

# 2 Corinthians

## 1

**Summary:** *Second Corinthians opens with Paul's standard greeting from Paul and Timothy to the church at Corinth and all the saints in Achaia. Paul then launches into a deeply personal passage about affliction and comfort, recounting severe suffering he experienced in Asia that brought him to the brink of death. He frames this suffering theologically: God comforts the afflicted so they can comfort others, and the God who raises the dead is the one who delivered Paul and will deliver him again. The chapter closes with Paul defending his change of travel plans, insisting his word is not 'yes and no' but grounded in the faithfulness of God, whose promises in Christ are always 'Yes' and 'Amen.'*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The theological density of verses 19-22 is extraordinary. In defending himself against the charge of fickleness, Paul articulates a profound theology of divine faithfulness: all God's promises find their 'Yes' in Christ, believers say 'Amen' through him, and God has sealed believers with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (arrabōn). This Trinitarian passage — involving God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit — emerges not from systematic theology but from Paul's self-defense. The suffering passage (vv. 3-11) introduces the letter's central paradox: weakness and affliction are the means through which God's power and comfort are displayed.*

**Translation Friction:** *The exact nature of Paul's affliction in Asia (v. 8) is debated — possibilities include a severe illness, a mob attack (Acts 19:23-41), or imprisonment. We translate the Greek without specifying what Paul himself leaves unspecified. The phrase 'sentence of death' (v. 9, apokrima tou thanatou) is difficult; apokrima may mean 'sentence, verdict, response' and appears only here in the New Testament. The identity of the 'brother' co-author Timothy and his role in the letter's composition is unclear.*

**Connections:** *The comfort language (paraklēsis) connects to Jesus's Beatitude ('Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted,' Matthew 5:4) and to the Holy Spirit as Paraclete in John 14-16. Paul's near-death experience in Asia connects to the hardship catalogs later in the letter (4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-33). The 'Yes and Amen' passage connects to Revelation 3:14, where Christ is called 'the Amen.' The arrabōn ('guarantee') of the Spirit appears again in 5:5 and Ephesians 1:14.*

<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia: <sup>2</sup>And from the lord Jesus christ, and grace be to you and peace from God our Father. <sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>Who

comforts us in all our suffering, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort by that we ourselves are receives comfort from God. <sup>5</sup>For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. <sup>6</sup>If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective as you patiently endure the same sufferings that we also suffer. <sup>7</sup>And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so also you share in the comfort. <sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. We were burdened utterly beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life itself. <sup>9</sup>Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, so that we would not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup>He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. In him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again, <sup>11</sup>You also helping together by petition for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of numerous persons thanks may be given by numerous on our behalf. <sup>12</sup>For this is our boast: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by worldly wisdom but by the grace of God — and especially toward you. <sup>13</sup>For we are not writing anything to you other than what you can read and understand, and I hope you will fully understand, <sup>14</sup>As as well you possess acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, not even as you as well are ours in the time of the Lord Jesus. <sup>15</sup>And because of this confidence, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace, <sup>16</sup>I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia, then return from Macedonia to you, and have you send me on my way to Judea. <sup>17</sup>Was I being fickle when I intended this? Or do I make my plans according to the flesh, so that with me it is 'Yes, yes' and 'No, no' at the same time? <sup>18</sup>But as God is faithful, our word to you has not been 'Yes' and 'No.' <sup>19</sup>For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you — Silvanus, Timothy, and I — was not 'Yes' and 'No,' but in him it has always been 'Yes.' <sup>20</sup>For all the promises of God find their 'Yes' in him. That is why it is through him that we say our 'Amen' to God for his glory. <sup>21</sup>And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, <sup>22</sup>Who has as well sealed us, and granted the earnest of the Inner life in our hearts. <sup>23</sup>But I call God as witness against my soul, that it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. <sup>24</sup>Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work together for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The SBLGNT reads 'Christ Jesus' (Christou Iēsou) rather than the KJV's 'Jesus Christ,' placing the title first. Timothy is named as co-sender but called 'the brother' (ho adelphos), not co-apostle. The address extends beyond Corinth to 'all Achaia' (the Roman province of southern Greece), suggesting a circular intent.
2. Paul's standard greeting fuses the Greek salutation (chairein, modified to charis, 'grace') with the Hebrew shalom ('peace'). The coordination of 'God our Father' and 'the Lord Jesus Christ' as joint source of grace and peace reflects the high Christology operative in Paul's earliest letters.
3. The opening eulogētos ('blessed') echoes the Jewish berakah (blessing formula) found in Psalms (e.g., Psalm 41:13; 72:18). The twin titles 'Father of mercies' (patēr tōn oiktirmōn) and 'God of all comfort' (theos pasēs paraklēseōs) establish the theological framework for the entire chapter. The noun paraklēsis and its cognates appear ten times in verses 3-7.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 41:13 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The cascade of paraklēsis vocabulary in this verse creates a deliberate rhetorical effect: comfort received becomes comfort given. The Greek thlipsis ('affliction, tribulation, pressure') carries the literal sense of being crushed or pressed, which Paul will develop through the letter (4:8, 'afflicted in every way but not crushed').
5. The verb perisseuei ('overflows, abounds') creates a proportional equation: suffering and comfort are both measured in terms of overflow. 'The sufferings of Christ' (ta pathēmata tou Christou) likely means sufferings endured for Christ's sake or in union with Christ, not a participation in Christ's atoning suffering.
6. Paul's suffering is not private but vicarious — it serves the Corinthians' comfort and salvation. The participle energoumenēs ('being made effective, working') suggests that comfort produces endurance as an active, dynamic process, not merely passive consolation.
7. The word koinōnoi ('partners, sharers') implies active participation, not mere sympathy. Paul's confidence (elpis bebaia, 'firm hope') rests on the theological principle that participation in suffering guarantees participation in comfort — a pattern that mirrors the death-and-resurrection logic of the gospel.

8. The phrase *kath' hyperbolēn hyper dynamin* ('utterly beyond our strength') piles prepositions to convey extremity. The verb *exaporēthēnai* ('to be utterly at a loss, to despair') is an intensified form found only in Paul. The exact nature of this affliction in the Roman province of Asia remains debated — possibilities include the Ephesian riot (Acts 19), an illness, or imprisonment.
9. The word *apokrima* ('sentence, verdict, response') appears only here in the New Testament. Paul interprets his brush with death teleologically — its purpose (*hina*, 'so that') was to redirect his trust from himself to God. The title 'God who raises the dead' (*tō theō tō egeironti tous nekrous*) echoes the second benediction of the Jewish Amidah prayer, connecting Paul's personal deliverance to the God of resurrection.
10. The threefold repetition of *rhysetai* ('he will deliver') creates a past-present-future framework of divine rescue: God delivered, delivers, and will deliver. This triple temporal structure mirrors Paul's understanding of salvation as already-accomplished, presently-experienced, and not-yet-completed.
11. The compound verb *synpourgoyntōn* ('joining together in helping') emphasizes communal participation in prayer. Paul envisions a theological circuit: many pray, God grants favor (charisma), and many give thanks — creating a chain of intercession and gratitude.
12. The word *kauchēsis* ('boast') is a key term in 2 Corinthians, appearing frequently as Paul defends his ministry. The SBLGNT reads *haplotēti* ('simplicity, sincerity') rather than the variant *hagiotēti* ('holiness'). The contrast between 'worldly wisdom' (*sophia sarkikē*) and 'the grace of God' echoes the argument of 1 Corinthians 1-2.
13. There is a wordplay between *anaginōskete* ('read') and *epiginōskete* ('understand, recognize') that cannot be fully captured in English. Paul is responding to accusations of hidden agendas or double-meaning in his letters. His correspondence says exactly what it means.
14. The phrase *apo merous* ('in part, partially') is a candid admission that the Corinthians' understanding of Paul is incomplete. 'The day of the Lord Jesus' refers to the eschatological judgment when all relationships and ministries will be evaluated. Mutual boasting at the final judgment is a remarkable expression of apostolic confidence.
15. The word *charin* ('grace, benefit, gift') here refers to the blessing of an apostolic visit. Paul's original plan was to visit Corinth twice — once on the way to Macedonia and once on the return. This plan changed, prompting the accusations of fickleness that Paul addresses in the following verses.
16. This double-visit plan differs from the single visit described in 1 Corinthians 16:5-7, where Paul planned to come only after passing through Macedonia. The verb *propemphthēnai* ('to be sent on one's way') implies material provision and accompaniment for travel.
17. Paul quotes his critics' accusation: that his changed plans reveal unreliability (*elaphria*, 'lightness, fickleness'). The phrase 'according to the flesh' (*kata sarka*) means making decisions by merely human calculation rather than divine guidance. The rhetorical questions expect negative answers.
18. Paul grounds the reliability of his word in the faithfulness of God (*pistos ho theos*). This is not merely an oath formula but a theological claim: Paul's integrity as an apostle derives from the God who sent him. The shift from defending travel plans to affirming divine faithfulness is characteristic of Paul's theological method.
19. Silvanus (the Latinized form of Silas) was Paul's companion on the founding mission to Corinth (Acts 18:5). The argument moves from Paul's personal reliability to Christ's cosmic reliability: if the message proclaimed is consistently 'Yes,' the messenger cannot be 'Yes and No.' Christ himself is the guarantee of Paul's truthfulness.
20. This verse is one of the most theologically compressed statements in the Pauline corpus. Every divine promise (*epangelia*) reaches its fulfillment ('Yes') in Christ. The Hebrew 'Amen' ('so be it, it is certain') is the believer's response to God's 'Yes' in Christ. The liturgical setting is evident: the congregation says 'Amen' through Christ, and this corporate response glorifies God.
21. There is a wordplay between *Christon* ('Christ, Anointed One') and *chrisas* ('having anointed'). God establishes believers 'into Christ' and 'anoints' them — believers participate in the anointing that defines Christ himself. This verse begins a Trinitarian sequence: God (the Father) anoints, seals, and gives the Spirit.
22. The word *arrabōn* ('guarantee, down payment, pledge') is a commercial term borrowed from Semitic languages (Hebrew 'eravon), referring to a first installment that guarantees full payment to come. The Holy Spirit is God's down payment on the believer's full inheritance. The sealing (*sphragisamenos*) metaphor draws from the ancient practice of stamping a seal on property to mark ownership.
23. Paul now reveals the real reason for his changed plans: he wanted to spare the Corinthians a painful confrontation. The oath formula 'I call God as witness against my soul' is the most solemn form of self-imprecation available — Paul invokes divine judgment on himself if he is lying. The verb *pheidomenos* ('sparing') reveals pastoral concern behind what appeared to be fickleness.
24. Paul immediately qualifies his authority: sparing them was not an act of domination (*kyrieuomen*, 'lord it over') but of partnership (*synergoi*, 'co-workers, fellow laborers'). The final clause — 'for you stand firm in your faith' — affirms the Corinthians' spiritual maturity even as Paul exercises apostolic care. This balance between authority and partnership runs throughout 2 Corinthians.

## 2

**Summary:** *Paul continues explaining his delayed visit: he chose not to come in sorrow but wrote a painful letter instead, so that when he finally arrived, his joy would not be replaced by grief. He urges the Corinthians to forgive and restore the offender who had been disciplined by the majority, lest Satan exploit the situation through excessive punishment. Paul then recounts his journey to Troas, where an open door for the gospel awaited him, but his anxiety over Titus's absence drove him onward to Macedonia. The chapter closes with a magnificent metaphor: God leads believers in a triumphal procession, and through them spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ everywhere — a fragrance of life to those being saved and of death to those perishing.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The triumphal procession imagery (vv. 14-16) draws from the Roman triumphus, in which a conquering general paraded through the streets with incense burning, captives in chains, and soldiers celebrating. Paul casts himself not as the general but as one led in the procession — a captive of Christ. The incense in a Roman triumph signaled life to the victors and death to the condemned captives. Paul applies this dual significance to the gospel itself: the same message that saves some condemns others. The closing rhetorical question, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' introduces the theme of apostolic sufficiency that dominates chapters 3-6.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the offender (v. 5) is much debated. Earlier interpreters identified him with the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5, but most modern scholars believe this is a different individual who personally wronged Paul, perhaps during an unrecorded 'painful visit.' The 'letter of tears' (v. 4) is likely a lost letter, distinct from 1 Corinthians. We translate the text without imposing either identification.*

**Connections:** *The forgiveness passage connects to Jesus's teaching on forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35) and Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 5. The triumphal procession imagery connects to Colossians 2:15. The 'open door' in Troas echoes 1 Corinthians 16:9. The fragrance metaphor draws on Old Testament incense offerings (Exodus 30:34-38) and anticipates the 'aroma of Christ' language in Ephesians 5:2.*

<sup>1</sup>For I made up my mind not to come to you again in sorrow. <sup>2</sup>For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? <sup>3</sup>And I wrote as I did so that when I came I would not be pained by those who should have made me rejoice, for I am confident about all of you that my joy is the joy of you all. <sup>4</sup>For I wrote to you out of great affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears — not to cause you pain, but so that you might know the overflowing love I have for you. <sup>5</sup>Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me but in some measure — not to exaggerate — to all of you. <sup>6</sup>For such a person, this punishment by the majority is sufficient, <sup>7</sup>so that contrariwise you anything rather to pardon him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. <sup>8</sup>So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. <sup>9</sup>For this is why I wrote: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything. <sup>10</sup>Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the presence of Christ for your sake, <sup>11</sup>indeed, lest Satan should get an advantage of us — since we are not ignorant of his devices. <sup>12</sup>When I came to Troas to proclaim the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup>I had no rest in my spirit, because I discovered not Titus my brother — but taking my leave of them, I traveled from thence into Macedonia. <sup>14</sup>But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him in every place. <sup>15</sup>For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing — <sup>16</sup>to the one we are the savour of execution to execution. And to the other the savour of life to life. And who is sufficient for these things? <sup>17</sup>For we are not, like so many, peddlers of the word of God, but as persons of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The word *palin* ('again') implies a previous sorrowful visit — this is the so-called 'painful visit' that is not recorded in Acts but is implied throughout 2 Corinthians. Paul's decision was deliberate (*ekrina emautō*, 'I judged for myself') rather than circumstantial.

2. Paul's reasoning reveals the depth of his emotional bond with the Corinthians: if he grieves them, he grieves his own source of joy. The logic is circular by design — the mutual dependence between apostle and community is the point.
3. The 'letter' Paul refers to is probably the so-called 'severe letter' or 'letter of tears' mentioned in verse 4, not 1 Corinthians itself. Paul's confidence (pepoithōs) that his joy and theirs are identical reveals his assumption of deep spiritual solidarity between apostle and church.
4. This verse gives the emotional background of the lost 'severe letter.' The phrase synochēs kardias ('anguish of heart') pairs psychological distress with the tears to emphasize that the letter was written in love, not anger. Paul's pastoral method combines confrontation with deep affection.
5. Paul deflects the personal offense away from himself and onto the community: the offender has grieved the whole church, not merely Paul. The phrase apo merous ('in part, to some degree') and hina mē epibarō ('so as not to overstate it') show Paul's reluctance to exaggerate the harm.
6. The word epitimia ('punishment, censure') appears only here in the New Testament. The phrase hypo tōn pleionōn ('by the majority') indicates that the disciplinary action was decided by a congregational vote, not unanimously — some may have dissented. Paul considers the punishment adequate and now calls for its end.
7. The verb charisasthai ('to forgive, to show grace') is related to charis ('grace'). The metaphor katapothē ('be swallowed up, overwhelmed') suggests that excessive punishment can destroy the person it was meant to correct. Paul's concern shifts from justice to pastoral care.
8. The verb kyrōsai ('to ratify, confirm, make legally valid') is a legal term — Paul asks the community to formally reinstate the offender through a public act of love, just as they had formally enacted the discipline.
9. The word dokimēn ('tested character, proof') implies that the entire episode — the offense, the letter, the discipline — served as a test of the Corinthians' willingness to follow apostolic guidance. Paul now reveals that their obedience, not just the punishment of the offender, was the goal.
10. The phrase en prosōpō Christou ('in the presence of Christ' or 'in the person of Christ') is striking — Paul's act of forgiveness is performed before Christ as witness, or as Christ's representative. The tentative 'if there was anything to forgive' downplays the personal offense to focus on the community's healing.
11. The verb pleonektēthōmen ('be taken advantage of, be outwitted, be defrauded') suggests that both excessive leniency and excessive severity can serve Satan's purposes. The noēmata ('schemes, designs, thoughts') of Satan include exploiting unforgiveness to divide the community. Paul identifies unresolved church conflict as a strategic opportunity for the adversary.
12. Troas (Alexandria Troas) was a major port city in northwest Asia Minor. The 'open door' metaphor for ministry opportunity echoes 1 Corinthians 16:9. The concessive force — 'even though a door was opened' — makes Paul's departure all the more striking: he left an open door because of his anxiety about Corinth.
13. Paul's anxiety about Titus — whom he had sent to Corinth with the severe letter — was so great that it overrode the missionary opportunity in Troas. This raw emotional disclosure is characteristic of 2 Corinthians. The resolution of this anxiety does not come until 7:5-7, creating a long narrative interruption filled with theological reflection (2:14-7:4).
14. The verb thriambeuonti ('leads in triumphal procession') does not mean 'causes us to triumph' (as the KJV implies) but 'leads us as captives in a victory parade.' In a Roman triumphus, the general led conquered enemies and his own soldiers through the streets while incense burned. Paul is the captive, not the conqueror — Christ is the triumphant general. The fragrance (osmē) of incense in the procession carried different implications for the victors (life, celebration) and the condemned (death).
15. The phrase euōdia Christou ('aroma of Christ') evokes the Old Testament burnt offering that produced a 'pleasing aroma to the LORD' (Genesis 8:21; Leviticus 1:9). The present participles sōzomenois ('being saved') and apollymenois ('perishing') indicate ongoing processes, not settled states — salvation and destruction are presented as present realities being worked out.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 8:21 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 1:9 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The doubling — 'from death to death' and 'from life to life' — intensifies the effect: the gospel does not merely describe death and life but produces them. The rhetorical question 'who is sufficient?' (tis hikanos) is not defeatist but prepares for the answer in 3:5-6: 'our sufficiency is from God.' The word hikanos ('sufficient, adequate, competent') becomes a key term in the following chapters.
17. The verb kapēleuontes ('peddling, hawking, adulterating for profit') is a marketplace term for merchants who diluted wine for extra profit. Paul contrasts himself with traveling teachers who commercialized their message. The triple qualification — 'of sincerity,' 'from God,' 'in the sight of God' — establishes the integrity of his ministry against implicit charges of self-serving rhetoric.

## 3

**Summary:** *Paul contrasts the ministry of the old covenant with the ministry of the new covenant. He begins by declaring that the Corinthians themselves are his letter of recommendation, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on human hearts. Paul then develops an extended midrash on Exodus 34, where Moses veiled his face after encountering God's glory. The ministry of the old covenant, though glorious, was a ministry of death and condemnation written in letters on stone; the ministry of the new covenant, written by the Spirit, is a ministry of righteousness and life with surpassing glory. The veil that covered Moses's face now covers the hearts of those who read the old covenant without Christ, but when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. The chapter culminates in the declaration that all believers, with unveiled faces, are being transformed into the Lord's image from one degree of glory to another.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *Paul's reading of Exodus 34 is one of the most creative and theologically consequential interpretive moves in the New Testament. He transforms Moses's veil from a concealment of fading glory into a metaphor for spiritual blindness that persists wherever the old covenant is read apart from Christ. The statement 'the Lord is the Spirit' (v. 17) is one of the most debated phrases in Pauline theology — it does not collapse the persons of the Trinity but identifies the risen Lord as the one who operates through the Spirit in the new covenant. The final verse (v. 18) presents the Christian life as ongoing transformation (metamorphoumetha, the same word used for the Transfiguration) into Christ's image.*

**Translation Friction:** *The phrase 'the Lord is the Spirit' (v. 17) is theologically complex and we render the Greek without systematic-theological paraphrase. Paul's contrast between old and new covenants has historically been used to denigrate Judaism; the text itself contrasts the modes of covenant administration (letter vs. Spirit, stone vs. heart), not the God who stands behind both. The 'fading glory' interpretation of Moses's face (vv. 7, 13) goes beyond the Exodus narrative, which does not say the glory faded — this is Paul's interpretive addition.*

**Connections:** *The 'tablets of the heart' language echoes Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:26-27 (the new covenant and heart-of-flesh promises). The veil imagery connects to Isaiah 25:7 (the shroud over all peoples). The transformation 'from glory to glory' anticipates Romans 8:29 (conformed to the image of the Son) and 1 Corinthians 15:49 (bearing the image of the heavenly man). The Spirit-letter contrast echoes Romans 2:29 and 7:6.*

<sup>1</sup>Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? <sup>2</sup>You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone, <sup>3</sup>Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. Not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. <sup>4</sup>Such is the confidence we have through Christ before God. <sup>5</sup>Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup>Who as well has fashioned us able ministers of the new testament. Not of the letter, but of the inner life — for the letter killeth, but the inner life gives life. <sup>7</sup>Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses's face because of its glory, which was being set aside, <sup>8</sup>How will not the ministration of the spirit be instead glorious? <sup>9</sup>For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, how much more does the ministry of righteousness overflow with glory! <sup>10</sup>Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. <sup>11</sup>For if what was being set aside came through glory, how much more does what remains come in glory! <sup>12</sup>Since we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, <sup>13</sup>Not as Moses, which placed a vail over his face, that genuine offspring of Israel could not stedfastly pay attention to the end of that which is abolished:. <sup>14</sup>But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it removed. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. <sup>16</sup>But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup>And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Letters of recommendation (systatikōn epistolōn) were standard practice in the ancient world for traveling teachers and missionaries. Paul's opponents in Corinth apparently carried such letters; Paul's rhetorical question implies that his relationship with the Corinthians makes such documentation unnecessary.
2. Paul transforms the metaphor: the Corinthian believers themselves are his letter of recommendation, and they are written not on paper but on the apostle's heart. The wordplay between ginōskomenē ('known') and anaginōskomenē ('read') creates an elegant pairing in Greek.
3. The contrast between stone tablets and hearts of flesh directly evokes Ezekiel 36:26 ('I will remove the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh') and Jeremiah 31:33 ('I will write my law on their hearts'). Paul fuses the new covenant prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel with the Sinai narrative to distinguish his ministry from that of Moses. The phrase 'letter of Christ' (epistolē Christou) makes Christ the author and the Corinthians the document.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 36:26 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 31:33 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The word pepoithēsis ('confidence, trust') is directed 'through Christ toward God' — Paul's confidence in his ministry is not self-generated but mediated by Christ and directed toward God as its ultimate ground.
5. This answers the question of 2:16, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' The word hikanotēs ('sufficiency, competence, adequacy') is emphatically sourced in God (ek tou theou), not in the apostle's own ability. Paul's ministry operates by divine enablement, not human qualification.
6. The phrase kainēs diathēkēs ('new covenant') directly echoes Jeremiah 31:31 (LXX 38:31). The contrast between gramma ('letter') and pneuma ('Spirit') is not between literal and allegorical interpretation, nor between Old Testament and New, but between the mode of the old covenant (external law that exposes sin and condemns) and the mode of the new (the Spirit who transforms from within). The verb zōopoiēi ('gives life, makes alive') is the same used for resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:22.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 31:31. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Paul calls the Sinai covenant the 'ministry of death' (diakonia tou thanatou) — not because the law is evil, but because when the law encounters human sin, it can only condemn (cf. Romans 7:10). The participle katargoumenēn ('being set aside, being brought to nothing') indicates that the glory of the old covenant was transitory by design, not that it was invalid. Paul is interpreting, not denigrating, the Mosaic ministry.
8. Paul argues from the lesser to the greater (qal vahomer in rabbinic terminology): if the ministry that brought death was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings the Spirit? The logic assumes that both ministries are genuinely glorious — the new does not negate the old but surpasses it.
9. A second qal vahomer argument, now using different terms: 'condemnation' (katakrisis) versus 'righteousness' (dikaiosynē). The verb perisseuei ('overflows, abounds') indicates not merely a comparative but a qualitative superiority of the new covenant's glory.
10. Paul uses a startling paradox: the old covenant's glory is so outshone by the new that it appears gloryless by comparison — like stars that are invisible at sunrise, not because they have ceased to exist, but because a greater light overwhelms them.
11. The contrast is between to katargoumenon ('what is being set aside') and to menon ('what remains, what endures'). The old covenant was temporary by divine design; the new covenant is permanent. Both come in glory, but permanence confers greater glory.
12. The word parrēsia ('boldness, openness, confidence, freedom of speech') is a key political and philosophical term in the Greek world, denoting the citizen's right to speak freely. Paul contrasts his parrēsia with Moses's veil: the new covenant minister speaks openly because the glory he mediates does not fade.
13. Paul's interpretation goes beyond Exodus 34:33-35, where Moses veils his face after speaking with Israel, apparently to shield them from the residual glory. Paul reinterprets the veil's purpose: it prevented Israel from seeing the telos ('end, outcome, goal') of the fading glory. The word telos can mean both 'end' (cessation) and 'goal' (fulfillment), and Paul may intend both — the old covenant's glory was pointing toward Christ as its fulfillment.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 34:33-35 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The verb epōrōthē ('were hardened, were made dull') shifts the veil from Moses's face to the minds of his hearers. Paul transfers the image across time: what happened at Sinai continues 'to this day' whenever the old covenant is read without recognizing Christ as its fulfillment. The phrase palaia diathēkē ('old covenant') is the earliest use of this term for the Hebrew Scriptures, though Paul means the Sinai covenant specifically, not the entire Old Testament.

15. The shift from 'minds' (v. 14) to 'hearts' (kardia) deepens the diagnosis: the problem is not merely intellectual but affects the core of the person. 'Moses' is used by metonymy for the Torah or the entire old covenant scripture read in synagogue.
16. Paul alludes to Exodus 34:34, where Moses removed the veil when he entered the LORD's presence. Paul universalizes this: whenever anyone (not just Moses) turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. The verb periaireitai ('is removed') is in the present tense — this is not a future eschatological event but a present reality available to any who turn to Christ.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 34:34. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. This is one of the most debated sentences in Paul. 'The Lord is the Spirit' does not mean that the second and third persons of the Trinity are identical, but that in the experience of the new covenant, the risen Lord encounters believers through the Spirit. The 'Lord' whom Moses approached (Exodus 34:34) is now encountered as 'the Spirit' who transforms. The freedom (eleutheria) is freedom from the veil, from the letter that kills, and from condemnation.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 34:34. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The verb katoptrizomenoi can mean 'beholding as in a mirror' or 'reflecting.' Either sense works: believers see Christ's glory and, in seeing it, are transformed. The verb metamorphoumetha ('are being transformed') is the same word used for the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2) and for Romans 12:2. The present tense indicates an ongoing process. The phrase apo doxēs eis doxan ('from glory to glory') describes progressive transformation, and the source is identified as kyriou pneumatos ('the Lord who is the Spirit').

## 4

**Summary:** *Paul continues defending his ministry by insisting on transparency and rejecting shameful, underhanded methods. The gospel is veiled only to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded. Paul proclaims not himself but Christ Jesus as Lord, for the same God who said 'Let light shine out of darkness' has shone in the hearts of believers to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Christ. This treasure, however, is held in 'jars of clay,' so that the surpassing power belongs to God, not to the apostles. Paul catalogs his afflictions — pressed but not crushed, struck down but not destroyed — always carrying the death of Jesus in his body so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed. The chapter closes with the contrast between the outer self wasting away and the inner self being renewed daily, and between the momentary lightness of affliction and the eternal weight of glory.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The 'jars of clay' metaphor (v. 7) is one of Paul's most enduring images. Clay pots were the cheapest, most fragile, most disposable containers in the ancient world — they held oil for lamps, stored provisions, and were easily shattered. Paul insists that the fragility of the human vessel is not a liability but the very means by which God's power is displayed. The paradoxes of verses 8-9 ('afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed') form one of the great catalogs of apostolic endurance. The closing contrast between momentary affliction and eternal glory (v. 17) uses the language of weight: the 'light' burden of suffering is contrasted with the 'weight' (baros) of glory — the Hebrew word for glory (kavod) derives from the root meaning 'heavy.'*

**Translation Friction:** *The phrase 'the god of this age' (v. 4) is the only place in the New Testament where Satan is given this title, though the concept appears elsewhere (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2). Some patristic interpreters took 'god' as a reference to the true God who blinded unbelievers in judgment, but the context strongly favors Satan as the referent. The phrase 'always carrying in the body the death of Jesus' (v. 10) is distinct from Paul's usual 'dying with Christ' language and may refer to the physical toll of apostolic ministry.*

**Connections:** *The creation-light imagery (v. 6) echoes Genesis 1:3 and Isaiah 9:2. The 'jars of clay' connects to the potter-clay imagery of Isaiah 29:16, 45:9, and Jeremiah 18. The death-life paradox anticipates the extended treatment in chapter 5. The 'eternal weight of glory' echoes the Hebrew kavod theology of the Old Testament. The catalog of sufferings connects to the longer lists in 6:4-10 and 11:23-33.*

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy we received, we do not lose heart. <sup>2</sup>But we have renounced shameful, hidden things, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the open display of the truth commending ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their

case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus's sake. <sup>6</sup>To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of god in the face of jesus christ, for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts. <sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay, so that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us. <sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, <sup>9</sup>We are hunted down but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down but never destroyed. <sup>10</sup>At all times bearing concerning in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. <sup>11</sup>For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus's sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup>So death is at work in us, but life in you. <sup>13</sup>Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written — "I believed, and so I spoke" — we also believe, and so we also speak, <sup>14</sup>Being aware that he which raised up the Lord Jesus will raise up us also by Jesus, and will present us with you. <sup>15</sup>For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people, it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. <sup>16</sup>So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For this momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup>While we pay attention not at the matters which are seen, but at the matters which are not seen — for the matters which are seen are temporal. But the matters which are not seen are eternal.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The verb *engkakoumen* ('lose heart, become discouraged, grow weary') is the letter's refrain (also in v. 16). Paul's perseverance is grounded not in personal resilience but in divine mercy (*eleēthēmen*, 'we were shown mercy' — a divine passive).
2. The verb *dolountes* ('adulterating, falsifying, corrupting') recalls the 'peddlers' of 2:17 and the wine-merchant metaphor. Paul contrasts hidden deception with open manifestation (*phanērōsis*) — the transparency theme of chapter 3 continues. The phrase 'in the sight of God' (*enōpion tou theou*) places all ministry under divine scrutiny.
3. Paul takes up the veil imagery from chapter 3 and applies it to the gospel itself. The perfect participle *kekalymmenon* ('having been veiled') indicates a settled state. The present participle *apollymenois* ('perishing') echoes 2:15 and indicates an ongoing condition, not a final verdict.
4. The title 'the god of this age' (*ho theos tou aiōnos toutou*) refers to Satan, who exercises a usurped authority over the present evil age. Christ is called 'the image of God' (*eikōn tou theou*), a title with profound theological implications — it echoes Genesis 1:26-27 (humanity made in God's image) and anticipates Colossians 1:15. What was lost in Adam is perfectly realized in Christ.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 1:26-27. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The double self-reference creates a deliberate contrast: Paul does not preach himself (as subject of the message) but presents himself as a servant (*doulos*, 'slave') of the Corinthians. The confession 'Jesus Christ as Lord' (*Iēsou Christon kyriōn*) is the earliest Christian creed (cf. Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:11).
6. Paul connects creation (Genesis 1:3) to conversion: the same God who spoke light into being at creation has illuminated the believer's heart. The phrase 'in the face of Jesus Christ' (*en prosōpō Iēsou Christou*) circles back to Moses's veiled face (3:7, 13) — what was hidden behind Moses's veil is now openly revealed in Christ's face. The chain of genitives ('the light of the knowledge of the glory of God') is theologically dense: God's glory is known and that knowledge illuminates.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 1:3. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The 'treasure' (*thēsauros*) is the gospel, the light of verse 6. The 'jars of clay' (*ostrakinois skeuesin*) were the cheapest containers in the ancient world — fragile, disposable, and utterly ordinary. The purpose clause (*hina*) reveals that human fragility is by divine design: the weakness of the vessel makes the power of God unmistakable. This is the thesis statement of 2 Corinthians' theology of weakness.
8. The first pair of paradoxes begins the catalog. The verbs *thlibomenoi* ('pressed, afflicted') and *stenochoroumenoi* ('crushed, hemmed in, confined') share a physical-pressure metaphor — squeezed but not compressed to the breaking point. The second pair uses *aporoumenoi* ('at a loss, perplexed') and *exaporoumenoi* ('utterly at a loss, in despair') — the same root intensified with the prefix *ex-*.
9. The third pair — 'persecuted but not forsaken' (*diōkomenoi all' ouk engkataleipomenoi*) — echoes Psalm 22:1 (LXX 21:2), where the psalmist cries out to a God who has not forsaken him. The fourth — 'struck down but not destroyed' — uses military imagery. Each pair insists on the same point: suffering is real but never final.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 22:1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.

10. The word *nekrōsin* ('death, dying, putting to death') is stronger than 'dying' — it denotes the state of death itself. Paul's physical body bears the marks of Jesus's death (through persecution and suffering), and this very participation in Christ's death becomes the means through which Christ's resurrection life is manifested. The logic is profoundly incarnational: the gospel is displayed through the apostle's body.
11. Paul restates verse 10 with greater specificity: 'we who are alive' (*hēmeis hoi zōntes*) emphasizes the paradox — they are living people constantly handed over to death. The phrase 'mortal flesh' (*thnētē sarki*) emphasizes the vulnerability of the body through which divine life is displayed.
12. This compressed sentence captures the vicarious logic of apostolic ministry: Paul's dying produces the Corinthians' living. The verb *energeitai* ('is at work, is operative') treats death as an active force, not a passive condition. The exchange — death in the apostle, life in the church — mirrors the pattern of Christ's own death-for-others.
13. Paul quotes Psalm 116:10 (LXX 115:1), a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from death. The 'spirit of faith' connects the psalmist's experience to Paul's own: both believed in the midst of suffering and therefore spoke. Faith compels proclamation, not silence.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalms 116:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The resurrection of Jesus is the ground of Paul's confidence: the same God who raised Jesus will raise his servants. The verb *parastēsei* ('will present, will bring before') suggests a formal presentation before God — the eschatological counterpart to the present suffering. The phrase 'with you' (*syn hymin*) includes the Corinthians in this future hope.
15. Paul envisions a cascade: grace reaches more people, who give more thanks, which increases God's glory. The verb *pleonasasa* ('having increased, having extended') and *perisseuē* ('may overflow, may abound') are both words of surplus and abundance, characteristic of Paul's theology of grace.
16. The refrain 'we do not lose heart' (*ouk engkakoumen*) echoes verse 1, forming an *inclusio*. The contrast between the 'outer person' (*exō anthrōpos*) and the 'inner person' (*esō anthrōpos*) is not a Platonic body-soul dualism but a distinction between the visible, mortal dimension of existence and the Spirit-renewed core that is being transformed (3:18). The phrase 'day by day' (*hēmera kai hēmera*) emphasizes the dailiness of renewal.
17. The phrase *kath' hyperbolēn eis hyperbolēn* ('beyond all measure to beyond all measure') piles superlatives to describe the incomparability of future glory. The word *baros* ('weight, heaviness') is deliberately contrasted with *elaphron* ('light') — affliction is light, but glory is heavy. This is a theological wordplay rooted in the Hebrew *kavod* ('glory'), which derives from the root *kaved* ('heavy'). The verb *katēgazetai* ('is producing, is working out') indicates that present suffering actively generates future glory.
18. The paradox of 'looking at what is unseen' is intentional: Paul inverts normal epistemology. The verb *skopountōn* ('looking at, fixing attention on, aiming at') implies deliberate focus, not passive sight. The visible world (suffering, decay, death) is *proskaira* ('temporary, for a season'), while the invisible world (glory, resurrection, God's presence) is *aiōnia* ('eternal'). This is not Platonic idealism but eschatological realism — the unseen things are more real because they endure.

## 5

**Summary:** *Paul extends his meditation on mortality and resurrection. He compares the earthly body to a tent that is being dismantled, and the resurrection body to a building from God, eternal in the heavens. While in this body, believers groan — not to be stripped naked (disembodied) but to be clothed with the heavenly dwelling so that mortality is swallowed up by life. God has given the Spirit as a guarantee of this future. Therefore, believers walk by faith, not by sight, and whether at home in the body or away from the body, they aim to please the Lord. Paul then declares that all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The chapter reaches its theological climax with the proclamation that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old has passed away, the new has come. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and has entrusted to the apostles the ministry and message of reconciliation. Paul closes with the stunning exchange formula: God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter contains two of the most quoted verses in the Pauline corpus. 'If anyone is in Christ — new creation!' (v. 17) is a declaration so compressed that its syntax is virtually exclamatory; the Greek has no verb, just the predicate 'new creation' (*kainē ktisis*). The reconciliation passage (vv. 18-21) is the fullest statement of atonement theology in Paul's letters, culminating in the 'great exchange' of verse 21 — a verse that has shaped atonement doctrine across every major Christian tradition. The phrase 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself' (v. 19) can be parsed in multiple ways, each with different theological implications, and we render the Greek without forcing a single reading.*

*Translation Friction: The tent-and-building metaphor (vv. 1-5) is debated: does the 'building from God' refer to the resurrection body, to an intermediate heavenly state, or to Christ's body (the church)? Paul's language about preferring to be 'away from the body and at home with the Lord' (v. 8) suggests some form of conscious intermediate state, though Paul does not systematize this. The 'judgment seat of Christ' (v. 10) refers to the *bēma*, the Roman magistrate's tribunal, applied here to Christ as eschatological judge. Verse 21 ('made him to be sin') is among the most theologically dense statements in Scripture; we render the Greek without interpretive paraphrase.*

*Connections: The tent metaphor connects to the tabernacle language of the Old Testament and to 2 Peter 1:13-14. The 'new creation' declaration echoes Isaiah 43:18-19 and 65:17. The reconciliation theology connects to Romans 5:10-11. The judgment seat of Christ connects to Romans 14:10. The 'great exchange' of verse 21 connects to Isaiah 53 (the suffering servant who bears iniquity) and to Galatians 3:13 (Christ became a curse for us).*

<sup>1</sup>For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. <sup>3</sup>If so be that being clothed we will not be discovered naked. <sup>4</sup>For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened — not that we want to be unclothed, but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. <sup>6</sup>So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, <sup>7</sup>Since we walk through faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. <sup>11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is also known to your conscience. <sup>12</sup>We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may have an answer for those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are out of our mind, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them. <sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ — new creation! The old has passed away; look, the new has come! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation — <sup>19</sup>The point is this: God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. He did not count people's sins against them, and he entrusted to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The word *skēnos* ('tent') is used in Greek literature for the body as a temporary dwelling. The contrast is between the fragile tent (earthly body) and the permanent building (*oikodomē*, 'construction, edifice') from God. The adjective *acheiropoiēton* ('not made with hands') is used elsewhere for the resurrected Christ's body as the new temple (Mark 14:58) and for the heavenly reality behind the earthly tabernacle (Hebrews 9:11, 24).
2. The verb *stenazomen* ('we groan') is not complaint but the deep yearning of creation itself (Romans 8:22-23). The verb *ependysasthai* ('to put on over, to be clothed upon') suggests putting on the heavenly body over the earthly one — not exchange but overlay, so that mortality is absorbed rather than merely discarded.
3. The fear of being found 'naked' (*gymnoi*) likely reflects the Jewish hope for bodily resurrection rather than Greek-style disembodied immortality. Paul does not want to be a bodiless soul but to be re-clothed with a resurrection body. Some manuscripts read *ekdysamenoi* ('having taken off') instead of *endysamenoi* ('having put on'), which would mean 'even though we have taken off the body, we will not be found naked' — the SBLGNT reads *endysamenoi*.
4. The phrase *katapothē to thnēton hypo tēs zōēs* ('mortality may be swallowed up by life') echoes Isaiah 25:8 ('he will swallow up death forever') and anticipates 1 Corinthians 15:54. Paul's hope is not escape from the body but the transformation of the mortal into the immortal — not subtraction but addition.

4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 25:8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The verb *katēgasamenos* ('having prepared, having fashioned, having worked out') indicates that God has been actively shaping believers for resurrection. The *arrabōn* ('guarantee, down payment') of the Spirit repeats from 1:22 — the Holy Spirit is the first installment of the resurrection life, already operative in the present.
6. The verbs *endēmoutēs* ('being at home, residing') and *ekdēmoumen* ('being away from home, abroad') create a spatial metaphor for the believer's present condition: physically present in the body but not yet in the Lord's immediate presence. This implies a distinction between the present experience of Christ through faith and the future experience of Christ face to face.
7. The word *eidos* ('sight, appearance, visible form') contrasts with *pistis* ('faith, trust'). The present tense *peripatoumen* ('we walk, we conduct our lives') indicates that faith-based living is the ongoing mode of Christian existence in the present age. This is not a deficiency but the divinely appointed mode of the 'already-not yet.'
8. Paul expresses a preference (*eudokoumen mallon*, 'we prefer rather') for departure from the body and presence with the Lord, similar to Philippians 1:23 ('to depart and be with Christ, which is far better'). This verse has been taken as evidence for a conscious intermediate state between death and resurrection, though Paul does not elaborate on its nature.
9. The verb *philotimoumetha* ('we aspire, we make it our ambition, we strive eagerly') carries connotations of honor-seeking — Paul redirects the competitive Corinthian culture toward the goal of pleasing Christ. The either-or construction (*eite... eite*) covers both present earthly life and the post-mortem state: the goal remains constant regardless of location.
10. The *bēma* ('judgment seat, tribunal') was the raised platform where a Roman magistrate sat to render verdicts. Paul applies this image to Christ as eschatological judge. The verb *phanerōthēnai* ('to be made manifest, to be revealed') suggests not merely appearance but exposure — all will be laid bare. The evaluation covers deeds done 'through the body' (*dia tou sōmatos*), emphasizing that embodied life has eternal consequences.
11. The 'fear of the Lord' (*ton phobon tou kyriou*) here is not generalized piety but specific awareness of standing before Christ's judgment seat. The verb *peithomen* ('we persuade') indicates that apostolic ministry is persuasion, not coercion. Paul's transparency before God (*pephanerōmetha*, 'we have been made manifest') and his hope for transparency before the Corinthians' consciences continue the openness theme of 2:17 and 4:2.
12. Paul distinguishes between self-commendation and providing ammunition for the Corinthians' defense of his ministry. The opponents boast 'in face' (*en prosōpō*) — that is, in externals like credentials, eloquence, and physical presence — rather than 'in heart' (*en kardia*). This contrast anticipates the 'fool's boast' of chapters 10-12.
13. The verb *exestēmen* ('we were beside ourselves, we were out of our mind') likely refers to Paul's ecstatic spiritual experiences (cf. 12:1-4), which his opponents may have criticized or questioned. Paul's response is that both his ecstatic moments (directed toward God) and his sober teaching (directed toward the Corinthians) serve legitimate purposes.
14. The verb *synechei* ('constrains, compels, controls, holds together') can mean either 'urges forward' or 'holds in check.' Both senses may be intended: Christ's love both drives Paul forward and prevents him from self-serving ministry. The logic of the atonement statement is participatory: because Christ died for all, all have died in him — his death is their death.
15. The purpose (*hina*) of Christ's death is not merely forgiveness but transformation of the direction of life: from self-oriented to Christ-oriented. The pairing of 'died and was raised' (*apothanōnti kai egerthenti*) is the irreducible core of the gospel — death without resurrection would be tragedy, not salvation.
16. The phrase *kata sarka* ('according to the flesh') does not mean 'in a physical body' but 'by worldly standards.' Paul is not denying the historical, incarnate Jesus but saying that the categories by which people (including Christ) are evaluated have been transformed by the cross and resurrection. The old criteria — social status, ethnicity, power — are obsolete in the new creation.
17. The Greek has no verb and no article: the exclamatory *kainē ktisis* ('new creation!') is a declaration, not a description. The phrase echoes Isaiah 43:18-19 ('I am doing a new thing') and Isaiah 65:17 ('new heavens and a new earth'). Paul applies cosmic-renewal language to the individual believer 'in Christ' — each conversion is an act of new creation. The perfect tense *parēlthen* ('has passed away') and *gegonen* ('has come into being') indicate that the new creation is an accomplished reality, not merely a future hope.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 43:18-19. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 65:17. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The verb *katallaxantos* ('having reconciled') is an aorist participle indicating a completed action: reconciliation is something God has already accomplished through Christ. The 'ministry of reconciliation' (*diakonia tēs katallagēs*) is both the content of Paul's message and the nature of his vocation. God is consistently the subject — he reconciles; humanity is the object that is reconciled.
19. The Greek word order allows multiple readings: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world' or 'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ.' Both are theologically valid; the first emphasizes the incarnation, the second emphasizes the instrumental role of Christ. The phrase *mē logizomenos* ('not counting, not reckoning') uses accounting language — God refuses to enter the world's sins on the ledger. The *logos tēs katallagēs* ('message of reconciliation') is both the gospel content and the apostolic commission.

20. The word *presbeuomen* ('we serve as ambassadors') is a diplomatic term — an ambassador represents the sovereign who sent him and speaks with the sovereign's authority. The appeal 'be reconciled to God' (*katallagēte tō theō*) is in the passive voice: 'let yourselves be reconciled,' 'accept the reconciliation God offers.' God has done the reconciling; the human response is to receive it.
21. This verse is among the most theologically consequential sentences Paul ever wrote. The 'great exchange' operates on a double identification: Christ is made sin (*hamartian epoiēsen* — not 'a sinner' but 'sin' itself), and believers become 'the righteousness of God' (*dikaiosynē theou*) in him. The phrase 'knew no sin' (*mē gnonta hamartian*) affirms Christ's sinlessness. How Christ was 'made sin' has been interpreted as bearing the penalty of sin, becoming a sin offering (the Hebrew *chatta't* means both 'sin' and 'sin offering'), or being identified with sinful humanity. We render the Greek without choosing among these interpretations.

## 6

**Summary:** *Paul continues his appeal as God's ambassador, urging the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. He quotes Isaiah 49:8 about the 'acceptable time' and 'day of salvation,' declaring that now is the favorable time. He then catalogs the marks of his authentic ministry: endurance through afflictions, hardships, sleepless nights, and beatings, as well as the weapons of righteousness. In a series of paradoxes, Paul describes himself as unknown yet well known, dying yet alive, sorrowful yet always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich, having nothing yet possessing everything. He then appeals with open heart for the Corinthians to open their hearts in return. The chapter concludes with a call to separate from unbelievers, citing a catena of Old Testament texts about God's dwelling with his people and the call to holiness.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The hardship catalog (vv. 4-10) is one of the most powerful passages in the Pauline corpus. It moves through three registers: circumstances of suffering (vv. 4-5), qualities of character (vv. 6-7), and paradoxes of existence (vv. 8-10). The final series of antitheses — 'as dying and look, we live; as sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet making many rich; as having nothing yet possessing everything' — is not rhetorical flourish but a theological claim: the cross-shaped life is the pattern of authentic ministry. The Old Testament catena in verses 16-18 weaves together texts from Leviticus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and 2 Samuel to construct a theology of holy separation grounded in God's covenant presence.*

**Translation Friction:** *The separation passage (vv. 14-18) has been much debated regarding its context. Many scholars consider it an interpolation from a separate Pauline letter (the 'previous letter' of 1 Corinthians 5:9), since it interrupts the emotional appeal of 6:11-13 that resumes in 7:2. We render the text as it stands in the SBLGNT without rearrangement. The call to 'not be unequally yoked with unbelievers' has been applied to various situations (marriage, business partnerships, religious syncretism); the original context likely addresses participation in pagan temple worship.*

**Connections:** *The Isaiah 49:8 quotation connects to the Servant Songs and Paul's self-understanding as fulfilling an Isaianic vocation. The hardship catalog connects to the lists in 4:8-9 and 11:23-33. The separation passage echoes Leviticus 26:11-12 (God dwelling among his people), Isaiah 52:11 (departing from uncleanness), Ezekiel 37:27 (the new covenant temple), and 2 Samuel 7:14 (the father-son relationship).*

<sup>1</sup>Working together with him, then, we also appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup>For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I helped you." Look, now is the favorable time; look, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup>We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup>However, in all matters approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, <sup>5</sup>Through beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, and times of fasting; <sup>6</sup>Indeed, by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, <sup>7</sup>By the message of truth, by the authority of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the departed, <sup>8</sup>By honour and dishonour, by wickedness report and good report — as deceivers, and yet true. <sup>9</sup>As unknown, and yet well known. As dying, and, take notice, we live. As chastened, and not killed; <sup>10</sup>Indeed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. As poor, yet making numerous rich. As having nothing, and yet possessing all things. <sup>11</sup>We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. <sup>12</sup>You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. <sup>13</sup>In return — I speak as to children — widen your hearts also. <sup>14</sup>Do not be

unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>What harmony is there between Christ and Beliar? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." <sup>17</sup>"Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them," says the Lord, "and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, <sup>18</sup>Will I be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The participle synergountes ('working together') most naturally takes God as the implied partner: Paul is God's co-worker (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:9). To receive grace 'in vain' (eis kenon, 'into emptiness') means to receive it without allowing it to transform one's life. The appeal is urgent: grace demands response.
2. Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8, a passage addressed to the Servant of the LORD. By applying it to the present moment, Paul declares that the prophesied day of salvation has arrived in the gospel era. The emphatic nyn ('now') repeated twice transforms prophetic future into realized present.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 49:8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The word proskopēn ('stumbling block, cause of offense, obstacle') indicates Paul's concern that personal conduct could undermine the credibility of the gospel message. The passive mōmēthē ('be blamed, be found fault with') indicates that it is the ministry itself, not merely Paul, that is at stake.
4. The hardship catalog begins with three general terms for suffering: thlipsesin ('afflictions, pressures'), anangkais ('hardships, necessities, compulsions'), and stenochoōriais ('distresses, tight places'). The word hypomonē ('endurance, patient steadfastness') heads the list as the governing virtue — not mere passive endurance but active perseverance under pressure.
5. The list moves from externally imposed sufferings (beatings, imprisonments, riots) to self-imposed disciplines (labors, sleepless nights, hunger). The word akatastasiais ('riots, disorders, tumults') refers to the social upheaval that followed Paul's preaching. The nēsteiais ('fastings, hunger') may refer to involuntary hunger from poverty rather than voluntary fasting.
6. The list shifts from circumstances of suffering to qualities of character. The inclusion of 'the Holy Spirit' (pneumati hagiō) among personal virtues is striking — the Spirit is not merely a quality Paul exercises but the divine source empowering all the other qualities. The phrase agapē anypokritos ('genuine love, love without hypocrisy') echoes Romans 12:9.
7. The 'weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left' (hoplōn tēs dikaiosynēs tōn dexiōn kai aristerōn) is a military image: the right hand held the offensive weapon (sword), the left held the defensive weapon (shield). Paul is armed for both attack and defense, but his weapons are righteousness, not worldly power.
8. The paradoxes begin. Each pair contrasts how the world perceives the apostle with the deeper reality. 'Impostors' (planoi, 'deceivers, wanderers, misleaders') is the charge leveled against Paul by his opponents; 'true' (alētheis) is the divine verdict. The series moves between external reputation and internal reality.
9. The exclamatory 'and look, we live!' (kai idou zōmen) breaks the rhythmic pattern to express astonishment at survival. The paradox of being 'unknown yet well known' describes Paul's marginal social status (unknown by worldly standards) contrasted with his recognition by God and the churches. 'Punished' (paideuomenoi, 'disciplined, chastened') carries the connotation of parental correction, not merely punitive suffering.
10. The climactic triad reaches its peak: 'having nothing yet possessing everything.' Paul's poverty is real (he worked with his hands, 1 Corinthians 4:12), but his spiritual wealth enriches others. The paradox echoes the Beatitudes and anticipates the description of Christ in 8:9 ('though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor'). The word katechontes ('possessing, holding fast') is stronger than merely 'having' — it implies firm, permanent possession.
11. Paul addresses the Corinthians by name — a rare and emotionally charged gesture in his letters (cf. Galatians 3:1; Philippians 4:15). The 'wide open heart' (peplatyntai, 'has been enlarged, expanded') is a Hebrew idiom for generosity and emotional openness (cf. Psalm 119:32). Paul has held nothing back.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 119:32. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The verb stenochoōreisthe ('you are restricted, confined, cramped') creates a spatial metaphor: Paul's heart is wide open (v. 11), but the Corinthians' hearts are cramped. The 'bowels' (splanchnois, 'viscera, gut, deepest affections') was the ancient locus of emotion, roughly equivalent to the modern 'heart.' The problem is not Paul's lack of openness but the Corinthians' withholding of affection.
13. The word antimisthian ('return, recompense, fair exchange') frames the request as reciprocity: Paul has opened his heart; now he asks the Corinthians to open theirs. The parenthetical 'as to children' (hōs teknois) reveals the paternal affection underlying the appeal and explains Paul's boldness.

14. The verb heterozygountes ('being yoked with a different kind') alludes to Deuteronomy 22:10, which prohibits yoking an ox and a donkey together. The five rhetorical questions (vv. 14-16) each expect the answer 'none' and establish absolute incompatibility between opposing principles. The context most likely addresses participation in pagan temple practices rather than all social contact with non-believers (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10).
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 22:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. Beliar (or Belial) is a name for Satan found in Jewish intertestamental literature (especially Jubilees and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs). The Hebrew beliya'al ('worthlessness') was used in the Old Testament for wickedness and eventually became a personal name for the chief adversary. The pairing of Christ and Beliar personalizes the cosmic conflict between light and darkness.
16. The declaration 'we are the temple of the living God' (naos theou esmen zōntos) parallels 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19, where the church and the individual body are called God's temple. The quotation combines Leviticus 26:11-12 and Ezekiel 37:27, both covenant-presence texts. The verb emperipatēsō ('I will walk among them') is extraordinarily intimate — God does not merely dwell in the temple but walks about among his people.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Leviticus 26:12. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 37:27. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. Paul quotes Isaiah 52:11, originally addressed to the exiles leaving Babylon. The call to 'go out' and 'be separate' is reapplied to the Corinthian situation: the new exodus is separation from pagan worship and idolatrous practices. The promise 'I will welcome you' (eisdexomai hymas) adds a positive dimension — separation from uncleanness leads to reception by God.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 52:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. This quotation adapts 2 Samuel 7:14 (the Davidic covenant promise, 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son') and universalizes it: the father-child relationship promised to David's heir is now extended to all believers, including 'daughters' (thygateras) — an expansion not in the original text. The title pantokratōr ('Almighty, ruler of all') translates the Hebrew Shaddai or Tsevaot and appears primarily in the Septuagint and Revelation.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 2 Samuel 7:14 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

## 7

*Summary: Paul resumes the personal appeal interrupted by 6:14-7:1, urging the Corinthians to make room for him in their hearts. He assures them he speaks not to condemn but out of deep affection. Paul then recounts his arrival in Macedonia, where he found no rest until Titus arrived with the good news that the Corinthians had responded to his severe letter with sorrow, longing, and zeal. Paul distinguishes between godly sorrow that produces repentance leading to salvation and worldly sorrow that produces death. The Corinthians' response demonstrated genuine repentance through their earnestness, eagerness, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and justice. Paul concludes by expressing his complete confidence in the Corinthians and his overflowing joy.*

*What Makes This Remarkable: Paul's distinction between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow (vv. 9-11) is one of the most pastorally significant passages in his letters. Godly sorrow (kata theon lypē) produces metanoia — a genuine change of mind and direction — that leads to salvation without regret. Worldly sorrow produces death: it is the remorse that spirals into despair rather than transformation. The seven marks of genuine repentance listed in verse 11 (earnestness, eagerness to clear themselves, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, punishment of wrong) form a comprehensive portrait of what true repentance looks like in a community. The resolution of the Titus narrative (begun in 2:13) in verses 5-7 reveals the emotional vulnerability of the apostle in a way that is unmatched in ancient literature.*

*Translation Friction: The relationship between 7:2 ('Make room for us in your hearts') and 6:13 ('Widen your hearts also') suggests that 6:14-7:1 may interrupt an originally continuous appeal. We render the text as it stands without rearrangement. The identity of the offender (v. 12) remains debated, as in chapter 2.*

*Connections: The Titus narrative resumes from 2:13 and completes the suspense created there. The godly sorrow passage connects to Jesus's teaching on repentance and Paul's theology of transformation. Paul's comfort in the midst of affliction echoes the comfort theology of 1:3-7. The expression of confidence anticipates the collection appeal in chapters 8-9.*

<sup>1</sup>Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. <sup>2</sup>Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have ruined no one, we have taken advantage of no one. <sup>3</sup>I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. <sup>4</sup>I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction. <sup>5</sup>For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn — conflicts without, fears within. <sup>6</sup>But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the arrival of Titus, <sup>7</sup>Not by his coming only, but by the encouragement by which he was comforted in you, when he informed us your earnest desire, your mourning, your passionate concern toward me. So that I rejoiced the more. <sup>8</sup>For even if I grieved you with my letter, I do not regret it — though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. <sup>9</sup>As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. <sup>10</sup>For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup>For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you — what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment of wrong! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in this matter. <sup>12</sup>So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. <sup>13</sup>Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. <sup>14</sup>For if I made any boast to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved to be true. <sup>15</sup>And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. <sup>16</sup>I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. This verse concludes the separation appeal of 6:14-18. The promises (epangelias) are those quoted in 6:16-18 — God's dwelling, fatherhood, and welcome. Holiness is not merely negative (cleansing from defilement) but positive (epitelountes, 'completing, perfecting'). The phrase 'fear of God' (phobō theou) provides the motivational context for holy living.
2. The imperative chōrēsate ('make room, receive, open up') resumes the appeal of 6:11-13. The triple denial — 'wronged no one, ruined no one, taken advantage of no one' — responds to accusations apparently leveled against Paul, perhaps related to the collection for Jerusalem or his exercise of authority.
3. The infinitives synapothanein ('to die together') and syzēn ('to live together') express the totality of Paul's bond with the Corinthians — a bond that encompasses both death and life. This echoes the death-and-life theme that pervades the letter (4:10-12; 5:14-15).
4. Four declarations of abundance: great confidence, great pride, filled with comfort, overflowing with joy. The verb hyperperisseuomai ('I overflow beyond measure') is an intensified form found only here and in Romans 5:20 in the New Testament. The paradox of overflowing joy 'in all our affliction' (epi pasē tē thlipsei) captures the letter's central paradox.
5. This resumes the narrative from 2:13, where Paul left Troas for Macedonia in search of Titus. The phrase 'our flesh had no rest' (oudemian eschēken anesin hē sarx hēmōn) echoes 2:13 ('my spirit had no rest'). The pair 'conflicts without, fears within' (exōthen machai, esōthen phoboi) reveals both external opposition and internal anxiety.
6. The title 'God who comforts the downcast' (ho parakalōn tous tapeinous) echoes the comfort theology of 1:3-4 and draws on Isaiah 49:13. The word tapeinous ('lowly, humble, downcast') describes Paul's emotional state without shame — vulnerability before God is the posture that receives comfort.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 49:13. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The comfort cascades: God comforts Paul through Titus, who was comforted by the Corinthians. Three responses characterize the Corinthians: longing (epipothēsis — deep desire to see Paul), mourning (odyrmos — grief over the breach), and zeal (zēlos — passionate commitment). This triad demonstrates genuine repentance through relational action.

8. Paul's candor is remarkable: he admits to having initially regretted sending the severe letter (metemelomin, 'I was regretting'), but the Corinthians' positive response has resolved his regret. The temporal qualifier 'for a while' (pros hōran, 'for an hour') indicates that the grief was temporary, not permanent.
9. Paul carefully distinguishes: his joy is not sadistic pleasure in their grief but joy that the grief accomplished its purpose — metanoia ('repentance, change of mind'). The phrase kata theon ('according to God, in a godly manner') qualifies the grief as divinely directed, not merely psychologically painful.
10. This verse presents one of the most important pastoral distinctions in the New Testament. Godly grief (kata theon lypē) is grief aligned with God's purposes that produces genuine transformation. Worldly grief (tou kosmou lypē) is self-focused remorse that leads to despair and death — Judas being the paradigmatic example (Matthew 27:3-5). The adjective ametamelēton ('without regret, not to be regretted') can modify either 'repentance' or 'salvation'; grammatically it most naturally modifies 'repentance.'
11. Seven responses demonstrate genuine repentance: (1) spoudēn ('earnestness, diligence'), (2) apologian ('defense, eagerness to clear themselves'), (3) aganaktēsīn ('indignation' at the wrong), (4) phobon ('fear' of God's judgment or Paul's authority), (5) epipothēsīn ('longing' for Paul), (6) zēlon ('zeal' for righteousness), (7) ekdikēsīn ('punishment, vindication'). The repeated alla ('but also, indeed') creates an escalating rhetorical effect.
12. Paul reveals that the severe letter had a deeper purpose than dealing with the specific offense: it was a test of the Corinthians' loyalty and love. The phrase 'in the sight of God' (enōpion tou theou) raises the relational dynamic to a theological level — the community's response to Paul is ultimately a response to God.
13. The joy multiplies through relational connection: the Corinthians' response comforted Paul, and Titus's joy at their response added even more to Paul's comfort. The verb anapepautai ('has been refreshed, has been given rest') echoes 1 Corinthians 16:18 and indicates that Titus found genuine rest of spirit among the Corinthians.
14. Paul had staked his credibility with Titus by boasting about the Corinthians' character. The Corinthians' positive response vindicated Paul's confidence and proved that his boast was not empty but truthful (alētheia egenēthē, 'proved to be truth').
15. The phrase 'fear and trembling' (meta phobou kai tromou) echoes Philippians 2:12 and indicates reverent seriousness in their reception of Titus as Paul's representative. Titus's deep affection (splanchna, 'gut-level compassion') for the Corinthians grew through the experience of their obedience.
16. The chapter ends on a note of unqualified confidence (tharrō, 'I am confident, I take courage') — remarkable given the tensions evident throughout the letter. This positive conclusion prepares the ground for the collection appeal in chapters 8-9, where Paul will leverage this restored relationship for a concrete act of generosity.

## 8

**Summary:** *Paul turns to the collection for the Jerusalem saints, using the Macedonian churches as a model of extraordinary generosity. Despite their severe affliction and extreme poverty, the Macedonians gave beyond their means, begging earnestly for the privilege of participating. Paul urges the Corinthians to excel in this grace as well, reminding them of Jesus Christ's supreme example: though he was rich, for their sake he became poor, so that by his poverty they might become rich. Paul counsels that giving should be proportional — from what one has, not what one does not have — and appeals to the principle of equality, quoting the manna story from Exodus. He commends Titus and two unnamed brothers who will administer the collection with full accountability and transparency.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *Verse 9 is one of the most theologically loaded single verses in the Pauline corpus: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.' This is not merely an appeal to follow Christ's example but a statement about the incarnation itself — Christ's pre-existent divine wealth, his voluntary impoverishment in becoming human, and the spiritual enrichment that results. Paul's fundraising theology is remarkable: he never simply asks for money but always grounds the request in Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. The principle of 'equality' (isotēs, v. 14) is not communism but reciprocal sharing among communities — those with surplus supply those in need, and the roles may reverse.*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the 'brother famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel' (v. 18) is unknown — Luke, Barnabas, and others have been suggested, but Paul's deliberate anonymity prevents identification. The relationship between chapters 8-9 is debated: some scholars see chapter 9 as a separate letter, others as a continuation. We render the text as continuous.*

*Connections: The collection for Jerusalem connects to 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Romans 15:25-28, and Acts 24:17. The Christ-hymn in verse 9 parallels Philippians 2:6-8 (the self-emptying of Christ). The manna quotation (v. 15) connects to Exodus 16:18. The theme of abundance from poverty echoes 6:10 ('poor yet making many rich').*

<sup>1</sup>We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup>In the midst of a severe trial, their overflowing joy and extreme poverty welled up into rich generosity. <sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup>They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to God's people. <sup>5</sup>This they did, not as we hoped, but foremost offered their own selves to the Lord, and to us, by the will of God. <sup>6</sup>So we urged Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup>But as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you — see that you excel in this act of grace also. <sup>8</sup>I say this not as a command, but through the earnestness of others I am testing the genuineness of your love. <sup>9</sup>That you through his poverty might be rich, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet because your sakes he became poor. <sup>10</sup>And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire it. <sup>11</sup>Now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. <sup>12</sup>For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>13</sup>For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness <sup>14</sup>However, by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance as well may be a supply since your want — that there may be equality:. <sup>15</sup>As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack." <sup>16</sup>But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care for you. <sup>17</sup>For he not only accepted our appeal but, being very earnest, he is going to you of his own accord. <sup>18</sup>With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. <sup>19</sup>And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. <sup>20</sup>We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, <sup>21</sup>Providing for honest matters, not only in the sight of the Lord, but as well in the sight of men. <sup>22</sup>And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup>As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. As for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. <sup>24</sup>So give proof of your love and of our boasting about you to these men, before all the churches.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Paul frames the Macedonians' generosity as 'the grace of God' (tēn charin tou theou) — their giving is not merely a human achievement but a divine gift. The Macedonian churches include Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.
2. The paradox is striking: severe affliction + extreme poverty = overflowing generosity. The phrase kata bathous ptōcheia ('rock-bottom poverty') indicates not relative but absolute deprivation. Yet this poverty, combined with 'abundance of joy' (perisseia tēs charas), produced rich generosity (haplotētos, 'generosity, simplicity, single-mindedness').
3. Paul testifies (martyrō) that the Macedonians gave not only up to their capacity (kata dynamin) but beyond it (para dynamin). The key word is authairetoi ('of their own accord, voluntarily') — this was not coerced giving but spontaneous generosity.
4. The Macedonians actually begged to be allowed to give — an inversion of the expected dynamic. The word koinōnian ('partnership, participation, fellowship') indicates that the collection was not mere charity but an act of communion between churches. Paul uses charin ('grace, favor') again for the collection, maintaining its theological dignity.
5. The phrase 'they gave themselves first to the Lord' (heautous edōkan prōton tō kyriō) reveals the theological priority: self-surrender to Christ preceded and motivated their financial generosity. Money follows the person; giving flows from self-giving.
6. Titus had apparently begun organizing the Corinthian collection during a previous visit. Paul now urges him to complete (epitelessē) what was started. Again, the collection is called charin ('grace, act of grace'), not merely a financial transaction.
7. Paul lists five areas where the Corinthians already excel (partly echoing the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 1:5), then adds generosity as a sixth. The SBLGNT reads 'our love for you' (tē ex hēmōn en hymin agapē) rather than 'your love for us.' By framing generosity as excelling (perisseuēte) in grace, Paul makes it a spiritual discipline, not merely a financial obligation.

8. Paul explicitly refuses to command (ou kat' epitagēn) generosity — it must be voluntary or it is not grace. The Macedonians' example serves as the test: will the Corinthians' love prove equally genuine (gnēsion, 'authentic, legitimate, true-born')?
9. This verse is a compressed incarnation-and-atonement Christology. Christ's 'riches' (plousios ōn) refer to his pre-existent divine glory; his 'poverty' (eptōcheusen, 'became a beggar') refers to the incarnation and its culmination in the cross. The 'riches' believers receive are the spiritual blessings of salvation. The entire verse functions as the ultimate paradigm for generosity: if Christ gave up infinite wealth for others' sake, how can his followers withhold their finite resources?
10. Paul distinguishes between gnōmēn ('judgment, opinion, counsel') and epitagēn ('command') from verse 8. He notes that the Corinthians began both the willing (to thelein) and the doing (to poiēsai) a year ago. The fact that willingness preceded action reflects the priority of heart disposition in Paul's theology of giving.
11. The principle is practical: eagerness must be followed through with action. The phrase ek tou echein ('out of what you have') establishes proportionality — Paul asks for completion based on actual means, not impossible standards.
12. This verse establishes a crucial principle of Christian giving: God evaluates the gift by the giver's willingness and means, not by the absolute amount. The word euprosdektos ('acceptable, welcome') indicates divine acceptance. The principle echoes the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44) and protects the poor from guilt.
13. Paul's principle is not that one group should be impoverished to enrich another. The word isotētos ('equality, fairness, equity') introduces a reciprocal principle that he develops in verse 14.
14. The principle of reciprocity: the Corinthians' material surplus meets Jerusalem's material deficit now; Jerusalem's spiritual riches (cf. Romans 15:27) or future material surplus may meet a Corinthian need later. The isotēs ('fairness, equality') is not mathematical equality but mutual provision within the body of Christ.
15. Paul quotes Exodus 16:18, describing the miraculous equalization of the manna: regardless of how much each Israelite gathered, everyone ended up with exactly what they needed. Paul applies this wilderness provision narrative to the church's economic life — God's people are meant to share so that no one has too much and no one too little.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 16:18 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. Paul attributes Titus's concern for the Corinthians to divine action — God 'put' (donti, 'having given') this earnestness into Titus's heart. Even the delegate's motivation is a work of grace.
17. Titus's willingness exceeds the mere acceptance of Paul's request — he goes authairetos ('of his own accord, voluntarily'), the same word used of the Macedonians in verse 3. Genuine generosity is always voluntary.
18. This unnamed brother has been traditionally identified with Luke, Barnabas, Mark, or others — but Paul's deliberate anonymity prevents certainty. The phrase 'whose praise is in the gospel' (hou ho epainos en tō euangeliō) means he is praised for his gospel work throughout all the churches.
19. The verb cheironōtheis ('appointed, elected, chosen by raising hands') indicates that this brother was selected by the churches through a formal process, not merely by Paul's personal preference. Multiple oversight of the collection funds demonstrates accountability — Paul is scrupulous about financial transparency.
20. The word hadrotēti ('generous gift, lavish amount, abundance') indicates the collection was substantial. Paul's caution about blame (mōmēsētai) reflects practical wisdom: handling large sums of money invites suspicion, so Paul ensures multiple trusted delegates are involved.
21. Paul echoes Proverbs 3:4 (LXX), establishing a dual standard of integrity: accountability before God and before people. Financial transparency in ministry is not optional but essential. The verb pronoumen ('we take thought in advance, we aim at, we provide for') indicates deliberate, proactive measures.
21. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Proverbs 3:4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
22. A second unnamed brother accompanies Titus — also proven through testing (edokimasamen, 'we tested and approved'). The three-person delegation provides full accountability for what was apparently a significant sum.
23. Titus is called koinōnos ('partner') and synergos ('fellow worker'). The brothers are called apostoloi ekklēsiōn ('messengers of the churches, apostles of the churches') — the word apostolos here means 'delegate, envoy' rather than carrying the technical sense of the Twelve. The title doxa Christou ('glory of Christ') is remarkable: these brothers are a visible display of Christ's glory.
24. Paul closes the chapter by placing the Corinthians' generosity on a public stage: their response will be visible to all the churches (eis prosōpon tōn ekklēsiōn, 'in the face of the churches'). The collection is not a private transaction but a public demonstration of love that validates Paul's boasting about the Corinthians.

## 9

**Summary:** *Paul continues his appeal regarding the collection, explaining that he is sending the brothers ahead to Corinth to ensure the gift is ready before Paul arrives with the Macedonians, so that neither Paul nor the Corinthians will be embarrassed. He then develops a theology of generous giving through the agricultural metaphor of sowing and reaping: whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Each person should give as they have decided in their heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. God is able to make all grace abound so that believers always have enough of everything and can abound in every good work. The chapter climaxes with doxology: the collection will produce thanksgiving to God, demonstrate the Corinthians' obedience to the gospel, and bind the churches together in mutual prayer and love. Paul closes with the exclamation, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The phrase 'God loves a cheerful giver' (v. 7) is one of the most widely quoted verses in the Bible, drawn from Proverbs 22:8 (LXX). The Greek hilaros ('cheerful, glad, joyful') is the root of the English 'hilarious' — the giver God delights in is not merely willing but genuinely joyful. Paul's theology of giving is remarkably non-coercive: each person gives 'as they have decided in their heart' (v. 7), and God's grace is the source of both the ability and the willingness to give. The closing exclamation about God's 'indescribable gift' (v. 15) brings the entire collection discourse to a Christological climax — the ultimate gift behind all giving is Christ himself.*

**Translation Friction:** *Some scholars regard chapter 9 as a separate letter from chapter 8, noting the apparent fresh beginning in 9:1 ('Now it is superfluous for me to write to you'). We render the text as continuous. The phrase 'indescribable gift' (v. 15) is grammatically ambiguous — it could refer to Christ, to the grace of giving, or to the whole economy of salvation. We render the Greek without specifying.*

**Connections:** *The sowing-reaping imagery connects to Proverbs 11:24-25, Hosea 10:12, and Galatians 6:7-9. The 'cheerful giver' alludes to Proverbs 22:8 (LXX). The abundant provision of God connects to Psalm 112:9 (quoted in v. 9). The collection's role in producing thanksgiving connects to 1:11 and 4:15. The 'indescribable gift' forms an inclusio with 8:9 (the grace of Christ).*

<sup>1</sup>Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, <sup>2</sup>I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians. I told them that Achaia was ready a year ago, and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. <sup>3</sup>But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. <sup>4</sup>Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we would be humiliated — to say nothing of you — in this undertaking. <sup>5</sup>So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance the generous gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an extortion. <sup>6</sup>The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup>He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup>For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup>By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your sharing with them and with all, <sup>14</sup>By their petition for you, which long following you for the exceeding grace of God in you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

1. The phrase *perisson moi estin* ('it is superfluous, unnecessary, excessive for me') is a rhetorical device (*praeteritio*) — by saying he does not need to write about it, Paul proceeds to write about it at length. The word *diakonia* ('ministry, service') elevates the collection from a mere financial transfer to an act of Christian service.
2. Paul reveals that he used the Corinthians' eagerness to motivate the Macedonians (just as he now uses the Macedonians' generosity to motivate the Corinthians). The verb *ērethisen* ('stirred up, provoked, stimulated') indicates healthy mutual encouragement between churches.
3. Paul is candid about his concern: if the Corinthians are not ready when the Macedonians arrive, his boasting will be exposed as hollow (*kenōthē*, 'be emptied, be made vain'). The advance delegation of Titus and the brothers (8:16-24) serves a practical purpose: to ensure the collection is complete before Paul arrives.
4. The parenthetical 'to say nothing of you' (*hina mē legō hymeis*) is wryly diplomatic — Paul acknowledges that the Corinthians' embarrassment would be even greater than his own. The word *hypostasei* ('undertaking, confidence, substance') can mean 'confident boasting' or 'project/enterprise.'
5. Paul uses *eulogia* ('blessing, generous gift, bounty') for the collection — a word that frames giving as blessing rather than obligation. The contrast between *eulogia* ('blessing, gift') and *pleonexia* ('greed, covetousness, extortion') reveals Paul's concern that the collection not appear coerced. The giving must be a blessing from the heart, not an extraction.
6. The agricultural metaphor of sowing and reaping was proverbial in the ancient world (cf. Proverbs 11:24; Galatians 6:7). The phrase *ep' eulogiais* ('upon blessings, bountifully') literally means 'sowing on the basis of blessings' — generosity produces abundance. The symmetry of the sentence makes the principle self-evident.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Proverbs 11:24. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The verb *proērētai* ('has decided beforehand, has chosen freely') emphasizes deliberate, premeditated generosity. Two negatives frame the motive: *not ek lypēs* ('from grief, reluctantly') and *not ex anankēs* ('from compulsion, under necessity'). The quotation 'God loves a cheerful giver' draws from Proverbs 22:8 (LXX). The word *hilaros* ('cheerful, glad, joyful') is the root of 'hilarious' — God delights in giving that flows from joy, not obligation.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Proverbs 22:8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The fourfold use of 'all/every' (*pasan... panti... pantote... pasan... pan*) emphasizes the comprehensiveness of God's provision. The word *autarkeia* ('sufficiency, self-sufficiency, contentment') was a Stoic virtue — having enough and needing no more. Paul transforms it: believers have *autarkeia* not through detachment but through God's abundant grace, which frees them for generosity.
9. Paul quotes Psalm 112:9 (LXX 111:9), which describes the righteous person's generosity. The verb *eskorpsen* ('scattered, distributed freely') suggests lavish, widespread giving. The 'righteousness' (*dikaiosynē*) that 'endures forever' is expressed through generous action — in the Psalm's logic, generosity is righteousness made visible.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalms 112:9. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. Paul draws on Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12, combining the image of God as the one who supplies seed with the promise that he will multiply the harvest. The 'harvest of your righteousness' (*ta genēmata tēs dikaiosynēs hymōn*) connects generosity to righteousness as in the Psalm 112 quotation — giving produces a crop of righteous fruit.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 55:10 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Hosea 10:12 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 112 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The theological circuit completes: God enriches believers so they can be generous, and their generosity produces thanksgiving to God. The word *haplotēta* ('generosity, simplicity, single-mindedness') indicates that enrichment is not for hoarding but for giving. The whole economy runs on grace and returns to God as praise.
12. Paul uses two words for the collection: *diakonia* ('ministry, service') and *leitourgia* ('liturgical service, public duty'). The latter is a cultic term — the collection is an act of worship, not merely philanthropy. It has a double effect: it meets physical needs and produces spiritual thanksgiving.
13. The collection proves the sincerity of the Corinthians' confession (*homologias*). Paul links financial generosity to gospel fidelity: sharing material resources with fellow believers demonstrates that one's confession of Christ is not mere words but lived reality. The phrase *eis autous kai eis pantas* ('toward them and toward all') extends the scope of generosity beyond Jerusalem.
14. The collection creates mutual affection: the Jerusalem saints will pray for the Corinthians and long for them. The relationship is no longer merely donor-to-recipient but sibling-to-sibling, bound together by the 'surpassing grace of God' (*hyperballousan charin tou theou*) that is visible in the Corinthians' generosity.
15. The chapter and the entire collection discourse close with this doxological exclamation. The word *anekdiēgētō* ('indescribable, inexpressible, beyond words') appears only here in the New Testament. The 'gift' (*dōrea*) most likely refers to Christ himself — the gift behind all gifts, the grace that enables all generosity. Paul began the collection appeal with the grace of Christ (8:9) and ends with it here, framing the entire discussion as a response to the supreme gift of God in the gospel.

## 10

**Summary:** *The tone of the letter shifts sharply as Paul addresses his opponents directly. He appeals 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ' but warns that he is prepared to wage spiritual warfare against every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. Paul's weapons are not worldly but divinely powerful for demolishing strongholds. He responds to the accusation that his letters are weighty but his physical presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible. Paul warns that when he comes in person, his actions will match his letters. He refuses to compare himself with those who commend themselves by their own standards, instead claiming only the territory God has assigned him — which includes Corinth. He closes with the principle that the one who boasts should boast in the Lord, for it is not self-commendation but the Lord's commendation that counts.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The military imagery of verses 3-6 is among the most vivid in Paul's letters. The 'strongholds' (ochyrōmata) he demolishes are not physical fortifications but patterns of thought — arguments, speculations, and 'every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.' This is intellectual and spiritual warfare, not physical combat, and Paul's weapons are truth and the power of God. The accusation quoted in verse 10 ('his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account') provides a rare glimpse of how Paul's opponents perceived him — and perhaps of Paul's actual physical appearance and rhetorical style.*

**Translation Friction:** *The relationship of chapters 10-13 to chapters 1-9 is one of the most debated questions in Pauline scholarship. The sharp change in tone has led many scholars to identify chapters 10-13 as part of the 'severe letter' or a separate letter fragment. We render the text as it stands in the SBLGNT. The identity of Paul's opponents (the 'super-apostles' of 11:5) remains debated — they appear to be Jewish-Christian missionaries who valued eloquence, visions, and physical impressiveness.*

**Connections:** *The spiritual warfare imagery anticipates Ephesians 6:10-17. The 'meekness and gentleness of Christ' echoes Matthew 11:29. The principle of boasting in the Lord quotes Jeremiah 9:24 (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:31). The territorial language ('the territory God has assigned to us') connects to Paul's apostolic commission in Galatians 2:7-9.*

<sup>1</sup>I, Paul, myself appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away! — <sup>2</sup>I ask that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I intend to show against some who regard us as walking according to the flesh. <sup>3</sup>For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup>For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, <sup>6</sup>We are ready to punish every act of disobedience once your own obedience is complete. <sup>7</sup>Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, let him remind himself that just as he belongs to Christ, so also do we. <sup>8</sup>For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. <sup>9</sup>I do not want to seem as if I am trying to frighten you with my letters. <sup>10</sup>For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." <sup>11</sup>Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will do when present. <sup>12</sup>Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding. <sup>13</sup>But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. <sup>14</sup>For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. We were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. <sup>15</sup>We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, <sup>16</sup>To preach the good news in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of matters fashioned ready to our possession. <sup>17</sup>"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." <sup>18</sup>For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The emphatic *autos de egō Paulos* ('I myself, Paul') signals a major shift in tone. Paul quotes his opponents' criticism ironically: they say he is *tapeinos* ('humble, lowly, servile') in person but bold only from a distance. By appealing through 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ' (*prautētos kai epieikeias tou Christou*), Paul transforms the accusation: his humility in person mirrors Christ's own self-lowering.
2. Paul issues a veiled warning: he prefers not to exercise the bold authority in person that he is willing to use. The charge that Paul walks 'according to the flesh' (*kata sarka*) implies that his opponents see his ministry as driven by human calculation rather than spiritual power.
3. Paul makes a crucial distinction: 'in the flesh' (*en sarki*, the sphere of ordinary human existence) versus 'according to the flesh' (*kata sarka*, by merely human means and standards). Living as a human does not mean fighting as one. The military metaphor *strateuometha* ('we wage war, we serve as soldiers') introduces the extended warfare imagery.
4. The phrase *dynata tō theō* ('powerful for God, divinely powerful, empowered by God') identifies the source of the weapons' effectiveness. The *ochyrōmata* ('strongholds, fortified places') are not physical fortresses but intellectual and spiritual constructions that oppose God's truth. The military language is metaphorical throughout.
5. The military imagery continues: *logismous* ('arguments, reasonings, calculations') and *hypsōma* ('lofty thing, high rampart, pretension') are demolished, and every *noēma* ('thought, scheme, mind') is taken prisoner (*aichmalōtizontes*, 'taking captive as a prisoner of war'). The warfare is explicitly intellectual and spiritual — the enemy is wrong thinking about God, and the goal is the obedience (*hypakoē*) of every thought to Christ.
6. Paul holds back disciplinary action (*ekdikēsai*, 'to punish, to avenge, to execute justice') until the Corinthians' obedience (*hypakoē*) is complete. This shows pastoral restraint: he gives the community time to self-correct before intervening with apostolic authority.
7. The opening can be read as an imperative ('Look at what is in front of you!') or an indicative ('You look only at the surface'). Either way, Paul challenges the Corinthians' superficial evaluation. His opponents claim special connection to Christ; Paul asserts that his claim is equally valid.
8. Paul defines the purpose of apostolic authority: *eis oikodomēn* ('for building up, for edification') and *ouk eis kathairesin* ('not for tearing down, not for destruction'). The verb *kathairesin* uses the same root as the 'destruction of strongholds' in verse 4 — Paul destroys arguments, not people.
9. Paul acknowledges the perception problem: his forceful letters could be read as mere intimidation (*ekphobein*, 'to terrify, to frighten thoroughly'). He wants his words to be taken seriously but not as bullying.
10. Paul quotes his opponents directly (*phēsin*, 'he/she/one says'). The criticism reveals that Paul's letters were powerful (*bareiai kai ischyrai*, 'heavy and strong'), but his in-person ministry was perceived as physically unimpressive (*asthenēs*, 'weak') and rhetorically poor (*exouthenēmenos*, 'despised, of no account'). This provides a rare window into how Paul appeared to his contemporaries.
11. Paul warns that his in-person actions will match his written words. The dichotomy his opponents exploit (strong in writing, weak in person) will collapse when he arrives. The warning is direct and unqualified.
12. Paul's irony is sharp: his opponents form a closed system of mutual admiration, measuring themselves only against each other. The repeated reflexive pronouns (*heautous... heautois... heautous*) emphasize the circularity. Those who commend themselves (*synistanontōn*) have no external standard — they are 'without understanding' (*ou syniasin*).
13. Paul introduces the concept of a divinely assigned *kanōn* ('rule, measuring rod, standard, territory'). His boasting is not unlimited but bounded by the territory God has apportioned. Corinth falls within that territory — Paul reached them first with the gospel, and his apostolic claim over them is legitimate.
14. The verb *efthasamen* ('we arrived first, we reached') implies chronological priority: Paul was the first to bring the gospel to Corinth (Acts 18). His opponents are latecomers who are building on Paul's foundation — a point he made in 1 Corinthians 3:10.
15. Paul implicitly accuses his opponents of boasting 'in the labors of others' (*en allotriois kopois*) — taking credit for churches they did not found. Paul's own hope is that the Corinthians' growing faith will expand his ability to carry the gospel further, using Corinth as a base.
16. Paul's missionary ambition extends westward — 'the lands beyond you' (*ta hyperekeina hymōn*) likely refers to Spain (cf. Romans 15:24, 28). He refuses to claim credit for territory someone else has evangelized, a principle of missionary ethics that his opponents apparently violate.
17. Paul quotes Jeremiah 9:24 (LXX 9:23), as he did in 1 Corinthians 1:31. The principle reframes all boasting: the only legitimate ground for boasting is what the Lord has done, not personal achievement. This sets the standard against which Paul's 'fool's boast' in chapters 11-12 will be measured.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Jeremiah 9:24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The chapter ends with the fundamental criterion of apostolic legitimacy: *dokimos* ('approved, tested, genuine') comes from the Lord's commendation (*synistēsīn*), not from self-promotion. This single sentence demolishes the opponents' entire project of self-commendation and returns the discussion to its proper ground: divine evaluation.

## 11

**Summary:** *Paul begins his 'fool's speech' — a sustained, ironic piece of self-defense in which he adopts the persona of a boasting fool to expose the absurdity of his opponents' credentials. He expresses jealousy for the Corinthians with a divine jealousy, fearing they will be led astray from sincere devotion to Christ. He sarcastically acknowledges the 'super-apostles' and defends his right to financial support while explaining why he chose to preach free of charge. He warns against false apostles who disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, just as Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. The chapter climaxes with an extraordinary catalog of sufferings: five times receiving thirty-nine lashes, three times beaten with rods, once stoned, three shipwrecks, a night and a day adrift at sea, danger from rivers, bandits, his own people, Gentiles, the city, the wilderness, the sea, and false brothers — along with sleeplessness, hunger, cold, and exposure. Beyond all these, Paul bears the daily pressure of his anxiety for all the churches.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The suffering catalog (vv. 23-28) is unparalleled in ancient literature for its combination of scope, specificity, and theological purpose. Paul lists sufferings that go far beyond the Acts narrative — only one of his five floggings and one of his three beatings can be correlated with Acts, meaning most of these events are otherwise unrecorded. The catalog functions as an anti-resume: where his opponents boast of impressive credentials, Paul boasts of the very things that prove his weakness. The ironic framework ('I am speaking as a fool,' v. 23) maintains the paradox throughout — the boast of suffering is simultaneously a refusal to boast in the conventional sense. The Damascus escape (vv. 32-33) is chosen as the climactic story not because it is the most dramatic but because it is the most humiliating: the great apostle fled like a smuggled package.*

**Translation Friction:** *The 'super-apostles' (hyperlian apostoloi, v. 5) are debated — some identify them with the Jerusalem apostles (Peter, James, John), others with Paul's opponents in Corinth. The context favors the Corinthian opponents. Paul's self-identification as 'unskilled in speech' (v. 6) may be genuine modesty, rhetorical strategy, or sarcastic understatement. The phrase 'another Jesus... a different spirit... a different gospel' (v. 4) suggests the opponents' theology differed significantly from Paul's, though the exact differences are unclear.*

**Connections:** *The 'divine jealousy' echoes Hosea and the prophetic tradition. Satan disguised as an angel of light connects to Jewish traditions about the fall of Satan. The suffering catalog connects to the shorter lists in 4:8-9 and 6:4-10, and to the imprisonments recorded in Acts. The Damascus escape connects to Acts 9:23-25. The 'anxiety for all the churches' (v. 28) encapsulates Paul's pastoral theology.*

<sup>1</sup>I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! <sup>2</sup>For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. <sup>3</sup>But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup>For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. <sup>5</sup>Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. <sup>6</sup>Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. <sup>7</sup>Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? <sup>8</sup>I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. <sup>9</sup>And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. <sup>10</sup>As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. <sup>11</sup>And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! <sup>12</sup>And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. <sup>13</sup>For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. <sup>16</sup>I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. <sup>17</sup>What I am saying with this boastful

confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. <sup>18</sup>Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. <sup>19</sup>For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! <sup>20</sup>For you bear it if someone makes you a slave, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. <sup>21</sup>To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of — I am speaking as a fool — I also dare to boast of that. <sup>22</sup>They are Hebrews? I am too. They are Israelites? So am I. They descend from Abraham? I do as well. <sup>23</sup>Are they servants of Christ? I am talking like a madman — I am a better one: with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. <sup>24</sup>Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea. <sup>26</sup>In journeyings frequently, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the desert, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brothers and sisters; <sup>27</sup>In exhaustion and hardship, in many sleepless nights, going hungry and thirsty, frequently going without food, exposed to cold and lacking adequate clothing. <sup>28</sup>And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I am not indignant? <sup>30</sup>If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. <sup>31</sup>The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup>At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, <sup>33</sup>By way of a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The word *aphrosynēs* ('foolishness, senselessness') signals the beginning of the 'fool's speech' that runs through chapter 12. Paul adopts the rhetorical convention of the fool's speech (known in the Greco-Roman world) but transforms it: his 'boasting' will consist entirely of weaknesses and sufferings.
2. Paul casts himself as the father who arranged the betrothal between the Corinthian church (the bride) and Christ (the husband). The 'divine jealousy' (*theou zelō*) echoes the LORD's jealousy for Israel in the Old Testament (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 4:24). Paul's concern is that the bride remain faithful to her betrothed until the wedding day.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 20:5. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 4:24. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The allusion to Genesis 3 casts Paul's opponents as serpent-figures who lead the bride astray through deceptive cunning (*panourgia*). The word *haplotētos* ('sincerity, simplicity, single-mindedness') describes the undivided devotion that characterizes faithfulness to one husband.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The irony is biting: the Corinthians tolerate false teachers but are impatient with Paul. The threefold 'another/different' (*allon Iēsoun... pneuma heteron... euangelion heteron*) suggests the opponents' teaching differed substantially from Paul's, though the exact nature of 'another Jesus' is debated.
5. The term *hyperlian apostolōn* ('super-apostles, supreme apostles') is Paul's sarcastic coinage — the prefix *hyper-* ('super, excessive') mocks their inflated self-estimation. Whether these are the Corinthian opponents or the Jerusalem apostles is debated; the context favors the opponents in Corinth.
6. The word *idiōtēs* ('layperson, amateur, unskilled person') was used for someone without professional training. Paul may concede lack of formal rhetorical training while insisting that his knowledge (*gnōsis*) — his grasp of the gospel — is not lacking. The irony is that Paul's letters demonstrate extraordinary rhetorical skill.
7. The rhetorical question drips with irony: Paul's 'sin' was preaching without payment. In the Greco-Roman world, traveling teachers who charged fees were considered more credible; by refusing payment, Paul lowered his social status (*tapeinōn*, 'humbling himself'). His opponents apparently used this against him, suggesting that his free preaching proved he was not a real apostle.
8. The verb *esylēsa* ('I robbed, I plundered') is deliberately provocative military language — Paul 'plundered' other churches (particularly the Macedonians, Philippians 4:15-16) by accepting their financial support while serving Corinth for free. The exaggeration highlights the absurdity of criticizing his free ministry.
9. The verb *katēnarkēsa* ('I was a burden, I was a deadweight') is a vivid word, possibly meaning 'I numbed no one' or 'I was a parasite to no one.' Paul's policy of financial independence from Corinth was deliberate and permanent (*tērēsō*, 'I will continue to keep').

10. Paul swears by the truth of Christ that he will never accept payment from Corinth. The verb *phragēsetai* ('will be blocked, will be silenced, will be stopped up') treats his boast about free ministry as a river that cannot be dammed.
11. The short, punchy question and answer reveal the emotional core beneath the theological argument. Paul's opponents had apparently suggested that his refusal of payment proved he did not love the Corinthians. Paul appeals to God as witness of his love.
12. Paul's free ministry removes his opponents' ability to claim equivalence with him. If they charge fees and Paul does not, they cannot say they work 'on the same terms' (*kathōs kai hēmeis*). Paul's financial policy is a strategic weapon against false apostles.
13. Paul drops the irony and speaks bluntly: his opponents are *pseudapostoloi* ('false apostles') and *ergatai dolioi* ('deceitful workers'). The verb *metaschēmatizomenoi* ('disguising themselves, masquerading') suggests deliberate deception, not mere error. They put on the appearance (*schēma*) of Christ's apostles while serving a different agenda.
14. Paul grounds the opponents' deception in a cosmic pattern: Satan himself practices disguise (*metaschēmatizetai*). The 'angel of light' image may draw on Jewish traditions about Satan's fall from angelic glory (cf. Life of Adam and Eve 9:1). If the master deceiver operates through attractive disguise, his servants will do the same.
15. Paul calls his opponents 'servants of Satan' (*diakonoi autou*) disguised as 'servants of righteousness.' The warning about their end (*telos*) corresponding to their deeds recalls the judgment seat of Christ (5:10) and places the opponents under eschatological judgment.
16. Paul re-establishes the ironic framework: he is about to boast 'as a fool' (*hōs aphrona*). The rhetorical device allows him to engage in self-promotion while simultaneously signaling that such behavior is foolish. The audience is put on notice that what follows is not Paul's normal mode of discourse.
17. The disclaimer *ou kata kyrion* ('not according to the Lord') is remarkable — Paul admits that self-boasting is not Christ's way. Yet the situation requires it: the Corinthians have been so impressed by his opponents' boasting that they need to hear Paul's credentials, even if presenting them feels foolish.
18. Paul matches his opponents' game — they boast 'according to the flesh' (*kata sarka*), by worldly credentials, so Paul will enter the same arena. But his boast, as it unfolds, will consist entirely of weaknesses and sufferings, inverting the entire convention.
19. Sharp irony: if the 'wise' Corinthians can tolerate the foolish boasting of his opponents, surely they can tolerate Paul's. The phrase *phronimoi ontes* ('being wise') echoes 1 Corinthians 4:10, where Paul called the Corinthians 'wise in Christ' with similar sarcasm.
20. Five abuses the Corinthians tolerate from Paul's opponents: enslavement (*katadouloi*), exploitation (*katesthiei*, 'devours, eats up'), theft (*lambanei*, 'takes'), arrogance (*epairetai*, 'exalts himself'), and physical abuse (*derei*, 'strikes, beats'). Whether the face-striking is literal or metaphorical is debated, but the rhetorical effect is clear: the Corinthians tolerate terrible treatment from impressive-looking leaders while rejecting Paul's genuine care.
21. More irony: Paul's 'shame' is that he was 'too weak' to abuse the Corinthians as his opponents do. The verb *ēsthenēkamen* ('we were weak') is the letter's central self-description, used both sarcastically here and sincerely elsewhere. Paul now turns to credentials that he shares with his opponents.
22. The three parallel claims establish ethnic and religious parity with his opponents, who apparently emphasized their Jewish credentials. 'Hebrews' (Hebrew-speaking Jews), 'Israelites' (members of the covenant people), and 'offspring of Abraham' (heirs of the promise) form an ascending scale of theological significance. Paul matches them at every level — but immediately surpasses them in the next verse.
23. Paul escalates from parity ('so am I') to superiority ('I am more,' *hyper egō*) — but his superiority consists entirely of suffering. The word *paraphronōn* ('talking like a madman, out of my mind') intensifies the foolishness motif. The catalog that follows is Paul's anti-resume: more labors, more prisons, more beatings, more brushes with death.
24. The 'forty lashes less one' (*tessarakonta para mian*) was the Jewish punishment prescribed in Deuteronomy 25:3, which set forty as the maximum. Jewish practice stopped at thirty-nine as a safeguard against exceeding the limit. None of these five floggings is recorded in Acts. The punishment indicates that Paul continued to submit to synagogue discipline, maintaining his identity within the Jewish community.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 25:3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. Beating with rods was a Roman punishment (Acts 16:22 records one instance at Philippi). The stoning likely refers to the event at Lystra (Acts 14:19). The three shipwrecks predate the one in Acts 27, which occurred after this letter was written. The 'night and a day adrift at sea' (*nychthēmeron en tō bythō*, literally 'in the deep') is otherwise unrecorded.
26. Eight instances of *kindynois* ('dangers') create a relentless catalog of peril. The dangers come from every direction: natural (rivers, sea), human (bandits, kinsmen, Gentiles), environmental (city, wilderness), and ecclesiastical (false brothers). The inclusion of 'false brothers' (*pseudadelphois*) at the climax of the list suggests that betrayal from within the church was the most painful danger of all.
27. The shift from dramatic dangers to grinding daily deprivation — sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness (*gymnotēti*, 'inadequate clothing, exposure') — completes the picture. Paul's suffering was not only spectacular but mundane, not only episodic but chronic.
28. The phrase *choris tōn parektos* ('apart from the external things, besides what I have not mentioned') suggests the catalog is not even complete. The *epistasis* ('pressure, attack, concern, crowding upon') and *merimna* ('anxiety, care, worry') describe the weight of pastoral responsibility for multiple churches simultaneously. This verse reveals what Paul considered the heaviest burden: not physical suffering but spiritual care.

29. Two rhetorical questions express Paul's empathetic identification with every member of his churches. When anyone is weak (asthenei), Paul feels their weakness. When anyone stumbles (skandalizetai), Paul burns with indignation (pyroumai — 'I am set on fire') on their behalf. This is not detached pastoral administration but visceral participation in others' suffering.
30. This verse is the thesis statement of Paul's entire fool's speech: his boast consists not of strengths but of weaknesses (astheneia). The paradox that governs 2 Corinthians — power made perfect in weakness — finds its definitive expression here.
31. Paul inserts a solemn oath, calling God as witness to the truth of his suffering catalog. The doxological phrase 'blessed forever' (eulogētos eis tous aiōnas) resembles the Jewish berakah formula and solemnizes the oath. The catalog of sufferings is so extraordinary that it requires divine attestation.
32. King Aretas IV was the Nabataean king (reigned 9 BC - AD 40). The ethnarchēs ('governor, ethnarch') was his representative in Damascus. This episode (also in Acts 9:23-25) comes from the very beginning of Paul's ministry. Its placement here, after the grand catalog, seems anticlimactic — which is precisely the point.
33. Paul closes the suffering catalog not with a triumphant deliverance but with an undignified escape — lowered through a window in a sarganē ('woven basket, hamper'). The great apostle to the Gentiles began his career being smuggled out of a city like a bundle of goods. This story is the perfect capstone for the fool's boast: Paul's signature moment of escape was simultaneously a moment of humiliation.

## 12

**Summary:** *Paul continues his fool's speech with an account of extraordinary visions and revelations, speaking of himself in the third person as 'a man in Christ' who was caught up to the third heaven and heard inexpressible things. To keep him from becoming conceited, a 'thorn in the flesh' was given to him — a messenger of Satan to torment him. Three times Paul pleaded with the Lord for its removal, and the Lord answered: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Paul embraces this paradox, declaring that he will boast all the more gladly in his weaknesses, for when he is weak, then he is strong. He then defends his apostleship by pointing to the signs, wonders, and mighty works performed among the Corinthians, while reiterating his refusal to burden them financially. He expresses his concern that when he comes, he will find quarreling, jealousy, and unrepentant sin, and that God will humble him before them.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The Lord's response to Paul's prayer — 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness' (v. 9) — is the theological heart of 2 Corinthians and arguably of Paul's entire ministry theology. It is one of only a few direct quotations of the risen Christ in the Pauline letters. The paradox that divine power reaches its full expression (teleitai, 'is completed, is perfected') specifically through human weakness is not merely a silver lining to suffering but a fundamental principle of how God operates in the world. Paul's response — 'when I am weak, then I am strong' (v. 10) — is the letter's thesis in a single sentence. The vision account (vv. 2-4) is remarkable for its reticence: Paul distances himself from the experience by using the third person, claims not to know whether it was bodily or spiritual, and says nothing about what he heard except that it was 'inexpressible.'*

**Translation Friction:** *The identity of the 'thorn in the flesh' (v. 7) has been endlessly debated: chronic illness (eye disease, epilepsy, malaria), a spiritual trial, persecution, or a particular opponent. Paul's language is deliberately vague, using the metaphor skolops ('thorn, stake, splinter') and the phrase 'messenger of Satan' (angelos satana). We render the Greek without specifying. The 'third heaven' and 'paradise' (vv. 2, 4) reflect Jewish cosmological categories in which multiple heavens exist; Paul uses these terms without explaining them.*

**Connections:** *The vision of paradise connects to Jewish apocalyptic literature (1 Enoch, Testament of Levi, 2 Baruch). The 'thorn in the flesh' connects to Numbers 33:55 and Ezekiel 28:24 (thorns as instruments of divine testing). The threefold prayer echoes Jesus's threefold prayer in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39-44). The 'signs of an apostle' (v. 12) connect to Romans 15:18-19 and Hebrews 2:4. The power-in-weakness theme reaches back to 1:8-9, 4:7, and 6:4-10.*

1I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3And I know that this man was caught up — whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows — 4How that he was caught up into paradise, and listened to unspeakable words, which it is not permitted for a man

to utter. <sup>5</sup>On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup>Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. <sup>7</sup>So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup>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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. <sup>11</sup>I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. <sup>12</sup>The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works. <sup>13</sup>For in what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong! <sup>14</sup>Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. <sup>15</sup>I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? <sup>16</sup>But granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by deceit. <sup>17</sup>Did I take advantage of you through any of those I sent to you? <sup>18</sup>I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? <sup>19</sup>Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. <sup>20</sup>For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish — that perhaps there will be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. <sup>21</sup>I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Paul acknowledges the unprofitability of boasting (ou sympheron, 'not beneficial') yet continues, driven by the rhetorical necessity of the fool's speech. The transition from suffering (ch. 11) to visions reveals another arena where Paul can match his opponents — but he will handle even this credential with characteristic self-deprecation.
2. Paul speaks of himself in the third person ('a man in Christ'), creating distance from the experience. The verb harpagenta ('caught up, snatched away') is passive — Paul did not achieve this experience through technique or merit; he was seized by divine power. The 'third heaven' in Jewish cosmology was the highest heaven, the dwelling place of God. The repeated disclaimer 'I do not know... God knows' reflects genuine uncertainty about the nature of the experience and a refusal to claim more than he can verify.
3. The repetition of the disclaimer emphasizes Paul's epistemological humility. Unlike his opponents who presumably boasted about their visions with elaborate detail, Paul refuses to claim knowledge he does not have about the mechanics of the experience.
4. The word paradeisos ('paradise') is a Persian loanword (pairidaeza, 'enclosed garden') used in the LXX for the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8) and in Jewish apocalyptic for the heavenly dwelling of the righteous. The arrēta rēmata ('inexpressible words, unspeakable utterances') are doubly inaccessible: they cannot be expressed (arrēta) and they are not permitted to be spoken (ouk exon). Paul's vision account is remarkable for what it withholds rather than what it reveals.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 2:8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. Paul maintains the third-person fiction: he will boast about 'that man' (the one who received the vision) but not about himself — except concerning his weaknesses. The distinction is theologically precise: the vision was God's doing and cannot be claimed as Paul's achievement; only his weaknesses are truly 'his own.'
6. Paul could legitimately boast about his visions — it would be truth, not foolishness. But he deliberately restrains himself (pheidomai, 'I spare, I refrain') so that people evaluate him only by what they can observe: his words and actions. He refuses to trade on secret spiritual experiences.
7. The skolops ('thorn, stake, splinter') is one of the most debated words in the Pauline corpus. Its identity has been suggested as a chronic illness, a spiritual affliction, an opponent, or persecution. Paul describes it with two phrases: 'in the flesh' (tē sarki, locating it in his bodily or human experience) and 'a messenger of Satan' (angelos satana, attributing it to demonic agency while recognizing it serves divine purpose). The purpose clause is repeated: 'to keep me from becoming conceited' (hina mē hyperairōmai) — God uses even Satan's torment to accomplish sanctification.

8. The threefold prayer echoes Jesus's threefold prayer in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44). In both cases, the answer is not removal of the suffering but grace to endure it. 'The Lord' (ton kyrion) to whom Paul prays is Christ, as the following verse makes clear — an early witness to prayer directed to the risen Jesus.
9. The perfect tense eirēken ('he has said and it still stands') indicates that Christ's answer is permanently valid, not a one-time response. The verb teleitai ('is made perfect, is completed, reaches its goal') means that divine power achieves its full expression specifically through human weakness — not despite it, not alongside it, but through it. Paul's response transforms suffering into opportunity: he will 'boast all the more gladly' (hēdista mallon) in weakness because weakness is the condition for experiencing Christ's power. The verb episkēnōsē ('may rest upon, may tabernacle upon, may spread a tent over') echoes the shekinah glory — God's dwelling presence — resting on the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35).
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 40:34-35. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The verb eudokō ('I am content, I delight, I take pleasure') does not describe masochism but the settled conviction that weakness is the arena of divine power. The final sentence — hotan gar asthenō, tote dynatos eimi ('for when I am weak, then I am strong') — is the thesis of the entire letter compressed into eight Greek words. It is the definitive Pauline paradox.
11. Paul closes the fool's speech by blaming the Corinthians for making it necessary — they should have been defending him instead of requiring him to defend himself. The phrase 'even though I am nothing' (ei kai ouden eimi) is both genuine humility and ironic understatement: Paul has just demonstrated superiority to the 'super-apostles' in every relevant category.
12. Paul mentions 'signs of an apostle' (sēmeia tou apostolou) as a recognized category — the Corinthians knew what authenticated an apostle. The triad sēmeiois te kai terasin kai dynamessin ('signs and wonders and mighty works') is a standard biblical formula for miracles (cf. Acts 2:22; Romans 15:19). Yet Paul places 'utmost patience' (pasē hypomonē) first, suggesting that endurance under suffering is the primary apostolic credential, not miraculous power.
13. Devastating irony: the only way the Corinthians were 'less favored' than other churches was that Paul did not take their money. 'Forgive me this wrong!' (charisasthe moi tēn adikian tautēn) is sarcasm at its most cutting — Paul's refusal to be a financial burden is cast as an 'injustice' requiring forgiveness.
14. The phrase 'I seek not what is yours but you' (ou zētō ta hymōn alla hymas) is one of the most beautiful expressions of pastoral love in the New Testament. Paul wants the Corinthians themselves, not their money. The parent-child analogy is apt: as their spiritual father (1 Corinthians 4:15), Paul provides for his children, not the reverse.
15. The verbs dapanēsō ('I will spend') and ekdapanēthēsomai ('I will be utterly spent, I will be completely exhausted') move from active to passive, from spending resources to being spent as a resource. Paul offers himself as an expendable commodity for the Corinthians' benefit. The closing question is poignant: greater love receives less love in return — the disproportionate economy of pastoral care.
16. Paul quotes another accusation: even if he did not accept payment directly, he was 'crafty' (panourgōs) and got money through deception — perhaps through the collection for Jerusalem. Paul's sarcastic tone indicates he is repeating slander, not confessing to it.
17. Paul challenges the accusation with a specific question: can the Corinthians name a single delegate of Paul's who exploited them? The verb epleonektēsa ('took advantage of, defrauded') is the same used in 7:2.
18. Paul cites Titus as a specific test case: the Corinthians can verify that Titus conducted himself with the same integrity as Paul. The rhetorical questions expect the answer 'No, he did not take advantage' and 'Yes, you acted the same way.' Paul's delegates replicate his character.
19. Paul corrects a misperception: his fool's speech was not self-defense (apologia) but was spoken 'in the sight of God' (katenanti theou) for the Corinthians' edification (oikodomēs, 'building up'). Everything Paul has said serves not his reputation but their spiritual growth. The address 'beloved' (agapētoi) reminds them of the relational warmth beneath the sharp rhetoric.
20. Paul lists eight vices he fears finding in Corinth — a catalog of relational sins that destroy community. The fear is mutual: Paul may not find the Corinthians as he wishes, and they may encounter a Paul they do not want (i.e., a disciplinarian). Many of these vices echo the problems already addressed in 1 Corinthians.
21. Paul's deepest fear is that unrepentant sin will force a painful confrontation. The triad akatharsia ('impurity'), porneia ('sexual immorality'), and aselgeia ('sensuality, debauchery') describes the sexual sins that were endemic in Corinthian culture and had apparently persisted in the church. The verb penthēsō ('I will mourn, I will grieve') shows that Paul's response to sin in the community is grief, not anger — the pastoral heart behind the apostolic authority.

## 13

**Summary:** *Paul prepares for his third visit to Corinth, warning that he will not spare the unrepentant. He cites the Old Testament requirement of two or three witnesses and warns those who have sinned that when he comes he will not be lenient. He challenges the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith, pointing out that Christ speaks through him — the same Christ who was crucified in weakness but lives by the power of God. Paul prays that they will do what is right so that he will not need to use his authority severely. The letter closes with final exhortations to restore relationships, agree with one another, and live in peace. The benediction that concludes the letter — 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all' — is the fullest Trinitarian formula in the Pauline corpus and has become the most widely used blessing in Christian worship.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The closing benediction (v. 14) is one of the most theologically significant sentences in the New Testament. It names all three persons of the Trinity in a single blessing formula: the grace of Christ, the love of God (the Father), and the fellowship (koinōnia) of the Holy Spirit. This is not a later credal formulation imposed on Paul but an early, pre-systematic expression of the church's experience of the triune God. The order — Christ first, then the Father, then the Spirit — reflects Paul's experiential starting point: believers encounter God's love through Christ's grace, and this encounter is made real by the Spirit's fellowship. The earlier paradox in verse 4 ('crucified in weakness... lives by the power of God') encapsulates the entire letter's theology in a single sentence about Christ.*

**Translation Friction:** *The 'two or three witnesses' citation (v. 1) from Deuteronomy 19:15 may refer to Paul's three visits (each visit being a 'witness' against the offenders) or to the standard legal requirement for church discipline. The phrase 'Christ is not weak in dealing with you but is powerful among you' (v. 3) could be heard as a threat of disciplinary action through apostolic authority, or as a statement about Christ's ongoing presence and power in the community. We render the Greek without privileging either reading.*

**Connections:** *The two-or-three-witnesses principle connects to Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, and 1 Timothy 5:19. The 'crucified in weakness / lives by the power of God' formulation connects to Romans 1:4, 1 Corinthians 1:23-25, and Philippians 2:7-8. The self-examination call echoes 1 Corinthians 11:28. The Trinitarian benediction connects to Matthew 28:19 and the later development of Trinitarian theology in the early councils.*

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. "Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." 2 I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them — 3 since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you but is powerful among you. 4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. 5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. 7 But we pray to God that you may not do wrong — not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, even though we may seem to have failed. 8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for. 10 For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, so that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down. 11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Welcome one another with a sacred embrace. 13 All the saints greet you. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 19:15, the legal requirement for establishing a charge. The application may be that each of Paul's three visits constitutes a 'witness' against the unrepentant — the first visit founded the church, the second ('painful visit') confronted the offense, and the third will bring judgment if necessary.

1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 19:15. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The phrase *ou pheisomai* ('I will not spare') is the same verb used in 1:23, where Paul explained his delayed visit was 'to spare' the Corinthians. The time for sparing is ending; if repentance has not occurred by the time he arrives, Paul will exercise apostolic discipline.
3. The Corinthians demanded proof (*dokimēn*) that Christ speaks through Paul. Paul's response is that Christ's power among them — seen in the gospel that transformed their lives and the signs that accompanied Paul's ministry — is that proof. The contrast between 'not weak' (*ouk asthenei*) and 'powerful' (*dynatei*) anticipates the next verse's paradox.
4. This verse is the Christological key to the entire letter. Christ's crucifixion was an act of weakness (*ex astheneias*) — the most helpless, degrading death imaginable. Yet from that weakness, he lives by the power of God (*ek dynamēōs theou*). Paul applies the same pattern to himself: his weakness mirrors Christ's crucifixion, and the power he exercises mirrors Christ's resurrection life. The cross-resurrection pattern is the template for apostolic ministry.
5. Paul redirects the demand for proof: instead of testing Paul, the Corinthians should test themselves (*heautous peirazete... heautous dokimazete*). The test is whether Christ is 'in' them — a statement of the mystical union that defines Christian existence. The word *adokimoi* ('failing the test, disapproved, disqualified') is the negative of *dokimos* ('approved, tested'), used in verse 3 for the proof they sought from Paul.
6. Paul expresses confidence (*elpizō*, 'I hope') that the Corinthians will recognize that he is not *adokimos* ('disqualified'). The logic is circular by design: if Christ is in the Corinthians (v. 5), and Paul brought them Christ, then Paul cannot be a fraud.
7. Paul's prayer reveals his deepest pastoral priority: he wants the Corinthians to do right, even if it means Paul looks bad. If they repent before he arrives, he will not need to exercise discipline — which means he will not get the chance to 'prove' his authority. He is willing to appear *adokimos* ('failed, disqualified') as long as the Corinthians are doing *kalon* ('what is good, what is right').
8. This deceptively simple sentence contains a profound claim about apostolic authority: it operates within boundaries set by truth itself. Paul's power is not arbitrary but bound to the truth of the gospel. He cannot act against the truth even if he wanted to — apostolic authority serves truth, not the reverse.
9. The final occurrence of the weakness-strength paradox in the letter: Paul rejoices when he is weak and the Corinthians are strong. The word *katartisin* ('restoration, mending, making complete') is related to the verb *katartizō* used for mending fishing nets (Matthew 4:21) and for setting a broken bone. Paul wants the Corinthian community healed and whole.
10. The purpose of this entire severe section (chs. 10-13) is restated: Paul writes firmly now so that he will not have to act firmly later. His authority (*exousia*) is for *oikodomēn* ('building up, edification'), not *kathairesin* ('tearing down, destruction') — the same distinction made in 10:8. The letter is an instrument of pastoral care, not punitive power.
11. Five imperatives close the letter: *chairete* ('rejoice' or 'farewell'), *katartizesthe* ('restore yourselves, be mended'), *parakaleisthe* ('comfort one another, encourage one another'), to *auto phroneite* ('think the same thing, be of one mind'), *eirēneuete* ('live in peace'). The promise attached is conditional in form: do these things, and 'the God of love and peace will be with you.' The title 'God of love and peace' is unique to this verse.
12. The 'holy kiss' (*hagiō philēmati*) is the standard early Christian liturgical greeting (cf. Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). It expressed familial bond and spiritual unity within the believing community, distinguishing itself from merely social or erotic greetings by the qualifier 'holy.'
13. The greeting from 'all the saints' (*hoi hagioi pantes*) encompasses the entire believing community from which Paul writes, connecting the Corinthians to the wider body of Christ. The universal scope ('all') emphasizes that the Corinthians are not isolated but part of a network of churches united in faith.
14. This is the fullest Trinitarian benediction in the New Testament and has become the most widely used liturgical blessing in Christian worship. Three divine persons are named with three distinct gifts: grace (*charis*) from Christ, love (*agapē*) from God the Father, and fellowship (*koinōnia*) from the Holy Spirit. The order — Christ, Father, Spirit — is unusual (Matthew 28:19 has Father, Son, Spirit) and reflects Paul's experiential starting point: believers first encounter Christ's grace, through which they know the Father's love, and this becomes real in the Spirit's fellowship. The SBLGNT omits the 'Amen' found in the KJV and some manuscripts.