

Sep 16-22
2 Corinthians 8-13
“God Loveth a Cheerful Giver”

OVERVIEW:

Recording spiritual impressions will help you remember what you learn during scripture study. You might write in a study journal, make notes in the margins of your scriptures, add notes in your Gospel Library app, or make an audio recording of your thoughts.

Record your impressions:

SCRIPTURES:

2 Corinthians 8

True saints impart of their substance to the poor—Christ out of his poverty brought eternal riches.

1 MOREOVER, brethren, ^awe (we make known (or declare) to you the grace) ~~do you to wit~~ (would have you to know) of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in a great ^atrial of ^baffliction the abundance of their joy and their deep ^cpoverty abounded unto the riches of their ^dliberality (sincerity, purity of mind).

3 For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the ^afellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And *this they did*, not as we ~~hoped~~ (required), but first ^agave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing, in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all ^adiligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also. (Bruce R. McConkie said: “Those who abound in faith and the attributes of godliness are the ones who impart liberally of their substance for the temporal welfare of their brethren in the kingdom.” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 2:433) Some of the tests incident to man’s mortal probation involve his instinctive love for money, his pursuit of riches in general, his desires for the power, influence, and ease that grow out of great wealth. When he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, however, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, he then becomes subject to a higher law. Money is no longer his master; it is his servant to do good and work righteousness; he becomes a cheerful giver. DNTC, 2:435.)

8 I speak ^anot by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the ^bsincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the ^agrace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was ^brich, yet for your sakes he became ^cpoor, that ye through his ^dpoverty might be rich. (In terms of riches, the Great Jehovah, the Creator of innumerable worlds, the law Giver, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had all that the Father had. Prior to his mortal advent, he was richer than any mortal. As Craig J. Ostler noted, “If the

glory of the premortal Messiah is likened unto riches, then he was truly the richest of all.” (*The Apostle Paul, His Life and His Testimony: The 23d Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], 161.) From this exalted station, he descended to be born in a lowly manger, to be raised in humble circumstances, and to come forth from the despised town of Nazareth.)

10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a ^awilling ^bmind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not. (James E. Talmage wrote: “In the accounts kept by the recording angels, figured out according to the arithmetic of heaven, entries are made in terms of quality rather than of quantity, and values are determined on the basis of capability and intent. The rich gave much yet kept back more; the widow’s gift was her all. It was not the smallness of her offering that made it especially acceptable, but the spirit of sacrifice and devout intent with which she gave. On the books of the heavenly accountants that widow’s contribution was entered as a munificent gift, surpassing in worth the largess of kings. ‘For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.’” (*Jesus the Christ*, 520))

13 For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

14 But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their ^aabundance also may be *a supply* for your want: that there may be ^bequality: (United Order, Law of Consecration)

15 As it is written, He that *had* ^agathered much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack. (All contributions in the Church should be based on ability to pay. The rich pay more tithing than the poor and similarly should give more to succor the needy, to aid the missionary cause, and to build houses of worship. Thus fast offering collections from areas where the saints have in abundance supply the needs of those who for a time and a season are less blessed temporally. DNTC, 2:433)

16 But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for ^ahonest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the ^bsight of men.

22 ~~And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great~~ ^aconfidence which *I have* in you. (Therefore we send him unto you, in consequence of the great confidence which we have in you, that you will receive the things concerning you, to the glory of Christ;)

23 ~~Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ~~ (whether we send by the hand of Titus, my partner and fellow-laborer, or our brethren, the messengers of the churches).

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf. (David O. McKay said: “Titus seems to have been one of the chief men in collecting contributions for the relief of the poor in Judea. When he returned to Corinth, he continued to make collections for Paul to take to Jerusalem in the near future.” (*Ancient Apostles* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964], 215.))

2 Corinthians 9

God loves and rewards a cheerful giver—Thanks be to him for his unspeakable gift.

1 FOR as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I ^aboast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath ^bprovoked very many.

3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your ^abounty (gift, blessing, benevolence), whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as *a matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness. (“Paul explains at some length that his purpose in going to Judea was to take a welfare donation from Macedonia and Achaia to the ‘poor saints which are at Jerusalem.’ ...in 2 Corinthians 9:1–15...Paul urges the Corinthian saints to get their donation ready beforehand so that he could obtain it when he arrived. The emphasis on these things brings us to another significant feature. Acts 11:27–30 makes scant reference to Paul as a welfare worker and mentions one occasion when with Barnabas he took a donation to the saints in Jerusalem. This was about A.D. 41 or 44 and was possibly Paul’s earliest experience with welfare as a Church program. However, as indicated above, his epistles give evidence that in the years that followed he became a diligent welfare worker, collecting donations throughout Galatia (see 1 Cor. 16:1), Macedonia (see Rom. 15:25–26), and Greece (see 2 Cor. 9:1–5) for the Judean saints.” (Robert J. Matthews, “St. Paul Writes about the Church,” *New Era*, Apr. 1977, 33, 35))

6 **But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall ^areap also sparingly; and he which ^bsoweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.**

7 **Every man according as he ^apurposeth in his heart, so let him give; not ^bgrudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a ^ccheerful ^dgiver.** (Brigham Young said: “We say to the Saints, do not pay Tithing, unless you want to; do not help to build up this Temple unless you want to; do not put forth your hands to one day’s work, unless you want to. . . . If you grudgingly put forth your means to help to gather the Saints, it will be a curse to you.” (Hugh Nibley, *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, p. 460) According to **Dr. James E. Talmage: ‘The spirit of giving makes the tithe holy; and it is by means thus sanctified that the material activities of the Church are carried on.’** Moroni 7:6-8 For behold, God hath said a man being ^aevil cannot do that which is good; for if he ^boffereth a gift, or ^cprayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real ^dintent it profiteth him nothing. 7 For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness. 8 For behold, if a man being ^aevil giveth a gift, he doeth it ^bgrudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God. **Everything on earth belongs to the Lord, so we should cheerfully share what we have according to His principles of caring for the poor. You should pay fast offering along with your tithing.)**

8 And God *is* able to make all ^agrace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your ^arighteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us ^athanksgiving to God.

12 For the ^aadministration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*;

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 ^aThanks *be* unto God for his **unspeakable ^bgift.** (There is a difference between ‘the gift of the Holy

Ghost' (D&C 33:15) and 'the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost' (D&C 121:26). The gift of the Holy Ghost is administered by the laying on of hands to those who have been baptized. It teaches the individual spiritual knowledge. By this Spirit we understand that Jesus is the Christ; we learn that the Book of Mormon is the word of God; we are taught to pray and to do good. While the joy we feel from this Spirit may be inexpressible, the doctrines we learn are not unspeakable. We may freely speak of them to anyone who understands the things of the Spirit. **The unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost is different.** All those who receive the gift of the Holy Ghost are entitled to the gifts of the Spirit, one of which is the unspeakable gift. It is a gift of revelation, prophecy, and knowledge whereby an individual is taught about things that 'cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man' (3 Ne 19:34). This knowledge is so sacred that it is unlawful to speak of it. It is knowledge 'which has not been revealed since the world was until now' (DC 121:26). **By this unspeakable gift, Paul ascended to the third heaven** and 'heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter' (2 Cor. 12:4). **By this unspeakable gift, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon saw 'great and marvelous' things which God commanded them not to write because it was 'not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit'** (DC 76:114-116). **By this unspeakable gift, the Nephites were taught great and marvelous things,** declaring 'eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father' (3 Ne. 17:15-18). **By this unspeakable gift, those who have purified themselves and 'endured valiantly for the gospel of Christ' will someday have all things revealed unto them.** This is the time when 'nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth' (DC 121:28-29). **All of this and more will be revealed and understood by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost.)**

2 Corinthians 10

Bring every thought into obedience—Paul glories in the Lord.

1 NOW I Paul myself beseech you by the ^ameekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you:
2 But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.
3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not ^awar after the flesh:
4 (For the ^aweapons of our ^bwarfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every ^athought to the ^bobedience of Christ; (Control your thoughts. Let virtue garnish your thoughts unceasingly. D&C 121:45)
6 And having in a readiness to revenge all ^adisobedience, when your ^bobedience is fulfilled.
7 Do ye look on things after the outward ^aappearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we ^bChrist's.
8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our ^aauthority, which the Lord hath given us for ^bedification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:
9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.
10 For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* ^abodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech ^bcontemptible. (Neal A. Maxwell said: "Paul, in his epistles, indicated at least one reaction to his outward appearance and to his personality. Some people regarded his letters as powerful and weighty, but his bodily presence as weak (see 2 Corinthians 10:10). His speech was regarded as rude, or contemptible (see 2 Corinthians 11:6)... Thus the absence of a commanding physical presence—or, in

modern political terms, the absence of charisma—can cause people to disregard or dismiss one actually sent of God, even though the substance of the individual or his message is exceedingly important.” (*Sermons Not Spoken* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985], 45.) “These hints of Paul's physical unimpressiveness but his power in writing seem to be reflected in a statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith, given January 5, 1841, at the organization of a school of instruction: ‘He is about five feet high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembled the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator, active and diligent, always employing himself in doing good to his fellow man.’ (Joseph Fielding Smith, comp. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976, 180.)” (Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994], 333.)

11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

13 But we will not ^aboast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. (Bruce R. McConkie said: “Boasting is of two kinds: either righteous, or unrighteous; either in the arm of flesh, or in the Lord and his gracious goodness and power. ‘He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,’ Paul said in summing up a sermon on boasting, ‘For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.’ (2 Cor. 10:7-18; Ps. 44:8.) Ammon spoke similarly: ‘I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God. Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things. Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will rejoice for our joy is full; yea, we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord?’ (Alma 26:8-16, 35.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 93.)

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ:

15 Not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is*, of other men's ^alabours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

16 To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glorieth, let him ^aglory in the Lord.

18 For not he that ^acommendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

2 Corinthians 11

Maintain the simplicity that is in Christ—Satan sends forth false apostles—Paul glories in his sufferings for Christ.

1 WOULD to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am ^ajealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have ^bespoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the ^aserpent ^bbeguiled Eve through his ^csubtilty, so your minds should be ^dcorrupted from the ^esimplicity that is in Christ. (The Gospel message is simple, understandable by everyone.)

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another ^aJesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another ^bgospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear

with ~~him~~ (me).

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though I be ^arude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things.

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God ^afreely?

8 I ^arobbed (despoiled other churches, having taken provisions for you) other churches, taking ^bwages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was ^achargeable to no man: for that which was ^blacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia ^csupplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they ^aglory (boast; so in chapters 11 and 12), they may be found even as we.

13 For such are ^afalse apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. (False prophets always arise to oppose the true prophets and they will prophesy so very near the truth that they will deceive almost the very chosen ones. TPJS, p. 365)

14 And no marvel; for ^aSatan himself is transformed into an ^bangel of light. (Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "There is no doubt about Satan having great power and that he can appear as an angel of light. In this form he appeared on the banks of the Susquehanna River to oppose the restoration of keys, and was detected by Michael, and his plans were thwarted. (See D. & C. 128:20. Compare also Section 129:8.) Jacob, son of Lehi, in his teachings, stated that if there had been no atonement, our spirits ' . . . must have become like unto him [Satan], and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.' (2 Nephi 9:9.) "Korihor, who tried to deceive the Nephites, admitted that Satan appeared to him as an angel and told him what to teach the people. (Alma 30:53.) "When the Prophet Joseph Smith and a company of brethren were journeying to Kirtland from Missouri, they camped at McIlwaine's Bend on the Missouri River. There Elder William W. Phelps 'in open vision by daylight, saw the destroyer in his most horrible power, ride upon the face of the waters; others heard the noise, but saw not the vision.' (D.H.C., Vol. 1, p. 203.) The Savior declared that Satan had the power to bind bodies of men and women and sorely afflict them. (Matthew 7:22-23; Luke 13:16.) If Satan has power to bind the bodies, he surely must have power to loose them. It should be remembered that Satan has great knowledge and thereby can exercise authority and to some extent control the elements, when some greater power does not intervene. Paul, writing to the Ephesian Saints called Satan 'The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' (Ephesians 2:2.)" (Answers to Gospel Questions, 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957-1966], 1: 178.) Joseph Smith said: "There have also been ministering angels in the Church which were of Satan appearing as an angel of light. A sister in the state of New York had a vision, who said it was told her that if she would go to a certain place in the woods, an angel would appear to her. She went at the appointed time, and saw a glorious personage descending, arrayed in white, with sandy colored hair; he commenced and told her to fear God, and said that her husband was called to do great things, but that he must not go more than one hundred miles from home, or he would not return; whereas God had called him to go to the ends of the earth, and he has since been more than one thousand miles from home, and is yet alive. Many true things were spoken by this personage, and many things were false. How, it may be asked, was this known to be a bad angel? By the color of his hair; that is one of the signs that he can be known by, and by his contradicting a former revelation." (History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 7 Vols.

4:581) “If Satan should appear as one in glory, who can tell his color, his signs, his appearance, his glory—or what is the manner of his manifestation? Who can drag into daylight and develop the hidden mysteries of the false spirits that so frequently are made manifest among the Latter-day Saints? We answer that no man can do this without the Priesthood, and having a knowledge of the laws by which spirits are governed; for as ‘no man knows the things of God, but by the Spirit of God,’ so no man knows the spirit of the devil, and his power and influence, but by possessing intelligence which is more than human, and having unfolded through the medium of the Priesthood the mysterious operations of his devices; without knowing the angelic form, the sanctified look and gesture, and the zeal that is frequently manifested by him for the glory of God, together with the prophetic spirit, the gracious influence, the godly appearance, and the holy garb, which are so characteristic of his proceedings and his mysterious windings. A man must have the discerning of spirits before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul-destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors; for nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God.” (*Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Alma P. Burton [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977], 113.) “When a messenger comes, saying he has a message from God, offer him your hand, and request him to shake hands with you. If he be an angel he will do so, and you will feel his hand. If he be the spirit of a just man made perfect, he will come in his glory; for that is the only way he can appear. Ask him to shake hands with you, but he will not move, because it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to deceive; but he will still deliver his message. If it be the devil as an angel of light, when you ask him to shake hands he will offer you his hand, and you will not feel anything; you may therefore detect him. These are three grand keys whereby you may know whether any administration is from God.” (D&C 129:4-9.) This is demonstrated in the Temple.)

15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose ^aend shall be according to their works.

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool ^areceive (listen to, bear with, follow) me, that I may ^bboast myself a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak *it* not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *yourselves* are wise.

20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into ^abondage, if a man devour *you*, if a man take *of you*, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

21 I speak as concerning ^areproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. (When Paul says, ‘I speak foolishly’ or ‘I speak as a fool’ (v. 23), he is acknowledging that he is bragging as a fool would brag about his accomplishments. In effect, he is saying, “I know I am boasting as a fool boasts, but bear with me while I try to make this point.”)

22 Are they ^aHebrews? so *am* I. Are they ^bIsraelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.

23 Are they ^aministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) ^b~~I am more~~ (so am I); in ^clabours more abundant, in ^dstripes above measure, in ^eprisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I ^aforty *stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I ^abeaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* ^acountrymen, *in* perils by the ^bheathen, *in* ^cperils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; (Joseph Smith said: “I, like Paul have been in perils, and oftener than anyone in this generation. As Paul boasted, I have suffered more than Paul did. I should be like a fish out of water, if I were out of persecutions. Perhaps my brethren think it requires all this to keep me humble. The Lord has constituted me so curiously that I glory in persecution. I am not nearly so humble as if I were not

persecuted.” (*The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, compiled and edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980], 373.))

27 In ^aweariness (toll, trouble) and ^bpainfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not ^aweak? who is offended, and I ~~burn~~ (anger) not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to ^aapprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

2 Corinthians 12

Paul caught up to the third heaven—The Lord gives men weaknesses that they may triumph over them—Paul manifests the signs of an apostle.

1 IT is not expedient for me doubtless to ^aglory. I will come to ^bvisions and ^crevelations of the Lord.

2 **^aI knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago), (whether in the ^bbody, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the ^cthird ^dheaven.**

(“Then he says, still contrasting himself to the false apostles, ‘I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord’ (see 2 Cor. 12:1). And here, surprisingly, the account suddenly shifts to understatement. After a dozen or more examples of dramatic persecution, we might expect a half a dozen episodes of dramatic revelation just to drive his point home. Instead, Paul’s awe, humility, and gratitude for having received those revelations turn him from aggressiveness to reverence—even reticence. The fact that he describes the vision as happening to ‘a man in Christ’ is such an evidence of that humility, though he is obviously speaking of himself. The passage makes no sense if it isn’t his own revelation, since he’s reminding the Corinthians of his credentials contrasted to those of the ‘false apostles.’” (Richard L. Anderson, *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, Neal A. Lambert, ed., [Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1981], 71.) Boyd K. Packer: “...as students there are some questions that we could not in propriety ask. One question of this type I am asked occasionally, usually by someone who is curious, is, ‘Have you seen Him?’ That is a question that I have never asked of another. I have not asked that question of my Brethren in the Council of the Twelve, thinking that it would be so sacred and so personal that one would have to have some special inspiration—indeed, some authorization—even to ask it. Though I have not asked that question of others, I have heard them answer it—but not when they were asked. I have heard one of my Brethren declare, ‘I know, from experiences too sacred to relate, that Jesus is the Christ.’ I have heard another testify, ‘I know that God lives, I know that the Lord lives, and more than that, I know the Lord.’ I repeat: they have answered this question not when they were asked, but under the prompting of the Spirit, on sacred occasions, when ‘the Spirit beareth record.’ (D&C 1:39.) There are some things just too sacred to discuss: not secret, but sacred; not to be discussed, but to be harbored and protected and regarded with the deepest of reverence. There are many difficult questions, including some that we will not be able to answer, and many things are to be taken on faith. As a teacher, therefore, do not let difficult questions create difficult problems for you or for those you teach.” (*Teach Ye Diligently*, pp. 86-7) Some truths and experiences are not lawful for man to utter in the sense that it is not permitted or appropriate to speak of them, except as led and directed by the Holy Spirit. DCBM, 3:84.)

3 **And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)**

(Sometimes prophets go into trances in connection with the receipt of visions. That is, they are so

completely overshadowed by the Spirit that to all outward appearances normal bodily functions are suspended. Such was the case with Balaam when he saw the coming of Christ and the triumph of Israel (Num. 24.) Peter 'fell into a trance' when he received the vision commanding him to take the gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts 10:9-48.) Paul 'was in a trance' when the Lord came to him with the command to leave Jerusalem and carry the message of salvation to the Gentiles. (Acts 22:17-21.) "A similar experience happened to the Prophet Joseph Smith in connection with the First Vision; he was not in control of all his bodily powers when the Father and the Son appeared to him. 'When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven,' he said. 'When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home.' (JS-Hist. 1:20.)" "...Similarly, when the Three Nephites 'were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things,' they were transfigured. 'Whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell; for it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God.' (3 Ne. 28:13-17.) Paul had a similar experience (2 Cor. 12:1-4), as also did Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. (D. & C. 76; Teachings, p. 107.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 802-803.)

4 How that he was caught up into ^aparadise, and heard ^bunspeakable (ineffable) words, which it is ^cnot ^dlawful (possible, permitted) for a man to utter. (Paradise is different than the third heaven (v. 2). In verse 1, Paul promised to discuss 'visions and revelations' (both in plural). So we may safely assume that Paul is speaking of two different visions—one of the celestial kingdom and another of Spirit Paradise. The difference is not hard for Latter-day saints to comprehend. With only one exception in the scriptures (Rev. 2:7), the word *paradise* refers to the spirit world (see Lu. 23:43; 2 Ne. 9:13; Alma 40:12). **LeGrand Richards noted, "From this scripture, it is evident that paradise is not the first, second, or third heaven."** (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950], 177.)

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not ^aglory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth ~~me to be~~ (of me), or *that* he heareth of me.

7 **And lest I should be ^aexalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, (caught up in pride because of his spiritual abilities) there was given to me a ^bthorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.** (Ether 12: 27 And if men come unto me I will show unto them their ^aweakness. I ^bgive unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my ^cgrace is sufficient for all men that ^dhumble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make ^eweak things become strong unto them.

28 Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness, and I will show unto them that ^afaith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all ^brighteousness.)

8 **For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.** ("No one really knows what Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' was...All we know for sure is that whatever it was, it kept Paul humble and forced him to his knees. His inabilities and his impotence in the face of this particular challenge were ever before him. I rather think that when Paul states that he 'besought the Lord thrice' for the removal of the thorn, he is not describing merely three prayers but instead three seasons of prayer, extended periods of wrestling and laboring in the Spirit for a specific blessing that never came. Indeed, as he suggests, another kind of blessing came—a closeness, a sensitivity, an acquaintance with Deity, a sanctified strength that came through pain and suffering. It was up against the wall of faith, when shorn of self-assurance and naked in his extremity and his frightening finitude, that a mere mortal received that enabling power we know as the grace of Christ. As the Savior explained to Moroni, when we acknowledge and confess our weakness—not just our specific weaknesses, our individual sins, but our weakness, our mortal limitation—and submit unto him, we transform weakness into strength (see Ether 12:27)." (Robert L. Millet, *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholars Series* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000], 502.) "Indeed, some thorns in the flesh call forth prayers of great

intensity (see 2 Corinthians 12:7-10), supplications and pleading that are certainly out of the ordinary. Such vexations of the soul are not typical, not part of our daily prayer life. Just as it would be a mistake to suppose that Jacob or Enos wrestled with God in prayer every day, so you and I are not expected to involve ourselves with the same tenacity, to be involved in the same bending of the soul on a regular basis. But now and then in the eternal scheme of things, we must pass through the fire in order to come through life purified and refined and thus prepared to dwell one day in everlasting burnings with God and Christ and holy beings.” (Robert L. Millet, *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholars Series* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000], 438-439.) There is circumstantial evidence in the scriptures to support the idea that Paul’s thorn in the flesh may have been poor eye sight. Galatians 4: 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 1 Cor 13:12 For now we see through a ^aglass, ^bdarkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. In Acts 23 he may not have recognized the high priest: 3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* ^awhited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? 4 And they that stood by said, ^aRevilest thou God’s high priest? 5 Then said Paul, I ^awist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ^bruler of thy people. Of this Brigham Young said: We find a pure spirit inhabiting the tabernacle of the creature which is always prompting the individual to good, to virtue, to truth and holiness; all of which emanate from that source of purity from which this spirit came. And here the evil that came through transgression that is in this tabernacle, is warring with this pure spirit, it seeks to overcome it, and is striving with all its power to bring this spirit into subjection... This is the warfare which Paul refers to when speaking of the thorn in the flesh, which is no more or less than the spirit contending against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit. JD, 18:258)

9 And he said unto me, My ^agrace is sufficient for thee: for my ^bstrength is made perfect in ^cweakness. James E. Faust said: “Here, then, is a great truth. In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner’s fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong. In this way the divine image can be mirrored from the soul. This pain is part of the purging toll exacted of some to become acquainted with God. In the agonies of life, we seem to listen better to the faint godly whisperings of the Divine Shepherd. Into every life there come the painful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful. The apostle Paul referred to his own challenge: ‘And lest I should be exalted above measure . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.’ (2 Corinthians 12:7.) “The thorns that prick, that stick in the flesh, that hurt—these often change lives that may seem robbed of significance and hope. This change comes about through a refining process that often seems cruel and hard. In this way the soul can become like soft clay in the hands of the Master in building lives of faith, usefulness, beauty, and strength. For some, the refiner’s fire causes a loss of belief and faith in God, but those with eternal perspective understand that such refining is part of the perfection process.” (*To Reach Even unto You* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980], 98.)) Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may ^drest upon me. (Trust in the Lord in spite of our weaknesses.)

10 Therefore I take pleasure in ^ainfirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in ^bpersecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am ^cweak, then am I ^dstrong.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very ^achiefest apostles, though I be nothing. (“As you know, Paul was, sadly, required to spend a significant amount of time defending his apostolic calling. Having been a zealous Pharisee and even a persecutor of the Christians before his conversion, and not having been one of the original witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ, he felt the need to testify to his detractors that his call had indeed come from God.” (Robert L. Millet, *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel*

Scholars Series [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000], 501 - 502.)

12 Truly the ^asigns of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not ^aburdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I ^aseek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

18 I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your ^aedifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, ^astrifes, ^bbackbitings, whisperings, swellings, ^ctumults:

21 *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

2 Corinthians 13

Saints should test themselves as to righteousness—Be perfect, of one mind, and live in peace.

1 THIS *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three ^awitnesses shall every word be established. (Henry B. Eyring said: “In our own time, we have been warned with counsel of where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated. For instance, more than once in these general conferences, you have heard our prophet say that he would quote a preceding prophet and would therefore be a second witness and sometimes even a third. Each of us who has listened has heard President Kimball give counsel on the importance of a mother in the home and then heard President Benson quote him, and we have heard President Hinckley quote them both. The Apostle Paul wrote that ‘in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established’ (2 Cor. 13:1). One of the ways we may know that the warning is from the Lord is that the law of witnesses, authorized witnesses, has been invoked. When the words of prophets seem repetitive, that should rivet our attention and fill our hearts with gratitude to live in such a blessed time.” (“Finding Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 25))

2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For *though he was* ^acrucified through weakness, (He was able to die because Mary was his mother and from her he inherited the power of mortality. DNTC, 2:451) yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

5 ^aExamine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that ^bJesus ^cChrist is in you, except ye be reprobates? (Bruce R. McConkie said: “I propose some simple tests that all of us may take to determine if we are true to the faith. They consist of a few basic questions, all of which must be answered correctly in order to gain the full blessings of the gospel in this life and inherit eternal life in the realms ahead. Our well-beloved brother Paul, an Apostle of old,

counsels us in these words: ‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.’ (2 Cor. 13:5.) And we may well ask ourselves: Do we believe all of the doctrines of salvation? Are we keeping the commandments? Are we valiant in the cause of truth and righteousness? Will we be saved in the kingdom of God? “From among many questions that all of us must one day answer, let me test you on these: *Test one: Do I worship the only true and living God? ...Test two: Do I believe in the fall of Adam? ...Test three: Do I believe in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? ...Test four: Do I accept the true plan of salvation? ...Test five: Do I believe the gospel as it has been restored in this final dispensation of grace? ...Test six: Am I a faithful member of the true Church? ...Test seven: Do I honor Joseph Smith as the great prophet of the Restoration? ...Test eight: Am I enduring to the end, growing in grace, and gaining the attributes of godliness? ... Test nine: Do I put first in my life the things of God’s kingdom? Is it with me and mine the kingdom of God or nothing? ...Test ten: Am I so living that I will be saved in the kingdom of God?* “This is our goal and aim and purpose in life. Everything we do should please the Lord and further our strivings for salvation. And, the Lord be praised, there comes a time in the lives of faithful Saints when, having kept the faith and been true and faithful at all hazards, the Lord says to them: Thou shalt be exalted. These, then, are a few of the many tests of true discipleship.” “The Caravan Moves On,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 82, 85)

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is ^ahonest, though we be as reprobates.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

9 For we are glad, when we are ^aweak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection.

10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the ^apower which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be ^aperfect, be of good comfort, be of ^bone ^cmind, live in ^dpeace; and the God of ^elove and peace shall be with you.

12 Greet one another with an holy ^akiss (salutation).

13 All the saints salute you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.