

# English: Unlocked Literal Bible for 2 Corinthians

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## 2 Corinthians

### Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God that is in Corinth, and to all God's holy people in the entire region of Achaia:

<sup>2</sup>May grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup>May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised. He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.<sup>4</sup>God comforts us in all our tribulation, so that we can comfort those who are in any tribulation. We comfort others with the same comfort that God used to comfort us.

<sup>5</sup>For just as the sufferings of Christ abound for our sake, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.<sup>6</sup>But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort. Your comfort is working effectively in your endurance of the same sufferings that we also suffer.<sup>7</sup>Our hope concerning you is unshaken, for we know that as you share the sufferings, you also share our comfort.

<sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the tribulation we had in Asia. We were utterly burdened beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life.<sup>9</sup>Indeed, we had the sentence of death on us. But that was to make us not put our trust in ourselves, but instead in God, who raises the dead.<sup>10</sup>He rescued us from such a deadly peril, and he will rescue us. On him we have set our hope that he will rescue us.

<sup>11</sup>He will do this as you also help us by your prayer. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the favor given to us through the prayers of many.

<sup>12</sup>Our boast is this: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world with integrity and godly sincerity, not relying on fleshly wisdom but on the grace of God.<sup>13</sup>We write to you nothing that you cannot read and understand, and I hope that you will fully understand<sup>14</sup>as you have understood us in part, that you can boast of us on the day of our Lord Jesus, just as we will boast of you.

<sup>15</sup>Because I was confident about this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might receive a second favor.<sup>16</sup>I was planning to visit you on my way to Macedonia. Then I wanted to visit you again on my trip from Macedonia, and then for you to send me on my way to Judea.

<sup>17</sup>When I was thinking this way, was I hesitating? Do I plan things according to the flesh, so that I say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time?<sup>18</sup>But just as God is faithful, our word to you is not "Yes" and "No."

<sup>19</sup>For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom Silvanus, Timothy, and I proclaimed among you, is not "Yes" and "No." Instead, he is always "Yes."<sup>20</sup>For all the promises of God are "Yes" in him. So also through him we say "Amen" to the glory of God.

<sup>21</sup>Now it is God who confirms us with you in Christ, and he anointed us,<sup>22</sup>he set his seal on us, and he gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee of what is to come.

<sup>23</sup>But I call God as witness to my soul that the reason I did not come to Corinth was so that I might spare you.<sup>24</sup>This is not because we want to be lords over your faith. Instead, we are fellow laborers with you for your joy, as you stand firm in your faith.

Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>So I decided for my own part that I would not again come to you in sorrow.<sup>2</sup>If I caused you sorrow, who could make me glad but the very one who was made sorrowful by me?

<sup>3</sup>I wrote as I did in order that, when I came to you, I might not be hurt by those who should have made me rejoice. I have confidence about all of you that my joy is the same joy you all have.<sup>4</sup>For I wrote to you from great tribulation, with anguish of heart, and with many tears. I did not write you so that you would be made sorrowful. Instead, I wanted you to know the depth of the love that I have for you.

<sup>5</sup>If anyone has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not only to me, but in some measure—not to burden you—to all of you.<sup>6</sup>This punishment of that person by the majority is enough.<sup>7</sup>So now rather than punish him, you should forgive and comfort him. Do this so that he is not overwhelmed by too much sorrow.

<sup>8</sup>So I exhort you to confirm your love for him.<sup>9</sup>This was the reason I wrote, so that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything.

<sup>10</sup>If you forgive anyone, I forgive that person as well. What I have forgiven—if I have forgiven anything—it is forgiven for your sake in the presence of Christ.<sup>11</sup>This is so that Satan will not trick us. For we are not ignorant of his schemes.

<sup>12</sup>A door was opened to me by the Lord when I came to the city of Troas to preach the gospel of Christ there.<sup>13</sup>I had no relief in my spirit because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I left them and went on to Macedonia.

<sup>14</sup>But may thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph. Through us he reveals the sweet aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.<sup>15</sup>For we are to God the sweet aroma of Christ, both among those who are saved and among those who are perishing.

<sup>16</sup>To the people who are perishing, it is an aroma from death to death. To the ones being saved, it is an aroma from life to life. Who is worthy of these things?<sup>17</sup>For we are not like so many people who sell the word of God for profit. Instead, with purity of motives, we speak in Christ, as we are sent from God, in the sight of God.

Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? We do not need letters of recommendation to you or from you, like some people, do we?<sup>2</sup>You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, known and read by all people.<sup>3</sup>You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry. It was written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God. It was not written on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.

<sup>4</sup>And this is the confidence that we have through Christ before God.<sup>5</sup>We are not competent in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Rather, our competence is from God.<sup>6</sup>It is God who made us able to be servants of a new covenant. This is a covenant not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

<sup>7</sup>Now the ministry of death—engraved in letters on stones—came in such glory that the sons of Israel could not look directly at Moses' face. This is because of the glory of his face, a glory that was fading.<sup>8</sup>How much more glorious will the ministry of the Spirit be?

<sup>9</sup>For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, how much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory!<sup>10</sup>For indeed, that which was once made glorious is no longer glorious in this respect, because of the glory that exceeds it.<sup>11</sup>For if that which was passing away had glory, how much more will what is permanent have glory!

<sup>12</sup>Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.<sup>13</sup>We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel were not able to look directly at the ending of a glory that was passing away.

<sup>14</sup>But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.<sup>15</sup>But even today, whenever Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.<sup>16</sup>But when a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

<sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is the Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.<sup>18</sup>Now all of us, with unveiled faces, see the glory of the Lord. We are being transformed into the same glorious likeness from one degree of glory into another, just as from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, because we have this ministry, and just as we have received mercy, we do not become discouraged.

<sup>2</sup>Instead, we have rejected secret and shameful ways. We do not walk in craftiness, and we do not mishandle the word of God, but by presenting the truth, we recommend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

<sup>3</sup>But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing.<sup>4</sup>In their case, the god of this world has blinded their unbelieving minds. As a result, they are not able to see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

<sup>5</sup>For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.<sup>6</sup>For God is the one who said, "Light will shine out of darkness." He has shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the presence of Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in jars of clay, so that it is clear that the exceedingly great power belongs to God and not to us.<sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way, but not overwhelmed. We are perplexed but not filled with despair.<sup>9</sup>We are persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed;<sup>10</sup>always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

<sup>11</sup>For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh.<sup>12</sup>So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

<sup>13</sup>But we have the same spirit of faith according to that which was written: "I believed, and so I spoke." We also believe, and so we also speak,<sup>14</sup>because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.<sup>15</sup>For everything is for your sake, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of God.

<sup>16</sup>So we do not become discouraged. Even though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day.<sup>17</sup>For this momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal burden of glory that exceeds all measurement.<sup>18</sup>For we are not watching for things that are seen, but for things that are unseen. The things that we can see are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup>We know that if our earthly house—the tent—is destroyed, we have a building from God. It is a house not made by human hands, but an eternal house, in heaven.<sup>2</sup>For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly residence.<sup>3</sup>We long for this because by putting it on we will not be found to be naked.

<sup>4</sup>For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened. We do not want to be unclothed. Instead, we want to be clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.<sup>5</sup>The one who prepared us for this very thing is God, who gave us the Spirit as a guarantee of what is to come.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore always be confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord.<sup>7</sup>For we walk by faith, not by sight.<sup>8</sup>So we have confidence. We would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

<sup>9</sup>So we make it our goal, whether we are at home or away, to please him.<sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for the things done in the body, whether for good or for bad.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade people. What we are is clearly seen by God, and I hope that it is also clear to your conscience.<sup>12</sup>We are not commending ourselves to you again, but we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you may have an answer for those who boast about appearances but not about what is in the heart.

<sup>13</sup>For if we are out of our minds, it is for God; and if we are in our right minds, it is for your sake.<sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: That one person died for all, and that therefore all have died.

<sup>15</sup>He died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

<sup>16</sup>For this reason, from now on we do not regard anyone according to the flesh, even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh. But now we no longer regard him that way.<sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. See, they have become new.

<sup>18</sup>All these things are from God. He reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.<sup>19</sup>That is, in Christ God is reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. He is entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

<sup>20</sup>So we are appointed as representatives of Christ, as though God were making his appeal through us. We plead with you, for the sake of Christ: "Be reconciled to God!"<sup>21</sup>He made him who knew no sin to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup>Working together with him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.<sup>2</sup>For he says,

"In a favorable time I paid attention to you,  
and in the day of salvation I helped you."

Look, now is the favorable time. Look, now is the day of salvation.

<sup>3</sup>We do not place a stumbling block in front of anyone, for we do not wish our ministry to be discredited.

<sup>4</sup>Instead, in every way we commend ourselves as God's servants in much endurance, in affliction, in distress, in hardship,<sup>5</sup>in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in hard labor, in sleepless nights, in hunger,<sup>6</sup>in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love,<sup>7</sup>in the word of truth, in the power of God; with the armor of righteousness for the right hand and the left.

<sup>8</sup>We are God's servants in glory and dishonor, in slander and praise; regarded as deceivers and yet truthful;<sup>9</sup>as unknown, yet well known; as dying, yet, look—we live; as being disciplined, yet not killed;<sup>10</sup>as sorrowful, yet rejoicing; as poor, yet many are enriched; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.

<sup>11</sup>We have spoken the whole truth to you, Corinthians, and our heart is wide open.<sup>12</sup>You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own hearts.<sup>13</sup>Now in fair exchange—I speak as to children—open yourselves wide also.

<sup>14</sup>Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what association does righteousness have with lawlessness? For what fellowship does light have with darkness?<sup>15</sup>What agreement can Christ have with Belial? Or what share does a believer have together with an unbeliever?<sup>16</sup>And what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said:

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

<sup>17</sup>Therefore,

"Come out from among them,  
and be set apart," says the Lord.

"Touch no unclean thing,  
and I will welcome you.

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



Chapter 7

<sup>1</sup>Beloved, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit. Let us perfect holiness in the fear of God.

<sup>2</sup>Make room for us! We have not wronged anyone. We have not corrupted anyone or taken advantage of anyone.

<sup>3</sup>It is not to condemn you that I say this. For I have already said that you are in our hearts, for us to die together and to live together.<sup>4</sup>I have great confidence in you, and great is my boast about you. I am filled with comfort. I overflow with joy even in all our tribulation.

<sup>5</sup>When we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest. Instead, we were troubled in every way by conflicts on the outside and fears on the inside.<sup>6</sup>But God, who comforts the lowly, comforted us by the arrival of Titus.<sup>7</sup>It was not only by his arrival that God comforted us. It was also by the comfort that Titus had received from you. He told us of your great affection, your sorrow, and your zeal for me. So I rejoiced even more.

<sup>8</sup>Even though my letter made you sorrowful, I do not regret it. But I did regret it when I saw that my letter made you sorrowful, though only for a little while.<sup>9</sup>Now I rejoice, not because you were sorrowful, but because your sorrow brought you to repentance. You experienced a godly sorrow, so you suffered no loss because of us.<sup>10</sup>For godly sorrow brings about repentance that accomplishes salvation without regret. Worldly sorrow, however, brings about death.

<sup>11</sup>See what great diligence this godly sorrow produced in you. How great was the determination in you to prove you were innocent. How great was your indignation, your fear, your longing, your zeal, and your desire to see that justice should be done! In everything you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.<sup>12</sup>Although I wrote to you, I did not write for the sake of the wrongdoer, nor for the one who suffered the wrong, but so that your earnestness toward us should be made known to you in the sight of God.

<sup>13</sup>It is by this that we are encouraged.

In addition to our own comfort, we also rejoiced even more because of Titus' joy, because his spirit was refreshed by all of you.

<sup>14</sup>For if I boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame. On the contrary, just as everything we said to you was true, our boasting about you to Titus proved to be true.

<sup>15</sup>His affection for you is even greater as he remembers the obedience of all of you, how you welcomed him with fear and trembling.<sup>16</sup>I rejoice because I have complete confidence in you.

## Chapter 8

<sup>1</sup>We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia.<sup>2</sup>During a great test of tribulation, the abundance of their joy and the extremity of their poverty have produced great riches of generosity.

<sup>3</sup>For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond what they were able, and of their own free will<sup>4</sup>they begged us with much earnestness for the privilege of sharing in this service to God's holy people.

<sup>5</sup>This did not happen as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us by the will of God.

<sup>6</sup>So we urged Titus, who had already begun this task, to complete among you this act of grace.<sup>7</sup>But you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us. So also make sure that you excel in this act of grace. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>8</sup>I say this not as a command but to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it to the eagerness of other people.

<sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

<sup>10</sup>In this matter I will give you advice that will help you. One year ago, you not only started to do something, but you desired to do it.<sup>11</sup>Now finish it. Just as there was an eagerness and desire to do it then, may you also bring it to completion, as much as you can.<sup>12</sup>For if you are eager to do this deed, it is a good and acceptable thing. It must be based on what a person has, not on what he does not have.

<sup>13</sup>For this is not to cause relief for others and tribulation for you, but for fairness.<sup>14</sup>Your abundance at the present time will supply what they need. This is also so that their abundance may supply your need, and so that there may be fairness.<sup>15</sup>It is as it is written:

"The one with much did not have anything left over,  
and the one who had little did not have any lack."

<sup>16</sup>But thanks be to God, who put into Titus' heart the same earnest care that I have for you.<sup>17</sup>For he not only accepted our appeal, but he was also very earnest about it. He came to you of his own free will.

<sup>18</sup>We have sent with him the brother who is praised among all of the churches for his work in proclaiming the gospel.<sup>19</sup>Not only this, but he also was chosen by the churches to be our traveling companion with this act of grace, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord himself and our good will.

<sup>20</sup>We are avoiding the possibility that anyone should complain about this act of generosity that we are carrying out.<sup>21</sup>We take care to do what is good, not only before the Lord, but also before people.

<sup>22</sup>We are also sending another brother with them. We have tested him in many ways and found him diligent for many tasks. He is even more eager now because of the great confidence he has in you.<sup>23</sup>As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for you. As for our brothers, they are messengers from the churches. They are a glory to Christ.<sup>24</sup>So show them the proof of your love, and show to the churches the reason for our boasting about you.

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<sup>1</sup>There is evidence that corrections were made to verse 7 by later copyists who were referring to other ancient texts. Most modern translations follow those corrections, and they now read, and in your love for us . But there are some important and ancient Greek copies that read, and in our love for you .

Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup>Concerning the service for God's holy people, it is not necessary for me to write to you.<sup>2</sup>I know about your desire, which I boasted about to the people of Macedonia. I told them that Achaia has been getting ready since last year. Your eagerness has motivated most of them to action.

<sup>3</sup>Now I have sent the brothers so that our boasting about you may not be futile, and so that you would be ready, as I said you would be.<sup>4</sup>Otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we would be ashamed—I say nothing about you—for being so confident in you.<sup>5</sup>So I thought it was necessary to urge the brothers to come to you and to make arrangements in advance for the gift you have promised. This is so that it might be ready as a blessing, and not as something extorted.

<sup>6</sup>The point is this: The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows for the purpose of a blessing will also reap a blessing.<sup>7</sup>Let each one give as he has planned in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

<sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace overflow for you, so that always, in all things, you may have all you need. This will be so that you may multiply every good deed.<sup>9</sup>It is as it is written:

"He has distributed his riches and given them to the poor.  
His righteousness lasts forever."

<sup>10</sup>He who supplies seed to the farmer who sows and bread for food will also supply and multiply your seed for sowing. He will increase the harvest of your righteousness.<sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way so you can be generous. This will bring about thanksgiving to God through us.

<sup>12</sup>For carrying out this service not only meets the needs of God's holy people, but it also is overflowing into many acts of thanksgiving to God.<sup>13</sup>Because of your being tested and proved by this service, you will also glorify God by obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ. You will also glorify God by the generosity of your contribution to them and to everyone.<sup>14</sup>They long for you, and they are praying for you. They do this because of the very great grace of God that is on you.<sup>15</sup>May thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Chapter 10

<sup>1</sup>I, Paul, myself urge you, by the humility and gentleness of Christ. I am meek when I am in your presence, but I am bold toward you when I am away.<sup>2</sup>I beg of you that, when I am present with you, I will not need to be bold with the confidence that I think I will need to be bold when I oppose those who think that we are walking according to the flesh.

<sup>3</sup>For even though we walk in the flesh, we do not make war according to the flesh.<sup>4</sup>For the weapons we fight with are not fleshly. Rather, they have divine power to destroy strongholds. They bring misleading arguments to nothing.

<sup>5</sup>We also destroy every high thing that rises up against the knowledge of God. We take every thought captive into obedience to Christ.<sup>6</sup>And we are getting ready to punish every act of disobedience, as soon as your obedience is complete.

<sup>7</sup>Look at what is clearly in front of you. If anyone is convinced that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.<sup>8</sup>For even if I boast a little too much about our authority, which the Lord gave for us to build you up and not to destroy you, I will not be ashamed.

<sup>9</sup>I do not want it to appear that I am terrifying you by my letters.<sup>10</sup>For some people say, "His letters are serious and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak. His words are not worth listening to."

<sup>11</sup>Let such people be aware that what we are in the words of our letters when we are absent is what we will be in our actions when we are there.<sup>12</sup>We are not so bold as to group ourselves or compare ourselves with those who praise themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with each other, they have no insight.

<sup>13</sup>We, however, will not boast beyond limits. Instead, we will do so only within the limits of what God has assigned to us, limits that reach even as far as you.<sup>14</sup>For we are not overextending ourselves as though we did not reach you. We were the first to reach as far as you with the gospel of Christ.

<sup>15</sup>We have not boasted beyond limits about the labors of others. Rather, our hope is that as your faith continues to grow, our work among you will greatly expand,<sup>16</sup> so that we may preach the gospel even in regions beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area.

<sup>17</sup> "But let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

<sup>18</sup>For it is not the one who recommends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord recommends.

## Chapter 11

<sup>1</sup>I wish that you could put up with me in some foolishness. But you are indeed putting up with me!<sup>2</sup>For I am jealous about you. I have a godly jealousy for you, since I promised you in marriage to one husband. I promised to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

<sup>3</sup>But I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts might be led astray, away from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.<sup>4</sup>For suppose that someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we preached. Or suppose that you receive a different spirit than what you received. Or suppose that you receive a different gospel than the one you received. You put up with these things well enough!

<sup>5</sup>For I think that I am not in the least inferior to those so-called super-apostles.<sup>6</sup>But even if I am untrained in speech, I am not untrained in knowledge. In every way and in all things we have made this known to you.

<sup>7</sup>Did I sin by humbling myself so you might be exalted? For I freely preached the gospel of God to you.<sup>8</sup>I robbed other churches by accepting support from them so that I could serve you.<sup>9</sup>When I was with you and I was in need, I did not burden anyone. For my needs were met by the brothers who came from Macedonia. In everything I have kept myself from being a burden to you, and I will continue to do that.

<sup>10</sup>As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the parts of Achaia.<sup>11</sup>Why? Because I do not love you? God knows.

<sup>12</sup>And what I do I will keep doing, so that I may cut off the opportunity of those who want an opportunity to be found to be like us in the things they boast about.<sup>13</sup>For such people are false apostles and deceitful workers. They disguise themselves as apostles of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>And this is no surprise, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.<sup>15</sup>It is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their fate will be what their deeds deserve.

<sup>16</sup>I say again: Let no one think I am a fool. But if you do, receive me as a fool so I may boast a little.<sup>17</sup>What I am saying with this boastful confidence—I am not talking the way the Lord would—I am saying as a fool.<sup>18</sup>Since many people boast according to the flesh, I will also boast.

<sup>19</sup>For you gladly put up with fools. You are wise yourselves!<sup>20</sup>For you put up with someone if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself, or if he slaps you in the face.<sup>21</sup>I will say to our shame that we were too weak to do that. Yet if anyone is bold—I am speaking like a fool—I too will be bold.

<sup>22</sup>Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.<sup>23</sup>Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as though I were insane.) I am more: in harder labor, in more prisons, in beatings beyond measure, in facing many deadly dangers.

<sup>24</sup>From Jews I received five times the "forty lashes minus one."<sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day on the open sea.<sup>26</sup>I have been on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, in danger from robbers, in danger from my own people, in danger from the Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the wilderness, in danger at sea, in danger from false brothers.

<sup>27</sup>I have served in labor and toil, in many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often in fasting, in cold and nakedness.<sup>28</sup>Apart from everything else, there is the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches.<sup>29</sup>Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who has been caused to stumble, and I do not burn?

<sup>30</sup>If I must boast, I will boast about what shows my weaknesses.<sup>31</sup>The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, the one who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying!

<sup>32</sup>At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus to arrest me.<sup>33</sup>But I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall, and I escaped from his hands.

## Chapter 12

<sup>1</sup>I must boast, even if it is unprofitable. But I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.<sup>2</sup>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 into the third heaven.

<sup>3</sup>And I know that this man—whether in the body, or out of the body, I do not know, God knows—<sup>4</sup>was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words that people are not permitted to speak.<sup>5</sup>On behalf of such a person I will boast. But on behalf of myself I will not boast, except about my weaknesses.

<sup>6</sup>If I should choose to boast, I will not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I will keep from boasting, so that no one will think more of me than what he sees in me or hears from me.<sup>7</sup>To keep me from exalting myself because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger from Satan to afflict me—so I would not exalt myself.

<sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, for him to take it away from me.<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is enough for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So I would much rather boast about my weakness, so that the power of Christ might reside on me.<sup>10</sup>Therefore I am content for Christ's sake in weaknesses, in insults, in troubles, in persecutions and distressing situations. For whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

<sup>11</sup>I have become a fool! You forced me to this, for I should have been praised by you. For I was not at all inferior to the so-called super-apostles, even though I am nothing.<sup>12</sup>The true signs of an apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, signs and wonders and miracles.<sup>13</sup>For how were you less important than the rest of the churches, except that I was not a burden to you? Forgive me for this wrong!

<sup>14</sup>Look! I am ready to come to you a third time. I will not be a burden to you, for I do not seek what is yours. I want you. For children should not save up for the parents. Instead, the parents should save up for the children.<sup>15</sup>I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

<sup>16</sup>But as it is, I did not burden you. But since I am so crafty, I am the one who caught you by deceit.<sup>17</sup>Did I take advantage of you by anyone I sent to you?<sup>18</sup>I urged Titus to go to you, and I sent the other brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?

<sup>19</sup>Do you think all of this time we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we speak in Christ, and all for your strengthening, beloved.

<sup>20</sup>For I fear that when I come, I may not find you as I wish. I fear that you might not find me as you wish. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, rivalries, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.<sup>21</sup>I fear that when I come back, my God might humble me before you. I fear that I might be grieved by many of those who have sinned before now and who did not repent of the uncleanness and sexual immorality and lustful indulgence that they practiced.

Chapter 13

<sup>1</sup>This is the third time that I am coming to you. "Every matter must be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses."<sup>2</sup>I have already said to those who sinned before and to all the rest when I was there the second time, and I say it again: When I come again, I will not spare them.

<sup>3</sup>I tell you this because you are looking for proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak toward you. Rather, he is powerful in you.<sup>4</sup>For he was crucified in weakness, but he is alive by God's power. For we also are weak in him, but we will live with him by the power of God among you.

<sup>5</sup>Examine yourselves, to see if you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, of course, you have failed the test.<sup>6</sup>And I hope that you will recognize that we have not failed the test.

<sup>7</sup>Now we pray to God that you may not do any wrong. I do not pray this so that we may appear to have passed the test. Rather, I pray that you may do what is proper, although we may seem to have failed the test.<sup>8</sup>For we are not able to do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

<sup>9</sup>For we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. We also pray that you may be made complete.<sup>10</sup>I write these things while I am away from you so, that when I am with you I do not have to deal harshly with you in the use of my authority—which the Lord gave to me so that I may build you up, and not tear you down.

<sup>11</sup>Finally, brothers, rejoice! Work for restoration, be encouraged, think alike, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.<sup>12</sup>Greet each other with a holy kiss. All God's holy people greet you. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Some copies number this sentence as verse 13.

<sup>2</sup>Some translations number this sentence as verse 14.

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