

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND CORINTHIANS

Paul had written First Corinthians in the spring of 55 A.D. This Letter was written a few months later from somewhere in Macedonia, as he visited the churches before going to Corinth. After writing First Corinthians, Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (*1 Cor. 16:10-11*), probably with that Letter. Timothy returned with a gloomy report of what the false apostles were doing to undermine Paul's work. Paul hurried to Corinth by boat, but his visit was *painful* (*2 Cor. 2:1*)! He then returned to Ephesus. Since he had told the Corinthians he would return to Corinth before going to Macedonia, he wrote a letter to substitute for his planned visit. This letter was written with "a greatly troubled and distressed heart" (*2 Cor. 2:4*). Paul sent Titus to Corinth with it. After the riot at Ephesus (*Acts 19:23-25*), Paul went to Troas (this would still be spring, 55 A.D.). Titus was supposed to meet Paul there, but did not arrive (*2 Cor. 2:12-13*). Paul went ahead to Macedonia and Titus met him there with an improved report on Corinth. Paul, and Timothy, then wrote Second Corinthians, which was delivered to Corinth by Titus and two others. They were to collect the contribution from Corinth (*2 Cor. 8:16-23; 9:4*) before Paul got there, and he planned to visit Corinth soon (*2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1*).

Paul writes to answer the slander by which the false apostles tried to undermine his authority. In doing this he mentions facts which prove him to be an apostle, given authority by Christ to direct the faith and practice of all the members of the church. He also explains the general principles of religion and morality, in such a way that they form a guide for ourselves. But note that Paul wrote to different groups in the church, and that not all the things which he said apply to everyone! Paul writes as one who expects to be in Corinth shortly. He was able to do this, as *Acts 20:3* shows us (see notes there).

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

1 From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and from our brother Timothy—

To the church of God in Corinth, and to all God's people in all Greece:

²May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Paul Gives Thanks to God

³Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! 'He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help those who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God. ⁴Just as we have a share in Christ's many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in his great help. ⁵If we suffer, it is for your help and salvation; if we are helped, then you too are helped and given the strength to endure with patience the same sufferings that we also endure.

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2

The God of All Comfort

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort; which produces in you patient endurance of the same 3
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¹ **From Paul.** Compare note on *1 Cor. 1:1*. **Our brother Timothy.** He had taken the First Letter to Corinth (*1 Cor. 4:17*), and was back with Paul at this time. **To the church of God.** See note on *1 Cor. 1:2*.

² **Give you grace and peace.** See note on *1 Cor. 1:3*.

³ **Let us give thanks!** Compare *Eph. 1:3*; *1 Pet. 1:3* and notes.

⁴ **He helps us.** We are not orphans!!! God is our Father!!! **So that we.** Christian love is treating others as God has treated us in Christ. If we have learned from the help which God gives us, we will be able to help others.

⁵ **In Christ's many sufferings.** Christ suffers with his people when they suffer (*Acts 9:4-5* and notes). Therefore when Paul suffered for Christ, or rather BECAUSE of his relationship to Christ, he was sharing Christ's many sufferings. **So also through Christ.** Paul understood he was NEW in his union to Christ (*2 Cor. 5:17*), and he knew the help which Christ promises to his people (such as *Rom. 8:28*; *1 Cor. 10:13*, etc.).

⁶ **If we suffer.** Compare *verse 8*. **It is for your help.** The example of Paul's suffering and endurance, and how the Lord made it all work out to His glory, ought to fill them with hope! Compare *1 Thess. 2:14-16* and notes.

⁷So our hope in you is never shaken; we know that just as you share in our sufferings, you also share in the help we receive.

⁸We want to remind you, brothers, of the trouble we had in the province of Asia. The burdens laid upon us were so great and so heavy, that we gave up all hope of living. ⁹We felt that the sentence of death had been passed against us. But this happened so that we should rely, not on ourselves, but only on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰From such terrible dangers of death he saved us, and will save us; and we have placed our hope in him that he will save us again, ¹¹as you help us by means of your prayers for us. So it will be that the many prayers for us will be answered, and God will bless us; and many will raise their voices to him in thanksgiving for us.

The Change in Paul's Plans

¹²This is what we are proud of: our conscience assures us that our lives in this world, and especially our relations with you, have been ruled by God-given frankness and sincerity, by the

sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

Paul's Change of Plans

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that

7. **So our hope in you.** "I have confidence in your faithfulness, because you also know the promise and help of the Lord."

8. **Of the trouble.** This is something that had happened recently. *MacKnight* says it would not have been the riot in *Acts 19:30*, but another time when he faced horrible death, mentioned in *1 Cor. 15:32*. Perhaps Alexander the metalworker was behind this (*2 Tim. 4:14-15*), or someone like him. **All hope of living.** Paul is not one to exaggerate! This shows how serious it really was. The Corinthians knew all about this, and Paul does not give any details.

9. **But this happened.** "God let me come so near death that I could almost feel myself already dead! He did this to teach me not to trust ANYONE except Him, who raises the dead."

10. **From such terrible dangers.** "He saves me daily from such dangers as this!" **That he will save us again.** "I am not afraid that the Lord will fail us! Look at the examples of the past!"

11. **As you help us.** The prayers of the Corinthian Christians had also been a source of help, as they plead with God for him. **And God will bless us.** In response to these many prayers! Compare *James 5:16-18* and notes.

12. **This is what we are proud of.** Paul is not like the false teacher at Corinth. Rather than being proud of his Jewish heritage and the Law of Moses, Paul is proud that his life and his relationship with the Corinthians have been ruled by God-given frankness and sincerity. **Frankness.** Paul has used no tricks

power of God's grace, and not by human wisdom. ¹³We write to you only what you can read and understand. And I hope that you will come to understand completely ¹⁴what you now understand only in part, so that in the Day of the Lord Jesus you can be as proud of us as we shall be of you.

¹⁵I was so sure of all this that I made plans at first to visit you in order that you might be blessed twice. ¹⁶For I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and again on my way back, to get help from you for my trip to Judea. ¹⁷In planning this did I appear fickle? When I make my plans, do I make them from selfish motives, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? ¹⁸As God is true, my promise to you was not a "Yes" and a "No." ¹⁹For Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was preached among you by Silas, Timothy, and myself, is not one who is "Yes" and "No." On the contrary, he

are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and

on them, but has given them the plain truth. The false teacher distorted the truth to please certain people. **Sincerity.** "My motivation is Christian love and a true wish to bring everyone to Christ!" Compare *verse 15-19*.

13. Only what you can read and understand. The false teacher must have said that Paul spoke one thing and did another (*verse 17*). Paul does not want any misunderstanding, so he explains in the next few verses.

14. Only in part. "Some of you already understand that I write you the truth in frankness and sincerity. I hope that all of you will come to understand that. In the Day when Christ judges the world, I want you to be as proud of me, as I will be of you." Compare *2 Cor. 5:11-12*.

15. I was so sure. "I thought you believed me to be a faithful apostle of Christ." **That I made plans at first.** Because Paul changed his plans to come to Corinth again, the false teacher accused him of being unreliable. **Blessed twice.** By stopping at Corinth twice, as *verse 16* explains.

16. For I planned. He had planned to go through Corinth on the way to Macedonia and to stop a second time on his return trip. **To get help.** He had planned to ask them to finance his trip to Judea. Contrast this with *1 Cor. 9:14-15*.

17. Fickle? Two accusations had been made against Paul: (1) that he is fickle; (2) that he makes plans from selfish motives. **Ready to say.** They had accused him of changing his mind at the least whim, of breaking his promises, and said you could not depend upon a thing he said!

18. As God is true. "My change of plans was not being fickle or from selfish motives. It was God's will!"

19. For Jesus Christ. Paul points to Jesus Christ and the Good News of God's finished work in Christ which he and the others preached, as proof that he is stable and dependable! "Think about the fact that I preached the Good News at Corinth with God-given frankness and sincerity!" **He is God's**

is God's "Yes"; ²⁰for it is he who is the "Yes" to all of God's promises. This is the reason that through Jesus Christ our "Amen" is said, to the glory of God. ²¹It is God himself who makes us sure, with you, of our life in Christ; it is God himself who has set us apart, ²²who placed his mark of ownership upon us, and who gave the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the guarantee of all that he has for us.

²³I call God as my witness—he knows my heart! It was in order to spare you that I decided not to go to Corinth. ²⁴We are not trying to dictate to you what you must believe; because you stand firm in the faith. Instead, we are working with you for your own happiness.

2 So I made up my mind about this: I would not come to you again to make you sad. ²For

Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

I call God as my witness ²³ that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord it ²⁴ over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand **2** firm. So I made up my ¹ mind that I would not make another painful visit

"Yes." Christ is the *source of truth* and the *GUARANTEE* that God keeps his promises! There is also the thought here that all true servants of God preach the same message of Good News about God's act in Christ. The Corinthians knew this to be true of what Paul, Silas, and Timothy had preached.

20. For it is he. *Acts 13:32-33* proves that what God had promised to Abraham, Israel and David, was made to come true when Jesus was raised from death!!! **This is the reason.** "It is because Christ is the 'Yes' to all God's promises, that our 'Amen' is morally proper!" Compare *1 Cor. 14:16; Rom. 15:9*.

21. It is God himself. As a *montheistic-trinitarian* (see note on *Rom. 16:27*), Paul shows that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in the work of salvation! **Makes us sure.** "God has made His guarantee of our new life in Christ!" **Set us apart.** *Anoint* = set apart for a particular mission. In the Old Testament, kings and priests were anointed to appoint them to their mission. The Christian is set apart (anointed) when he or she receives the Holy Spirit at baptism (*Acts 2:38*).

22. Mark of ownership. Abraham was circumcised as a mark of God's ownership. For the Christian, the Holy Spirit is God's mark of ownership. See *Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30*; compare *Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 14:1*; and note on *Heb. 10:29*. **As the guarantee.** The Holy Spirit is a pledge or down-payment which promises that full payment will be made. See *2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:11*.

23. I call God. We see how important it was to Paul to re-establish the confidence the Corinthians once had in him. He calls God as his witness! **It was.** Here is the reason why he changed his travel plans. After the *painful* meeting (*2 Cor. 2:1*), he decided it was best to spare them a second such incident. Remember: as an apostle, Paul had supernatural wisdom.

24. We are not. Because the word "spare" in *verse 23* might sound like he was trying to domineer them, he explains that this is not his intent. Even an apostle is not a church-Boss!!! Compare *1 Pet. 5:3*. Paul is a helper who works *with* them.

1. So I. Acts does not mention this *painful visit*, but see *2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1-2*. Paul implies that he made up his mind not to come, only after some very serious consideration of the matter. Instead of making another painful visit, he sent Titus with a strongly worded letter (which we do not have).

if I were to make you sad, who would be left to cheer me up? Only the very persons I had saddened. ³That is why I wrote that letter to you—I did not want to come to you and be made sad by the very people who should make me glad. For I am convinced that when I am happy, then all of you are happy too. ⁴I wrote you with a greatly troubled and distressed heart, and with many tears, not to make you sad, but to make you realize how much I love you all.

Forgiveness for the Offender

⁵Now, if anyone has made somebody sad, he has not done it to me but to you; or to some of you, at least, since I do not want to be too hard on him. ⁶It is enough for this person that he has been punished in this way by most of you. ⁷Now, however, you should forgive him and encourage him, to keep him from becoming so sad as to give up completely. ⁸Let him know, then, I beg you,

to you. For if I grieve you, ² who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? I wrote as I did so ³ that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. For I wrote ⁴ you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

Forgiveness for the Sinner

If anyone has caused ⁵ grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. ⁶ The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, ⁷ you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, ⁸ therefore, to reaffirm your

2. For if I. Paul was so much a part of the churches which he served, that their sorrow was his sorrow!!! It would give him no pleasure to make them sad, because he himself would share their sadness!

3. That is why. Compare 2 Cor. 13:10. If he came in person, he might have to use harsh methods to deal with the problems. Compare Acts 13:9-11.

4. A greatly troubled and distressed heart. This is how Paul himself felt as he wrote the strongly worded letter. [Johnson thinks this letter is First Corinthians, but there is no evidence that Paul wrote it in grief or that First Corinthians was to "spare" its readers. Scholars now believe that the "lost letter" said much the same thing as chapters 10-13 of Second Corinthians.]

5. Now. This is probably not the incestuous man, since this anyone seems to have attacked Paul's work as an apostle, in an insulting way! In doing this, the anyone has insulted the entire messianic community (church) at Corinth which is built on Paul's work as an apostle! But Paul does not want to be too harsh to the offender. Compare note on 2 Cor. 7:11.

6. It is enough. The Corinthian church followed Paul's instruction in the letter, and the majority punished the offender (see 2 Cor. 7:8-11). When punishment has brought the desired change, it is enough!

7. Now, however. Christians must not hold grudges! When the offender repents, the Christian response is to forgive him and encourage him! Evidently Paul had heard through Titus that the offender was almost at the point of giving up completely in despair.

8. Let him know. Paul does not use his authority to demand it, but he gently begs them to do this thing. Not only are they to officially accept him back into their fellowship, but by their actions they are to let him know that they really do love him!

that you really do love him. ⁹I wrote you that letter for this very reason: I wanted to find out how well you had stood the test, and whether you are always ready to obey my instruction. ¹⁰When you forgive someone for what he has done, I forgive him too. For when I forgive—if, indeed, I need to forgive anything—I do it because of you, in Christ's presence, ¹¹in order to keep Satan from getting the upper hand over us; for we know what his plans are.

love for him. The reason I ⁹wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If ¹⁰you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Ministers of the New Covenant

Now when I went to Troas ¹²to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of ¹³mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye and went on to Macedonia.

But thanks be to God, ¹⁴who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ

Paul's Anxiety in Troas

¹²When I arrived in Troas to preach the Good News about Christ, I found that the Lord had opened the way for the work there. ¹³But I was deeply worried because I could not find our brother Titus. So I said good-bye to the people there, and went on to Macedonia.

Victory through Christ

¹⁴But thanks be to God! For in union with Christ we are always led by God as prisoners in

9. **For this very reason.** Paul says that their treatment of the offender was a test of them! Paul will not DOMINEER (2 Cor. 1:24), but he will demand their obedience to the message of the Good News.

10. **When you forgive.** They had joined with Paul in punishing the offender, now Paul joins with them in forgiving the man. **If, indeed, I need.** "You as the messianic community must do the forgiving. I, Paul, can only confirm it!"

11. **To keep Satan from.** "A harsh, unforgiving spirit, will allow Satan to get an upper hand over us! Satan, making us think it is a matter of duty and loyalty, tempts us to adopt harsh measures, to drive offenders to despair and make them give up completely, and to turn outsiders away from the Good News!"

12. **When I arrived in Troas.** Paul does not give us details of his recent plans and travel. He must have gone to Troas after the riot at Ephesus. [But the visit in Acts 20:6 must have been at a later time.] Titus was supposed to meet with Paul there, but did not arrive. **The Lord had opened.** Note that Paul did not sit idle as he waited for Titus!!! He had come there to preach the Good News of Christ, and the Lord opened the way for the work there!!!

13. **Deeply worried.** Perhaps Paul was afraid Corinth had rejected his letter and that some special problem kept Titus there. It certainly was the Lord's will that Paul move on, and so he said good-bye to the friends there and went on to Macedonia.

14. **But thanks be to God!** Paul is jubilant when Titus brings him the good report from Corinth! [Paul returns to the theme of his meeting with Titus in 2 Cor. 7:5.] **We are always led by God.** Army commanders led their captives in a victory parade after a successful battle. Paul uses this symbolism to

Christ's victory procession. God uses us to make the knowledge about Christ spread everywhere like a sweet smell. ¹⁵For we are like a sweet-smelling incense offered by Christ to God, which spreads among those who are being saved and those who are being lost. ¹⁶For those who are being lost, it is a deadly stench that kills; for those who are being saved, it is a fragrance that brings life. Who, then, is capable for such a task? ¹⁷We are not like so many others, who handle God's message as if it were cheap merchandise; but because God has sent us, we speak with sincerity in his presence, as servants of Christ.

and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For ¹⁵ we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we ¹⁶ are the stench of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so ¹⁷ many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or

Servants of the New Covenant

3 Does this sound as if we were again boasting about ourselves? Could it be that, like some

describe the success of the Good News in capturing men and women for Christ! **God uses us.** Paul speaks of himself as God's prisoner (*Philemon vs. 1, 9*), and shows that God and Christ control his life. This is another answer to those who say he is fickle, but he is also thinking how God uses his own misery and problems to bring honor to Himself and to spread the influence of the Good News!!!

15. A sweet-smelling incense. "We are by our preaching a sweet-smelling incense which Christ offers to God!" This is still the symbolism of the victory parade. The incense announced both death to the prisoners and life to the victors! In the same way, the Good News which Paul preached had differing results on the ones who heard it. **Being saved . . . being lost.** Paul uses present participles to show continuing action. Men in this world are either **FOLLOWING** the way of life or the way of death. But their eternal destiny is not *finalized* until death calls them away (but see *Rev. 22:11* and note). *Free will* holds both the possibility of falling away and of turning from sin!

16. A deadly stench. The Good News hardens some in their sin, and it is to them the stench of death! **A fragrance.** The Good News brings a response in others that opens to them the blessings of God! **Who, then?** "Since this is in fact a matter of life and death, who is qualified to do such a work?"

17. As if it were cheap merchandise. Paul is qualified to God's work by his union with Jesus Christ (*Gal. 2:20*). In contrast to true servants of God are those who peddle the Good News like it was cheap merchandise. Paul uses a word which means "hucksters who cheat people by peddling worthless merchandise." The false teachers cheat and lie, distort the Good News (*2 Cor. 4:2*), and victimize people (*2 Cor. 11:13*). **But because God.** The ministry of Paul and every true servant of God, comes from God! No false teacher can truly say this. The **PRESENCE** of the Holy Spirit (which shows itself by faith, hope, and love) is infallible evidence that a person is in fact a true servant of God. For this reason we have the *written Word* to measure the reality of every person's *faith, hope, and love!!!*

1. Does this sound? It could be that Paul's strongly worded letter made some say he was boasting about himself. Something important is involved here, because Paul accuses his opponents of boasting (*2 Cor. 10:12*), but denies boasting about himself (*2 Cor. 5:12*). *MacKnight* says: "The things mentioned in the beginning of this chapter show, that the false teacher had established himself at Corinth, neither by working miracles, nor by communicating to the Corinthians spiritual gifts, but by producing letters of recommendation from some brethren in Judea, and by boasting about his own talents."

other people, we need letters of recommendation to you or from you? ²You yourselves are the letter we have, written on our hearts, for everyone to know and read. ³It is clear that Christ himself wrote this letter and sent it by us. It is written not with ink on stone tablets, but on human hearts, with the Spirit of the living God.

⁴We say this because we have confidence in God through Christ. ⁵There is nothing in us that allows us to claim that we are capable of doing this work. The capacity we have comes from God; ⁶it is he who made us capable of serving the new covenant, which consists not of a written law, but of the Spirit. The written law brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷The Law was carved in letters on stone tablets, and God's glory appeared when it was given. Even though the brightness on Moses' face faded away, it was so strong that the people of Israel

from you? You yourselves ² are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that ³ you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence as this is ⁴ ours through Christ before God. Not that we are com- ⁵ petent of ourselves to judge anything we do, but our competence comes from God. He has enabled us to ⁶ be ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Glory of the New Covenant

Now if the ministry that ⁷ brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the

2. **You yourselves.** The existence of the messianic community at Corinth is the only credential which Paul needs! **Written on our hearts.** *MacKnight* says it is best to understand this as the letter itself written on the heart of Paul, and a copy of that same letter written on the hearts of the Corinthians. **To know and read.** *MacKnight* thinks the letter written on Paul's heart was the spiritual gifts which he had as an apostle (compare *1 Thess. 1:5* and note). But we can also understand this to mean that the whole world can know and read Paul's work through the church at Corinth!

3. **That Christ himself.** "Christ himself wrote the letter and I delivered it by converting you to Christ and giving you the gifts from the Spirit!" **It is written.** Paul purposely associates the letters of recommendation that some had received from Judea, with the stone tablets of the Law. Christ does not write with ink on stone tablets, but with the Spirit on human hearts!!! Paul is saying that the Corinthian Christians are living evidence of Jeremiah's prophecy coming true! Compare *Heb. 8:10* and notes.

4. **We say this.** "This kind of a boast, that you are a copy of our letter of recommendation, we have in the presence of God through the assistance of Christ!"

5. **There is nothing in us.** The false teachers boasted about their own talents. Paul does no such thing! **Comes from God.** "It is God who tells us how to carry out our mission as apostles, and it is God who gives us the capacity to do it!!!"

6. **Not of a written law.** Jeremiah's prophecy told about a *new covenant* (*Heb. 8:10*). It would be a time when God would make *us capable of serving*, as Paul says here. Paul sees this fulfilled in the Holy Spirit as a gift (the indwelling). So he contrasts the written law (the old covenant) with the *new covenant* of the Spirit. Compare *Rom. 2:27-29; ch 7 & 8*. See also note on the three uses of law, *Rom. 3:31*. **Death . . . life.** The written law brings death because it is weak through our human nature. The Spirit gives life, something that law cannot do (*Gal. 3:21*). Christians have this life *now* (*John 6:63; 7:37-39*), because they receive the Spirit at baptism (*Col. 2:12-13; Acts 5:32*).

7. **The Law.** The false teachers were very proud of The Law! Paul shows us that The Law was a thing of glory! When Moses came down from the mountain with the stone tablets of The Law, his face shone with a brilliant, blinding light! But that brightness faded away, and Paul uses this to introduce the

could not keep their eyes fixed on him. If the Law, whose service was to bring death, came with such glory, ⁸how much greater is the glory that belongs to the service of the Spirit! ⁹The service by which men are condemned was glorious; how much more glorious is the service by which men are declared innocent! ¹⁰We may say that, because of the far brighter glory now, the glory that was so bright in the past is gone. ¹¹For if there was glory in that which lasted for a while, how much more glory is there in that which lasts forever!

¹²Because we have this hope, we are very bold. ¹³We are not like Moses, who had to put a veil over his face, so that the people of Israel would not see the brightness fade and disappear. ¹⁴Their minds, indeed, were closed; and to this very day their minds are covered with the same veil, as they read the books of the old covenant. The veil is removed only when a man is joined to

Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who veiled his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull; for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in

thought, that if The Law, whose service was to bring death, came with such glory, how much greater the glory of the Spirit!!!

8. **How much greater!** In contrast to The Law, the service of the Spirit (1) gives life, not death; (2) is eternal, not fading away; (3) is written on hearts, not stone. Notice that in comparing the service of the two covenants, Paul assumes that he is as great as Moses (*1 Cor. 4:6*), and yet the service of Paul is in fact greater than the service of Moses! See *verse 14*.

9. **Are condemned.** Paul repeats what he has just said, but contrasts *are condemned* (by the old covenant) with *declared innocent* (by the new covenant). ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ = *declared innocent* is a legal term, which implies that God declares a man innocent even though he is actually guilty. See *Rom. 4:3* and note.

10. **Because of.** Paul sees value in God's old covenant (*Rom. 15:4*), yet the far brighter glory of the service of the Spirit supersedes and displaces all else!!!

11. **For.** "If there was glory in the service of Judaism, how much more glory is there in the service of the Spirit, which lasts forever!!!" Compare *Heb. 8:13*. Paul probably says this for the benefit of the *circumcision party* who thought The Law was eternal!

12. **Because.** The facts in *verses 7-11* are the basis of confident hope, which gives the servants of Christ *boldness* in speaking!!! This is Paul's answer to his opponents.

13. **Not like Moses.** Paul again compares himself to Moses, and shows the veil which Moses put over his face symbolized both a lack of boldness and that God's truth was *veiled* in The Law. But as the glory of Moses' face faded away, those who continue to look to Moses or The Law, will find no glory there!

14. **Were closed.** Stephen used the same reasoning (*Acts 7:51-53*). The reason for the Jewish leaders rejecting Christ was that they did not understand the intent and purpose of The Law from the earliest times!!! **Removed only.** Since God's promises made in The Law were fulfilled in Jesus Christ (*Acts 13:32-33*), only when these Jews turned to Christ could they see the true message of The Law!

Christ. ¹⁵Even today, whenever they read the Law of Moses, the veil still covers their minds. ¹⁶But it is removed, as the scripture says, "Moses' veil was removed when he turned to the Lord." ¹⁷Now, "the Lord" in this passage is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. ¹⁸All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord who is the Spirit, transforms us into his very likeness, in an ever greater degree of glory.

Spiritual Treasure in Clay Pots

4 God, in his mercy, has given us this service, and so we do not become discouraged. ²We put aside all secret and shameful deeds; we do not act with deceit, nor do we falsify the word of God. In the full light of truth, we live in God's sight and try to commend ourselves to everyone's

Christ is it taken away. Even 15
to this day when Moses is
read, a veil covers their
hearts. But whenever any- 16
one turns to the Lord, "The
veil is taken away." Now the 17
Lord is the Spirit, and where
the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is freedom. And we, 18
who with unveiled faces all
reflect the Lord's glory, are
being transformed into his
likeness with ever-increasing
glory, which comes from the
Lord, who is the Spirit.

Treasures in Jars of Clay

4 Therefore, since through
God's mercy we have
this ministry, we do not
lose heart. Rather, we have 2
renounced secret and
shameful ways; we do not
use deception, nor do we
distort the word of God. On
the contrary, by setting forth
the truth plainly we com-
mend ourselves to every
man's conscience in the

15. Even today. Every Sabbath, the Law of Moses (the Old Testament) was read publicly in the synagogue. Paul says the veil still covers their minds! The veil he speaks of, is the veil of prejudice and evil desires which they have constructed for themselves!

16. But it is removed. Paul paraphrases *Exod. 34:34* and uses it to show that when they go into the presence of God IN FACT, this veil will be removed! Compare *Rom. 11:23-26* and notes. *When the Jews believe the gospel, then the veil will be removed!*

17. Is the Spirit. What does it mean for the Christian to have this veil removed??? This verse gives the answer!!! Paul is a *monotheistic-trinitarian* (see note on *Rom. 16:27*) and he does not sharply contrast the functions of the Father, Son, and Spirit. **There is freedom.** *The Law* is slavery, *The Spirit* is freedom! The Christian is not a slave, but a son (includes daughter)!!! Compare *Rom. 8:14-17* and notes.

18. All of us, then. *MacKnight* thinks Paul means the apostles only, but it seems better to understand this to mean every Christian, as *Johnson* does. *With uncovered faces.* As Moses removed his veil when he came before the Lord, we Christians reflect the Lord's glory without any need to cover our faces! [There may be a reference here to the fact that Jewish men prayed with their heads covered.] **Transforms us.** Christians are *new* in Christ (*2 Cor. 5:17*), and are transformed by their direct access to God. The Spirit is involved in this (*2 Cor. 4:16*); and none of this transformation was available through the old covenant.

1. Has given us this service. Since *2 Cor. 2:17*, Paul has been talking about his capacity for the service of the Spirit. Paul had a special service as an apostle, but every Christian is a servant of God in a general sense. Paul's opponents said he was too *weak* to fulfill his service (see *2 Cor. 10:10*). But God, in his mercy, has given to Paul this *service!* Compare *1 Cor. 7:25*. Because Paul is involved in such a glorious service, nothing can seriously discourage him (*verse 16*)!

2. We put aside. The false teachers used secret and shameful deeds, deceit, and falsified the word of God. Paul never used such methods, even when he was trying to destroy the church. **In the full light of truth.** *Truth* and *love* are two weapons which false teachers cannot use!!!

good conscience. ³For if the gospel we preach is hidden, it is hidden only to those who are being lost. ⁴They do not believe because their minds have been kept in the dark by the evil god of this world. He keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. ⁵For it is not ourselves that we preach; we preach Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶The God who said, "Out of darkness the light shall shine!" is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the light of the knowledge of God's glory, shining in the face of Christ.

⁷Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us. ⁸We are often troubled, but not crushed; sometimes in doubt, but never in despair; ⁹there are many enemies, but we are never without a friend; and though

sight of God. And even if ³
our gospel is veiled, it is
veiled to those who are per-
ishing. The god of this age ⁴
has blinded the minds of un-
believers, so that they can-
not see the light of the gos-
pel of the glory of Christ,
who is the image of God.
For we do not preach our-
selves, but Jesus Christ as ⁵
Lord, and ourselves as your
servants for Jesus' sake. For
God who said, "Let light
shine out of darkness," ⁶
made his light shine in our
hearts to give us the light of
the knowledge of the glory of
God in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure ⁷
in jars of clay to show that
this all-surpassing power is
from God and not from us.
We are hard pressed on ev-
ery side, but not crushed; ⁸
perplexed, but not in des-
pair; persecuted, but not a-
bandoned; struck down, but ⁹

3. **For if.** False teachers speak to confuse the hearer (*1 Tim. 6:3-5*). If the Good News is hidden, it is only because the hearer has made himself a veil from prejudice and evil desires!

4. **Because their minds.** The world is a battleground where truth and error are locked in struggle for men's minds! But God is always in control, and Christ has already won the victory! But those who construct veils for themselves from prejudice and evil desires, allow themselves to be blinded by the evil god of this world, who then uses them to try to prevent others from seeing the light shining on them! **The exact likeness of God.** The false teachers probably called themselves *servants of light* and boasted about their *wisdom*, which Jewish literature described as *God's likeness and reflection*. Paul declares that the *light shining* in the world comes from the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God!!!

5. **For it is not ourselves.** "Even though we apostles are the likeness of Christ, we do not preach ourselves. We preach Jesus Christ as your Lord, and ourselves as your servants!" **For Jesus' sake.** Compare *1 Cor. 9:19-23*.

6. **The God who said.** Paul paraphrases *Gen. 1:3* to show that the same God who was the only source of light in the beginning, is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts! The light is the message which God spoke through his Son (*Heb. 1:2*).

7. **Like common clay pots.** Paul speaks in irony! Who would store treasure in common clay pots!!! Yet God has done just this, to show that the supreme power is His!!! The false teachers boasted about how great they were, and how weak Paul was. But Paul shows that God's power *comes through* in human weakness!!!

8. **We are often troubled.** Paul is an *optimistic-pessimist*. For each word which shows weakness, there is one which shows strength. **Trouble?** Yes, but not crushed and put out of the battle! **In doubt?** Yes, but we do not despair, God will make a way out!

9. **Many enemies?** Yes, but God is still our friend! **Badly hurt?** Yes, but not killed!

badly hurt at times, we are not destroyed. ¹⁰At all times we carry in our mortal bodies the death of Jesus, so that his life also may be seen in our bodies. ¹¹Throughout our lives we are always in danger of death for Jesus' sake, in order that his life may be seen in this mortal body of ours. ¹²This means that death is at work in us; but life is at work in you.

¹³The scripture says, "I spoke because I believed." In the same spirit of faith, we also speak because we believe. ¹⁴We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus to life, will also raise us up with Jesus and bring us, together with you, into his presence. ¹⁵All this is for your sake; and as God's grace reaches more and more people, they will offer more prayers of thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Living by Faith

¹⁶For this reason we never become discouraged. Even though our physical being is gradually

not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed

10. **The death of Jesus.** Paul sees his suffering (and his weakness???) as sharing in the death of Jesus! Compare *Gal. 6:17; 2 Cor. 13:4*. So that his life. Compare *Rom. 8:10-11; Gal. 2:20*. Paul was a messenger of life, in a world of death!

11. **Always in danger.** The servants of the Good News were always in danger from the enemies of Christ! At great risk they transmitted the *life of Christ* to mankind! Compare *1 Cor. 4:9-13*. No one could accuse the apostles of working for selfish motives!!!

12. **This means.** The death that attacks the servants of Christ in many ways, was the means of spreading the message of life! Paul's work brought suffering to him, but life to those who heard the Good News!

13. **The scripture says.** *Psalm 116:10* Septuagint. *MacKnight* reconstructs the thinking of the Psalmist: "Though I have been in great affliction, yet faith in God's promises hath supported me, so that I can say, I believed, therefore I have spoken in praise of his goodness." Paul points to this example of faith, and says this is what motivates and sustains he and the other servants of Christ!

14. **We know.** Notice how sure Paul is that God will do as He promised! **Will also raise us up.** Christ is the *guarantee* of this (*1 Cor. 15:20-23*)! **Together with you.** The total messianic community. See note on *Matt. 16:18*.

15. **All this.** The suffering and work of the Christian servants. When suffering and work points to a definite goal and purpose, man's ability to endure is almost limitless!!! **Prayers of thanksgiving.** Paul sees Christian prayer as praise to God!!! Compare *Rev. 8:3-4*.

16. **For this reason.** *Verse 15.* **Our physical being.** Paul's service to Christ cost him something in physical strength (*2 Cor. 1:8; 11:23-28*). **Yet our spiritual being.** This is the part of every person that is *morally responsible*. See *Rom. 7:20, 23; Eph. 3:16*. Probably Paul is not thinking about progressive spiritual growth, but the fact that even though his physical strength is being drained away, his spiritual strength is renewed day after day!

decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day. ¹⁷And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and external glory, much greater than the trouble.

¹⁸For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time; but what cannot be

5 seen lasts forever. For we know that when this tent we live in—our body here on earth—is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself made, which will last forever. ²And now we sigh, so great is our desire to have our home which is in heaven put on over us; ³by being clothed with it we shall not be found without a body. ⁴While we live in this earthly tent we groan with a feeling of oppression; it is not that we want to get rid of our earthly body, but that we want to have the heavenly one put on over us, so that what is

day by day. For our light **17**
and momentary troubles are
achieving for us an eternal
glory that far outweighs
them all. So we fix our eyes **18**
not on what is seen, but on
what is unseen. For what is
seen is temporary, but what
is unseen is eternal.

Our Heavenly Dwelling

5 Now we know that if the
earthly tent we live in is
destroyed, we have a building
from God, an eternal
house in heaven, not built
by human hands. **2**
Meanwhile we groan, longing to
be clothed with our heavenly
dwelling, since when we are
clothed, we will not be found **3**
naked. For while we are in **4**
this tent, we groan and are
burdened, because we do
not wish to be unclothed but
to be clothed with our heavenly
dwelling, so that what
is mortal may be swallowed

17. And this. "Besides, we can endure this small and temporary trouble! What does it amount to, when you compare it with the tremendous and eternal glory which this suffering will bring us!" *Salvation is seized, not achieved!*

18. For we fix our attention. "We pay no attention to the glory that this world has to offer (*1 John 2:15-17*). The power, honor, and glory of this world are only temporary!!! But the unseen things of God, which we see through faith, are eternal and last forever!!!"

1. For we know. This links what he is about to say, with *2 Cor. 4:16-18*. **This tent we live in.** A tent is a temporary place to live. This is how Paul thinks of this physical body. Compare *Mark 14:58*, where Jesus contrasts his physical body with his resurrection body. See also notes on *1 Cor. 6:19-20*. **Is torn down** by death. **God will have.** Paul looked forward to a resurrection body which God would give him. Greek thought viewed the body as evil, the prisonhouse of the soul. The Bible, however, does not view the body as evil, and points forward to the time when all the dead are raised to live in *another* body which will be eternal! Compare *1 Cor. 15:35-44*.

2. And now we sigh. The Christian has already received the *first of God's gifts* (*Rom. 8:23*) which is the *guarantee* (verse 5). But the fact that there is more to come makes Paul eager to make the change! Compare *1 Cor. 15:47*.

3. Without a body. Greek thought saw the *immortal soul* living forever without any body at all! Paul and the others proclaimed a raising from death which included a new body. Compare *2 Pet. 3:13* and notes.

4. While. "The feeling of oppression does not come from a desire to escape from this world and our suffering, but it comes from our eager desire to exchange this mortal life for true life!!!" **Put on over us.** Paul purposely says it this way to show that there is a *continuity* between our physical body and our heavenly body (*1 Cor. 15:35-54*).

mortal will be swallowed up by life. ⁵God is the one who has prepared us for this change, and he gave us his Spirit as the guarantee of all that he has for us.

⁶So we are always full of courage. We know that as long as we are at home in this body we are away from the Lord's home. ⁷For our life is a matter of faith, not of sight. ⁸We are full of courage, and would much prefer to leave our home in this body and be at home with the Lord. ⁹More than anything else, however, we want to please him, whether in our home here or there. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. Each one will receive what he deserves, according to what he has done, good or bad, in his bodily life.

Friendship with God through Christ

¹¹We know what it means to fear the Lord, and so we try to persuade men. God knows us completely, and I hope that in your hearts you

up by life. Now it is God who ⁵ made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Therefore we are always ⁶ confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not ⁷ by sight. We are confident, I ⁸ say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we ⁹ make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear be- ¹⁰ fore the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

Since, then, we know ¹¹ what it is to fear the Lord, we try to convince men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to

5. **God is the one.** Again Paul points to God as the source of *heavenly house*. Compare *Rom. 5:18* and note. **As the guarantee.** The Spirit is our guarantee, because it is through the Spirit that we will be raised from death (*Rom. 8:11*).

6. **So we.** Now Paul uses the language of a *refugee*. "Because we expect to live eternally, we are always full of courage as we live out our life here!" **We know that.** "As long as we live in this present body, we are away from the Lord's home, and we are still refugees and strangers as we wait!"

7. **Not sight.** "In our life here on earth, we do not see the heavenly things we long for! So our lives are based on faith, not sight."

8. **And would much prefer.** "We have no fear of death, and would like to receive our heavenly home (resurrection body) *now*, and be at home with the Lord!"

9. **We want to please him.** This is Paul's answer to the problem. Whatever the Lord has for him, is what he wants!!! See how Paul explains this in *Phil. 1:18-26*.

10. **Before Christ.** Paul had no idea of anyone earning their salvation (see *Eph. 2:8*)!!! Yet he taught that everyone was obligated to respond to this *grace of God* through good actions in their bodily life.

11. **To fear the Lord.** Not terror, but reverence and respect. Terror is never a valid motive to obey the Lord (*1 John 4:18*). [*MacKnight* takes this to mean: "Knowing, therefore, the terribleness of the Lord's displeasure, we persuade men to repent and believe the gospel . . ."] The Good News shows God's love, and so Paul tries to persuade men to see the urgency and truth so that they will escape the coming Judgment through Christ.

know me as well. ¹²We are not trying again to recommend ourselves to you; rather, we are trying to give you a good reason to be proud of us, so that you will be able to answer those who boast about a man's appearance, and not about his character. ¹³Are we really insane? It is for God's sake. Or are we sane? It is for your sake. ¹⁴We are ruled by Christ's love for us, now that we recognize that one man died for all men, which means that all men take part in his death. ¹⁵He died for all men so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for him who died and was raised to life for their sake.

¹⁶No longer, then, do we judge anyone by human standards. Even if at one time we judged Christ according to human standards, we no longer do so. ¹⁷When anyone is joined to Christ he is a new being; the old is gone, the new has

your conscience. We are not ¹² trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we ¹³ are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, ¹⁴ because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he ¹⁵ died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we re- ¹⁶ gard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in ¹⁷ Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new

12. **We are not.** It may be that in the strong letter, Paul seemed to boast about his work (see *2 Cor. 11:16 to 12:13*). But Paul is very sensitive to the accusation that he has done this! He wants to give them a true picture of his mission and work, so that they can answer the opponents.

13. **Are we really insane?** Some said this about Jesus (*Mark 3:21* and note). *MacKnight* thinks the false teachers accused Paul of being insane because of the risks and dangers he placed himself in for the sake of the Good News. Compare *Acts 26:24* and note. **Or are we sane?** At times Paul reasoned with them very quietly. [*Johnson* thinks the false teachers boasted about their visions from God, but said the visions Paul claimed, were due to insanity.]

14. **By Christ's love.** "In our service to Christ, we are not insane. We are ruled in all this by Christ's love for us. We take great risks and place ourselves in danger, because we recognize that one man died for all men." **Which means.** Christ's death was for all! *Verse 15* explains this. All men take part in his death, but this does not mean that all will be saved. Compare *Rom. 5:18* and note.

15. **So that.** "If you take Christ-on-the-cross seriously, you will see that Jesus died for all, Jew and Gentile. If you imitate Christ, you will no longer live for yourself, but you will live for Christ. For this reason, you become a Christian by being baptized into Christ's death (*Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:12-13*)."

16. **No longer, then.** Christians do not *create distinctions* (*James 2:1-4*). **Even if.** Before Paul became a Christian, he did look at Jesus from a human point of view. He could see no value in the *cross*. Compare *1 Cor. 18-23*. The cross makes peace between Jew and Gentile (*Eph. 2:14*).

17. **When.** At the time anyone is joined to Christ. See *Gal. 3:27*. **He is.** Not: he will be; but he is! The *new being* is opposed to the human point of view. It supersedes racial distinctions (*Gal. 6:15*), and it is a life of the Spirit (*Rom. 8:10-11*). **The old.** Sin, guilt, and punishment are all put behind! **The new.** Life, forgiveness, the Spirit, a new point of view (*1 Cor. 2:14*), etc.

come. ¹⁸All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends, and gave us the task of making others his friends also. ¹⁹Our message is that God was making friends of all men through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins against them, and he has given us the message of how he makes them his friends.

²⁰Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were appealing to you through us: on Christ's behalf, we beg you, let God change you from enemies into friends! ²¹Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that we, in union with him, might share the righteousness of God.

6 In our work together with God, then, we beg of you; you have received God's grace,

come! All this is from God, ¹⁸ who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ²⁰ ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him ²¹ who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

18. All this is done by God. Paul gives the credit to God! For Paul, the *cross* demonstrates both Christ's love and God's love!!! **Changed us from enemies.** Note Christ's sacrifice changes us, not God! God's act in Christ to set us free changes us from enemies to friends, when we reach out through faith to seize it! **And gave us the task.** The church, and specifically Paul, has the task of making others the friends of God. This is done by preaching the Good News!

19. Our message. The basis of the Good News is that God himself had acted and was making friends of those who had rebelled against him! **Keep an account.** *MacKnight* says: "That God is by Christ bringing back the world to himself, promising not to punish them for their trespasses, but to pardon them upon their faith and repentance." See *Col. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:4-7; Heb. 9:14-15*. It is Christ's doing and dying which makes it possible (*Rom. 8:3-4*). **Given us the message.** The Good News of God's finished work in Christ is the message that changes us into friends of God. See *Rom. 1:16-17* and notes.

20. As though God himself. *Proxy* probably would be a better word than *ambassador*. Paul (and every Christian) acts as a *proxy* for God by trying to persuade others to let God change them from enemies into friends!!!

21. Christ was without sin. The sinlessness of Jesus is affirmed throughout the New Testament. Christ therefore satisfied the righteous demands of the Law. **God made him share our sin.** *MacKnight* understands this to mean that God made Christ our sin-offering. The rite of the *scapegoat* pictured what Jesus would do. The sins of the people were confessed on the goat and transferred to it. At the cross, Jesus shared our sin, which was transferred to him. *Johnson* says: "Since we die with Christ, in him we pay the penalty, and are justified [put right with God]." *God puts men right through their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22)*.

1. Together with God. Paul sees all the servants of Christ working together with God in the mission of persuading people to let God change them from enemies into friends! **Wasted.** Grace is free, and salvation cannot be earned by our own efforts. Yet God's act in Christ will be wasted by the one who does not receive it with gratitude! We reach out through faith to seize the sacrifice of Christ, but we must hold firmly to it! We do this through good actions and holy lives, not to add to what Christ has done, but to *hold on* to be able to receive the promises! There is always a danger that we will *let go* and fall away! Compare *2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 3:4*. Do not think God's grace is cheap! Christ-on-the-cross is the price that was paid to *buy men for God!!!*

and you must not let it be wasted. ²Hear what God says:

"I heard you in the hour to show you favor,

I helped you on the day to save you."

Listen! This is the hour to receive God's favor, today is the day to be saved!

³We do not want anyone to find fault with our work, so we try not to put obstacles in anyone's way. ⁴Instead, in everything we do we show that we are God's servants, by enduring troubles, hardships, and difficulties with great patience. ⁵We have been beaten, jailed, and mobbed; we have been overworked and have gone without sleep or food. ⁶By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God's servants; by the Holy Spirit, by our true love, ⁷By our message of truth, and by the power of God. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves.

For he says,

"At the time of my favor I heard you,
and on the day of salvation I helped you."

I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Paul's Hardships

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, in every way we show ourselves to be servants of God: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;

2. **Hear.** *Isa. 49:8* Septuagint. *Johnson* understands this prophecy to point to the saving of the Gentiles. Paul uses it to emphasize the fact that we servants of Christ *work together with God!* In the passage quoted, God was through his servant bringing in divine help. **This is the hour!** "Fellow-workers, this is the hour; today is the day to be saved! God will help us as we work to convert the Gentiles to Christ! It is urgent to persuade all mankind to accept God's salvation *now!*!" [Hour = *KAIROS* = divinely given opportunity.]

3. **To find fault.** Paul lives a holy and pure life, so that no one will find fault with his work. All God's servants must do this! **Obstacles.** This includes many things. Probably Paul is pointing to the false teachers who used unholy methods (*2 Cor. 4:2*).

4. **Instead.** The true servant of God must be like his Lord! The false teachers boasted about worldly things. For Paul, they disqualify themselves by this, and destroy any claim to authority. **Troubles.** *2 Cor. 1:8. Hardships. 1 Cor. 4:11. Difficulties. Acts 17:5-8. With great patience.* Dedication.

5. **We have.** Paul shows a general picture of the things which servants of Christ faced in his day! He describes his own personal experience!!!

6-7. **We have shown ourselves.** "This is how we have shown ourselves to be God's servants: by our purity of life and motives, by our knowledge of the Truth, by our patience as we endure suffering, by our kindness toward all, by the Holy Spirit (compare *1 Thess. 1:5*), by our true love which is un-hypocritical, by the fact that we preach the truth, and by the power of God as we correctly use the gifts from the Spirit." **As our weapon.** Only one who is pure and holy can use righteousness as a weapon! Compare *Eph. 6:10-13*. The TEV correctly gives the meaning of the symbolism as: *to attack and to defend ourselves.* Compare *2 Cor. 10:4-5*.

⁸We are honored and disgraced; we are insulted and praised. We are treated as liars, yet we speak the truth; ⁹as unknown, yet we are known by all; as though we were dead, but, as you see, we live on. Although punished, we are not killed; ¹⁰although saddened, we are always glad; we seem poor, but we make many people rich; we seem to have nothing, yet we really possess everything.

¹¹Dear friends in Corinth! We have spoken frankly to you, we have opened wide our hearts.

¹²We have not closed our hearts to you; it is you who have closed your hearts to us. ¹³I speak now as though you were my children: show us the same feelings that we have for you. Open wide your hearts!

Warning against Pagan Influences

¹⁴Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done. How can right and wrong be partners? How can light and

through glory and dishonor, 8
praise and blame; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as un- 9
known; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always 10
rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything.

We have spoken freely to 11
you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our 12
affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange—I 13
speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.

Do Not Be Yoked with Unbelievers

Do not be yoked together 14
with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light

8. **We are.** Paul shows the paradox of his service to Christ. People respond differently to his work of preaching Christ. [MacKnight sees in this the fact that Paul neither becomes conceited nor discouraged.]

9. **As unknown.** In this verse Paul seems to contrast outward appearance with actual fact. Some said Paul's sufferings proved he was *unknown to God*. But *in fact*, he is known by God (authenticated). Some said he was *dead*, because he constantly *tempted death* by the risks he took in proclaiming the Good News! But *in fact*, he was very much alive! Some saw God's *punishment* in the calamities which came to Paul. Yet, as he says, *we are not killed*, and he takes this as being the *spanking of a father*. [Paul's *painful physical ailment* (2 Cor. 12:7) may be part of what he is thinking about here.]

10. **Although saddened.** See Heb. 12:11. **We seem poor.** The false teachers probably said that Paul's poverty showed God's disfavor! But he follows the example of Christ (2 Cor. 8:9). He makes others rich spiritually!!! **Nothing.** He did not have the rank and honor, nor the luxury which the false teachers seized for themselves. But, in Christ, everything was his!!! See 1 Cor. 3:22.

11. **Dear friends in Corinth!** Paul wants them to know that he has spoken frankly to them in the past, and is doing so now! Paul and the others had opened wide their hearts to the Corinthians, and they were still open!!! If there is an obstacle in Paul's relationship with the Corinthians, he is still open to them and he is still their friend!!!

12. **It is you.** "You do not love me, otherwise you would have stood up for me against the false teachers! If there is any barrier between us, you have built it!"

13. **I speak now.** "You are my spiritual children! I have given myself for you! Will you love me now in return???"

14. **Do not try.** Paul has just told them: "Open wide your hearts!" This phrase has a bad meaning in the Law (Deut. 11:16). Too much tolerance would place them in a dangerous situation! Therefore he gives this warning. Paul's warning is: *Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done.* The rest of this section gives examples. This verse is commonly quoted to forbid

darkness live together? ¹⁵How can Christ and the Devil agree? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶How can God's temple come to terms with pagan idols? For we are the temple of the living God! As God himself has said,

"I will make my home with my people
and live among them;
I will be their God,
and they shall be my people."

¹⁷And so the Lord says,

"You must leave them,
and separate yourselves from them.
Have nothing to do with what is unclean,
and I will accept you.

¹⁸I will be your father,
and you shall be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

have with darkness? What ¹⁵
harmony is there between
Christ and Belial? What
does a believer have in com-
mon with an unbeliever?
What agreement is there be- ¹⁶
tween the temple of God and
idols? For we are the temple
of the living God. As God
has said:

"I will live with them and
walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they will be my
people."

"Therefore come out from ¹⁷
them
and be separate,

says the Lord,
Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."

"I will be a Father to you, ¹⁸
and you will be my sons
and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

marriage with non-Christians. But it would better suit the context to understand the *unbelievers* to be the false teachers and their followers, and Paul's instruction to mean avoiding fellowship with them. See *1 Cor. 5:9-13* and notes. Paul asks five questions to show how absurd it would be to form a bond with those who do not share The Faith. **Right and wrong?** One excludes the other! **Light and darkness?** Darkness is the absence of light. Paul's opponents at Corinth called themselves "servants of light," but their lives showed their darkness!

15. Christ and the Devil. It would be unthinkable to expect Christ and the Devil to work together (but some are saying this now)! [Belial is a name for the Devil, which appears in late Jewish literature, especially the Dead Sea Scrolls. It has much the same meaning as the Enemy of Christ.] **Believer . . . unbeliever.** The Christian has tasted heaven's gift, but the false teachers had renounced it! See *Heb. 6:4-6*.

16. God's temple . . . pagan idols. The Dead Sea Scrolls use *idol* to mean any temptation to sin. Paul identifies the temple of God as we! Compare *1 Cor. 3:16-17; 10:14-22* and notes. **As God himself.** Paul paraphrases *Lev. 26:12; Jer. 32:38; Ezek. 37:27* to show that God now makes his home in the messianic community (church). Compare *Eph. 2:20-22*.

17. And so. Paul paraphrases *Isa. 52:11* to show they must separate themselves from the false teachers who make the messianic community (church) *unclean* by their unholy conduct and their distorted teaching! **And I will accept you.** This phrase comes from *Ezek. 20:34*. God will accept all who follow him!!!

18. I will be. Paul paraphrases *2 Sam. 7:14*. Paul is saying that this promise is fulfilled in the church (messianic community)! [The Dead Sea Scrolls quote this often, showing that the Qumran community believed the promise came true in them.] **Sons and daughters.** *Sons* commonly includes *daughters* as well. Paul specifically mentions them here, as does Joel's prophecy (see *Acts 2:17*). Women formed an important part of the church at Corinth.

7 All these promises are made to us, my dear friends. So then, let us purify ourselves from everything that makes body or soul unclean, and let us be completely holy, by living in the fear of God.

Paul's Joy

2 Make room for us in your hearts. We have done wrong to no one, we have ruined no one, nor tried to take advantage of anyone. **3** I do not say this to condemn you; for, as I have said before, you are so dear to us that we are together always, whether we live or die. **4** I am so sure of you, I take such pride in you! In all our troubles I am still full of courage, I am running over with joy.

5 Even after we arrived in Macedonia we did not have any rest. There were troubles everywhere, quarrels with others, fears in our hearts. **6** But God, who encourages the downhearted,

7 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, and let us strive for perfection out of reverence for God.

Paul's Joy

Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.

For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn — conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of

1. **Are made to us.** "Since God makes us all these promises, we ought to jump into action!" Let us purify. "Since we are God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17), we must make ourselves pure by separating ourselves from everything that makes body or soul unclean!" Body and soul form a *unity*, and the sin that makes one unclean, also makes the other unclean. Some claimed that the soul was untouched by the guilt of sin which the body committed. **Fear** = reverence, respect, and includes obedience.

2. **Make room.** It is not possible for the Corinthians and Paul to be friends as long as they listen to the slander of the false teachers against him! but **THEY** must act to make room in their hearts for Paul and the other true servants of Christ! **Done wrong to no one.** Paul is thinking about the painful letter. *Verse 12* implies that someone at Corinth led a rebellion against Paul. Paul's letter must have touched a *sore spot*. **Ruined no one.** The false teachers may have accused Paul of ruining people by his teaching and his example. Perhaps they felt he had ruined them!!! **To take advantage.** This implies that some had accused him of *draining the church treasury*. See 2 Cor. 12:17.

3. **I do not say this.** "I do not say this to condemn you for allowing yourselves to be misled by the false teachers, or to stir up past problems! As I said before, *we have opened wide our hearts to you!* Our fellowship in Christ is too important to allow anything to destroy it!!!"

4. **So sure of you!** The news from Titus has made him jubilant!!! See *verse 6*.

5. **Even after.** Note that Paul picks up the thought he dropped in 2 Cor. 2:13. When Titus did not meet Paul at Troas, he may have been afraid that Corinth had rejected his letter and that some special problem kept Titus there. Paul also faced opposition from unbelievers, as he always seemed to do.

6. **But God.** Note how Paul always gives God the credit for what happens! How happy it made Paul to hear the good news about improved conditions at Corinth!!!

encouraged us with the coming of Titus. ⁷It was not only his coming, but also his report of how you encouraged him. He told us how much you want to see me, how sorry you are, how ready you are to defend me; and so I am even happier now.

⁸For even if that letter of mine made you sad, I am not sorry I wrote it. I could have been sorry about it when I saw that the letter made you sad for a while. ⁹But now I am happy—not because I made you sad, but because your sadness made you change your ways. That sadness was used by God, and so we caused you no harm. ¹⁰For the sadness that is used by God brings a change of heart that leads to salvation—and there is no regret in that! But worldly sadness causes death. ¹¹See what God did with this sadness of yours: how earnest it has made you, how eager to prove your innocence! Such indignation, such alarm, such feelings, such devotion, such readiness to

Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your affection, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.

Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what affection, what concern, what readiness to see justice

7. **But also his report.** Titus may have had doubts about his mission to Corinth, knowing the problems which Paul had in the *painful visit* (2 Cor. 2:1). He was much encouraged to learn the improved attitude of the Corinthians! **To see me.** They sincerely wanted him to be with them! **How sorry.** They deeply regretted their past actions! Compare *verse 10*. **To defend me.** They still had deep feelings for Paul, and were ready to take his part against the false teachers! **Even happier.** If the arrival of Titus made Paul happy, the good report made him even happier!

8. **If that letter.** The letter of 2 Cor. 2:4. **I am not sorry.** "It was necessary that I write this strongly worded letter to you!" **I could have been sorry.** "Please don't think it made me happy to humiliate you! It made me sad to do it, but it was for your own good."

9. **But because.** "Here is why I am happy: it made you change your ways!" **Was used by God.** *Verse 10* explains this.

10. **For the sadness.** "God is able to use the sadness that regrets actions which were contrary to God, to change our heart and bring us to himself! The Corinthians were sad because their actions against Paul had also been against God. Change our heart = repent = turn *from sin to God*. **Worldly sadness.** This produces only guilt, and does not change our hearts. Contrast Peter and Judas. Peter regretted his action in denying Jesus, and God used this to make him repent. Judas regretted the results of his action, and the Devil used this guilt to drive him to suicide! Some make the mistake of trying to *drive* people to God by using the guilt of worldly sadness!

11. **See what God did!** Paul gives God the credit for the *change of heart* which the Corinthian Christians have made. Paul examines the signs which show that they have repented of past sins. Repent = reform! **Innocence!** They *clear themselves* by doing as Paul had instructed. **Indignation!** Probably toward the chief troublemaker (2 Cor. 2:5). **Alarm!** They were a little afraid of what Paul might do to them. Compare *Acts 13:11*. **Feelings!** They deeply wanted to restore their friendship with Paul. **Devotion!** They were ready now to protect Paul's honor and reputation. **To punish!** Their zeal to punish the one

punish wrongdoing! You have shown yourselves to be without fault in the whole matter.

¹²So, even though I wrote that letter, it was not because of the one who did wrong, or the one who was wronged. Instead, I wrote it to make plain to you, in God's sight, how deep is your devotion to us. ¹³That is why we were encouraged.

Not only were we encouraged; how happy Titus made us with his happiness over the way in which all of you helped to cheer him up. ¹⁴I did boast of you to him, and you have not disappointed me. We have always spoken the truth to you. In the same way, the boast we made to Titus has proved true. ¹⁵And so his love for you grows stronger, as he remembers how all of you were ready to obey, how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. ¹⁶How happy I am that I can depend on you completely!

Christian Giving

8 We want you to know, brothers, what God's grace has done in the churches in Mace-

done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So ¹²even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong or of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. By all ¹³this we are encouraged.

In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because all of you helped put his mind at ease. I had boasted to him ¹⁴about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. And his affection for you is all the ¹⁵greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. I am glad I can ¹⁶have complete confidence in you.

Generosity Encouraged

8 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given

who had insulted Paul was so strong, in fact, that it was necessary to ask them to forgive the man (2 Cor. 2:5-8). **You have shown yourselves.** They did not argue with Paul's demands, but demonstrated their faith by their action.

12. It was not. "I do not want you to misunderstand why I wrote that letter. Although it may have seemed harsh, there was no thought of taking revenge." **Instead.** "I wrote to test you (2 Cor. 2:9) and to make you yourselves AWARE of how you actually felt in this matter! This crisis could only be resolved when you demonstrated your love and devotion for me as a true apostle."

13. That is why. Paul is much encouraged by the evidence of repentance which the Corinthians have demonstrated! **Titus.** Both Titus and Paul are servants of the same Lord! When Titus was made happy, Paul was made happy also!

14. I did boast of you. After the *painful visit* of 2 Cor. 2:1, it may surprise us that Paul would boast of them. But Paul's love for them looks beyond the moment, and sees the good! Some let present problems blind them to the real value of a person. Paul did not do that!!!

15. And so his love. Titus remembers well their spirit of faith!!!

16. How happy! They have passed the test! Compare *verse 4*.

Note: Chapters 8-9 are the most complete discussion of *Christian giving* in the New Testament. *Gal. 2:1-10* implies a working-agreement between the Jewish and Gentile churches. This showed a *new spirit* among the Christians (see *Acts 11:29*). The Christians in Judea may have suffered more money problems than those in other areas (compare note on *Acts 2:44-45*). Probably the persecution

donia. ²They have been severely tested by the troubles they went through; but their joy was so great that they were extremely generous in their giving, even though they were very poor. ³I assure you, they gave as much as they could, and even more than they could. Of their own free will ⁴they begged us and insisted on the privilege of having a part in helping God's people in Judea. ⁵It was more than we could have hoped for! First they gave themselves to the Lord; and then, by God's will, they gave themselves to us as well. ⁶So we urged Titus, who began this work, to continue it and help you complete this special service of love. ⁷You are so rich in all you have: in faith, speech, and knowledge, in your eagerness to help, and in your love for us. And so we want you to be generous also in this service of love.

the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

was more severe. More than one gift of money was taken to the poor Christians in Judea. Almost a year had passed since Paul asked the Corinthians to contribute to this need (*1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:10*), but they have not fulfilled their commitment. Paul is obviously concerned about the Christian poor in Judea, but he also sees this as an opportunity to *unify* more strongly, the Gentile and Jewish elements of the church of Christ!

1. **What God's grace.** Paul points to the good example of the churches in Macedonia, but is careful to give God the glory! Macedonia would include Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, etc. The Corinthians had at first been eager to help, and Paul had boasted about them to the churches in Macedonia (*2 Cor. 9:2*). But these have completed their collection, while the Corinthians lag behind.

2. **Severely tested.** Compare *1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 3:3-9*. **Extremely generous.** "In spite of the fact that they themselves were very poor (which could be used as an excuse to do nothing) they were extremely generous in the money they were sending to help the Christian poor.

3. **And even more.** "They outdid themselves in their giving, and it was of their own free will!"

4. **They begged us.** "This is how eager they were to have a part in this good work, and they looked at it as being a privilege!" As Jesus freely gave himself, so Christians are to share with needy brothers and sisters! [*Saints*: see note on *1 Cor. 6:11*.]

5. **It was more!** They did more than Paul could expect them to do! **First . . . then.** Their Christian giving grew out of the fact that they had already given themselves as *living sacrifices* to Christ! Compare *Röm. 12:1-2*. *If you can reach a man's mind, you can reach his heart, and through it his pocketbook, and when you have reached his pocketbook, you have captured the whole man.* You cannot buy that kind of dedication!!!

6. **So we urged Titus.** Titus has just come from Corinth, but Paul is sending him back there, to complete this *raising of money* to help the poor. Paul is careful just how he words this, calling it a special service of love. Some accused him of *draining the treasury* (*2 Cor. 12:17*).

7. **You are so rich.** "You are a gifted church, rich in spiritual things (*1 Cor. 1:4-5*)." Paul implies they should be the one to set the example for everyone else!

⁸I am not laying down any rules. But by showing how eager others are to help, I am trying to find out how real your own love is. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; rich as he was, he made himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of his poverty.

¹⁰This is my opinion on the matter: it is better for you to finish now what you began last year. You were the first, not only to act, but also to be willing to act. ¹¹On with it, then, and finish the job! Be as eager to finish it as you were to plan it, and do it with what you have. ¹²If you are eager to give, God will accept your gift on the basis of what you have to give, not on what you don't have.

¹³⁻¹⁴I am not trying to relieve others by putting a burden on you; but since you have plenty at this time, it is only fair that you should help those who are in need. Then, when you are in need and they have plenty, they will help you. In this

I am not commanding ⁸ you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you ⁹ know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

And here is my advice ¹⁰ about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish ¹¹ work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness ¹² is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

Our desire is not that ¹³ others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time ¹⁴ your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be

8. **Any rules.** "I do not command you to do this. This must be a work of love, and so voluntary." To find out. "The example of the Macedonian churches has given me the courage to ask you to do this, and what you do will demonstrate the reality of your love!"

9. **For you know.** "Think of the example which Christ set for us!" Compare *Phil. 2:5-11*.

10. **My opinion.** Not a command, but advice. **It is better.** If they don't finish this now, they will have lost something by neglect. **What you began last year.** They had started in a burst of spontaneous enthusiasm! Probably the false teachers had tried to talk them out of it.

11. **On with it, then!** The TEV brings out the emphatic now! "You volunteered and made a beginning of it. Finish it up!!!"

12. **Eager.** "Don't put it off, saying that you will have more in the future from which to give! If you are eager to show your love, God will accept your gift because of what you have to give, not because of what may come to you in the future!"

13-14. **By putting a burden on you.** A false teacher may have said this collection was a Jewish attempt to make themselves rich from the generosity of the Gentile churches! Compare *2 Cor. 12:16-18*. **Treated equally.** Paul says this in a different way in *Rom. 15:27*. This sharing was a characteristic of the early church (*Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35*). Paul sees it as being *treated equally* for Corinth (who has plenty) to share with those who are in need. If at some point in the future, it is Corinth in need, others will share with them!

way both are treated equally. ¹⁵As the scripture says,

“The man who gathered much did not have too much, and the man who gathered little did not have too little.”

Titus and His Companions

¹⁶How we thank God for making Titus as eager as we are to help you! ¹⁷Not only did he welcome our request; he was so eager to help that of his own free will he decided to go to you. ¹⁸With him we are sending the brother who is highly respected in all the churches for his work in preaching the gospel. ¹⁹And besides that, he has been chosen and appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this service of love for the Lord’s glory, and to show that we want to help.

²⁰We are being careful not to stir up any complaints about the way we handle this generous gift. ²¹Our purpose is to do what is right, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

²²So we are sending our brother with them; we have tested him many times, and found him always very eager to help. And now that he has so much confidence in you, he is all the more

equality, as it is written: 15

“He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little.”

Titus Sent to Corinth

I thank God, who put into 16 the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For 17 Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along 18 with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen 19 by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking 21 pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.

In addition, we are send- 22 ing with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confi-

15. *As the scripture says. Exod. 16:18.* Paul uses this to show a Bible basis for Christians to share resources. Christian love will prevent either waste or shortage.

16. *How we thank God!* Paul gives God the credit for Titus’ eagerness. Starting here, Paul gives the credentials of the three who were to complete the collection.

17. *Not only.* Paul did suggest this to Titus (*verse 6*), but Titus volunteered to go!

18-19. *With him.* We do not know why Paul does not give the names of these two. Perhaps they are some of those mentioned in *Acts 20:4*. See *verse 22* for the second unnamed brother. These will go with Paul to Jerusalem with the money.

20. *Not to stir up.* “I suggested to the churches that they send messengers with me to Jerusalem, so that we will not stir up any complaints about the way this generous gift of money is handled.” Paul seems sensitive about this. Compare *2 Cor. 11:8-9*.

21. *Not only.* “I want to do right in the Lord’s sight, and as much as possible, I want to avoid any suspicion of misconduct, which would make me less useful in the service of Christ.”

22. *So we are sending.* This is the second unnamed brother. See *verse 18*. He shares Titus’ enthusiasm!

eager to help. ²³As for Titus, he is my partner who works with me to help you; as for the other brothers who are going with him, they represent the churches and bring glory to Christ. ²⁴Show your love to them, so that all the churches will be sure of it and know that we are right in boasting of you.

Help for Fellow Christians

9 There is really no need for me to write you about the help being sent to God's people in Judea. ²I know that you are willing to help, and I have boasted of you to the people in Macedonia. "The brothers in Greece," I said, "have been ready to help since last year." Your eagerness has stirred up most of them. ³Now I am sending these brothers, so that our boasting of you in this matter may not turn out to be empty words. But, just as I said, you will be ready with your help. ⁴Or else, if the people from Macedonia should come with me and find out that you are not ready, how ashamed we would be—not to speak of your shame—for feeling so sure of

dence in you. As for Titus, ²³ he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore, show these men ²⁴ the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that all the churches can see it.

9 There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I ² know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. But I am ³ sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. For if any Macedonians come with me and ⁴ find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of

23. He is my partner. Paul gives Titus a good recommendation! Paul certifies to Corinth that these brothers are *authentic*. Many false prophets were victimizing the churches.

24. Show your love to them. These men will eventually report back to the churches they represent. The conduct of the Corinthian church will be proof of all the good things Paul has said about them!

1. Really no need. Paul is still anxious about the situation at Corinth. It will be embarrassing if he arrives at Corinth with the brothers from Macedonia, and things are not ready! Even though there is really no need to write about this, he still wants to hurry them up, so they will have finished this collection long before he arrives.

2. I have boasted. Paul gives the exact words he used in his boast about them. Achaia is the Roman name for Greece. Corinth's eagerness had stirred up a *healthy rivalry* among the Macedonian churches.

3. Now I am sending. Paul is sending the three brothers he spoke about in the previous chapter. They will go on ahead to be sure everything is ready. Paul does not want his boast to become only empty words, and so make him ashamed.

4. And find out. "We would all be ashamed, if we came and found you unprepared!"

you! ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go to you ahead of me and get ready in advance the gift you promised to make. Then it will be ready when I arrive, and it will show that you give because you want to, not because you have to.

⁶Remember this: the man who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop. ⁷Each one should give, then, as he has decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly. ⁸And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. ⁹As the scripture says,

“He gives generously to the poor;
his kindness lasts forever.”

¹⁰And God, who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and make it grow, to produce a rich

having been so confident. So ⁵I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

Sowing Generously

Remember this: Whoever ⁶sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man ⁷should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is ⁸able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written:

“He has scattered abroad
his gifts to the poor;
his righteousness endures for ever.”

Now he who supplies seed ¹⁰to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of

5. **So I thought it necessary.** Paul seems to be saying that they have wasted too much time already! Because you want to. It is important that this be a gift out of their free will, not something they are forced into!

6. **Remember this.** Christian giving is not a sacrifice, but a planting. Paul is probably quoting a popular proverb. Results are in proportion to effort.

7. **As he has decided.** Note that Paul sets no standard amount. It is what each one decides after thinking it over, not something done in a burst of emotion, or with a feeling of being pushed into it. **Who gives gladly.** What they do, will be of their own free will, out of love! This is what God wants!

8. **And God.** It is a general rule that you should not withhold your Christian giving just because you think *hard times* may come. Since the Christian is a *proxy* of God's grace, the supply does not run out! The one who gives in proportion to what he has, will be blessed by it! But Paul does not mean to say that Christians can become rich in money, by giving it all away. Compare the Parable of the Shrewd Manager (*Luke 16:1-12* and notes).

9. **As the scripture says.** *Psalm 112:9.* Paul uses this to prove what he said in *verse 8.* The benevolent man gives generously to the poor.

10. **And God.** The farmer depends on God. When the farmer plants seed in his field, God makes it grow, and gives him even more seed to plant the next time. The same thing is true in Christian giving.

harvest from your generosity. ¹¹He will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for your gifts they receive from us. ¹²For this service you perform not only meets the needs of God's people, but also produces an outpouring of grateful thanks to God. ¹³And because of the proof which this service of yours brings, many will give glory to God for your loyalty to the gospel of Christ, which you profess, and for your generosity in sharing with them and all others. ¹⁴And so they will pray for you with great affection for you because of the extraordinary grace God has shown you. ¹⁵Let us thank God for his priceless gift!

Paul Defends His Ministry

10 I, Paul, make a personal appeal to you—I who am said to be meek and mild when I am with you, but bold toward you when I am away from you. I beg of you, by the gentleness

your righteousness. You will ¹¹ be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

This service that you per- ¹² form is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have pro- ¹³ vided yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And ¹⁴ in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given to you. Thanks be to God for his in- ¹⁵ describable gift!

Paul's Defense of His Ministry

10 By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold"

11. **He will always.** The giver is blessed by God so that he can help others! Compare *verse 8*. But God's blessing cannot be used for selfish reasons!

12. **For this service.** "Your generous gift will supply the things that the Christian poor need, and will honor God by means of the outpouring of grateful thanks to Him!"

13. **And because of the proof.** The proof that the Corinthians are loyal to Christ is their willingness to give. It is likely that the *circumcision party* in Judea did not think the Gentile churches were churches of Christ at all! This gift would help to change attitudes and prove their *oneness* in Christ!

14. **And so.** Paul's goal was to unite Jewish and Gentile Christians in one common fellowship. Compare notes on *Acts 21:11-14*. This Gentile gift would produce love in Jewish hearts. *Josephus* says that by the end of the first century, one-third of the Jews had become Christians!!!

15. **For his priceless gift!** This gift is Jesus Christ himself (*John 3:16*), who is the source of all other gifts, and who unites Jew and Gentile in one church!!!

1. **I, Paul.** With this verse, Paul begins a strong warning to the false teacher (or teachers) and the group that followed him. Up to this point, he had been writing to those who accepted him as an apostle. He begins his defence with an emphatic statement of authority: *I, Paul! I who am said to be.* The false teacher (or teachers) made fun of Paul's *strongly worded letter* and said he could talk big when he was not there, but was meek and mild when he faced his opposition. The faction believed harshness and arrogance was the mark of a true apostle, so they made fun of Paul's weakness and trembling (see *1 Cor. 2:3* and note). **I beg of you.** Even now Paul does not *command* them, but tries to persuade them. Gentleness and kindness are two characteristics of Christ himself, and every Christian must imitate these!!!

and kindness of Christ: ²Do not force me to be bold with you when I come; for I am sure I can be bold with those who say that we act from worldly motives. ³It is true that we live in the world; but we do not fight from worldly motives. ⁴The weapons we use in our fight are not the world's weapons, but God's powerful weapons, with which to destroy strongholds. We destroy false arguments; ⁵we pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey Christ. ⁶And after you have proved your complete loyalty, we will be ready to punish any act of disloyalty.

⁷You are looking at things as they are on the outside. Is there someone there who reckons himself to belong to Christ? Well, let him think again about himself, because we belong to Christ

when away! I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to tear down strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much

2. **Do not force me.** "If you continue your present actions, I will be forced to take harsh measures with you when I come in person!" **Worldly motives.** This group accused Paul of the things they themselves were doing. Because Paul did not talk like a politician (2 Cor. 11:6), and because he was meek and mild, they said he was no true apostle and did not have the Spirit.

3. **It is true.** "While it is true that we live in the world, it is not at all true that we fight against idolaters and unbelievers from worldly motives!" Compare *John 17:15* and note.

4. **The weapons.** Paul likes to compare his service to Christ with a military campaign. Christ, his ministry, and his cross all seem weak to the worldly man (1 Cor. 1:18-25). But God chose "what the world considers nonsense" to put to shame the powerful men of this world (1 Cor. 1:27). **God's weapons.** All along, Paul has been using God's weapons (such as gentleness, kindness, love, etc.) which will destroy strongholds! Paul's opponents do not understand this! **False arguments.** What is this evil power that Paul fights against??? **Unbelief!** Satan captured Eve by persuading her to disbelieve what God said (1 Tim. 2:14). False arguments cause excessive pride and make people deaf to the truth!

5. **Every proud obstacle.** This is human pride, human wisdom, things erected as a wall against God. These grow out of worldly motives! Compare 1 John 2:16. **Every thought.** Paul wants to do more than win arguments. He wants to take every thought captive through faith, and make it obey Christ! Christ-on-the-cross, the evidence of God's love, is the only *weapon* which can win man's loyalty!!! Therefore, Paul does not use the human methods the false teachers expect, but comes in the "weakness" which Christ demonstrated.

6. **And after.** "I do not want to come to Corinth until you have had time to prove your complete loyalty to me as an apostle of Christ. When I do come, I will take harsh measures with any who are still disloyal."

7. **On the outside.** "Don't let anyone's claim to authority keep you from seeing that I am an apostle. You have been looking at external things, and you are confused by this and don't really know who does belong to Christ!" **Is there someone there?** "If someone is claiming to be the servant of Christ, so am I, just as much as he is! But my claims have more proof!" [It may be these false teachers formed a "Christ party" (1 Cor. 1:12), and that their *claim to fame* was that they had seen Jesus in his life on earth.]

just as much as he does. ⁸For I am not ashamed, even if I have boasted somewhat too much of the authority that the Lord has given us—authority to build you up, that is, not to tear you down. ⁹I do not want it to appear that I am trying to frighten you with my letters. ¹⁰Someone will say, “Paul’s letters are severe and strong, but when he is with us in person he is weak, and his words are nothing!” ¹¹Such a person must understand that there is no difference between what we write in our letters when we are away, and what we will do when we are there with you.

¹²Of course we would not dare classify ourselves or compare ourselves with those who rate themselves so highly. How stupid they are! They make up their own standards to measure themselves by, and judge themselves by their own standards! ¹³As for us, however, our boasting will not go beyond certain limits; it will stay within the limits of the work which God has set for us, which includes our work among you. ¹⁴And since you are within those limits, we did not go beyond them when we came to you, bringing the

as he. For even if I boast ⁸ somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do ⁹ not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. For some say, “His letters ¹⁰ are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.” Such ¹¹ people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

We do not dare to classify ¹² or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. We, however, will ¹³ not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. We are ¹⁴ not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ.

8. **For I am not ashamed.** “I have made no threat that I cannot fulfill! When I come in person, I will make everything I said in that letter come true!” **To build you up.** No apostle would work to destroy the church, as these have done! Paul’s mission is to *build up*, although he also has the ability to destroy (*Acts 13:11*).

9. **To appear.** Paul writes, not to frighten them, but to build them up! Compare *Gal. 4:20*.

10. **Someone will say.** This is what his opponents were saying. Tradition makes Paul small, bald, and with a big nose. He did not make a strong impression in person. The false teachers used this fact to try to discredit him as an apostle. Because Paul did not speak with eloquence (*1 Cor. 2:1-5* and notes), they said he did not have the Holy Spirit.

11. **Such a person.** “If I come and find you still disloyal, you will discover that I am *in person* just as strong as my letters!”

12. **Of course.** Paul speaks in irony. It was confusing to the Corinthians that the false teachers and Paul each used different standards to measure by. Paul now examines this fact. **How stupid they are!** “They make up their own standards, and say ‘See! We are the true apostles!’ But measure them by the Lord’s standards!”

13. **As for us.** “We will not go beyond the limits which God has set.” He has not seized authority over the Corinthians, like a church-Boss! God himself appointed Paul apostle to the Gentiles.

14. **And since you are within.** Paul was working within God’s limits when he planted the church at Corinth. In contrast, the false teachers had not been sent by God!

Good News about Christ. ¹⁵So we do not boast of the work that others have done beyond the limits God set for us. Instead, we hope that your faith may grow, and that we may be able to do a much greater work among you, always within the limits that God has set. ¹⁶Then we can preach the Good News in other countries beyond you, and shall not have to boast of work already done in another man's field.

¹⁷But as the scripture says, "Whoever wants to boast, must boast of what the Lord has done."
¹⁸Because a man is really approved when the Lord thinks well of him, not when he thinks well of himself.

Paul and the False Apostles

11 I wish you would tolerate me, even when I am a bit foolish. Please do! ²I am jealous for you just as God is; you are like a pure virgin whom I have promised in marriage to one man

Neither do we go beyond our 15 limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach 16 the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory. But, "Let him who 17 boasts, boast in the Lord." For it is not the man who 18 commends himself who is approved, but the man whom the Lord commends.

Paul and the False Apostles

11 I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. I am jealous for 2 you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure

15. **So we do not boast.** Paul's work was to *lay foundations*. He did not intrude on the work of the other apostles. See *Rom. 15:20* and note. It may be that the false teachers accused Paul of intruding on *their work*, when it was in fact they themselves who were the intruders! **That we may be able.** These problems are forcing Paul to concentrate his efforts on them, and neglect other things that need to be done. When their faith grows, he can leave them in the care of their ordinary teachers, and go on to other fields of work.

16. **Then we.** (1) It was the special mission of the apostles to proclaim the Good News in areas where it had not yet gone; (2) They were not to neglect any country, but to proceed from country to country. The false apostle had come directly from Judea to Corinth, and may have expected to make himself rich by staying there. He boasted of work that Paul himself had already done! God's work for Paul and the true apostles was to be *pioneers*! [But there is a need to *water* (*1 Cor. 3:6*)!]

17. **But as.** Paul paraphrases *Jer. 9:23-24*. Compare *1 Cor. 1:31*. *MacKnight* understands this: "If, then, any teacher boasteth, let him boast of his having performed his duty in the manner the Lord hath appointed."

18. **Because.** The real proof of being approved, is that the Lord thinks well of you. The false apostle had failed the test by not following God's instructions on the mission field!

1. **Tolerate me.** There is still a possibility that the false apostles may deceive the Corinthians with their claims that *seem reasonable* by worldly standards. Two key words are *foolish* (*fools*) and *boasting* (*boast*). Since the false apostles said he was being foolish to boast about himself being an apostle, Paul uses their own language.

2. **Just as God is.** Paul feels the same jealousy which God feels (*Exod. 20:5*) because in converting them to Christ he had promised them in marriage to *one man only*, that is, to Christ. Compare *Rev. 19:7-9*. Paul's godly jealousy stands in contrast to the human jealousy of the false apostles (compare *Gal. 4:17*). **Promised in marriage.** See note on *Matt. 1:18*.

only, who is Christ. ³I am afraid that your minds will be corrupted and that you will abandon your full and pure devotion to Christ—in the same way that Eve was deceived by the snake's clever lies. ⁴For you gladly tolerate anyone who comes to you and preaches a different Jesus, not the one we preached; and you accept a spirit and a gospel completely different from the Spirit and the gospel you received from us!

⁵I do not think that I am the least bit inferior to those very special "apostles" of yours! ⁶Perhaps I am an amateur in speaking, but certainly not in knowledge; we have made this clear to you at all times and in all conditions.

⁷I did not charge you a thing when I preached the Good News of God to you; I humbled myself in order to make you important. Was that wrong of me? ⁸While I was working among you I was paid by other churches. I was robbing them, so

virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.

⁷ Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by receiving support from them

3. **I am afraid.** "I am afraid, that as the snake deceived Eve and led her into sin (*Gen. ch 3*), so your minds will be corrupted by false arguments and you will abandon your full and pure devotion to Christ and be guilty of spiritual immorality!" [Note Paul believes the account of Adam and Eve.]

4. **For you gladly tolerate.** Compare this with *verse 1*. Human nature loves new things (*Acts 17:21*), and this makes Paul afraid that they will adopt this new message which is phony (not genuine, but a distortion). [Sometimes, however, people are so rooted in *tradition*, that they reject **PURE TRUTH** because it seems new to them (because they never heard it before).]

5. **The least bit inferior!** Paul has proved himself by his loyalty to Christ-on-the-cross! He has the Holy Spirit, but the false apostles do not! It is almost certain that the false apostles (and the *circumcision party*???) preached a "Jesus without the cross." As a true apostle, Paul is in no way inferior to such as these!!!

6. **An amateur in speaking.** Paul was not a gifted orator, as these men must have been. Yet he has *true knowledge*, and is in no way inferior to anyone! He has made this clear by his teaching and by the *gifts from the Spirit* which he gave to them.

7. **Charge you a thing.** Paul would accept no pay from the Corinthians when he planted the church there. The false apostles said this proved he was not an apostle. Paul says that he humbled himself to make them important! Compare *Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 9:15* and notes.

8. **I was paid by other churches.** Paul has been accused over the very thing he did for their own good! He did not take money from them to avoid even a hint of suspicion that he acted from worldly motives!!! But it was proper for an established congregation to support him (*Phil. 4:15-17*).

to speak, to help you. ⁹And during the time I was with you I did not bother you for help when I needed money; the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me everything I needed. As in the past, so in the future: I will never be a burden to you! ¹⁰By Christ's truth in me, I promise that this boast of mine will not be silenced anywhere in all of Greece. ¹¹Why do I say this? Because I don't love you? God knows I do!

¹²I will go on doing what I am doing now, in order to keep those other "apostles" from having any reason for boasting and saying that they work in the same way that we do. ¹³Those men are not true apostles—they are false apostles, who lie about their work and change themselves to look like real apostles of Christ. ¹⁴Well, no wonder! Even Satan can change himself to look like an angel of light! ¹⁵So it is no great thing if his servants change themselves to look like servants of right. In the end they will get exactly what they deserve for the things they do.

so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

9. I did not bother you for help. Paul has already mentioned the generosity of the Macedonian churches (2 Cor. 8:1-2). Paul must have been in desperate need during his initial work at Corinth, and these brothers supplied his need.

10. By Christ's truth in me. This is a strong affirmation of what he says!!! Conditions at Corinth make it important that he does not allow them to give him money to live on!

11. Why do I say this? When Paul refused to be paid by the Corinthian church, the false apostles said it proved he did not love them! But Paul does love them and affirms it by saying that *God knows I do!* Since Paul was paid by other churches, what he did here at Corinth must have been to destroy the claims of the false teachers.

12. In order to. The false apostles were making themselves rich off the church! Since they will be compared to Paul, they feel they must discredit him. But if he allowed Corinth to pay him, he would be doing his opponents a favor!!!

13. They are false apostles. The *Expositor's Greek Testament* says: "This speedy appearance of false teachers was one of the most remarkable features of the Apostolic age; compare Gal. 2:4; Phil. 1:15; 1 John 4:1, crafty workers (compare Phil. 3:2), fashioning themselves into Apostles of Christ, i.e., laying special claim to that great title (compare 2 Cor. 10:7)." The heresies of today are really as old as the first century. See Introduction to the Letter From James.

14. Even Satan! A Jewish legend said that Satan once took the form of an *angel of light* and joined other angels in singing praises to God; and that Eve in the garden saw him as he "bent over the wall." The point is that evil can counterfeit good.

15. If his servants. Paul says Satan's servants are trying to deceive the church! Then the false apostles are *Satan's servants*!!! Compare 1 John 2:18-19 and notes.

Paul's Sufferings as an Apostle

¹⁶I repeat: no one should think that I am a fool. But if you do, at least accept me as a fool, just so I will have a little to boast of. ¹⁷Of course what I am saying now is not what the Lord would have me say; in this matter of boasting I am really talking like a fool. ¹⁸But since there are so many who boast for merely human reasons, I will do the same. ¹⁹You yourselves are so wise, and so you gladly tolerate fools! ²⁰You tolerate anyone who orders you around, or takes advantage of you, or traps you, or looks down on you, or slaps you in the face. ²¹I am ashamed to admit it: we were too timid to do that!

But if anyone dares to boast of something—I am talking like a fool—I will be just as daring. ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. ²³Are they Christ's servant's? I sound like a madman—but I am a better servant than they are! I have worked much harder, I have been in prison more times, I have been whipped much more, and I have been near death more often.

Paul Boasts About His Sufferings

I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

What anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged

16. **I repeat.** "Bear with me as I boast a little bit, and see if I have as much to boast about as those false apostles!"

17. **Not what the Lord.** Paul is not now disobeying the Lord!!! What he is doing is to argue from a human point of view as the false apostles have done. In doing this, he *is* talking like a fool (which they have accused him of being).

18. **I will do the same.** "I can boast about worldly things also!" See verse 30.

19. **Are so wise.** He speaks in irony. Compare *1 Cor. 4:10* and note.

20. **You tolerate anyone.** "You certainly have great patience! You tolerate these false apostles when they take your money to support themselves in luxury, and you tolerate them when they give you a *hard time!*"

21. **We were too timid!** "What a shame! I was too timid to treat you like that!" **Just as daring.** He now boasts on their own level.

22. **Hebrews?** This means a Jew who preserved his national language and customs, a kind of *super-patriot*. Compare note on *Acts 9:1*. **Israelites?** One of God's own people. Compare *Rom. 9:4; 11:1*. **Abraham's.** The messianic promise came through Abraham. Paul is completely Jewish in every sense of the word!

23. **Christ's servants?** They called themselves both *apostles of Christ* and *servants of Christ* (verse 13). **Like a madman.** This implies that while they think they are wise, all they really understand is the babbling of madmen, and Paul must come down to their level to be understood. Paul now gives us an amazing picture of his life and work as an apostle of Christ!!!

²⁴Five times I was given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews; ²⁵three times I was whipped by the Romans, and once I was stoned; I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent twenty-four hours in the water. ²⁶In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from fellow Jews and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. ²⁷There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. ²⁸And, not to mention other things, every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress.

³⁰If I must boast, I will boast of things that

more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show

24. **The thirty-nine lashes.** The Law allowed forty lashes (*Deut. 25:1-3*), but they always stopped one short, to avoid breaking the law. *Josephus* says this sometimes caused death. The fact that Paul received this five times, shows that during his ministry there was no final separation between church and synagogue.

25. **Whipped by the Romans.** Compare *Acts 16:22-23*. **Stoned.** *Acts 14:19*. **Three shipwrecks.** A fourth is described in *Acts 27* (at a later date). **Twenty-four hours.** Holding on to some of the wreckage.

26. **In my many travels.** Paul was constantly risking his life in many ways! A few of these experiences are mentioned in the New Testament, but we can only imagine what all Paul endured for the mission he had received from Christ!!!

27. **There has been.** Here he mentions hardships. This is a general picture, and he does not give specific details.

28. **My concern.** As an apostle, Paul had a great concern for *all* the churches, not just Corinth. Compare *2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5*.

29. **When someone.** By this Paul shows how close he feels to each Christian!

30. **That show.** This explains what Paul says in *verse 18*. The weakness of which he has been accused (*2 Cor. 10:10*) is the only proper subject for boasting! In weakness (as the world sees it), Paul is imitating Christ, who died in weakness (*2 Cor. 13:4*).

show how weak I am. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus—blessed be his name forever!—knows that I am not lying. ³²When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas placed guards at the city gates to arrest me. ³³But I was let down in a basket, through an opening in the wall, and escaped from him.

Paul's Visions and Revelations

12 I have to boast, even though it doesn't do any good. But I will now talk about visions and revelations given me by the Lord. ¹I know a certain Christian man who fourteen years ago was snatched up to the highest heaven (I do not know whether this actually happened, or whether he had a vision—only God knows). ²I repeat, I know that this man was snatched to Paradise (again, I do not know whether this actually happened, or whether it was a vision—only God knows), and there he heard things which cannot be put into words, things that human lips may

my weakness. The God and ³¹ Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. ³²In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

Paul's Vision and His Thorn

12 I must go on boasting. ¹Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know ² a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up ³ to Paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. ⁴

31. The God and Father. Paul affirms the truth of all these things he has just said, and says God knows he is speaking the truth!!!

32-33. When I was in Damascus. See note on *Acts 9:23*. Paul adds this account as an afterthought. It may be that the false teacher had widely circulated this account, hoping to embarrass Paul with it. Here he sets the record straight! What to them was a laughable situation, is to Paul an example of God's mercy!!! Also, this account being circulated as fact (which it was) would help to increase the credibility of the other things Paul tells about in this chapter.

1. I have to boast. Paul personally feels the whole thing of boasting is a waste of time! Yet he must go on with it, because he must destroy false arguments and pull down proud obstacles. **About visions and revelations.** The false apostles bragged about visions and ecstatic experiences. Paul may have had many such experiences (since as an apostle, he had a special measure of the Holy Spirit), but he spends no time boasting about such things, and it is with regret he mentions this here.

2. Who fourteen years ago. It is a Jewish form to speak in the third person. *Verse 7* identifies this man as Paul. The date must have been in 41 or 42 A.D. (by the corrected calendar). *Johnson* thinks it may have been while Paul was at Antioch or Tarsus (*Acts 9:29-30*.) **Snatched up.** Compare *Rev. 4:1-2; Acts 10:11-17*. **Highest heaven.** Jews called the atmosphere the first heaven; outer space the second heaven; and the highest heaven was the place where God lives. **I do not know.** The TEV correctly translates the idiom. Some see in this proof that Paul believed a *disembodied spirit* had awareness

3. I repeat. Paul uses the word Paradise this time, which is *heaven before the Judgment*. See notes on *Luke 16:19-31*. See also *Luke 23:43; Rev. 2:7*.

4. And there he heard things. The false teachers may tell others about their visions and boast of how God spoke to them, but Paul's experience was too sacred to reveal! God does not allow Paul to tell what he saw and heard!!! Compare *Rev. 10:3-4* and notes.

not speak. ⁵So I will boast of this man—but I will not boast about myself, except the things that show how weak I am. ⁶If I wanted to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be telling the truth. But I will not boast, because I do not want anyone to have a higher opinion of me than he has from what he has seen me do and heard me say.

⁷But to keep me from being puffed up with pride because of the many wonderful things I saw, I was given a painful physical ailment, which acts as Satan's messenger to beat me and keep me from being proud. ⁸Three times I prayed to the Lord about this, and asked him to take it away. ⁹His answer was, "My grace is all you need; for my power is strongest when you are weak." I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me. ¹⁰I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

5. **So I will boast.** What God allowed Paul to see, gave him great courage! Yet because the false teachers seem to think visions and revelations prove a person to be a true disciple of Christ, Paul speaks about these things as though it were someone else who had experienced them. He will only boast of his weakness!!!

6. **I would be telling the truth.** He can truthfully boast of many such things!!! But his appointment as an apostle is not based on this! Also, such things can be easily faked and are impossible to test. Therefore Paul wants people to evaluate him on the basis of what they see him do and say!!!

7. **But to keep me.** This shows that *verse 2* speaks of Paul himself. **Puffed up.** One who is puffed up by his visions and experiences, tends to de-emphasize God. In contrast to the boasting of the false teachers, Paul says God gave him a painful physical ailment to keep him from being *proud*. What this was, we have no way of knowing. Two things most often suggested are: chronic eye disease; epilepsy. [*Chrysostom* thinks it was not something in his body, but an opponent who followed him around and tried to destroy his work. *Ephraim Syrus* identifies the *painful physical ailment* as Alexander the metalworker (2 *Tim.* 4:14).]

8. **Three times.** Like Jesus (*Mark 14:36*), Paul prays to escape suffering. But he learns that God's refusal is his answer, and he submits to the will of his Lord!

9. **His answer was.** Paul did not receive what he wanted, but really something better!!! The fact that Paul could do so much in spite of his weakness, showed it was the Lord's power working through him!!! *Suffering is no curse!!!*

10. **I am content.** He can be content, because it is all for Christ's sake!!! His weakness, etc., all work out to a more successful ministry!!! Compare *Phil.* 4:13.

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

¹¹I am acting like a fool—but you have made me do it. You are the ones who ought to show your approval of me. For even if I am nothing, I am in no way inferior to those very special “apostles” of yours. ¹²The things that prove that I am an apostle were done with all patience among you; there were signs and wonders and miracles. ¹³How were you treated any worse than the other churches, except that I did not bother you for help? Please forgive me for being so unfair!

¹⁴This is now the third time that I am ready to come to visit you—and I will not make any demands on you. It is you I want, not your money. After all, children should not have to provide for their parents, but parents should provide for their children. ¹⁵I will be glad to spend all I have, and myself as well, in order to help you. Will you love me less because I love you so much?

¹⁶You will agree, then, that I was not a burden to you. But, someone will say, I was tricky and

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the “super-apostles,” even though I am nothing. The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance. How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught

11. **I am acting like a fool.** “I know I am acting like a fool to come down to your level and boast about such things, but you have forced me to do it! You should have taken my part against the false teachers, because I am in no way inferior to those ‘super-apostles’ you seem to be so proud of!”

12. **The things that prove.** “During the time I spent at Corinth when I planted the church there, you saw much evidence that I was an apostle!” Compare *1 Thess. 1:5* and note.

13. **How were you?** In order to discredit Paul, the false teachers have said that the fact he would not take their pay proved he did not really love them, and that he thought they were inferior to the other churches! See notes on *2 Cor. 11:7-12*. But the only *sign* he omitted at Corinth was to take their money. He says in *irony*, “Please forgive me for being so unfair!”

14. **The third time.** The first was *Acts 18:1*; the second was the painful visit mentioned in *2 Cor. 2:1*. He still refuses to take their money, but he did take money from other churches (*2 Cor. 11:7-9* and notes). As their *spiritual father*, he must provide for them!

15. **I will be glad to.** Paul’s whole life is a living sacrifice in imitation of Jesus Christ. Compare *Mark 10:45*. **Will you!** They have completely misunderstood his act of self-sacrifice. He intended this as a sign of his great love, but they misinterpreted it and thought he did not love them, and even said he had done them wrong (*2 Cor. 11:7*). Paul now hopes they will understand his love for them, and will respond with great love for him!

16. **You will agree, then.** Paul asks them to take this as evidence of his love for them! **But, someone will say.** The false teachers said he was tricky enough to drain the treasury in other ways.

trapped you with lies. ¹⁷How? Did I take advantage of you through any of the messengers I sent? ¹⁸I begged Titus to go, and I sent the other Christian brother with him. Would you say that Titus took advantage of you? Do not he and I act from the very same motives and behave in the same way?

¹⁹Perhaps you think that all along we have been trying to defend ourselves before you. No! We speak as Christ would have us speak, in the presence of God, and everything we do, dear friends, is done to help you. ²⁰I am afraid that when I get there I will find you different from what I would like you to be and you will find me different from what you would like me to be. I am afraid that I will find quarreling and jealousy, hot tempers and selfishness, insults and gossip, pride and disorder. ²¹I am afraid that the next time I come my God will humiliate me in your presence, and I shall weep over many who sinned in the past and have not repented of the immoral things they have done, their sexual sins and lustful deeds.

you by trickery! Did I exploit 17
you through any of the men
I sent you? I urged Titus to 18
go to you and I sent our
brother with him. Titus did
not exploit you, did he? Did
we not act in the same spirit
and follow the same course?

Have you been thinking 19
all along that we have been
defending ourselves to you?
We have been speaking in
the sight of God as those in
Christ; and everything we
do, dear friends, is for your
strengthening. For I am a- 20
fraid that when I come I may
not find you as I want you to
be, and you may not find me
as you want me to be. I fear
that there may be quarrel-
ing, jealousy, outbursts of
anger, factions, slander,
gossip, arrogance and dis-
order. I am afraid that when 21
I come again my God will
humble me before you, and I
will be grieved over many
who have sinned earlier and
have not repented of the im-
purity, sexual sin and de-
bauchery in which they have
indulged.

17. **How?** How could he have done anything like this??? None of the messengers Paul sent *made slaves* of the Corinthians as the false teachers had done (2 Cor. 11:20).

18. **I begged Titus to go.** Evidently the attack has all been against Paul, and the Corinthians continued to trust Titus, and also the unnamed brother. **Would you say?** "Certainly you would not accuse Titus of taking advantage of you and draining the treasury!!! **Do not he and I?** Paul points to their good opinion of Titus and reminds them that Titus was only carrying out Paul's orders. They both work together! This, then, makes it impossible to believe that Paul was trying to trick them in some way.

19. **Perhaps you think.** Paul wants to make it plain that he says all this to help the church at Corinth, and not just to clear his own name. He speaks as Christ's servant.

20. **I am afraid.** "This is why I have defended myself. You must be helped! I am afraid that when I come, I will still find you living in the old way of sin!"

21. **My God will humiliate me.** Paul is thinking of that painful second visit (2 Cor. 2:1). **And I shall weep.** It will bring him great sorrow to be forced to punish those who have failed to turn away from their sins and reform!!! **Immoral.** Here it means any kind of unholy living. **Sexual sins.** These were *standard practice* in the Gentile world. It includes *everything outside* the marriage relationship, such as adultery, homosexuality, etc. See note on Matt. 19:9. **Lustful deeds.** *Debauchery* is the technical term. Compare 1 Pet. 4:2-4 and notes.

Final Warnings and Greetings

13 This is now the third time that I am coming to visit you. "Any accusation must be upheld by the evidence of two or three witnesses"—as the scripture says. ²I want to tell you who have sinned in the past, and all the others; I said it before, during my second visit to you, but I will say it again now that I am away: the next time I come nobody will escape punishment. ³You will have all the proof you want that Christ speaks through me. When he deals with you he is not weak; instead he shows his power among you. ⁴For even though it was in weakness that he was put to death on the cross, it is by God's power that he lives. In union with him we also are weak; but in our relations with you, we shall live with him by God's power.

⁵Put yourselves to the test and judge yourselves, to find out whether you are living in faith. Surely you know that Christ Jesus is in you?—

Final Warnings

13 This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." I already ²gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, since you are demanding ³proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For to ⁴be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.

⁵Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you

1. **This is now.** See note on 2 Cor. 12:14. **Two or three witnesses.** Deut. 19:15. This is best understood in view of the fact that he mentions this is the third time he comes. Each visit is a *witness*. If they still have not repented when he comes the third time, he must take harsh measures!!! [Johnson thinks he will hold a church-trial, if necessary, and allow two or three witnesses to establish the truth.]

2. **I want to tell you.** Because Paul had not taken harsh measures against those who sinned in the past, they may think he will not do it now. **I said it before.** "I told you that if I had to come again, I would punish the guilty (compare 2 Cor. 1:23 and note). **Nobody will escape.** Paul is a true apostle and has authority to do what he says! Two examples of miraculous punishment are found in Acts 5:1-3; 13:9-11.

3. **All the proof.** The false teachers said Paul had no power from the Spirit! They want some *sign* as proof. **When he deals with you.** Paul does not boast about himself, but says the Lord working through him is not weak!!! As the Lord showed his power through the gifts from the Spirit, he would also show his power in the punishments of those who refused to turn from sin!!!

4. **For even though.** The world sees the *cross* as evidence of weakness. From a human point of view, the whole idea of a crucified Savior is "*offensive to the Jews and nonsense to the Gentiles*" (1 Cor. 1:23). **It is by God's power.** The resurrection of Christ shows God's power. See 1 Cor. 6:14; Rom. 1:4. **In union with him.** See 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12. Paul followed the Lord by sharing his weakness in baptism, but the result is that he also shares His Power! See 1 Pet. 3:21 and note.

5. **Put yourselves to the test.** "You have tested me! Now put yourselves to the test! Measure yourself by the Good News, and see if you are really following what Christ taught! Does He approve of the sin in your lives???" **That Christ Jesus is in you.** Christ lives in the "people of God" through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:22; Rom. 8:9-11; compare Col. 2:7; Gal. 2:20). **Unless.** The test Paul mentions here is the true test of living in faith, which is: accepting Christ's weakness (verse 4) and being willing to suffer with Him!!! The Corinthians stressed *knowledge*, Paul stresses *action*!

unless you have completely failed. ⁶I trust you will know that we are not failures. ⁷We pray to God that you will do no wrong—not in order to show that we are a success, but that you may do what is right, even though we may seem to be failures. ⁸For we cannot do a thing against the truth, but only for it. ⁹We are glad when we are weak but you are strong. And so we also pray that you will become perfect. ¹⁰That is why I write this while I am away from you; it is so that when I arrive I will not have to deal harshly with you in using the authority that the Lord gave me—authority to build you up, not to tear you down.

¹¹And now, brothers, good-bye! Strive for perfection; listen to my appeals; agree with one another, and live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is for your perfection. This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

Final Greetings

Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

6. **I trust.** "When you put yourself to the test of faith, you will discover that what we have been telling you is true! The weakness you despise is really proof that Christ is in us!" [*Reprobate* means *one who has failed the test.*]

7. **We pray to God.** "It is important that you do no wrong, and that you may do what is right. If your obedience leaves me without an opportunity to show the Lord's power through me, I will be happy!"

8. **But only for it.** To act against the truth would be to act from worldly motives and selfish goals. "We apostles do not use our supernatural power to oppose the truth, but always to support it!!" The *Expositor's Greek Testament* says: "It is a *general* principle, which Christian theology has not always sufficiently remembered, that to fight against truth, whether ethical or historical or scientific, is to fight against Him who is *the Truth*, and so is to court defeat. We *can* do nothing, even if we would, against the truth." Compare Gamaliel's statement in *Acts 5:33-39*. Imagine how Paul must have felt at his conversion.

9. **We are glad.** "Even though we will not need to demonstrate supernatural powers and show that we are strong, we will gladly appear weak to you. The important thing is that you be strong!!!" **That you will become perfect.** *MacKnight* says the literal meaning of *perfect* here is: "*to set a dislocated joint.*" Paul's thought is: "You have *dislocated* yourselves through sin. Turn from sin and turn to God and put yourself back in place! You must do this!!!"

10. **That is why.** This is the reason for Paul's strongly worded letter, and for what he writes in this Second Letter. It would be no pleasure to him to punish them, and in effect *show off* his authority as a true apostle! The whole purpose behind the Lord's gift of authority to him is to build up! Authority = obligation; and that obligation is to build up, not tear down!!!

11. **Good-bye!** This is his benediction and conclusion. **Strive for perfection.** *Perfection* is the same word used in *verse 9*. **Listen.** "Do what I asked you to do." **Agree.** "Live in peace and avoid division!"

¹²Greet one another with a brotherly kiss.
All God's people send you their greetings.

¹³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Greet one another with a 12
holy kiss. All the saints send
their greetings.

May the grace of the Lord 13
Jesus Christ, and the love of
God, and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit be with all of
you.

12. A **brotherly kiss**. See note on *Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20*. This was a standard form of greeting. **All God's people**. The Christians in Macedonia (*2 Cor. 7:5-7*). [*Saint*: see note on *1 Cor. 6:11*.]

13. **The grace**. This is Paul's most complete benediction. **Grace** is the undeserved salvation which comes through Christ-on-the-cross. **Love** is what God showed in acting through Christ while we were still enemies. **Fellowship** is the joint sharing of the church in the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. 12:13*).