

2 Corinthians

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother. To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Acha'ia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

5 Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your

10 comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were

15 so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will

20 give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many

prayers. For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God. For we write you nothing but what you can read and understand; I hope you will understand
5 fully, as you have understood in part, that you can be proud of us as we can be of you, on the day of the Lord Jesus. Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double pleasure; I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedo'nia, and to come back to you from Macedo'nia and have you send me on my way to Judea. Was I
10 vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silva'nus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find
15 their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God. But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. But I call God to witness against me--it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. Not that we lord it over
20 your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

For I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. For if I
cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have
pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain
from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you,
5 that my joy would be the joy of you all. For I wrote you out of much
affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain
but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. But if any one
has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure--not to
put it too severely--to you all. For such a one this punishment by the
10 majority is enough; so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him,
or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm
your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know
whether you are obedient in everything. Any one whom you forgive, I also
forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your
15 sake in the presence of Christ, to keep Satan from gaining the advantage
over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs. When I came to Tro'as to
preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; but my
mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took
leave of them and went on to Macedo'nia. But thanks be to God, who in
20 Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of

the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of

righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor. Since we have such a hope, we

5 are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a

10 man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not

15 lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the

20 minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel

of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. 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. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look

not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

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.

5 Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us

10 the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear

15 before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to be proud of us, so that you

20 may be able to answer those who pride themselves on a man's position and

not on his heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer.

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation." Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,

but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return--I speak as to children--widen your hearts also. Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Be'lial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you

shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God. Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have
5 taken advantage of no one. 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. I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed. For even when we came into Macedo'nia, our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn--
10 fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did
15 regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For see what
20 earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear

yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in
5 order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all. For if I have expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus
10 has proved true. And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him. I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you. We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedo'nia, for in a severe test of affliction, their
15 abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of
20 God. Accordingly we have urged Titus that as he had already made a

beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work. Now as
you excel in everything--in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all
earnestness, and in your love for us--see that you excel in this gracious work
also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of
5 others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so
that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I give my
advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not
only to do but to desire, so that your readiness in desiring it may be
10 matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness
is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what
he has not. I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened,
but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should
supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there
15 may be equality. As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing
over, and he who gathered little had no lack." But thanks be to God who
puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only
accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his
own accord. With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all
20 the churches for his preaching of the gospel; and not only that, but he has

been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work which we are carrying on, for the glory of the Lord and to show our good will.

We intend that no one should blame us about this liberal gift which we are administering, for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight

5 but also in the sight of men. 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. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker in your service; and as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. So give

10 proof, before the churches, of your love and of our boasting about you to these men. Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedo'nia, saying that Acha'ia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I am sending the brethren so

15 that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; lest if some Macedo'nians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated--to say nothing of you--for being so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you

20 have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing

gift. The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and
he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he
has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a
cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in
5 abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may
provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written, "He scatters
abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever." He who
supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your
resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be
10 enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce
thanksgiving to God; for the rendering of this service not only supplies the
wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Under
the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in
acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your
15 contribution for them and for all others; while they long for you and pray
for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God
for his inexpressible gift! I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and
gentleness of Christ--I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold
to you when I am away! -- I beg of you that when I am present I may
20 not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing

against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion. For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. Look at what is before your eyes. If any one is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that as he is Christ's, so are we. 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 shall not be put to shame. I would not seem to be frightening you with letters. For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. Not that we venture to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding. But we will not boast beyond limit, but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, to reach even to you. 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. We do not boast beyond limit, in

other men's labors; but our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's field.

"Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." For it is not the man who

5 commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.

I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere

10 and pure devotion to Christ. For if some one comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, 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 submit to it readily enough. I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles. Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I

15 am not in knowledge; in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. Did I commit a sin in abasing myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel without cost to you? I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in want, I did not burden any one, for my needs

20 were supplied by the brethren who came from Macedo'nia. So I refrained and

will refrain from burdening you in any way. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine shall not be silenced in the regions of Acha'ia. And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And what I do 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.

5 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. I

10 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. (What I am saying I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful confidence; since many boast of worldly things, I too will boast.) For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! For you bear it if a man makes slaves of you, or preys

15 upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever any one dares to boast of--I am speaking as a fool--I also dare to boast of that. 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 a

20 better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more

imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I
have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three
times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have
been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent
5 journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own
people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness,
danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through
many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and
exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me
10 of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who
is made to fall, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of
the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus,
he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the
governor under King Ar'etas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize
15 me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and
escaped his hands. I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I
will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I 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. And I know that this
20 man was caught up into Paradise--whether in the body or out of the body I

do not know, God knows-- and he heard things that cannot be told, which
man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own
behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to
boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain
5 from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears
from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of
revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to
harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the
Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is
10 sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the
more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon
me. 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. I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been
15 commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these superlative
apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were
performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty
works. 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! Here for
20 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 ought not to lay up for their
parents, but parents for their children. I will most gladly spend and be spent
for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less? But
granting that I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the
5 better of you by guile. Did I take advantage of you through any of those
whom I sent to you? 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? Have you been thinking all along that we have
been defending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of God that we have
10 been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. For I fear
that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may
find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy,
anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. I fear that when I
come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn
15 over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of the
impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced. This is
the third time I am coming to you. Any charge must be sustained by the
evidence of two or three witnesses. I warned those who sinned before and
all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on
20 my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them-- since you

desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him by the power of God. Examine yourselves, to see
5 whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? --unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed. But we pray 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, though we may seem to have failed. For we
10 cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement. I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down. Finally,
15 brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, 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. *

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