

## **Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, the 1<sup>st</sup> letter**

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From Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus. For you were made rich in every way in him, in all your speech and in every kind of knowledge—just as the testimony about Christ has been confirmed among you—so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose. For members of Chloe's household have made it clear to me, my brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each of you is saying, "I am with Paul," or "I am with Apollos," or "I am with Cephas," or "I am with Christ." Is Christ divided? Paul wasn't crucified for you, was he? Or were you in

fact baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name! (I also baptized the household of Stephanus. Otherwise, I do not remember whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—and not with clever speech, so that the cross of Christ would not become useless.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ***"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and I will thwart the cleverness of the intelligent."*** Where is the wise man? Where is the expert in the Mosaic law? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made the wisdom of the world foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom did not know God, God was pleased to save those who believe by the foolishness of preaching. For Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks ask for wisdom, but we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position. But God chose what the world thinks foolish to

shame the wise, and God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, to set aside what is regarded as something, so that no one can boast in his presence. He is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "**Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.**"

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with superior eloquence or wisdom as I proclaimed the testimony of God. For I decided to be concerned about nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and with much trembling. My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Now we do speak wisdom among the mature, but not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are perishing. Instead we speak the wisdom of God, hidden in a mystery, that God determined before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood it. If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But just as it is written, "**Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him.**" God has revealed these to us by the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things

of God. For who among men knows the things of a man except the man's spirit within him? So too, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things that are freely given to us by God. And we speak about these things, not with words taught us by human wisdom, but with those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. The unbeliever does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The one who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is understood by no one. ***For who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to advise him?*** But we have the mind of Christ.

So, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but instead as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready. In fact, you are still not ready, for you are still influenced by the flesh. For since there is still jealousy and dissension among you, are you not influenced by the flesh and behaving like unregenerate people? For whenever someone says, "I am with Paul," or "I am with Apollos," are you not merely human?

What is Apollos, really? Or what is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, and each of us in the ministry the Lord gave us. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused it to grow. So neither the one who plants counts for anything, nor

the one who waters, but God who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters work as one, but each will receive his reward according to his work. We are coworkers belonging to God. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master-builder I laid a foundation, but someone else builds on it. And each one must be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than what is being laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each builder's work will be plainly seen, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed by fire. And the fire will test what kind of work each has done. If what someone has built survives, he will receive a reward. If someone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If someone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, which is what you are.

Guard against self-deception, each of you. If someone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become foolish so that he can become wise. For the wisdom of this age is foolishness with God. As it is written, "**He catches the wise in their craftiness.**" And again, "**The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.**" So then, no more boasting about mere mortals! For everything belongs to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the

present or the future. Everything belongs to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

One should think about us this way—as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now what is sought in stewards is that one be found faithful. So for me, it is a minor matter that I am judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not acquitted because of this. The one who judges me is the Lord. So then, do not judge anything before the time. Wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the motives of hearts. Then each will receive recognition from God.

I have applied these things to myself and Apollos because of you, brothers and sisters, so that through us you may learn “not to go beyond what is written,” so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of the one against the other. For who concedes you any superiority? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as though you did not? Already you are satisfied! Already you are rich! You have become kings without us! I wish you had become kings so that we could reign with you! For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to die, because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to people. We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, we are dishonored! To the present hour we are

hungry and thirsty, poorly clothed, brutally treated, and without a roof over our heads. We do hard work, toiling with our own hands. When we are verbally abused, we respond with a blessing, when persecuted, we endure, when people lie about us, we answer in a friendly manner. We are the world's dirt and scum, even now.

I am not writing these things to shame you, but to correct you as my dear children. For though you may have 10,000 guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, because I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I encourage you, then, be imitators of me. For this reason, I have sent Timothy to you, who is my dear and faithful son in the Lord. He will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. Some have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord is willing, and I will find out not only the talk of these arrogant people, but also their power. For the kingdom of God is demonstrated not in idle talk but with power. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

It is actually reported that sexual immorality exists among you, the kind of immorality that is not permitted even among the Gentiles, so that someone is cohabiting with his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you have been deeply sorrowful instead and removed the one who did this from among you? For even though I am absent physically, I am present in spirit. And I have already judged the one who did

this, just as though I were present. When you gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus, and I am with you in spirit, along with the power of our Lord Jesus, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast affects the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch of dough—you are, in fact, without yeast. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. So then, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of vice and evil, but with the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. In no way did I mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy and swindlers and idolaters, since you would then have to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a Christian who is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Are you not to judge those inside? But God will judge those outside. *Remove the evil person from among you.*

When any of you has a legal dispute with another, does he dare go to court before the unrighteous rather than before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not



competent to settle trivial suits? Do you not know that we will judge angels? Why not ordinary matters! So if you have ordinary lawsuits, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame! Is there no one among you wise enough to settle disputes between fellow Christians? Instead, does a Christian sue a Christian, and do this before unbelievers? The fact that you have lawsuits among yourselves demonstrates that you have already been defeated. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? But you yourselves wrong and cheat, and you do this to your brothers and sisters!

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. Some of you once lived this way. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

"All things are lawful for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "All things are lawful for me"—but I will not be controlled by anything. "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both." The body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Now God indeed raised the Lord and he will raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I take the members of Christ and make them

members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that anyone who is united with a prostitute is one body with her? For it is said, "***The two will become one flesh.***" But the one united with the Lord is one spirit with him. Flee sexual immorality! "Every sin a person commits is outside of the body"—but the immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.

Now with regard to the issues you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But because of immoralities, each man should have relations with his own wife and each woman with her own husband. A husband should fulfill his marital responsibility to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. It is not the wife who has the rights to her own body, but the husband. In the same way, it is not the husband who has the rights to his own body, but the wife. Do not deprive each other, except by mutual agreement for a specified time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then resume your relationship, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that everyone was as I am. But each has his own gift from God, one this way, another that.

To the unmarried and widows I say that it is best for them to remain as I am. But if they do not have self-control, let them

get married. For it is better to marry than to burn with sexual desire.

To the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord—a wife should not divorce a husband (but if she does, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband), and a husband should not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say—I, not the Lord—if a brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is happy to live with him, he should not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is happy to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified because of the wife, and the unbelieving wife because of her husband. Otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever wants a divorce, let it take place. In these circumstances the brother or sister is not bound. God has called you in peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will bring your husband to salvation? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will bring your wife to salvation?

Nevertheless, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each person, so must he live. I give this sort of direction in all the churches. Was anyone called after he had been circumcised? He should not try to undo his circumcision. Was anyone called who is uncircumcised? He should not get circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Instead, keeping God's commandments is what counts. Let each one remain in that

situation in life in which he was called. Were you called as a slave? Do not worry about it. But if indeed you are able to be free, make the most of the opportunity. For the one who was called in the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. In the same way, the one who was called as a free person is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men. In whatever situation someone was called, brothers and sisters, let him remain in it with God.

With regard to the question about people who have never married, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one shown mercy by the Lord to be trustworthy. Because of the impending crisis I think it best for you to remain as you are. The one bound to a wife should not seek divorce. The one released from a wife should not seek marriage. But if you marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face difficult circumstances, and I am trying to spare you such problems. And I say this, brothers and sisters: The time is short. So then those who have wives should be as those who have none, those who weep like those not weeping, those who rejoice like those not rejoicing, those who buy like those without possessions, those who use the world as though they were not using it to the full. For the present shape of this world is passing away.

And I want you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the things of the

world, how to please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, to be holy both in body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the things of the world, how to please her husband. I am saying this for your benefit, not to place a limitation on you, but so that without distraction you may give notable and constant service to the Lord.

If anyone thinks he is acting inappropriately toward his virgin, if she is past the bloom of youth and it seems necessary, he should do what he wishes; he does not sin. Let them marry. But the man who is firm in his commitment, and is under no necessity but has control over his will, and has decided in his own mind to keep his own virgin, does well. So then, the one who marries his own virgin does well, but the one who does not, does better.

A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes (only someone in the Lord). But in my opinion, she will be happier if she remains as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God!

With regard to food sacrificed to idols, we know that “we all have knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If someone thinks he knows something, he does not yet know to the degree that he needs to know. But if someone loves God, he is known by God.

With regard then to eating food sacrificed to idols, we know that “an idol in this world is nothing,” and that “there is no God but one.” If after all there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we live, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live.

But this knowledge is not shared by all. And some, by being accustomed to idols in former times, eat this food as an idol sacrifice, and their conscience, because it is weak, is defiled. Now food will not bring us close to God. We are no worse if we do not eat and no better if we do. But be careful that this liberty of yours does not become a hindrance to the weak. For if someone weak sees you who possess knowledge dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience be “strengthened” to eat food offered to idols? So by your knowledge the weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed. If you sin against your brothers or sisters in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. For this reason, if food causes my brother or sister to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause one of them to sin.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you, for you are the confirming sign of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who examine me. Do we not have the right to financial

support? Do we not have the right to the company of a believing wife, like the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I lack the right not to work? Who ever serves in the army at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Who tends a flock and does not consume its milk? Am I saying these things only on the basis of common sense, or does the law not say this as well? For it is written in the law of Moses, "***Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.***" God is not concerned here about oxen, is he? Or is he not surely speaking for our benefit? It was written for us, because the one plowing and threshing ought to work in hope of enjoying the harvest. If we sowed spiritual blessings among you, is it too much to reap material things from you? If others receive this right from you, are we not more deserving?

But we have not made use of this right. Instead we endure everything so that we may not be a hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Don't you know that those who serve in the temple eat food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar receive a part of the offerings? In the same way the Lord commanded those who proclaim the gospel to receive their living by the gospel. But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing these things so that something will be done for me. In fact, it would be better for me to die than—no one will deprive me of my reason for boasting! For if I preach the gospel, I have no reason for boasting, because I am compelled to do this. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward. But if I do it unwillingly, I am

entrusted with a responsibility. What then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel I may offer the gospel free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights in the gospel.

For since I am free from all I can make myself a slave to all, in order to gain even more people. To the Jews I became like a Jew to gain the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) to gain those under the law. To those free from the law I became like one free from the law (though I am not free from God's law but under the law of Christ) to gain those free from the law. To the weak I became weak in order to gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by all means I may save some.

I do all these things because of the gospel, so that I can be a participant in it.

Do you not know that all the runners in a stadium compete, but only one receives the prize? So run to win. Each competitor must exercise self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.

So I do not run uncertainly or box like one who hits only air. Instead I subdue my body and make it my slave, so that after preaching to others I myself will not be disqualified.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in



the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they were all drinking from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. But God was not pleased with most of them, for they were cut down in the wilderness. These things happened as examples for us, so that we will not crave evil things as they did. So do not be idolaters, as some of them were. As it is written, "***The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.***" And let us not be immoral, as some of them were, and 23,000 died in a single day. And let us not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes. And do not complain, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So let the one who thinks he is standing be careful that he does not fall. No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.

So then, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I am speaking to thoughtful people. Consider what I say. Is not the cup of blessing that we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread that we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all share the one bread. Look at the people of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? Am I saying that idols or food sacrificed to them

amount to anything? No, I mean that what the pagans sacrifice is to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot take part in the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or are we trying to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we really stronger than he is?

"Everything is lawful," but not everything is beneficial.

"Everything is lawful," but not everything builds others up. Do not seek your own good, but the good of the other person. Eat anything that is sold in the marketplace without questions of conscience, for *the earth and its abundance are the Lord's*. If an unbeliever invites you to dinner and you want to go, eat whatever is served without asking questions of conscience. But if someone says to you, "This is from a sacrifice," do not eat, because of the one who told you and because of conscience—I do not mean yours but the other person's. For why is my freedom being judged by another's conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I blamed for the food that I give thanks for? So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Do not give offense to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also try to please everyone in all things. I do not seek my own benefit, but the benefit of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

I praise you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I passed them on to you. But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and

the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered disgraces his head. But any woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered disgraces her head, for it is one and the same thing as having a shaved head. For if a woman will not cover her head, she should cut off her hair. But if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, she should cover her head. For a man should not have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of the man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for man. For this reason a woman should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. In any case, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman. But all things come from God. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. If anyone intends to quarrel about this, we have no other practice, nor do the churches of God.

Now in giving the following instruction I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For in the first place, when you come together as a church I hear there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must in fact be divisions among you, so

that those of you who are approved may be evident. Now when you come together at the same place, you are not really eating the Lord's Supper. For when it is time to eat, everyone proceeds with his own supper. One is hungry and another becomes drunk. Do you not have houses so that you can eat and drink? Or are you trying to show contempt for the church of God by shaming those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I will not praise you for this!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and after he had given thanks he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of me." For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

For this reason, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself first, and in this way let him eat the bread and drink of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks without careful regard for the body eats and drinks judgment against himself. That is why many of you are weak and sick, and quite a few are dead. But if we examined ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world. So then, my brothers and

sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that when you assemble it does not lead to judgment. I will give directions about other matters when I come.

With regard to spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans you were often led astray by speechless idols, however you were led. So I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different results, but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the benefit of all. For one person is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, and another the message of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another performance of miracles, to another prophecy, and to another discernment of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. It is one and the same Spirit, distributing as he decides to each person, who produces all these things.

For just as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body—though many—are one body, so too is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one

body. Whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, we were all made to drink of the one Spirit. For in fact the body is not a single member, but many. If the foot says, "Since I am not a hand, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. And if the ear says, "Since I am not an eye, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. If the whole body were an eye, what part would do the hearing? If the whole were an ear, what part would exercise the sense of smell? But as a matter of fact, God has placed each of the members in the body just as he decided. If they were all the same member, where would the body be? So now there are many members, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor in turn can the head say to the foot, "I do not need you." On the contrary, those members that seem to be weaker are essential, and those members we consider less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our unpresentable members are clothed with dignity, but our presentable members do not need this. Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another. If one member suffers, everyone suffers with it. If a member is honored, all rejoice with it.

Now you are Christ's body, and each of you is a member of it. And God has placed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, gifts of healing, helps, gifts of leadership, different kinds of tongues. Not all are

apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all perform miracles, do they? Not all have gifts of healing, do they? Not all speak in tongues, do they? Not all interpret, do they? But you should be eager for the greater gifts.

And now I will show you a way that is beyond comparison.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I give over my body in order to boast, but do not have love, I receive no benefit.

Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful. It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But if there are prophecies, they will be set aside; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be set aside. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when what is perfect comes, the partial will be set aside. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became an adult, I set aside childish ways. For now we see in a mirror indirectly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in

part, but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Pursue love and be eager for the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. For the one speaking in a tongue does not speak to people but to God, for no one understands; he is speaking mysteries by the Spirit. But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. I wish you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets so that the church may be strengthened.

Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I help you unless I speak to you with a revelation or with knowledge or prophecy or teaching? It is similar for lifeless things that make a sound, like a flute or harp. Unless they make a distinction in the notes, how can what is played on the flute or harp be understood? If, for example, the trumpet makes an unclear sound, who will get ready for battle? It is the same for you. If you do not speak clearly with your tongue, how will anyone know what is being said? For you will be speaking into the air. There are probably many kinds of languages in the world, and none is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of a language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner



to me. It is the same with you. Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, seek to abound in order to strengthen the church.

So then, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unproductive. What should I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing praises with my spirit, but I will also sing praises with my mind. Otherwise, if you are praising God with your spirit, how can someone without the gift say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are certainly giving thanks well, but the other person is not strengthened. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you, but in the church I want to speak five words with my mind to instruct others, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking. Instead, be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. It is written in the law: ***"By people with strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, yet not even in this way will they listen to me,"*** says the Lord. So then, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. So if the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and unbelievers or uninformed people enter, will they not say that you have lost your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or uninformed person enters, he will be convicted by all, he will be called to account by all. The secrets of his

heart are disclosed, and in this way he will fall down with his face to the ground and worship God, declaring, "God is really among you."

What should you do then, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each one has a song, has a lesson, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all these things be done for the strengthening of the church. If someone speaks in a tongue, it should be two, or at the most three, one after the other, and someone must interpret. But if there is no interpreter, he should be silent in the church. Let him speak to himself and to God. Two or three prophets should speak and the others should evaluate what is said. And if someone sitting down receives a revelation, the person who is speaking should conclude. For you can all prophesy one after another, so all can learn and be encouraged. Indeed, the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is not characterized by disorder but by peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak. Rather, let them be in submission, as in fact the law says. If they want to find out about something, they should ask their husbands at home, because it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church. Did the word of God begin with you, or did it come to you alone?

If anyone considers himself a prophet or spiritual person, he should acknowledge that what I write to you is the Lord's

command. If someone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. So then, brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid anyone from speaking in tongues. And do everything in a decent and orderly manner.

Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received—that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as though to one born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been in vain. In fact, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God with me. Whether then it was I or they, this is the way we preach and this is the way you believed.

Now if Christ is being preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our

preaching is futile and your faith is empty. Also, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified against God that he raised Christ from the dead, when in reality he did not raise him, if indeed the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless; you are still in your sins. Furthermore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. For if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then when Christ comes, those who belong to him. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be eliminated is death. For ***he has put everything in subjection under his feet***. But when it says "everything" has been put in subjection, it is clear that this does not include the one who put everything in subjection to him. And when all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, then why are they baptized for them? Why too are we in danger every hour? Every day I am in danger of death! This is as sure as my boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. If from a human point of view I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what did it benefit me? If the dead are not raised, *let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*. Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." Sober up as you should, and stop sinning! For some have no knowledge of God—I say this to your shame!

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" Fool! What you sow will not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare seed—perhaps of wheat or something else. But God gives it a body just as he planned, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same: People have one flesh, animals have another, birds and fish another. And there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The glory of the heavenly body is one sort and the earthly another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars, for star differs from star in glory.

It is the same with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, "***The first man, Adam, became a living person***"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, made of dust; the second man is from heaven. Like the one made of dust, so too are those made of dust, and like the one from heaven, so too those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, let us also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Now this is what I am saying, brothers and sisters: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Now when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will happen,

***"Death has been swallowed up in victory."***

***"Where, O death, is your victory?"***

***Where, O death, is your sting?"***

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord

Jesus Christ! So then, dear brothers and sisters, be firm. Do not be moved! Always be outstanding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

With regard to the collection for the saints, please follow the directions that I gave to the churches of Galatia: On the first day of the week, each of you should set aside some income and save it to the extent that God has blessed you, so that a collection will not have to be made when I come. Then, when I arrive, I will send those whom you approve with letters of explanation to carry your gift to Jerusalem. And if it seems advisable that I should go also, they will go with me.

But I will come to you after I have gone through Macedonia—for I will be going through Macedonia—and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you can send me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now in passing, since I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord allows. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, because a door of great opportunity stands wide open for me, but there are many opponents.

Now if Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear among you, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I am too. So then, let no one treat him with contempt. But send him on his way in peace so that he may come to me. For I am expecting him with the brothers.

With regard to our brother Apollos: I strongly encouraged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was simply not his

intention to come now. He will come when he has the opportunity.

Stay alert, stand firm in the faith, show courage, be strong. Everything you do should be done in love.

Now, brothers and sisters, you know about the household of Stephanus, that as the first converts of Achaia, they devoted themselves to ministry for the saints. I urge you also to submit to people like this, and to everyone who cooperates in the work and labors hard. I was glad about the arrival of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus because they have supplied the fellowship with you that I lacked. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. So then, recognize people like this.

The churches in the province of Asia send greetings to you. Aquila and Prisca greet you warmly in the Lord, with the church that meets in their house. All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

I, Paul, send this greeting with my own hand.

Let anyone who has no love for the Lord be accursed. Our Lord, come!

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.



## **Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter we have**

From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow toward us, so also our comfort through Christ overflows to you. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort that you experience in your patient endurance of the same sufferings that we also suffer. And our hope for you is steadfast because we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you will share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, regarding the affliction that happened to us in the province of Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of living. Indeed we felt as if the sentence of death had been passed against us, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. He delivered us from so great a risk of death, and he will deliver us. We have set our hope on him that he will deliver us yet again, as you also join in helping us by prayer, so that many people may

give thanks to God on our behalf for the gracious gift given to us through the help of many.

For our reason for confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that with pure motives and sincerity which are from God—not by human wisdom but by the grace of God—we conducted ourselves in the world, and all the more toward you. For we do not write you anything other than what you can read and also understand. But I hope that you will understand completely just as also you have partly understood us, that we are your source of pride just as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus. And with this confidence I intended to come to you first so that you would get a second opportunity to see us, and through your help to go on into Macedonia and then from Macedonia to come back to you and be helped on our way into Judea by you. Therefore when I was planning to do this, I did not do so without thinking about what I was doing, did I? Or do I make my plans according to mere human standards so that I would be saying both “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? But as God is faithful, our message to you is not “Yes” and “No.” For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the one who was proclaimed among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not “Yes” and “No,” but it has always been “Yes” in him. For every one of God’s promises are “Yes” in him; therefore also through him the “Amen” is spoken, to the glory we give to God. But it is God who establishes us together with you in Christ and who anointed us, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment.

Now I appeal to God as my witness, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth. I do not mean that we rule over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy, because by faith you stand firm. So I made up my own mind not to pay you another painful visit. For if I make you sad, who would be left to make me glad but the one I caused to be sad? And I wrote this very thing to you, so that when I came I would not have sadness from those who ought to make me rejoice, since I am confident in you all that my joy would be yours. For out of great distress and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not to make you sad, but to let you know the love that I have especially for you. But if anyone has caused sadness, he has not saddened me alone, but to some extent (not to exaggerate) he has saddened all of you as well. This punishment on such an individual by the majority is enough for him, so that now instead you should rather forgive and comfort him. This will keep him from being overwhelmed by excessive grief to the point of despair. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. For this reason also I wrote you: to test you to see if you are obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone for anything, I also forgive him—for indeed what I have forgiven (if I have forgiven anything) I did so for you in the presence of Christ, so that we may not be exploited by Satan (for we are not ignorant of his schemes). Now when I arrived in Troas to proclaim the gospel of Christ, even though the Lord had opened a door of opportunity for me, I had no relief in my spirit, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and set out for Macedonia.

But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and who makes known through us the fragrance that consists of the knowledge of him in every place. For we are a sweet aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing—to the latter an odor from death to death, but to the former a fragrance from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? For we are not like so many others, hucksters who peddle the word of God for profit, but we are speaking in Christ before God as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? We don't need letters of recommendation to you or from you as some other people do, do we? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone, revealing that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not *on stone tablets* but on tablets of human hearts.

Now we have such confidence in God through Christ. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as if it were coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who made us adequate to be servants of a new covenant not based on the letter but on the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

But if the ministry that produced death—carved in letters *on stone tablets*—came with glory, so that the

Israelites could not keep their eyes fixed on the face of Moses because of the glory of his face (a glory which was made ineffective), how much more glorious will the ministry of the Spirit be? For if there was glory in the ministry that produced condemnation, how much more does the ministry that produces righteousness excel in glory! For indeed, what had been glorious now has no glory because of the tremendously greater glory of what replaced it. For if what was made ineffective came with glory, how much more has what remains come in glory! Therefore, since we have such a hope, we behave with great boldness, and not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from staring at the result of the glory that was made ineffective. But their minds were closed. For to this very day, the same veil remains when they hear the old covenant read. It has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away. But until this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds, but when one turns to the Lord, *the veil is removed*. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Therefore, since we have this ministry, just as God has shown us mercy, we do not become discouraged. But we have rejected shameful hidden deeds, not behaving with deceptiveness or distorting the word of God, but by open proclamation of the truth we commend ourselves to

everyone's conscience before God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing, among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For God, who said "*Let light shine out of darkness,*" is the one who shined in our hearts to give us the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that the extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are experiencing trouble on every side, but are not crushed; we are perplexed, but not driven to despair; we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are knocked down, but not destroyed, always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our body. For we who are alive are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal body. As a result, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. But since we have the same spirit of faith as that shown in what has been written, "***I believed; therefore I spoke,***" we also believe, therefore we also speak. We do so because we know that the one who raised up Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus and will bring us with you into his presence. For all these things are for your sake, so that the grace that is including more and more people may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of

God. Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

For we know that if our earthly house, the tent we live in, is dismantled, we have a building from God, a house not built by human hands, that is eternal in the heavens. For in this earthly house we groan, because we desire to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed, after we have put on our heavenly house, we will not be found naked. For we groan while we are in this tent, since we are weighed down, because we do not want to be unclothed, but clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment. Therefore we are always full of courage, and we know that as long as we are alive here on earth we are absent from the Lord—for we live by faith, not by sight. Thus we are full of courage and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So then whether we are alive or away, we make it our ambition to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be paid back according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil.

Therefore, because we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people, but we are well known to God, and I hope we are well known to your consciences too. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who take pride in outward appearance and not in what is in the heart. For if we are out of our minds, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised. So then from now on we acknowledge no one from an outward human point of view. Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view, now we do not know him in that way any longer. So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away—look, what is new has come! And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making his plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God!" God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.



Now because we are fellow workers, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "***I heard you at the acceptable time, and in the day of salvation I helped you.***" Look, now is ***the acceptable time***; look, now is ***the day of salvation***! We do not give anyone an occasion for taking an offense in anything, so that no fault may be found with our ministry. But as God's servants, we have commended ourselves in every way, with great endurance, in persecutions, in difficulties, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in troubles, in sleepless nights, in hunger, by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by benevolence, by the Holy Spirit, by genuine love, by truthful teaching, by the power of God, with weapons of righteousness both for the right hand and for the left, through glory and dishonor, through slander and praise; regarded as impostors, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well-known; as dying and yet—see!—we continue to live; as those who are scourged and yet not executed; as sorrowful, but always rejoicing, as poor, but making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart has been opened wide to you. Our affection for you is not restricted, but you are restricted in your affections for us. Now as a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts to us also.

Do not become partners with those who do not believe, for what partnership is there between righteousness and

lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness? And what agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share in common with an unbeliever? And what mutual agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said, ***"I will live in them and will walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."*** Therefore ***"come out from their midst, and be separate,"*** says the Lord, ***"and touch no unclean thing, and I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,"*** says the All-Powerful Lord.

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that could defile the body and the spirit, and thus accomplish holiness out of reverence for God. Make room for us in your hearts; we have wronged no one, we have ruined no one, we have exploited no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I told you before that you are in our hearts so that we die together and live together with you.

I have great confidence in you; I take great pride on your behalf. I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy in the midst of all our suffering. For even when we came into Macedonia, our body had no rest at all, but we were troubled in every way—struggles from the outside, fears from within. But God, who encourages the downhearted, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus. We were encouraged not only by his arrival, but also by the

encouragement you gave him, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your deep concern for me, so that I rejoiced more than ever. For even if I made you sad by my letter, I do not regret having written it (even though I did regret it, for I see that my letter made you sad, though only for a short time). Now I rejoice, not because you were made sad, but because you were made sad to the point of repentance. For you were made sad as God intended, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For sadness as intended by God produces a repentance that leads to salvation, leaving no regret, but worldly sadness brings about death. For see what this very thing, this sadness as God intended, has produced in you: what eagerness, what defense of yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what deep concern, what punishment! In everything you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So then, even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did wrong, or on account of the one who was wronged, but to reveal to you your eagerness on our behalf before God. Therefore we have been encouraged. And in addition to our own encouragement, we rejoiced even more at the joy of Titus, because all of you have refreshed his spirit. For if I have boasted to him about anything concerning you, I have not been embarrassed by you, but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus about you has proved true as well. And his affection for you is much greater when he remembers the obedience of you all, how you welcomed him

with fear and trembling. I rejoice because in everything I am fully confident in you.

Now we make known to you, brothers and sisters, the grace of God given to the churches of Macedonia, that during a severe ordeal of suffering, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in the wealth of their generosity. For I testify, they gave according to their means and beyond their means. They did so voluntarily, begging us with great earnestness for the blessing and fellowship of helping the saints. And they did this not just as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God. Thus we urged Titus that, just as he had previously begun this work, so also he should complete this act of kindness for you. But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, and in all eagerness and in the love from us that is in you—make sure that you excel in this act of kindness too. I am not saying this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love by comparison with the eagerness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich, he became poor for your sakes, so that you by his poverty could become rich. So here is my opinion on this matter: It is to your advantage, since you made a good start last year both in your giving and your desire to give, to finish what you started, so that just as you wanted to do it eagerly, you can also complete it according to your means. For if the eagerness is present, the gift itself is acceptable according to whatever one has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not say this so there would be

relief for others and suffering for you, but as a matter of equality. At the present time, your abundance will meet their need, so that one day their abundance may also meet your need, and thus there may be equality, as it is written: "***The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.***"

But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same devotion I have for you, because he not only accepted our request, but since he was very eager, he is coming to you of his own accord. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his work in spreading the gospel. In addition, this brother has also been chosen by the churches as our traveling companion as we administer this generous gift to the glory of the Lord himself and to show our readiness to help. We did this as a precaution so that no one should blame us in regard to this generous gift we are administering. For we are *concerned about what is right not only before the Lord but also before men*. And we are sending with them our brother whom we have tested many times and found eager in many matters, but who now is much more eager than ever because of the great confidence he has in you. If there is any question about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; if there is any question about our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. Therefore show them openly before the churches the proof of your love and of our pride in you.

For it is not necessary for me to write you about this service to the saints, because I know your eagerness to help. I keep boasting to the Macedonians about this eagerness of yours, that Achaia has been ready to give since last year, and your zeal to participate has stirred up most of them. But I am sending these brothers so that our boasting about you may not be empty in this case, so that you may be ready just as I kept telling them. For if any of the Macedonians should come with me and find that you are not ready to give, we would be humiliated (not to mention you) by this confidence we had in you. Therefore I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go to you in advance and to arrange ahead of time the generous contribution you had promised, so this may be ready as a generous gift and not as something you feel forced to do. My point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace overflow to you so that because you have enough of everything in every way at all times, you will overflow in every good work. Just as it is written, ***"He has scattered widely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness remains forever."*** Now God who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your supply of seed and will cause the harvest of your righteousness to grow. You will be enriched in every way so that you may be generous on every occasion, which is

producing through us thanksgiving to God, because the service of this ministry is not only providing for the needs of the saints but is also overflowing with many thanks to God. Through the evidence of this service they will glorify God because of your obedience to your confession in the gospel of Christ and the generosity of your sharing with them and with everyone. And in their prayers on your behalf, they long for you because of the extraordinary grace God has shown to you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Now I, Paul, appeal to you personally by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (I who am meek when present among you, but am full of courage toward you when away!)— now I ask that when I am present I may not have to be bold with the confidence that (I expect) I will dare to use against some who consider us to be behaving according to human standards. For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ. We are also ready to punish every act of disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. You are looking at outward appearances. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should reflect on this again: Just as he himself belongs to Christ, so too do we. For if I boast somewhat more about our authority that the Lord gave us for building you up and not for tearing you down, I

will not be ashamed of doing so. I do not want to seem as though I am trying to terrify you with my letters, because some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but his physical presence is weak and his speech is of no account." Let such a person consider this: What we say by letters when we are absent, we also are in actions when we are present.

For we would not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who recommend themselves. But when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. But we will not boast beyond certain limits, but will confine our boasting according to the limits of the work to which God has appointed us, that reaches even as far as you. For we were not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach as far as you, because we were the first to reach as far as you with the gospel about Christ. Nor do we boast beyond certain limits in the work done by others, but we hope that as your faith continues to grow, our work may be greatly expanded among you according to our limits, so that we may preach the gospel in the regions that lie beyond you, and not boast of work already done in another person's area. But ***the one who boasts must boast in the Lord***. For it is not the person who commends himself who is approved, but the person the Lord commends.

I wish that you would be patient with me in a little foolishness, but indeed you are being patient with me! For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, because I promised you in marriage



to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus different from the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit than the one you received, or a different gospel than the one you accepted, you put up with it well enough! For I consider myself not at all inferior to those "super-apostles." And even if I am unskilled in speaking, yet I am certainly not so in knowledge. Indeed, we have made this plain to you in everything in every way. Or did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you could be exalted, because I proclaimed the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so that I could serve you! When I was with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia fully supplied my needs. I kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may eliminate any opportunity for those who want a chance to be regarded as our equals in the things they boast about. For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not

surprising his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will correspond to their actions.

I say again, let no one think that I am a fool. But if you do, then at least accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. What I am saying with this boastful confidence I do not say the way the Lord would. Instead it is, as it were, foolishness. Since many are boasting according to human standards, I too will boast. For since you are so wise, you put up with fools gladly. For you put up with it if someone makes slaves of you, if someone exploits you, if someone takes advantage of you, if someone behaves arrogantly toward you, if someone strikes you in the face. (To my disgrace I must say that we were too weak for that!) But whatever anyone else dares to boast about (I am speaking foolishly), I also dare to boast about the same thing. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am talking like I am out of my mind!) I am even more so: with much greater labors, with far more imprisonments, with more severe beatings, facing death many times. Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with a rod. Once I received a stoning. Three times I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I spent adrift in the open sea. I have been on journeys many times, in dangers from rivers, in dangers from robbers, in dangers from my own countrymen, in dangers from Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers at sea, in dangers from false brothers, in hard work and toil, through many sleepless nights,

in hunger and thirst, many times without food, in cold and without enough clothing. Apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxious concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast about the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forever, knows I am not lying. In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to arrest me, but I was let down in a rope-basket through a window in the city wall, and escaped his hands.

It is necessary to go on boasting. Though it is not profitable, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) was caught up to the third heaven. And I know that this man (whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows) was caught up into paradise and heard things too sacred to be put into words, things that a person is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such an individual I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except about my weaknesses. For even if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I would be telling the truth, but I refrain from this so that no one may regard me beyond what he sees in me or what he hears from me, even because of the extraordinary character of the revelations. Therefore, so that I would not become arrogant, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to trouble me—so that I would not become arrogant. I asked the Lord three

times about this, that it would depart from me. But he said to me, "My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." So then, I will boast most gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

I have become a fool. You yourselves forced me to do it, for I should have been commended by you. For I lack nothing in comparison to those "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. Indeed, the signs of an apostle were performed among you with great perseverance by signs and wonders and powerful deeds. For how were you treated worse than the other churches, except that I myself was not a burden to you? Forgive me this injustice! Look, for the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you, because I do not want your possessions, but you. For children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. Now I will most gladly spend and be spent for your lives! If I love you more, am I to be loved less? But be that as it may, I have not burdened you. Yet because I was a crafty person, I took you in by deceit! I have not taken advantage of you through anyone I have sent to you, have I? I urged Titus to visit you and I sent our brother along with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit? Did we not behave in the same way? Have you been thinking all this time that we have been defending ourselves to you? We are speaking in Christ before

God, and everything we do, dear friends, is to build you up. For I am afraid that somehow when I come I will not find you what I wish, and you will find me not what you wish. I am afraid that somehow there may be quarreling, jealousy, intense anger, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder. I am afraid that when I come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I will grieve for many of those who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practiced.

This is the third time I am coming to visit you. ***By the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter will be established.*** I said before when I was present the second time and now, though absent, I say again to those who sinned previously and to all the rest, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak toward you but is powerful among you. For indeed he was crucified by reason of weakness, but he lives because of God's power. For we also are weak in him, but we will live together with him, because of God's power toward you. Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize regarding yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you—unless, indeed, you fail the test! And I hope that you will realize that we have not failed the test! Now we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong, not so that we may appear to have passed the test, but so that you may do what is right even if we may appear to have failed the test. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the sake of

the truth. For we rejoice whenever we are weak, but you are strong. And we pray for this: that you may become fully qualified. Because of this I am writing these things while absent, so that when I arrive I may not have to deal harshly with you by using my authority—the Lord gave it to me for building up, not for tearing down!

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice, set things right, be encouraged, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.