

Theo 210, SESSION #13:
Pauline Literature II (ANSWER KEY)
The University of St. Francis

Questions from Video

1. How was Paul received during his second trip to Corinth? How was Paul treated initially at Ephesus?

On this Third Journey... At Corinth, the faithful physically kicked him out; at Ephesus, the entire province received his teachings and healings well – he stayed there for two years, more than any other place. At Ephesus, he groomed evangelists and the faithful desired to listen to St. Paul speak.

2. According to the video presentation, what was the main message Paul wished to stress to the people of Corinth?

1 Cor 3: 17. The unity of the Church is more important than anything that divides the individuals. Unity was “bought” at the price of submission to the higher good.

3. What is the supreme Christian value purported by the author in 1 Cor 13?

Love (literally, Christian charity or agape)

4. What problem did Paul experience in Ephesus in 57 AD? How did the Ephesians treat him?

Paul challenged those who supported the pagan worship of the idol Artemus (the pagan god of fertility) and the items being sold in his name. This threatened the local economy, which depended on the sale of those idols. Demetrius (one of the craftsmen) created a mob that

needed to be quelled and Paul was forced to retreat.

5. Paul retreated to Corinth in the winter of 57 AD. To whom did he write at this time (the one community he never visited)? Why did he write to them?

Paul wrote to the Christian Romans in his letter of introduction, in an attempt to outline his message and systematic theology in an effort to gain favor with the Romans in anticipation of a future visit.

6. On his way to Jerusalem in the Spring of 58, Paul began a collection for the poor in the city. Acts 23 ff. described his subsequent arrest and trial. What accusation did the Jews levy against St. Paul?

That Jews living with Gentiles should ignore Mosaic law. Paul was accused of taking a Gentile into a Jewish temple, then penalty of which was death. Paul was willing to undergo ritual purification, but brought a non-Jew in a forbidden place within the temple. In the process, an unholy alliance of forty Jews were plotting to murder him, Subsequently, Paul was taken to Caesaria for trial, which was 90 miles NW of Jerusalem.

7. In 60 AD, Paul was brought to Festus (the Roman governor) to stand trial (Acts 25). Why did Festus grant Paul's request to stand trial in Rome?

Because Paul claimed his Roman citizenship, which was his right.

True/False

1. False 1 Corinthians is the oldest surviving Christian document.
2. True Corinth is in Greece.
3. True The Corinthians were converted by St. Paul.

4. True There was dissension among the Corinthians about the faith.
5. True The Corinthians were divided on moral issues.
6. True St. Paul told the Corinthians that their conduct was scandalous.
7. False St. Paul depended on the Corinthians for his livelihood.
8. True St. Paul told the Corinthians not to associate with Christians living immoral lives.
9. True There were four competitive parties in Corinth, each following either Christ, or Paul, or Apollos, or Peter.
10. True Some Corinthians were living in incestuous marriages.
11. False St. Paul praised the Corinthians for engaging in many lawsuits.
12. True The Corinthians had asked St. Paul, through messengers, about disputed questions of doctrine and discipline.
13. True St. Paul ordered the Corinthians to give of their necessities to relieve the poor.
14. True Paul spends considerable space in 1 Cor encouraging his readers to overcome their intra-church rivalries and suspicion.
15. True Pride is the root of all sin. (1 Cor 5)
16. True Pride leads to sins against chastity. (1 Cor 5)

17. True Christians should not sue one another in the civil courts.
(1 Cor 6)
18. True Christian marriage is indissoluble. (1 Cor 7)
19. True Married people must practice chastity. (1 Cor 7)
20. False The Pauline Privilege applied only in apostolic times.
(1 Cor 7)
21. True Virginity was praised by St. Paul as a state of life. (1 Cor 7)
22. False St. Paul was one of the original “twelve” Apostles.
23. True According to St. Paul, the Church is like a human body,
with a Head who is Christ, and members who are the
faithful. (1 Cor 11)
24. True St. Paul gives the account of the institution of the Eucharist.
(1 Cor 11: 23-26)
25. True St. Paul condemns those who receive Holy Communion
unworthily. (1 Cor 11: 27)
26. True Charismatic gifts are meant for the spiritual benefit of other
people. (1 Cor 12)
27. True Every sin a Christian commits, does harm to the whole
Church. (1 Cor 12)
28. True All human beings are members of the Mystical Body.
(1 Cor 12)
29. False Love is identical with charity. (1 Cor 13)

30. False Charity is a lower virtue than faith. (1 Cor 13)
31. False St. Paul encourages women to preach. (1 Cor 14: 34)
32. False St. Paul says that love, like faith and hope, will one day end. (1 Cor 13)
33. True In Paul's letters, he frequently stresses his own Jewish heritage. (1 Cor 9: 20)
34. False In 1 Cor 11, Paul places restrictions on women's participation in church services, saying that women cannot pray or prophesy in church when men are present.
35. True 1 Cor 15 preserves the earliest tradition of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to his disciples.
36. True Scholars believe that 2 Cor may be a patchwork of several different letters that Paul wrote to Corinth.
37. False In 2 Cor 10-13, Paul uses sarcasm and irony to attack a group he calls "the idiot apostles" who had undermined the church's confidence in Paul's apostolic authority.
38. True God loves a cheerful giver, according to St. Paul. (2 Cor 9: 7)
39. True Many scholars believe that 2 Cor. 10-13 is actually to be dated earlier than 2 Cor. 1-9.
40. True If Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, then he wrote it only a few weeks or months after writing 1 Thessalonians.

Multiple Choice

St. Paul's 1st Letter to the Thessalonians

1. Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of _____.
 - a. Northern Palestine.
 - b. Central Asia Minor.
 - c. **Macedonia.**
 - d. Egypt.

2. What Greek term defines the content of the oral gospel that Paul preached in the marketplaces, shops, and private homes of Thessalonica?
 - a. Parousia.
 - b. Logos.
 - c. **Kerygma.**
 - d. Sophia.

3. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul encourages the Thessalonian believers to respond to the nearness of the Parousia of Christ by doing what?
 - a. Telling all of their friends about Jesus.
 - b. Quitting their jobs and leaving their families.
 - c. Eating, drinking, and being merry.
 - d. **Abstaining from sexual immorality.**

4. What does Paul's argue in his letter to the Church at Thessalonica?
 - a. **The Church did not need to worry about members who had recently died. Christ would soon return and those who had died would be raised from the dead.**
 - b. Those who had died had missed their opportunity to witness the second coming of Jesus.
 - c. All Christians should try their best to determine the date when Jesus would return.
 - d. The eschaton would not come.

5. What does the text of 1 Thessalonians seem to indicate?
- a. That the Thessalonians were being influenced by false prophets.
 - b. That the Thessalonians were practicing circumcision, doubting the Pauline teachings about baptism.
 - c. That the Thessalonians were performing acts of ritual sacrifice, doubting the one true sacrifice that Christ offered on the cross.
 - d. *That the Thessalonians were worried about whether their dead Christian friends would miss the blessings available to believers still alive at the Second Coming of Christ.***

St. Paul's 2nd Letter to the Thessalonians

1. Why do many scholars doubt whether Paul actually wrote 2 Thessalonians?
- a. The author of 2 Thessalonians claims to be a Gentile.
 - b. The readers of 2 Thessalonians were mostly Gentiles.
 - c. Early canon lists don't mention a book of 2 Thessalonians.
 - d. *The eschatology proposed in 2 Thessalonians is quite different from that proposed in 1 Thessalonians.***
2. According to 2 Thessalonians, which of the following must occur before the Parousia of Christ?
- a. The Raising Of The Dead
 - b. *The Appearance Of A Wicked Man Who Desecrates The Jerusalem Temple***
 - c. The Manifestation Of The Gift Of Speaking In Tongues
 - d. Nothing

St. Paul's 1st & 2nd Letter to the Corinthians

1. What below best describes the First Century Church of Corinth?
 - a. A strongly unified Church with few distractions from the work of spreading the gospel.
 - b. Not founded yet at the time Paul wrote his first letter to Corinth.
 - c. Strongly affiliated with Rome and its culture.
 - d. *A troubled Church with many internal divisions and serious challenges to its ministry.***

2. What below best describes the city of Corinth?
 - a. A quiet town in central Asia Minor
 - b. *A wealthy port city in what is now the southern part of Greece***
 - c. A city in Egypt with a very homogeneous population
 - d. A famous suburb of Rome

3. Paul criticizes the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians because they will not excommunicate a church member who is guilty of doing what?
 - a. Theft
 - b. *Incest***
 - c. Murder
 - d. Gossiping

4. What is Paul's general principle for personal relationships in 1 Corinthians?
 - a. Married Christians need not remain married.
 - b. God desires everyone to be married.
 - c. Marriage is sinful.
 - d. *Married people should remain married; and single people should remain single.***

5. What is Paul's position in 1 Corinthians concerning the eating of idol meat?
- a. Christians should never eat it.
 - b. Christians have a right to eat it if they want to.
 - c. Christians should not eat meat at all.
 - d. *Christians have a right to eat idol meat, but they should forego that right if it offends a fellow Christian.***
6. About how long did Paul first visited Corinth on his second missionary journey?
- a. *A Year and a Half***
 - b. Three Days
 - c. Forty Days
 - d. Seventy Days
7. In Paul's day, the city of Corinth was known for what?
- a. Its conservative lifestyle.
 - b. *Its libertine lifestyle.***
 - c. Its poverty.
 - d. Its extremely cold climate.
8. What opposite concepts were the most important distinctions that Paul makes in 1 Cor. 1-2?
- a. Darkness and Light.
 - b. Sickness and Wellness.
 - c. Life and Death.
 - d. *Wisdom and Foolishness.***
9. In 1 Cor. 11, Paul criticizes the Corinthians' observance of the Lord's Supper, claiming that the Corinthians were doing what?
- a. *They turned the Supper into a riotous drinking party.***
 - b. They used grape juice instead of wine.
 - c. They used leavened bread instead of unleavened bread.
 - d. They did not pray before they partook of the elements of the Supper.

10. In what Chapter of 1 Corinthians does Paul challenge women and men to dress appropriately (or wear their hair appropriately) when they pray or prophesy in public worship?
- a. Chapter 9
b. Chapter 10
c. **Chapter 11**
d. Chapter 12
11. In what Chapter of 1 Corinthians does Paul offer his most famous prose concerning Christian charity?
- a. Chapter 11
b. Chapter 12
c. **Chapter 13**
d. Chapter 14
12. Which letter do many scholars think is actually a collection of at least two originally separate letters?
- a. 1 Corinthians
b. **2 Corinthians**
c. Galatians
d. Romans

Essay

St. Paul's 1st Letter to the Thessalonians

1. Why was the issue of the “end-time” so critical to the Thessalonian church?

The Thessalonians' suffering stemmed in part from the tension created by the distance between their convictions and their circumstances. They knew that they were beloved by God and chosen by him (1: 4). They knew that Jesus was raised from the dead and would deliver them from the wrath to come (1: 10). But the deliverance had not visibly occurred, and the wrath seemed to be very much upon them (2: 16). They seemed to be more under the promise than the fulfillment (5: 9-10): God has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, so that whether we wake or sleep we live with him.

The last part of this conviction – that awake or asleep they lived with Christ – was exactly what those in the Thessalonian church did not grasp. Paul must therefore pay particular attention to their shaken confidence in the triumph of God, caused by the death of some community members.

Paul's initial preaching may, as in other cases, have helped create the problem. On the evidence, this was a young community, only recently turned from paganism. When Paul mentioned that they were now waiting "for his son from heaven" (1: 10), they apparently understood that this climactic triumph would happen very soon, surely in their lifetime. But now, some in the community had died, perhaps even killed in the persecution. This raises the question of whether or not they have missed out on the full realization of the kingdom. It would seem so, especially if the revelation of God's power was for the future only, and not already revealed in the present. Because those who died apparently missed out on the "not yet," the members of the community mourned, forgetting their more significant participation in the "already" of God.

Paul responds to the problem at three levels. First, he sketches a picture of the end time (4: 16–18), clarifying that those already dead will not in any way be disadvantaged at the coming of the Lord. Second, he warns that the time of this coming is not a matter of timetables or calculations but is in God's hands (5: 1–3). But Paul's third point is the most important for him: the crisis in the community arose only because its members had forgotten a fundamental part of their identity. The essential victory over death and evil had already been won in the resurrection of Jesus. In it, God already showed himself triumphant. The God who raised Jesus to life is not a powerless projection of human desires, like idols, but a "living and true God" (1: 9–10). The God preached by Paul lives. The members' mourning for the dead is therefore both a loss of hope and a fall from faith.

The Christian identity of the Thessalonian assembly was shaken, since they were responding like those outsiders who do not

understand the distinctive view of God gained by the resurrection of Jesus. Those who “did not know God” in this way lived in the world “with no hope,” for their gods were dead. But those who had come to know the God who raised Jesus from the dead had hope rooted in reality. They knew that just as he had raised Jesus, so could he also raise them to life: “God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep” (4: 14). The timing may be uncertain, but the outcome is sure: “We shall always be with the Lord” (4: 17).

2. How and why are Paul’s instructions to the Thessalonians concerning the “end-time” different in the two letters to that church?

The description of the end time in 2 Thessalonians is thought by some to contradict that found in 1 Thess. 4: 13–5: 3, especially since it seems to imply a schedule of events whereas 1 Thessalonians explicitly eschews any set sequence. There is unquestionably some difference between the two eschatological accounts. They are best understood, however, as successive responses by a pastor to stages in a community’s panic, rather than the eschatological formulations of two different individuals.

3. Why was Paul so harsh toward those in Thessalonica who had stopped working?

The tone of 2 Thessalonians is definitely sharper than that of the first letter. The persecution is spoken of in more explicit terms (1: 3–5). The judgment awaiting the persecutors is more dramatic (1: 6–9). People in the community who have left their normal occupations are severely rebuked: “If anyone will not work, let him not eat” (3: 10).

Disobedience to the letter’s instructions make one liable to shunning by other community members, so that the deviant might be made to conform (3: 14–15). The letter indeed appears to be responding to a crisis.

The nature of the crisis is suggested by 2 Thess. 2: 1–2... Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or

excited, either by spirit or word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

The church is in a state of panic, thinking that the end time is upon them. Some have ceased working altogether, devoting themselves to waiting for the arrival of Jesus, an event they apparently expect very soon. But why should they have thought the end so imminent? Three things have contributed to shaping the crisis: the immaturity of the community, Paul's instructions in 1 Thessalonians, and the classic apocalyptic scenario of the end-time. To this already volatile mixture was added an intensification of the church's suffering through persecution, catalyzing the crisis.

4. What metaphors does Paul use to describe himself to the Thessalonian church? Why might he have chosen these particular metaphors?

Paul recalls his sojourn among the Thessalonians in terms similar to the self-characterization of wandering Hellenistic philosophers (e.g., Dio Orations 32.8–11, 35.8). He first contrasts himself to charlatans. Unlike them, he did not teach error, nor did he speak out of impure motives or guile (2: 3). He was not out to flatter people, to steal their money, or to win their praise (2: 5). He thus claims freedom from the three classic vices of charlatans: love of pleasure, love of possessions, and love of glory. Instead, Paul belonged to the tradition of philosophers who preached because of a divine call (see Dio Orations 13.9–10, 32.12), “not to please men but to please God who tests the hearts” (2: 4). Paul also characterizes himself positively. He was “gentle as a nurse” among them (2: 7). This phrase has two important aspects. The image of nurse coincides with the frequent understanding of philosophy as a spiritual medicine: healthy teaching cures the illness of the soul, which is vice (see chap. 1, above). Second, Paul's gentleness places him in a tradition that contrasts itself with the harsh “surgical” methods of some philosophers, whose vituperative methods called people to reform by reviling them. He was one who taught by positive example and instruction (see Dio Oration 77/78.38–45; Lucian Demonax).

Paul also calls himself a father to this church (2: 11). He thereby

establishes the accustomed social relationship for parenesis: the moral teacher takes the place of a father with his children. Paul asserts this claim to special authority with other churches as well (e.g., 1 Cor. 4: 15). Finally, he presents himself as a model to the community: they are to imitate him (1: 6). This has nothing to do with arrogance; such imitation is the normal mode of moral education in Paul's world. The Thessalonians also imitate the churches in Judea, insofar as they suffer like them (2: 14). And they have become, in turn, examples to all the communities in Macedonia and Achaia because of the way they accepted the gospel (1: 7).

St. Paul's 1st & 2nd Letter to the Corinthians

1. What factors created divisions in the Church at Corinth?

Although they were called into a fellowship (koinōnia) with Jesus, they are in fact destroying that unity by their factiousness. Paul exhorts them therefore to have the same mind (nous) and judgment (gnōmē) among themselves (1: 10). By this he means more than mere unanimity. The same mind they should have is that formed by the one with whom they have been joined: they should have the "mind of Christ" (2: 16). Their party spirit has "divided Christ" (1: 13). Factions and rivalries are characteristic of human gatherings in which people define themselves by their knowledge, power, or prestige. In God's Church, such measurements do not apply.

Their calling is not an invitation to a club or a cultic association, which would demand of them allegiance to their patron or mystagogue (see 1: 13–14). Those are the perceptions of the world and not of the gospel. The Corinthians have been called into God's convocation (ekklēsia), through an invitation and command apart from natural abilities or predilections. God's call transcends human status (1: 26), exceeds human strength (1: 25), and confounds human wisdom (1: 18). It is a call that reverses all human norms, for it is based not on the persuasiveness of human rhetoric but on the preaching of the cross (1: 17). The identity of the Church is indelibly marked by the one who remains a scandal to the Jews and a fool to

the Gentiles (1: 18–23), Jesus Christ. To accept this invitation means to regard the measure of the world as an inadequate measure for one who is “the power of God, the wisdom of God” (1: 24).

2. What was the perspective of those Paul calls “the strong?”

Paul's advice must move in a delicate space between two extremes in the congregation. Both extremes wanted to avoid ambiguity by reducing norms to slogans. Some pushed Paul's gospel of freedom to a virtual antinomianism: “All things are lawful for me” (6: 12). For them, spiritual identity is secure and unassailable; material and social realities are strictly irrelevant: “Food for the stomach, the stomach for food” (6: 13). They place great store in their knowledge – “All of us possess knowledge” (8: 1) – and consider their spiritual state to be sufficiently secure to enable them to engage the world indiscriminately. Paul calls them “the strong” (4: 10; 10: 22); they tended to be arrogant and contemptuous of those who worried about behavioral norms as a safeguard for identity, namely the people Paul calls “the weak” (8: 7–10). “The weak” were convinced that Christian identity was fragile, requiring definite social practices different from those of society. Sexual activity should be distinctive and radical: “It is good not to touch a woman” (7: 1). Food and drink could contaminate; thus it was better to maintain a more rigid diet, avoiding contact with pagan practices (10: 28).

Paul agrees intellectually with the position of the strong; his bias is always for freedom. But his understanding of this freedom or power (exousia) is different. If one's identity is secure, it is because it is based in God (1: 6), not in one's own accomplishments. It is not that the Christians have come to know God but that God has known them, and this is what has given them freedom (8: 1–3; 13: 12). In that sense, “food will not commend us to God” (8: 8). But the strong are naïve about the social dimensions of human existence; spiritual life does involve physical entanglements. In fact, their vaunted freedom and knowledge have led to a neglect of others. They have become spiritual solipsists, forgetting they are part of a community. And Paul's focus is always the community: the primary gift of the Spirit is love (13: 1–13); its main manifestation is the building up (oikodomē)

of others in faith and understanding (8: 1, 10; 10: 23; 14: 3, 12). Therefore, rather than boast of their superiority, “the strong” should build up “the weak.”

3. What point does Paul make with his metaphor of “the body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12?

Since the Spirit they have received comes from the God who called them into community, the diverse manifestations of this Spirit serve functions within that community. Paul insists on two reciprocal aspects of this community context. First, since all the gifts come from the same God, there is a fundamental unity and equality between them (12: 4–11). All the gifts have been given for the common good (12: 7; cf. 6: 12), not by the random selection of an impersonal force but by the direction of a personal spirit, the activity of the living God (12: 11). Second, within this unity there is a proper diversity of function within the Church, which Paul here explicitly identifies as the “body of Christ.” As eating the same loaf and drinking the same cup made them “one body” (10: 16–17), so here the drinking of one spirit in baptism makes them one body (12: 13). The parts of a human body exist in mutual interdependence (12: 14–26), and therefore so should the members of the Church: “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (12: 27). All the functions are required for the body to be complete; there is no place for comparison or conflict among them.

4. How does Paul correct the abuses of the Lord’s Supper in the Corinthian Church?

Once more, the exact nature of the problem is not completely clear. Because “each one goes ahead with his own meal,” Paul says that some are filled while others go hungry (11: 21). Are people bringing their own food and proceeding without waiting for the ritual actions that join them together? Are their uneven resources being selfishly and privately consumed, so that not everyone has enough? Or are those who provide the meal taking larger portions for themselves and their clients, like patrons of clubs and cults? We cannot be sure. This

much, though, is clear: Paul perceives that the Christian sacred meal is being infiltrated by the attitudes of the world (11: 20). Divisions between people on the basis of wealth or position threaten the common identity of the Church. Paul berates those responsible for “humiliating those who have nothing,” and by so doing, “despising the Church of God” (11: 22). Their party spirit is contrary to the very notion of Church.

Paul responds with his most extensive and explicit citation of Jesus’ words, introduced by the technical language of scribal tradition: “I received... what I also delivered to you” (11: 23). The words are close to the Synoptic version of Jesus’ last supper, providing an important clue to the development of the gospel traditions. Paul agrees with Luke 22: 19 by including the command “Do this in memory of me,” but he attaches it to both loaf and cup (11: 24–25). He also makes explicit the connection of this broken bread to the crucifixion: “You proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (11: 26). By the words “until he comes,” he reminds them that the ritual life of the Church is framed by the “already” of the death and resurrection and the “not yet” of the Parousia. In such a context, the liturgical cry with which he ends the letter would have been most natural: “Lord, come [maranatha]” (16: 22).

5. Why can 2 Corinthians properly be called “a letter of reconciliation?”

We remember that already in 1 Corinthians Paul threatened to come “with a rod,” if the community did not heed him (1 Cor. 4: 21). That threat immediately preceded his command to excommunicate the brother living in incest (1 Cor. 5: 1–5). It is plausible to suppose that Paul did come to the community, did demand obedience in this matter, and was rebuffed. This would obviously be a “painful visit.” He could then have returned to Ephesus and penned the “letter in tears,” which once more demanded obedience. The letter, probably delivered by Titus who went to Corinth on business for the collection, worked. It caused resentment, however, precisely because Paul had been forced to exert his authority so blatantly. The growing estrangement between Paul and the community cannot have been decreased by the demand for money made by Titus. And Paul’s

authority over this Church was still more tenuous because the Corinthians were increasingly fascinated with other apostles, whether those they had known earlier (see 1 Cor. 1: 12) or newer visitors who were more impressive than Paul and were viewed as being straightforward in their demands for support, not “devious” like him. Paul therefore writes this letter at a point when he wants the Corinthians to cooperate in his great effort of reconciliation, while he himself is uncertain of his reconciliation with them!

6. How does the Corinthian correspondence show us the importance of the “Jerusalem collection” for Paul?

Paul’s fund-raising project for the Jerusalem Church was a major preoccupation of his ministry (see Rom. 15: 25–29; 1 Cor. 16: 1–4; Gal. 2: 10). Despite the fact that his asking the Corinthians for money exacerbated the alienation between them, he continued to seek their cooperation. The Corinthians saw his collection as a surreptitious way of exploiting them for personal gain. Despite his care to avoid misunderstanding (8: 20–24), his sending of delegates for money was misconstrued (12: 16–18). His rivals may well have seized on Paul’s “inconsistent” monetary policy as a sign of his lacking proper apostolic credentials. Even Paul’s boast of preaching to them freely (1 Cor. 9: 15–18) is now twisted to appear as a lack of love for this Church (2 Cor. 11: 7–11). It is more than a little ironic that as Paul tried to establish a worldwide reconciliation, he was stymied by a local alienation. The importance of this project for Paul is indicated by his persistence in it even in the face of opposition and rejection.

The collection was so important in part simply because it was a response to need (Gal. 2: 10). For the first Christians, as for other Jews, the mandate of sharing possessions with the needy was binding on all (9: 12). But Paul also wanted the collection to serve a symbolic function: to establish a reconciliation between his gentile communities and the Jerusalem Church. This reconciliation was now the more needed, since Paul’s ministry had stirred considerable hostility. Paul does not stand on his “rights” as an apostle to the Gentiles, but “empties himself out” in this complicated, arduous, and thankless enterprise. He asks his Gentile communities to do the same.

If the Corinthian Church participated in the collection, they would return thanks to God for all that they had been given by him (9: 12; cf. 4: 15). They would also fulfill the Hellenistic ideals of friendship by establishing a fellowship (koinēnia) with the Jerusalem Church (8: 4; 9: 13) and an equality (isotēs) that is reciprocal in nature (8: 14). This reciprocity is expressed more fully in Romans: the Gentiles had received spiritual things (ta pneumatika) from the Jewish Christians; now they owed them material things (ta sarkika) in return (Rom. 15: 27). The same principle is found in 1 Cor. 9: 11: "If we have sown spiritual things [ta pneumatika] among you, is it too much to reap your material things [ta sarkika]?" Here, the material generosity of the Corinthians is answered by the Jewish Christians' prayer for them (1 Cor. 9: 14).

Paul does not call for a structured sharing of possessions. He does not demand a contribution as an obligation or "temple tax" (8: 12; 9: 5). He has, however, engaged in some competitive rhetoric that now threatens to embarrass him. He had told the Macedonians that the Corinthians were extremely generous in their pledges (9: 2), just as he now boasts of the Macedonians' generosity in order to stimulate the Corinthians (8: 2-5). The Macedonians have fulfilled their pledges, but the Corinthians have not, and Paul might appear a liar (9: 3-4).

More than his personal embarrassment is at stake. Paul sees giving as a demand of the Christian life. Sharing is an act of obedience to the gospel (9: 13). The reason is that when Christians "give out of poverty" (8: 2), they express with the body language of material possessions the pattern of "life for others" that Paul has been trying to engender among them. They have the opportunity to show toward other communities the attitudes he has been urging them to have toward each other: gifts are not for clinging and boasting but for sharing freely to build up others. The pattern for this is again found ultimately in the "mind of Christ" (2 Cor. 8: 9):

For you know the grace (or, gift: charis) of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Did the Corinthians reconcile with Paul and respond? We have two signs that they did. First, when writing to the Romans, Paul later reports: "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" (Rom. 15: 26). Second, they preserved his letters.