

Language: English

Book: Romans

Romans

Chapter 1

¹ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand by his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ concerning his Son who was a descendant of David according to the flesh. ⁴ Through the Spirit of holiness he was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵ Through him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all the nations, for the sake of his name. ⁶ Among these nations, you also have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷ To all in Rome who are beloved of God and called to be his holy people: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, of how continually I make mention of you. ¹⁰ I always request in my prayers that by any means I may at last be successful now by the will of God in coming to you. ¹¹ For I desire to see you, that I may give you some spiritual gift, in order to strengthen you. ¹² That is, I long to be mutually encouraged among you, through each other's faith, yours and mine. ¹³ Now I do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, that I often intended to come to you (but I was hindered until now), in order to have some fruit among you also, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am a debtor both to Greeks and to foreigners, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So, as for me, I am ready to proclaim the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, as it has been written, "The righteous will live by faith."

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who through unrighteousness hold back the truth. ¹⁹ This is because that which is known about God is visible to them. For God has enlightened them. ²⁰ For ever since the creation of the world, his invisible qualities, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, having been discerned in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ This is because, although they knew about God, they did not glorify him as God, nor did they give him thanks. Instead, they became foolish in their thoughts, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²² They claimed to be wise, but they became foolish. ²³ They exchanged the glory of the imperishable God for the likenesses of an image of perishable man, of birds, of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God delivered them over to the lusts of their hearts for uncleanness, for their bodies to be dishonored among themselves. ²⁵ It is they who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and who worshiped and served the creation instead of the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶ Because of this, God delivered them over to dishonorable lusts, for their women exchanged natural relations for those that were unnatural. ²⁷ In the same way, the men also left their natural relations with women and burned in their lust for one another. These were men who committed shameless acts with men and received in themselves the penalty they deserved for their error.

²⁸ And just as they did not approve of having God in their awareness, he gave them up to a corrupted mind, for them to do those things that are not proper. ²⁹ They have been filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, and malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and evil intentions.

They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventing ways of doing evil; they are disobedient to parents. ³¹ They are senseless, faithless, heartless, and unmerciful. ³² They understand the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death. But not only do they do these things, they also approve of others who do them.

Romans 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The first verse is a type of introduction. People in the ancient Mediterranean region often started their letters this way. Sometimes this is called a "salutation."

Special concepts in this chapter

The gospel

When Paul writes of "the gospel" in this chapter (verses 1, 2, 9, 15, 16, 17), he is referring to the message about God's salvation for people through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross.

Harvest

This chapter uses the image of a harvest ([1:13](#)) to speak of the Roman Christians doing good works because they believe what Paul has told them about Jesus. (See: fruit and faith and righteous)

Universal Condemnation and the Wrath of God

This chapter explains that everyone is without excuse. We all know about the true God, Yahweh, from his creation all around us. Because of our sin and our sinful nature, every person justly deserves the wrath of God. This wrath was satisfied by Jesus dying on a cross for those who believe in him. (See: believe and sin)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

"God gave them over"

Many scholars view the phrases "God gave them over" and "God gave them up" as theologically significant. In both cases, it means that God had stopped trying to teach the people the right way and had allowed them to do whatever they want, even though everything they wanted to do was evil.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Difficult phrases and concepts

This chapter has many difficult ideas in it. The way Paul writes makes many of the phrases in this chapter difficult to translate. The translator may need to use the UDB to understand the meaning of the phrases and then translate them in a way that is easy for people to understand. Some of the difficult phrases include: "obedience of faith," "whom I serve in my spirit," "from faith to faith" and "exchanged the glory of the imperishable God for the likenesses of an image of perishable man."

Romans 1:1

Paul

Your language may have a particular way of introducing the author of a letter. You may also need to tell in this same verse who the people are to whom Paul wrote the letter

Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Christ. God called me to be an apostle and chose me to tell people about the gospel"

called

appointed or chosen by God to be his child, to be his servant and proclaimer of his message of salvation through Jesus

Romans 1:2

which he promised beforehand by his prophets in the holy scriptures

God promised his people that he would set up his kingdom. He told the prophets to write these promises in the Scriptures.

Romans 1:3

concerning his Son

This refers to "the gospel of God," the good news that God promised to send his Son into the world.

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

who was a descendant of David according to the flesh

Here the word "flesh" refers to the physical body. Alternate translation: "who is a descendant of David according to the physical nature" or "who was born into the family of David"

Romans 1:4

he was declared with power to be the Son of God

The word "he" refers to Jesus Christ. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God declared him with power to be the Son of God"

by the resurrection from the dead

"by raising him from among the people who are dead." This expression speaks of all dead people together in the underworld, and coming alive again is spoken of as resurrection from among them.

Spirit of holiness

This refers to the Holy Spirit.

Romans 1:5

Connecting Statement:

Paul talks here about his obligation to preach.

we have received grace and apostleship

God has given Paul the gift of being an apostle. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God caused me to be an apostle. This is a special privilege"

for obedience of faith among all the nations, for the sake of his name

Paul uses the word "name" as a metonym to refer to Jesus. Alternate translation: "in order to teach all nations to obey because of their faith in him"

Romans 1:6

General Information:

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Romans 1:7

To all in Rome who are beloved of God and called to be his holy people

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "I am writing this letter to all of you in Rome whom God loves and has chosen to become his people"

Grace to you and peace

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "May God give you grace and peace" or "May God bless you and give you inner peace"

God our Father

The word "Father" is an important title for God.

Romans 1:8

the whole world

the world Paul and his readers knew and could travel in, which was the Roman Empire

Romans 1:9

For God is my witness

Paul emphasizes that he earnestly prays for them and that God has seen him praying. The word "for" is often left untranslated.

in my spirit

A person's spirit is the part of him that can know God and believe in him.

the gospel of his Son

The good news (gospel) of the Bible is that the Son of God has given himself as the Savior of the world.

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

I make mention of you

"I talk to God about you"

Romans 1:10

I always request in my prayers that ... I may at last be successful ... in coming to you

"Every time I pray, I ask God that ... I may succeed ... in coming to visit you"

by any means

"in whatever way God allows"

at last

"eventually" or "finally"

now by the will of God

"now, because God desires it,"

Romans 1:11

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues his opening statements to the people in Rome by stating his desire to see them in person.

For I desire to see you

"Because I really want to see you"

some spiritual gift, in order to strengthen you
Paul wants to strengthen the Roman Christians spiritually. Alternate translation: "some gift that will help you to grow spiritually"

Romans 1:12

That is, I long to be mutually encouraged among you, through each other's faith, yours and mine
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "I mean that I want us to encourage each other by sharing our experiences of faith in Jesus"

Romans 1:13

I do not want you to be uninformed
Paul is emphasizing that he wanted them to have this information. You can translate this double negative in a positive form. Alternate translation: "I want you to know"

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

I was hindered until now
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "something has always prevented me"

in order to have some fruit among you
The word "fruit" is a metaphor that represents people in Rome whom Paul wants to believe the gospel. Alternate translation: "that more people among you might trust in Jesus"

the rest of the Gentiles
the Gentiles in the other regions where he had gone

Romans 1:14

I am a debtor both to
Using the metaphor "debtor," Paul speaks of his duty to serve God as if he owed God a financial debt. Alternate translation: "I must take the gospel to"

Romans 1:15

General Information:
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Romans 1:16

I am not ashamed of the gospel
You can translate this in a positive form. Possible meanings are that 1) Paul is not ashamed of believing the gospel because he knows it is true. Alternate translation: "I am confident in the gospel" 2) Paul is not ashamed of preaching the gospel because he knows that is true. Alternate translation: "I confidently preach the gospel"

it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes
Here "believes" means that one puts his trust in Christ. Alternate translation: "it is through the gospel that God powerfully saves those who put their trust in Christ"

for the Jew first and for the Greek
"for Jewish people and also for Greek people"

first
Here "first" means coming before all others in order of time.

Romans 1:17

For in it
Here "it" refers to the gospel. Paul explains why he completely trusts in the gospel.

God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith
Paul speaks about the gospel message as if it were an object that God could physically show to people. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God has told us that it is by faith from beginning to end that people become righteous"

as it has been written
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "as someone has written in the Scriptures"

The righteous will live by faith
Possible meanings are 1) the words "by faith" describe "righteous," and those who by faith are righteous will live, or 2) the words "by faith" describe "will live," and those who are righteous will live by faith.

The righteous
The word "righteous" can be written as an adjective. Alternate translation: "Righteous people" or "A person who is righteous"

Romans 1:18

Connecting Statement:
Paul reveals God's great anger against sinful man.

For the wrath of God is revealed
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "For God shows how angry he is"

For
Paul uses the word "for" to show he is about to tell why people know that what he has said in Romans 1:17 is true.

the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people
The words "ungodliness" and "unrighteousness" are abstract nouns that can be expressed using the adjectives "ungodly," which describes the people,

and "unrighteous," which describes their deeds. These nouns are metonyms for the people with whom God is angry. You can translate this in active form. Alternate translation: "God reveals from heaven how angry he is with people because they are ungodly and do unrighteous deeds"

hold back the truth

Here "truth" refers to true information about God. Alternate translation: "hide the true information about God"

Romans 1:19

that which is known about God is visible to them

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "they can know about God because of what they can plainly see"

For God has enlightened them

Here "enlightened them" means God has shown them the truth about him. Alternate translation: "Because God has shown everyone what he is like"

Romans 1:20

world

This refers to the heavens and the earth, as well as everything in them.

his invisible qualities, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen

Paul speaks of people understanding God's invisible qualities as if people have seen those qualities. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "people have clearly understood God's invisible qualities, namely his eternal power and divine nature"

divine nature

"all the qualities and characteristics of God" or "the things about God that make him God"

having been discerned

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "because people have discerned them" or "because people have understood them"

in the things that have been made

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "in the things that God has made"

they are without excuse

"people do not have an excuse" or "these people can never say that they did not know"

Romans 1:21

became foolish in their thoughts

"began to think foolish things"

their senseless hearts were darkened

Here "darkness" is a metaphor that represents the people's lack of understanding. Here "hearts" is a

metonym for a person's mind or inner being. Alternate translation: "they became unable to understand what God wanted them to know"

Romans 1:22

They claimed to be wise, but they became foolish

"While they were claiming that they were wise, they became foolish"

They ... they

the people in Romans 1:18

Romans 1:23

exchanged the glory of the imperishable God

"traded the truth that God is glorious and will never die"

exchanged the glory of the imperishable God for the likenesses of an image of

"stopped loving the glory of the God who never dies and instead chose to worship idols that looked like"

perishable man

"human beings, who will die"

of birds, of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things

"or that looked like birds, four-footed beasts, or creeping things"

Romans 1:24

Therefore

"Because what I have just said is true"

God delivered them over to

"God allowed them to indulge in"

them ... their ... themselves

These words refer to the "people" of Romans 1:18.

the lusts of their hearts for uncleanness

Here "lusts of their hearts" is a synecdoche that represents the evil things they wanted to do.

Alternate translation: "the morally impure things they desired greatly"

for their bodies to be dishonored among themselves

This is a euphemism that means they committed immoral sexual acts. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "and they committed sexually immoral and degrading acts"

Romans 1:25

they

This word refers to the "people" of Romans 1:18.

who worshiped and served the creation

Here "creation" refers to what God created.

Alternate translation: "They worshiped things that God created"

instead of
"rather than"

Romans 1:26

Because of this
"Because of idolatry and sexual sin"

God delivered them over to dishonorable lusts
"God allowed them to do all the dishonorable things they very much wanted to do"

dishonorable lusts
"shameful sexual desires"

lusts, for their women
"lusts. For example, their women"

exchanged natural relations for those that were unnatural
The idea of relations "that were unnatural" is a euphemism for immoral sexuality. Alternate translation: "started practicing sexuality in a way God did not design"

Romans 1:27

men also left their natural relations with women
Here "natural relations" is a euphemism for sexual relationships. Alternate translation: "many men stopped having natural sexual desire for women"

burned in their lust for one another
"experienced strong sexual desire for other men"

committed shameless acts with men and
"committed acts with men for which they should have been ashamed. But they were not ashamed, and they"

men and received in themselves the penalty they deserved for their error
"men, and God has punished them justly for the error they committed"

error
moral wrong, not a mistake about facts

Romans 1:28

And just as they did not approve of having God in their awareness
"They did not think it was necessary to know God"

And just as
Possible meanings are 1) God "gave them up to a corrupted mind ... proper" (see the words in this verse) because they not only "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and ... worshiped and served the creation" (Romans 1:25), but they also "did not approve ... awareness," or 2) God "gave them up ... proper" because "they did not approve ...

awareness," in which case "And just as" should be translated "Because."

they ... their ... them
These words refer to the "people" of Romans 1:18.

he gave them up to a corrupted mind
Here "a corrupted mind" means a mind that thinks only about immoral things. Alternate translation: "God allowed their minds, which they had filled with worthless and immoral thoughts, to completely control them"

not proper
"disgraceful" or "sinful"

Romans 1:29

They have been filled with all
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "They have in them a strong desire for all" or "They strongly desire to do deeds of"

They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and evil intentions
"Many are constantly envying other people ... Many constantly desire to murder people ... to cause arguments and quarrels among people ... to deceive others ... to speak hatefully about others"

Romans 1:30

slanderers
A slanderer says false things about another person in order to damage that person's reputation.

inventing ways of doing evil
"thinking of new ways to do evil things to others"

Romans 1:31

General Information:
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Romans 1:32

They understand the ordinance of God, that
"They know how God wants them to live and that"

that those who practice such things
Here "practice" refers to continually or habitually doing things that are evil. Alternate translation: "that those who keep on doing wicked things"

are deserving of death
"deserve to die"

these things
"these kinds of evil things"

who do them
Here the verb "do" refers to continuing to do things that are evil. Alternate translation: "who keep on doing evil things"

Chapter 2

¹ Therefore you are without excuse, you person, you who judge, for in things for which you judge the other person, you condemn yourself. For you who judge practice the same things. ² But we know that God's judgment is according to truth when it falls on those who practice such things. ³ But consider this, you person, you who judge those who practice such things although you do the same things. Will you escape from the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you think so little of the riches of his kindness, his delayed punishment, and his patience? Do you not know that his kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But it is to the extent of your hardness and unrepentant heart that you are storing up for yourself wrath on the day of wrath, that is, the day of the revelation of God's righteous judgment. ⁶ He will pay back to every person according to his actions: ⁷ to those who according to the perseverance of good deeds have sought glory, honor, and incorruptibility, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But to those who are self-seeking, who disobey the truth but obey unrighteousness, wrath and fierce anger will come. ⁹ God will bring tribulation and distress on every human soul that has practiced evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁰ But glory, honor, and peace will come to everyone who practices good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God. ¹² For as many as have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and as many as have sinned with respect to the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but it is the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things of the law, they are a law to themselves, although they do not have the law. ¹⁵ By this they show that the actions required by the law are written in their hearts. Their conscience also bears witness to them, and their own thoughts either accuse or defend them ¹⁶ on the day when God will judge the secrets of all people, according to my gospel, through Jesus Christ.

¹⁷ But if you say that you are a Jew and rest upon the law and boast in God, ¹⁸ and know his will and approve of what is excellent because you have been instructed from the law; ¹⁹ and if you are convinced that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, and that you have in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth, then how does this affect the way you live your life? ²¹ You who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who hate idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by transgressing the law? ²⁴ For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," just as it has been written. ²⁵ For circumcision is profitable to you if you obey the law, but if you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ If, then, the uncircumcised person keeps the requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be considered as circumcision? ²⁷ And will not the one who is naturally uncircumcised condemn you if he fulfills the law? This is because you have the written law and circumcision, yet you are a transgressor of the law! ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is merely one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is merely outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter. The praise of such a person comes not from people but from God.

Romans 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter shifts its audience from Roman Christians to those who "judge" other people and do not believe in Jesus. (See: judge and believe)

"Therefore you are without excuse"

This phrase looks back at Chapter 1. In some ways, it actually concludes what Chapter 1 teaches. This phrase explains why everyone in the world must worship the true God.

Special concepts in this chapter

"Doers of the Law"

Those who try to obey the law will not be justified by trying to obey it. Those who are justified by believing in Jesus show that their faith is real by obeying God's commands. (See: justice and law of Moses)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

Paul uses several rhetorical questions in this chapter. It appears the intent of these rhetorical questions is to make the readers see their sin so they will trust in Jesus. (See: guilt and sin and faith)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"You who judge"

At times, this could be translated in a simpler way. But it is translated in this relatively awkward way because when Paul refers to "people who judge" he is also saying that everyone judges. It is possible to translate this as "those who judge (and everyone judges)."

Romans 2:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul has stated that all people are sinners and continues to remind his readers that all people are wicked.

Therefore you are without excuse

The word "therefore" marks a new section of the letter. It also makes a concluding statement based on what Paul has said in [Romans 1:1-32]

you are

Paul is writing here as if he were addressing a Jewish person who is arguing with him. Paul is doing this to teach his audience that God will punish everyone who continually sins, whether Jew or Gentile.

you

Here the pronoun "you" is singular.

excuse, you person, you who judge, for in things for which you judge the other person, you condemn yourself
"excuse. You are just a human being, yet you judge others and say they deserve God's punishment. But you are only judging yourself because you do the same wicked deeds that they do"

you person

Another possible meaning is "whoever you are."

Romans 2:2

But we know

Here the pronoun "we" may include Christian believers and also Jews who are not Christians.

God's judgment is according to truth when it falls on those

Here Paul speaks of "God's judgment" as if it were alive and could "fall" on people. Alternate

translation: "God will judge those people truly and fairly"

those who practice such things

"the people who do those wicked deeds"

Romans 2:3

But consider this

"So consider this" or "Therefore, consider this"

consider this

"think about what I am going to tell you"

you person

Use the phrase "you, whoever you are" or use "you," (with the comma), followed by a general word for a human being.

you who judge those who practice such things although you do the same things

"you who say someone deserves God's punishment while you do the same wicked deeds"

Will you escape from the judgment of God?

This remark appears in the form of a question to add emphasis. You can also translate this question as a strong negative statement. Alternate translation: "You will certainly not escape God's judgment!"

Romans 2:4

Or do you think so little of the riches of his kindness, his delayed punishment, and his patience ... repentance?

This remark appears in the form of a question to add emphasis. You can also translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You should not act like it does not matter that God is good and that he patiently waits a long time before he punishes people so that his goodness will cause them to repent!"

think so little of the riches ... patience

"consider the riches ... patience unimportant" or
"consider ... patience not good"

Do you not know that his kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

This remark appears in the form of a question to add emphasis. You can also translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You must know that God shows you he is good so that you might repent!"

Romans 2:5

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the people that all people are wicked.

But it is to the extent of your hardness and unrepentant heart

Paul uses a metaphor to compare a person who refuses to obey God to something hard, like a stone. He also uses the metonym "heart" to represent the person's mind or inner being. Alternate translation: "It is because you refuse to listen and repent"

hardness and unrepentant heart

This is a doublet that you can combine as
"unrepentant heart."

you are storing up for yourself wrath

The phrase "storing up" implies a metaphor that usually refers to a person gathering his treasures and putting them in a safe place. Paul says, instead of treasures, that the person is gathering God's punishment. The longer they go without repenting, the more severe the punishment. Alternate translation: "you are making your punishment worse"

on the day of wrath ... the day of the revelation of God's righteous judgment

Both of these phrases refer to the same day. Alternate translation: "when God will show everyone that he is angry and that he judges all people fairly"

Romans 2:6

pay back

"give a fair reward or punishment"

to every person according to his actions

"each person according to what that person has done"

Romans 2:7

who according to the perseverance of good deeds have
who, by persevering and doing good deeds, have

have sought

have tried to get

glory, honor, and incorruptibility

They want God to praise and honor them, and they want to never die.

incorruptibility

This refers to physical, not moral, decay.

Romans 2:8

self-seeking

"selfish" or "only concerned with what makes themselves happy"

disobey the truth but obey unrighteousness

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The second intensifies the first.

wrath and fierce anger will come

The words "wrath" and "fierce anger" mean basically the same thing and emphasize God's anger. Alternate translation: "God will show his terrible anger"

wrath

Here the word "wrath" is a metonym that refers to God's severe punishment of wicked people.

Romans 2:9

Connecting Statement:

Though this section is speaking to the non-religious wicked person, Paul sums it up by stating both non-Jews and Jews are wicked before God.

tribulation and distress on

The words "tribulation" and "distress" mean basically the same thing here and emphasize how bad God's punishment will be. Alternate translation: "awful punishments to"

on every human soul

Here, Paul uses the word "soul" as a synecdoche that refers to the whole person. Alternate translation: "upon every person"

has practiced evil

"has continually done evil things"

evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek

"evil. He will judge the Jewish people first, and then those people who are not Jewish"

first

Possible meanings are 1) "first in order of time" or 2) "most certainly"

Romans 2:10

But glory, honor, and peace will come

"But God will praise, honor, and give peace"

practices good

"continually does what is good"

good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek
"good. God will reward the Jewish people first, and then those people who are not Jewish"

first

You should translate this the same way you did in Romans 2:9.

Romans 2:11

For there is no partiality with God

You can translate this in a positive form. Alternate translation: "For God treats all people the same"

Romans 2:12

For as many as have sinned

"For all those who have sinned"

without the law will also perish without the law

Paul repeats "without the law" to emphasize that it does not matter if people do not know the law of Moses. If they sin, God will judge them. Alternate translation: "without knowing the law of Moses will certainly still die spiritually"

as many as have sinned

"all those who have sinned"

with respect to the law will be judged by the law

God will judge sinful people according to his law. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "and who do know the law of Moses, God will judge them according to that law"

Romans 2:13

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to let the reader know that perfect obedience to God's law is required even for those who never had God's law.

it is not the hearers of the law

Here "the law" refers to the law of Moses. Alternate translation: "it is not those who only hear the law of Moses"

who are righteous before God

"whom God considers righteous"

but it is the doers of the law

"but it is those who obey the law of Moses"

who will be justified

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "whom God will accept"

Romans 2:14

For

This verse is the beginning of an interruption of Paul's main argument, in which he gives the reader

extra information. If you have a way to mark an interruption like this in your language, you can use it here.

a law to themselves ... do not have the law

This is an idiom that means that these people naturally obey God's laws. Alternate translation: "have God's laws already inside them ... actually do not have the law"

they do not have the law

Here "the law" refers to the law of Moses."

Alternate translation: "they do not actually have the laws that God gave to Moses"

Romans 2:15

General Information:

This verse is the end of an interruption of Paul's main argument, in which he gives the reader extra information. If you have a way to mark an interruption like this in your language, you can use it here.

By this they show

"By naturally obeying the law they show"

that the actions required by the law are written in their hearts

Here "hearts" is a metonym for the person's thoughts or inner person. The phrase "written in their hearts" is a metaphor for knowing something in their mind. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "that God has written on their hearts what the law requires them to do" or "that they know the actions that God wants them to do according to his law"

bears witness to them

Here "bears witness" refers to the knowledge they gain from the law that God has written in their hearts. Alternate translation: "tells them if they are disobeying or obeying God's law"

Romans 2:16

when God will judge

This finishes Paul's thought from Romans 2:13. You can put a period at the end of 2:15 and start a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "This will happen when God judges"

Romans 2:17

Connecting Statement:

Here begins Paul's discussion that the law the Jews possess actually condemns them because they do not obey it.

if you say that you are a Jew

"since you call yourself a Jew" or "if you want people to think of you as a Jew"

rest upon the law

The phrase "rest upon the law" represents believing that they can become righteous by obeying the law. Alternate translation: "rely on the law of Moses"

Romans 2:18

know his will

"and know God's will"

because you have been instructed from the law

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "because people have taught you what is right from the law" or "because you have learned from the law"

Romans 2:19

that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness

Here "the blind" and "those who walk in darkness" represent people who do not understand the law. Alternate translation: "that because you teach the law, you yourself are like a guide to blind people, and you are like a light to people who are lost in the dark"

Romans 2:20

an instructor of the foolish

"you correct those who do wrong"

a teacher of little children

Here Paul compares those who do not know anything about the law to very small children. Alternate translation: "you teach those who do not know the law"

and that you have in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth

The knowledge of the truth that is in the law comes from God. Alternate translation: "and you are sure you understand the truth that God has given in the law"

Romans 2:21

You who teach others, do you not teach yourself?

Paul is using a question to scold his listeners. You can translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You teach others, but you do not teach yourself!" or "You teach others, but you do not do what you teach!"

You who preach against stealing, do you steal?

Paul is using a question to scold his listeners. You can translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You tell people not to steal, but you steal!"

Romans 2:22

You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?

Paul is using a question to scold his listeners. You can translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You tell people not to commit adultery, but you commit adultery!"

You who hate idols, do you rob temples?

Paul is using a question to scold his listener. You can translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You say you hate idols, but you rob temples!"

do you rob temples

Possible meanings are 1) "do you steal items from local pagan temples to sell and make a profit" or 2) "do you keep back from the Jerusalem temple all the money that is due to God"

Romans 2:23

You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by transgressing the law?

Paul uses a question to scold his listener. You can translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "It is wicked that you claim to be proud of the law while at the same time you disobey it and bring shame to God!"

Romans 2:24

the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "many Gentiles blaspheme the name of God"

name of God

The word "name" is a metonym that refers to the entirety of God, not just his name.

Romans 2:25

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to show that God, by his law, condemns even the Jews who have God's law.

For circumcision is profitable to you

"I say all of this because it is good for you to be circumcised"

if you are a transgressor of the law

"if you do not obey the commandments found in the law"

your circumcision becomes uncircumcision

"it is as though you were no longer circumcised"

Romans 2:26

the uncircumcised person

"the person who is not circumcised"

keeps the requirements of the law
"obeys what God commands in the law"

will not his uncircumcision be considered as circumcision?

This is the first of two questions Paul asks here to emphasize that circumcision is not what makes one right before God. You can translate this question as a statement in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will consider him as circumcised."

Romans 2:27

And will not the one who is naturally uncircumcised condemn you ... the law?
This is the second of two questions that Paul asks here

Romans 2:28

outwardly
This refers to Jewish rituals, such as circumcision, which people can see.

merely outward in the flesh
This refers to the physical change to a man's body when someone circumcises him.

flesh
This is a synecdoche for the whole body. Alternate translation: "body"

Romans 2:29

he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart

These two phrases have similar meanings. The first phrase, "he is a Jew who is one inwardly," explains the second phrase, "circumcision is that of the heart."

inwardly
This refers to the values and motivations of the person whom God has transformed.

of the heart
Here "heart" is a metonym for the inner person.

in the Spirit, not in the letter
Here "letter" is a synecdoche that refers to written Scripture. Alternate translation: "through the work of the Holy Spirit, not because you know the Scriptures"

in the Spirit
This refers to the internal, spiritual part of a person that the Holy Spirit changes.

Chapter 3

¹ Then what advantage does the Jew have? And what is the benefit of circumcision? ² It is great in every way. First of all, the Jews were entrusted with revelation from God.

³ For what if some Jews were without faith? Will their unbelief nullify God's faithfulness? ⁴ May it never be. Instead, let God be found to be true, even though every man is a liar. As it has been written,

"That you might be shown to be righteous in your words,
and that you might prevail when you come into judgment."

⁵ But if our unrighteousness shows the righteousness of God, what can we say? Can we say that God is unrighteous to bring his wrath upon us? (I am using a human argument.) ⁶ May it never be! For then how would God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie the truth of God increases his glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner? ⁸ Why not say, as we are slandered as saying, and as some affirm that we say, "Let us do evil, so that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

⁹ What then? Are we excusing ourselves? Not at all. For we have already accused both Jews and Greeks, all of them, of being under sin. ¹⁰ This is as it is written:

"No one is righteous, not one;
¹¹ there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.
¹² They have all turned away;
together they have become useless.
There is no one who does good, no,
not even one."
¹³ "Their throat is an open grave.
Their tongues have deceived.
The poison of snakes is under their lips."
¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."
¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to pour out blood.
¹⁶ Destruction and suffering are in their paths.
¹⁷ These people have not known a way of peace."
¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to the ones who are under the law, so that every mouth may be shut, and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰ For no flesh will be justified by the works of the law in his sight. For through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been revealed, to which the Law and the Prophets bear witness— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. For there is no distinction, ²³ for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and they are freely justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ For God provided Christ Jesus as an atoning sacrifice through faith in his blood. He offered Christ as proof of his justice, because of his disregard of previous sins ²⁶ in his patience. This was to show his righteousness at this present time, so he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? Of works? No, but through a law of faith. ²⁸ We conclude then that a person is justified by faith without works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not also the God of Gentiles? Yes, of Gentiles also. ³⁰ If, indeed, God is one, he will justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

³¹ Do we then nullify the law through faith? May it never be! Instead, we uphold the law.

Romans 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 4 and 10-18 of this chapter, which is from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Chapter 3 answers the question, "What advantage does being a Jew have over being a Gentile?" (See: lawofmoses and save)

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"

Because God is holy, anyone with him in heaven must be perfect. Any sin at all will condemn a person. (See: heaven and condemn)

The purpose of the law of Moses

Obedying the law cannot make a person right with God. Obeying God's law is a way a person shows they believe in God. People have always been justified only by faith. (See: justice and faith)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

Paul frequently uses rhetorical questions in this chapter. It appears the intent of these rhetorical questions is to make the readers see their sin so they will trust in Jesus. (See: and guilt)

Romans 3:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul proclaims the advantage that Jews have because God gave them his law.

Then what advantage does the Jew have? And what is the benefit of circumcision?

Paul presents ideas that people might have after they hear what he wrote in chapter 2. He does this in order to respond to them in verse 2. Alternate translation: "Some people might say, 'Then what advantage does the Jew have? And what is the benefit of circumcision?'" or "Some people might say, 'If that is true, then the Jews do not have any advantage, and there is no benefit in being circumcised.'"

Romans 3:2

It is great in every way

Paul now responds to the concerns brought up in verse 1. Here "It" refers to being a member of the Jewish people. Alternate translation: "But there is great advantage to being a Jew"

First of all

Possible meanings are 1) "First in order of time" or 2) "Most certainly" or 3) "Most importantly."

the Jews were entrusted with revelation from God

Here "revelation" refers to God's words and promises. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God gave his words that contain his promises to the Jews"

Romans 3:3

For what if some Jews were without faith? Will their unbelief nullify God's faithfulness?

Paul uses these questions to make people think. Alternate translation: "Some Jews have not been faithful to God. We should not conclude from this that God will not fulfill his promise."

Romans 3:4

May it never be

This expression strongly denies that this could happen. You may have an expression in your language that you could use here. "That is not possible!" or "Certainly not!"

Instead, let

"We should say this instead, let"

let God be found to be true

God will always be true and will keep his promises. Alternate translation: "God always does what he has promised"

even though every man is a liar

The words "every" and "liar" are exaggerations here to add emphasis that God alone is always true to his promises. Alternate translation: "even if every man were a liar"

As it has been written

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "The Scriptures themselves agree with what I am saying"

That you might be shown to be righteous in your words, and that you might prevail when you come into judgment

These two phrases have very similar meanings. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Everyone must acknowledge that what you say is true, and you will always win your case when anyone accuses you"

Romans 3:5

But if our unrighteousness shows the righteousness of God, what can we say? Can we say that God is unrighteous to bring his wrath upon us?

Paul uses these questions to present what some people were arguing and to get his readers to think about whether or not this argument is true. Alternate translation: "Some people say that since our unrighteousness shows God's righteousness, then God is unrighteous when he punishes us."

to bring his wrath upon us

Here "wrath" is a metonym for punishment. Alternate translation: "to bring his punishment upon us" or "to punish us"

I am using a human argument

"I am saying here what some people say" or "This is what some people say"

Romans 3:6

May it never be

"We must never say that God is unrighteous"

For then how would God judge the world?

Paul uses this question to show that the arguments against the gospel are not valid, since the Jews believe that God will judge all people. Alternate translation: "We all know that God will in fact judge the world!"

the world

The "world" is a metonym for the people who live in the world. Alternate translation: "the people who live in the world"

Romans 3:7

But if through my lie the truth of God increases his glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner?

Here Paul imagines someone continuing to reject the Christian gospel. That adversary argues that his sin shows that God is righteous, so God should not declare that person guilty of sin on judgment day.

increases his glory

"causes people to praise God for his glory"

Romans 3:8

Why not say ... come"?

Here Paul raises a question of his own, to show how ridiculous the argument of his imaginary adversary is. Alternate translation: "I might as well be saying ... come!"

as we are slandered as saying

"as some lie to others, claiming that this what we are saying"

evil ... good

These Greek words are plural: "evil deeds ... good things"

good may come

You may need to make explicit that the speakers expect to receive good things. Alternate translation: "good things may come to us" or "we may receive good things"

Their condemnation is just

God will be acting justly when he condemns these enemies of Paul for telling lies about what Paul has been teaching.

Romans 3:9

Connecting Statement:

Paul sums up that all are guilty of sin, none are righteous, and no one seeks God.

What then? Are we excusing ourselves?

Paul asks these questions to emphasize his point. Alternate translation: "We Jews should not try to imagine we are going to escape God's judgment, just because we are Jewish!"

Not at all

These words are stronger than a simple "no," but not as strong as "absolutely not!"

Romans 3:10

This is as it is written

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "This is as the prophets have written in the Scriptures"

Romans 3:11

there is no one who understands

There is no one who understands what is right. Alternate translation: "no one really understands what is right"

there is no one who seeks God

Here the phrase "seeks after God" means tries to have a relationship with God. Alternate translation: "no one sincerely tries to have a right relationship with God"

Romans 3:12

They have all turned away

This is an idiom that means the people do not even want to think about God. They want to avoid him. Alternate translation: "They have all turned away from God"

together they have become useless

Since no one does what is good, they are useless to God. Alternate translation: "Everyone has become useless to God"

Romans 3:13

Their ... Their

The word "their" refers to the "Jews and Greeks" of Romans 3:9.

Their throat is an open grave

The word "throat" is a metonym for everything that people say. Here "open grave" is a metaphor that refers to the stench of dead bodies, a metaphor for the evil words of the people.

Their tongues have deceived

The word "tongues" is a metonym for the false words that people speak. Alternate translation: "People speak lies"

The poison of snakes is under their lips

Here "poison of snakes" is a metaphor that is used to represent the great harm of the evil words that the people speak. The word "lips" refers to the words of the people. Alternate translation: "Their evil words injure people just like the poison of a venomous snake"

Romans 3:14

Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness

Here "mouths" is a metonym that represents the evil words of the people. The word "full" exaggerates how often people speak bitterly and curse. Alternate translation: "They often speak curses and cruel words"

Romans 3:15

Their feet are swift to pour out blood

Here "feet" is a synecdoche that represents the people themselves. The word "blood" is a metaphor that refers to killing people. Alternate translation: "They are in a hurry to harm and murder people"

Their feet

The word "their" refers to the Jews and Greeks in Romans 3:9.

Romans 3:16

their paths

The word "their" refers to the Jews and Greeks in Romans 3:9.

Destruction and suffering are in their paths

Here "destruction and suffering" are metonyms that represent the harm that these people cause others to suffer. Alternate translation: "They try to destroy others and cause them to suffer"

Romans 3:17

These people

These words refer to the Jews and Greeks in Romans 3:9.

a way of peace

"how to live at peace with others." A "way" is a road or path.

Romans 3:18

their

This word refers to the Jews and Greeks in Romans 3:9.

There is no fear of God before their eyes

Here "fear" is a metonym that represents respect for God and willingness to honor him. Alternate translation: "They refuse to give God the respect he deserves"

Romans 3:19

whatever the law says, it speaks to

Paul speaks of the law here as if it were alive and had its own voice. Alternate translation: "everything that the law says people should do is for" or "all the commands that Moses wrote in the law are for"

the ones who are under the law

"those who must obey the law"

so that every mouth may be shut

Here "mouth" is a synecdoche that means the words people speak. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "so that no people will be able to say anything valid to defend themselves"

the whole world held accountable to God

Here "world" is a synecdoche that represents all the people who live in the world. Alternate translation: "that God can declare everyone in the world guilty"

Romans 3:20

flesh

Here "flesh" refers to all human beings.

For through the law

Possible meanings are 1) "Therefore, through the law" or 2) "This is because through the law"

through the law comes the knowledge of sin

"when someone knows God's law, he realizes that he has sinned"

Romans 3:21

Connecting Statement:

The word "but" here shows Paul has completed his introduction and is now beginning to make his main point.

now

The word "now" refers to the time since Jesus came to the earth.

apart from the law the righteousness of God has been revealed

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God has made known a way to be right with him without obeying the law"

to which the Law and the Prophets bear witness

The words "the Law and the Prophets" refer to the parts of scripture that Moses and the prophets wrote. Paul describes them here as if they were people testifying in court. Alternate translation: "What Moses and the prophets wrote confirms this"

Romans 3:22

the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ

Here "righteousness" means being right with God. Alternate translation: "being right with God through trusting Jesus Christ"

For there is no distinction

Paul implies that God accepts all people in the same way. Alternate translation: "There is no difference at all between the Jews and the Gentiles"

Romans 3:23

come short of the glory of God

Here the "glory of God" is a metonym that refers to the image of God and his nature. Alternate translation: "have failed to be like God"

Romans 3:24

they are freely justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

Here "justified" refers to being made right with God. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God makes them right with

himself as a free gift, because Christ Jesus sets them free"

they are freely justified

This means that they are justified without having to earn or merit being justified. God freely justifies them. Alternate translation: "they are made right with God without earning it"

Romans 3:25

in his blood

This is a metonym for the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for sins. Alternate translation: "in his death as a sacrifice for sins"

his disregard

Possible meanings are 1) his ignoring or 2) his forgiving.

Romans 3:26

This was to show his righteousness at this present time

"God did this to show at this present time that he is righteous"

so he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus

"By this he shows that he is both just and the the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus"

the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus

"the one who declares everyone righteous who has faith in Jesus"

Romans 3:27

Where then is boasting? It is excluded

Paul asks this question to show that there is no reason for people to boast about obeying the law. Alternate translation: "So there is no way that we can boast that God favors us because we obeyed those laws. Boasting is excluded"

It is excluded

This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "God does not allow it"

Through what kind of law? Of works? No, but through a law of faith

You may need to fill in the words omitted in the ellipsis. Alternate translation: "Through what kind of law is boasting excluded? Is it excluded through a law of works? No, it is excluded through a law of faith" You can also translate using active forms. Alternate translation: "On what grounds does God exclude boasting? Does he exclude it through a law of works? No, he excludes it through a law of faith" or "Why does God exclude boasting? Is it because of something that we have done? No, it is because we have believed"

Through what kind of law? ... through a law of

"On what grounds? ... on the grounds of"

Through what kind of law? Of works?

Paul asks these questions to get his readers ready to receive the point he is making. Alternate translation: "Let me tell you what kind of law he excludes it through. It is not through a law of works."

Romans 3:28

a person is justified by faith

This can be translated in active form. Here the words "by faith" refers to either 1) the means by which God justifies a person. Alternate translation: "God justifies a person through that person's faith" Or 2) the reason for which God justifies a person. Alternate translation: "God justifies a person because he has faith" Faith is not the actor that justifies a person.

without works of the law

"even if he has done no works of the law"

Romans 3:29

Or is God the God of Jews only?

Paul asks this question for emphasis. Alternate translation: "You who are Jews certainly should not think that you are the only ones whom God will accept!"

Is he not also the God of Gentiles? Yes, of Gentiles also

Paul asks this question to emphasize his point. Alternate translation: "He will also accept non-Jews, that is, Gentiles"

Romans 3:30

he will justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith

Here "circumcision" is a metonym that refers to Jews and "uncircumcision" is a metonym that refers to non-Jews. Alternate translation: "God will make both Jews and non-Jews right with himself through their faith in Christ"

Romans 3:31

Connecting Statement:

Paul confirms the law through faith.

Do we then nullify the law through faith?

Paul asks a question that one of his readers might have. Alternate translation: "Someone might say that we can ignore the law because we have faith."

May it never be

This expression gives the strongest possible negative answer to the preceding rhetorical question. You may have a similar express in your language that you could use here. Alternate translation: "This is certainly not true" or "Certainly not"

we uphold the law

"we obey the law"

we

This pronoun refers to Paul, other believers, and the readers.

Chapter 4

¹ What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found? ² For if Abraham had been justified by works, he would have had a reason to boast, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

⁴ Now for him who labors, his wage is not counted as a gift, but as what is owed. ⁵ But for him who does not work but instead believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. ⁶ David also pronounces blessing on the man to whom God counts righteousness without works.

⁷ He says,

"Blessed are those
whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the man
against whom the Lord will not count sin."

⁹ Then is this blessing pronounced only on those of the circumcision, or also on those of the uncircumcision? For we say, "Faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness." ¹⁰ How was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them. ¹² He is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and to his descendants that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if those who live by the law are to be the heirs, faith is made empty, and the promise does nothing. ¹⁵ For the law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there is no transgression. ¹⁶ For this reason it is by faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all of Abraham's descendants—not only to those who are under the law, but also to those who share the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have appointed you the father of many nations." Abraham was in the presence of him whom he trusted, that is, God, who gives life to the dead and calls the things that do not exist into existence. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he would become the father of many nations, according to what he had been told, "So will your descendants be." ¹⁹ Without becoming weak in faith, he considered his own body as dead (because he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ But because of God's promise, Abraham did not hesitate in unbelief. Instead, he was strengthened in faith and gave glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to accomplish. ²² Therefore this was also "counted to him as righteousness." ²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone. ²⁴ They were written also for us, and it will be counted to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ This is the one who was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Romans 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 7-8 of this chapter, which is from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

The purpose of the law of Moses

Paul builds upon material from chapter 3. He explains how Abraham, the father of Israel, was justified. Even Abraham could not be justified by what he did. Obeying the law of Moses does not make a person right with God. Obeying God's commands is a way a person shows they believe in God. People have always been justified only by faith. (See: justice and lawofmoses and faith)

Circumcision

Circumcision was important to the Israelites. It identified a male as a descendant of Abraham. It was also a sign of the covenant between Abraham and Yahweh. However, no person was justified only by being circumcised. (See: circumcise and covenant)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

Paul uses rhetorical questions in this chapter. It appears the intent of these rhetorical questions is to make the readers see their sin so they will trust in Jesus. (See: and guilt and sin)

Romans 4:1

What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, found?

Paul uses the question to catch the attention of the reader and to start talking about something new. Alternate translation: "This is what Abraham our physical ancestor found."

Romans 4:2

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Romans 4:3

For what does the scripture say?

Paul uses this question to call attention to what he is about to say, not to receive an answer. He speaks of the Scriptures as if they were alive and could talk. Alternate translation: "For this is what is in the scripture:"

it was counted to him as righteousness

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God considered Abraham to be a righteous person because he believed"

Romans 4:4

his wage is not counted as a gift

"no one counts what his employer pays him as a gift from his employer"

but as what is owed

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "but as what his employer owes him"

Romans 4:5

in the one who justifies

"in God, who justifies"

his faith is counted as righteousness

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God considers that person's faith as righteousness" or "God considers that person righteous because of his faith"

Romans 4:6

David also pronounces blessing on the man to whom God counts righteousness without works

"David also wrote about how God blesses the man whom God makes righteous without works"

Romans 4:7

whose lawless deeds are forgiven ... whose sins are covered

The same concept is stated in two different ways. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "who have broken the law, but the Lord has forgiven ... whose sins the Lord has covered"

Romans 4:8

General Information:

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Romans 4:9

Then is this blessing pronounced only on those of the circumcision, or also on those of the uncircumcision?

This remark appears in the form of a question to show that Paul is beginning a discussion about the relationship between blessing and circumcision. Alternate translation: "I want to show you how it is that God blesses not only those who are circumcised, but also those who are not circumcised"

those of the circumcision

This is a metonym that refers to the Jewish people. Alternate translation: "the Jews"

those of the uncircumcision

This is a metonym that refers to the people who are not Jews. Alternate translation: "the Gentiles"

For we say

Paul is going to show that because God counted Abraham as righteous by faith, we can infer that it is people who have faith that God counts righteous.

Faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God considered the faith of Abraham as righteousness"

Romans 4:10

How was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before!

Paul asks two questions to introduce the third sentence. If your language does not allow speakers to use questions to introduce what they are talking about, you may need to translate these all as statements. Alternate translation: "This is when righteousness was counted to him: it was not after he had been circumcised, but before!"

How was it counted to him?

Paul is asking in a general way about the circumstances in which God considered Abraham righteous. He is not asking what procedure God followed to consider Abraham righteous. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "How did God consider Abraham to be righteous?"

It was not after, but before

This can be stated with the words that have been omitted in the ellipsis. Alternate translation: "It happened before he was circumcised, not after he was circumcised"

Romans 4:11

a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised

Here "righteousness that he had by faith" means that God considered him to be righteous because he had faith. Alternate translation: "a visible sign that God considered him righteous because he had believed in God before he was circumcised"

so that righteousness would be counted to them

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "so that God would consider them righteous"

Romans 4:12

General Information:

Paul is saying that circumcision alone does not make a man a descendant of Abraham, that is, a true Jew. A true Jew is one who has been circumcised and who lives by faith the way Abraham did.

He is also the father of the circumcised

Here "the circumcision" refers to Jews.

who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had

Here "walk in the footsteps of the faith" is an idiom that means to follow someone's example. Alternate translation: "who follow our father Abraham's example in the faith that he had" or "who have faith as our father Abraham did"

Romans 4:13

Connecting Statement:

Paul confirms that even in the past believers were made right with God by faith and not by the law.

law but through the righteousness of faith

The words "the promise came" are understood from the first phrase. You can translate this by adding these implied words. Alternate translation: "law, but the promise came through faith, which God considers as righteousness"

Romans 4:14

heirs

The people to whom God has made promises are spoken of as if they were to inherit property and wealth from a family member.

if those who live by the law are to be the heirs

Here "live by the law" refers to obeying the law. Alternate translation: "if those who obey the law are the ones who will inherit the earth"

faith is made empty, and the promise does nothing

"faith has no value, and the promise is meaningless"

Romans 4:15

there is no transgression

This can be restated to remove the abstract noun "transgression." Alternate translation: "no one has disobeyed the law" or "it is impossible to disobey the law"

Romans 4:16

For this reason

"So"

it is by faith

The word "it" refers to receiving what God had promised. Alternate translation: "it is by faith that we receive the promise" or "we receive the promise by faith"

in order that the promise may rest on grace

Here "the promise may rest on grace" represents God giving what he promised because of his grace. Alternate translation: "so that what he promised"

might be a free gift" or "so that his promise would be because of his grace"

those who are under the law

This refers to the Jewish people, who were obligated to obey the law of Moses.

those who share the faith of Abraham

This refers to those who have faith as Abraham did before he was circumcised. Alternate translation: "those who believe as Abraham did"

father of us all

Here the word "us" refers to Paul and includes all Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Christ. Abraham is the physical ancestor of the Jewish people, but he is also the spiritual father of those who have faith.

Romans 4:17

as it is written

Where it is written can be made explicit. You can also translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "as someone has written in the Scriptures"

I have appointed you

Here the word "you" is singular and refers to Abraham.

Abraham was in the presence of him whom he trusted, that is, God, who gives life to the dead

Here "of him whom he trusted" refers to God. Alternate translation: "Abraham was in the presence of God whom he trusted, who gives life to those who have died"

calls the things that do not exist into existence
"creates everything from nothing"

Romans 4:18

In hope he believed against hope

This idiom means that Abraham hoped and believed even though what he hoped for seemed to be impossible. That is, Abraham trusted God to give him many descendants, even though it seemed to be impossible for him to have children. Alternate translation: "Even though it seemed that there was no reason to hope, Abraham hoped and believed" or "Even though it seemed to be impossible for him to have descendants, Abraham believed God and confidently expected"

according to what he had been told

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "just as God said to Abraham"

So will your descendants be

The full promise God gave to Abraham can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "You will have more descendants than you can count"

Romans 4:19

General Information:

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Romans 4:20

did not hesitate in unbelief. Instead, he

You can translate this double negative in a positive form. Alternate translation: "kept on acting in faith. He"

he was strengthened in faith

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "he became stronger in his faith"

Romans 4:21

He was fully convinced

"Abraham was completely sure"

he was also able to accomplish

"God was able to do"

Romans 4:22

Therefore this was also "counted to him as righteousness."

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Therefore God counted Abraham's belief as righteousness" or "Therefore God considered Abraham righteous because Abraham believed him"

also "counted to him as righteousness."

"also, as the scripture says, 'counted to him as righteousness.'"

Romans 4:23

for his sake alone

"for Abraham only"

it was counted to him

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God counted righteousness to him" or "God considered him righteous"

Romans 4:24

for us

The word "us" refers to Paul and includes all believers in Christ.

They were written also for us

You can translate this without the passive form "written." Alternate translation: "Those words were also for us"

it will be counted to us who believe in him

The word "it" refers to righteousness. You can translate this with an active form. Alternate

translation: "God will count righteousness to us who believe in him" or "God will consider us righteous if we believe in him"

him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead

"Raised ... from the dead" here is an idiom for "caused to live again." Alternate translation: "him who caused Jesus our Lord to live again"

Romans 4:25

who was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised for our justification

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "whom God gave over to enemies for our trespasses and whom God brought back to life so he could make us right with him"

Chapter 5

¹ Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we also have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only this, but we also boast in our tribulations. We know that tribulation brings about perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not make ashamed because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who was given to us. ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous person, though perhaps someone would dare to die for a good person. ⁸ But God proves his own love toward us, because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more, then, now that we are justified by his blood, we will be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, after having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now have received this reconciliation.

¹² So then, as through one man sin entered into the world, in this way death entered through sin. And death spread to all people, because all sinned. ¹³ For until the law, sin was in the world, but there is no accounting for sin when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who did not sin like Adam's disobedience, who is a pattern of him who was to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if by the trespass of one the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound for the many! ¹⁶ For the gift is not like the outcome of that one man's sin. The judgment followed one trespass and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one, death ruled through the one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ So then, as one trespass led to condemnation for all people, so also through the one act of righteousness came justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one will the many be made righteous. ²⁰ But the law came in to increase the trespass. But where sin abounded, grace abounded even more. ²¹ This happened so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness for everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Many scholars view verses 12-17 as some of the most important, but difficult, verses in Scripture to understand. Some of their richness and meaning has likely been lost while being translated from how the original Greek was constructed.

Special concepts in this chapter

Results of justification

How Paul explains the results of our being justified is an important part of this chapter. These results include having peace with God, having access to God, being confident about our future, being able to rejoice when suffering, being eternally saved, and being reconciled with God. (See: justice)

"All sinned"

Scholars are divided over what Paul meant in verse 12: "And death spread to all people, because all sinned." Some believe that all of mankind was present in the "seed of Adam." So, as Adam is the father of all mankind, all of mankind was present when Adam sinned. Others believe that Adam served as a representative head for mankind. So when he sinned, all of mankind "fell" as a result. Whether people today played an active or passive role in Adam's original sin is one way these views differ. Other passages will help one decide.

The second Adam

Adam was the first man and the first "son" of God. He was created by God. He brought sin and death into the world by eating the forbidden fruit. Paul describes Jesus as the "second Adam" in this chapter and the

true son of God. He brings life and overcame sin and death by dying on the cross. (See: sonofgod and death)

Romans 5:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul begins to tell many different things that happen when God makes believers right with him.

Since we are justified

"Because we are justified"

we ... our

All occurrences of "we" and "our" refer to all believers and should be inclusive.

through our Lord Jesus Christ

"because of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Lord

Here "Lord" means that Jesus is God.

Romans 5:2

Through him we also have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand

Here "by faith" refers to our trust in Jesus, which allows us to stand before God. Alternate translation: "Because we trust in Jesus, God allows us to come into his presence"

we boast in the hope of the glory of God

Here the word "hope" is a person's confident expectation that what he desires really will happen. The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "confidently expect" or "confidently wait" or "trust." Alternate translation: "we rejoice because we confidently expect to share in the glory of God"

Romans 5:3

Not only this

The word "this" refers to the ideas described in [Romans 5:1-2](#).

we ... our ... We

These words refer to all believers and should be inclusive.

tribulation brings about perseverance

"suffering helps us learn to endure"

Romans 5:4

Perseverance produces character

Perseverance is an abstract noun that can be translated as a verb. Here it is a metonym for the person who endures. You may need to make explicit what it is that a person endures. Alternate translation: "We develop character when we endure hardship"

character

the desire and ability to do what is right

character produces hope

"having character helps us to hope." Here the word "hope" is a person's confident expectation that what he desires really will happen, and it refers to the confident expectation that God will fulfill all his promises. The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "wait confidently" or "trust". Alternate translation: "character helps us to wait confidently" or "character helps us to trust God"

Romans 5:5

our ... us

These words refer to all believers and should be inclusive.

hope does not make ashamed

Paul uses personification here as he speaks of "hope" as if it were alive. "Hope" is an abstract noun that can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: "we are very confident that we will receive the things that we wait for"

make ashamed

"make us ashamed"

because the love of God has been poured into our hearts

Here "hearts" represents a person's thoughts, feelings, or inner person. The phrase "the love of God has been poured into our hearts" is a metaphor for God showing love to his people. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "because he has loved us greatly" or "because God has shown us how much he loves us"

Romans 5:6

we

The word "we" here refers to all believers and so should be inclusive.

Romans 5:7

For one will hardly die for a righteous person

"It is hard to find someone who is willing to die, even for a righteous person"

though perhaps someone would dare to die for a good person

"but you might find someone who is willing to die for such a good person"

Romans 5:8

proves

You can translate this verb in past tense using "demonstrated" or "showed."

us ... we

All occurrences of "us" and "we" refer to all believers and should be inclusive.

Romans 5:9

Much more, then, now that we are justified by his blood, we will be saved

Paul is saying that because we are justified by Christ's blood, we can be much more certain that Christ will save us. Alternate translation: "Now that we are justified by his blood, we will more certainly be saved"

now that we are justified by his blood

Here "justified" means that God puts us in a right relationship with himself. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "now that God has made us right with himself because of Christ's death"

blood

This is a metonym for the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.

saved

God forgives us and rescues us from being punished in hell for our sin.

the wrath of God

Here "wrath" is a metonym that refers to God's punishment of those who have sinned against him. Alternate translation: "God's punishment"

Romans 5:10

we were

All occurrences of "we" refer to all believers and should be inclusive.

his Son ... his life

"God's Son ... the life of God's Son"

we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son

The death of the Son of the God has provided eternal forgiveness and made all who believe in Jesus friends with God. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God allowed us to have a peaceful relationship with him because his Son died for us"

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

after having been reconciled

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "now that God has made us his friends again"

Romans 5:11

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Romans 5:12

Connecting Statement:

Paul explains why death happened even before God gave the law to Moses.

through one man sin entered ... death entered through sin

Paul describes sin as a dangerous thing that came into the world through the actions of "one man," Adam. This sin then became an opening through which death, pictured here as another dangerous thing, also came into the world.

Romans 5:13

For until the law, sin was in the world

This means that the people sinned before God gave the law. Alternate translation: "People in the world sinned before God gave his law to Moses"

but there is no accounting for sin when there is no law

This means that God did not charge the people with sinning before he gave the law. Alternate translation: "but God recorded no sin against the law before he gave the law"

Romans 5:14

Nevertheless, death

"Even though what I have just said is true, death" or "There was no written law from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, but death" (Romans 5:13).

death reigned from Adam until Moses

Paul is speaking of death as if it were a king who ruled. Alternate translation: "people continued to die from the time of Adam until the time of Moses as a consequence of their sin"

Moses, even over those who did not sin like Adam's disobedience, who is

"Moses. Even people whose sins were different from Adam's continued to die, Adam being"

who is a pattern of him who was to come

Adam was a pattern of Christ, who appeared much later. He had much in common with him.

Romans 5:15

how much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound for the many
Here "grace" refers to God's free gift that he made available to everyone through Jesus Christ.
Alternate translation: "even more through the man Jesus Christ, who died for us all, did God kindly offer us this gift of everlasting life, although we do not deserve it"

Romans 5:16

For the gift is not like the outcome of that one man's sin
Here "the gift" refers to God's freely erasing the record of our sins. Alternate translation: "The gift is not like the result of Adam's sin"

The judgment followed one trespass and brought condemnation

The abstract nouns "judgment," "trespass," and "condemnation," can be expressed with verbs.
Alternate translation: "After one man trespassed, God judged all people and condemned them to be punished" or "God declared that all people deserved to have him punish them because one man committed one sin"

but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification

The abstract nouns "gift," "trespass," and "justification" can be expressed as verbs. It is implied that God's gift of justification is greater than his judgement. Alternate translation: "but after people trespassed many times, God gave the gift and justified them" or "but the gift is greater because he gave it after many people had committed many sins, and by giving the gift he justified them"

Romans 5:17

trespass of the one
This refers to the sin of Adam.

death ruled
Here Paul speaks of "death" as a king who ruled. The "rule" of death causes everyone to die.
Alternate translation: "everyone died"

Romans 5:18

as one trespass led to condemnation for all people
The abstract nouns "trespass" and "condemnation" can be expressed with the verbs "sin" and "condemn." Alternate translation: "as one trespass caused all people to be condemned" or "as all people are condemned because one person sinned against God"

one trespass
This refers to Adam's sin.

condemnation for all people
Here "condemnation" refers to God's punishment. Alternate translation: "all people deserve God's punishment for sin"

through the one act of righteousness came justification and life for all people

The abstract nouns "justification" and "life" can be expressed with the verbs "justify" and "live."
Alternate translation: "one act of righteousness allows all people to be justified and live" or "all people can be justified and live because one person did that one righteous act"

the one act of righteousness
This refers to Jesus's obedience to God in dying for our sins.

Romans 5:19

one man's disobedience
the disobedience of Adam

the many were made sinners
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "many people sinned"

the obedience of the one
the obedience of Jesus

of the one will the many be made righteous
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "of the one, God will make many people right with him"

Romans 5:20

the law came in
Here Paul speaks of the law as if it were a person. Alternate translation: "God gave his law to Moses"

sin abounded
"sin increased"

grace abounded even more
Here "grace" refers to God's undeserved blessings. Alternate translation: "God continued to act even more kindly toward them, in a way that they did not deserve"

Romans 5:21

sin reigned in death ... grace might reign through righteousness for everlasting life
Here Paul speaks of sin as if it were a king who ruled over people and made them unable to obey God and ultimately killing them, and he speaks of grace as if it were a king who might rule over people and enable them to be right with God. Alternate translation: "as people obeyed their desire to sin and therefore had to die ... God might show grace to people and allow them to be right with him, resulting in everlasting life"

our Lord

Paul includes himself, his readers, and all believers.

Chapter 6

¹ What then will we say? Should we continue in sin so that grace may abound? ² May it never be. We who died to sin, how can we still live in it? ³ Do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried, then, with him through baptism into death. This happened in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will also be united with his resurrection. ⁶ We know this, that our old man was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be destroyed. This happened so that we should no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ He who has died is declared righteous with respect to sin. ⁸ But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live together with him. ⁹ We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer rules over him. ¹⁰ For in regard to the death that he died to sin, he died once for all. However, the life that he lives, he lives for God. ¹¹ In the same way, you also must consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Therefore do not let sin rule in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts. ¹³ Do not present the members of your bodies to sin, to be tools used for unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present the members of your bodies to God as tools to be used for righteousness. ¹⁴ Do not allow sin to rule over you. For you are not under law, but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law, but under grace? May it never be. ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey? You are either slaves to sin, which leads to death, or slaves to obedience, which leads to righteousness. ¹⁷ But thanks be to God! For you were slaves of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart the pattern of teaching that you were given. ¹⁸ You have been made free from sin, and you have been made slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak like a man because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented the members of your bodies as slaves to uncleanness and to lawlessness, resulting in more lawlessness, in the same way, now present the members of your bodies as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. ²¹ At that time, what fruit then did you have of the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been made free from sin and are enslaved to God, you have your fruit for sanctification. The result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin are death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul begins this chapter by answering how someone might object to what he taught in Chapter 5.

Special concepts in this chapter

Against the Law

In this chapter, Paul refutes the teaching that Christians can live however they want after they are saved. Scholars call this "antinomianism" or being "against the law." To motivate godly living, Paul recalls the great price Jesus paid for a Christian to be saved. (See: save and godly)

Servants of sin

Before they believe in Jesus, people are servants of sin, that is, they are unable to resist their desire to sin. God frees Christians from serving sin. They are able to choose to serve Christ in their lives. Paul explains that when Christians choose to sin, they willingly choose to sin. (See: faith and sin)

Fruit

This chapter uses the imagery of fruit. The image of fruit usually refers to a person's faith producing good works in their life. (See: fruit and righteous)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

Paul uses rhetorical questions in this chapter. It appears the intent of these rhetorical questions is to make the readers see their sin so they will trust in Jesus. (See: and guilt and sin)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Death

Paul uses "death" to refer to many different things in this chapter: physical death, spiritual death, sin reigning in the heart of man, and the end of something. He contrasts sin and death with the new life provided by Christ and the new way Christians are supposed to live after they are saved. (See: death)

Romans 6:1

Connecting Statement:

Under grace, Paul tells those who believe in Jesus to live a new life as though dead to sin and alive to God.

What then will we say? Should we continue in sin so that grace may abound?

Paul asks these rhetorical questions to get the attention of his readers. Alternate translation: "So, what should we say about all of this? We certainly should not keep on sinning so that God will give us more and more grace!"

we say

The pronoun "we" refers to Paul, his readers, and other people.

Romans 6:2

We who died to sin, how can we still live in it?

Here "We who died to sin" refers to those who follow Jesus, who are now like dead people who cannot be affected by sin. Paul uses this rhetorical question to add emphasis. Alternate translation: "We are now like dead people on whom sin has no effect! So we certainly should not keep on sinning!"

Romans 6:3

Do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Paul uses this question to add emphasis. Alternate translation: "Remember, when someone baptized us to show that we have a relationship with Christ, this also shows that we died with Christ on the cross!"

Romans 6:4

We were buried, then, with him through baptism into death

Here Paul speaks of a believer's baptism in water as if it were a death and burial. Alternate translation: "When someone baptized us, it is just like that person buried us with Christ in the tomb"

just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life

To raise from the dead is an idiom for causing a person to live again. This compares a believer's new spiritual life to Jesus coming back to life physically. The believer's new spiritual life enables that person to obey God. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "just as the Father brought Jesus back to life after he died, we might have new spiritual life and obey God"

the dead

All those who have died. This expression describes all dead people together in the underworld. To be raised from among them speaks of becoming alive again.

Romans 6:5

become united with him in the likeness of his death ... be united with his resurrection

Paul compares our union with Christ to death. Those who are joined with Christ in death will share in his resurrection. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "died with him ... come back to life with him"

Romans 6:6

our old man was crucified with him

The "old man" is a metaphor that refers to the person before he believes in Jesus. Paul describes our old sinful person as dying on the cross with Jesus when we believe in Jesus. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "our sinful person died on the cross with Jesus"

old man

This means the person who once was, but who does not exist now.

the body of sin

This is a metonym that refers to the whole sinful person. Alternate translation: "our sinful nature"

might be destroyed

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "might die"

we should no longer be enslaved to sin

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "sin should no longer enslave us" or "we should no longer be slaves to sin"

we should no longer be enslaved to sin

Slavery to sin is a metaphor meaning having such a strong desire to sin that one is unable to stop himself from sinning. It is as if sin controls the person. Alternate translation: "we should no longer be controlled by sin"

Romans 6:7

He who has died is declared righteous with respect to sin

Here "righteous" refers to being right with God. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "When God declares a person right with him, that person is no longer controlled by sin"

Romans 6:8

we have died with Christ

Here "died" refers to the fact that believers are no longer controlled by sin.

Romans 6:9

We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead

Here to raise up is an idiom for causing someone who has died to become alive again. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "We know since God brought Christ back to life after he died"

the dead

All those who have died. This expression describes all dead people together in the underworld. To be raised from among them is to become alive again.

death no longer rules over him

Here "death" is described as if it were a king or ruler that has power over people. Alternate translation: "He cannot ever die again"

Romans 6:10

he died once for all

Possible meanings are 1) he died once, and he will not die again, nor will anyone else need to die, or 2) it is true now and will be true for all time that he died.

Romans 6:11

In the same way, you also must consider

"For this reason consider"

consider yourselves to be

"think of yourselves as" or "see yourselves as"

dead to sin

Just as one cannot force a corpse to do anything, sin has no power to force believers to dishonor God. Alternate translation: "as if you were dead to the power of sin"

dead to sin, but alive to God

"dead to the power of sin, but living to honor God"

alive to God in Christ Jesus

"living to honor God through the power Christ Jesus gives you"

Romans 6:12

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds us that grace rules over us, not the law; we are not sin's slaves, but God's slaves.

do not let sin rule in your mortal body

Paul speaks of people sinning as if sin were their master or king that controlled them. Alternate translation: "Do not let sinful desires control you"

your mortal body

This phrase refers to the physical part of a person, which will die. Alternate translation: "you"

so that you obey its lusts

Obedying the mortal body's lusts would be the result of letting sin rule in the body. That is why Paul commands people not to let sin rule in their mortal body—so they they do not obey its lusts. Paul speaks of people doing the evil things they desire as if the body had evil desires and commanded people to do what it desires.

Romans 6:13

Do not present the members of your bodies to sin, to be tools used for unrighteousness

The picture is of the sinner offering his "members," the parts of his body to his master or king. One's "members" are a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: "Do not offer yourselves to sin so that you do what is not right"

But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life

Here the words "brought ... to life" refer to the believer's new spiritual life. Alternate translation: "But offer yourselves to God because he has given you new spiritual life" or "But offer yourselves to God as those who had died and are now alive"

present the members of your bodies to God as tools to be used for righteousness

Here "members" is a synecdoche that refers to the whole person. Alternate translation: "let God use you for what is pleasing to him"

Romans 6:14

Do not allow sin to rule over you

Paul speaks of "sin" here as if it were a king who rules over people. Alternate translation: "Do not let sinful desires control what you do" or "Do not allow yourselves to do the sinful things you want to do"

For you are not under law

To be "under law" means to be subject to its limitations and weaknesses. You can make the full meaning explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "For you are no longer bound to the law of Moses, which could not give you the power to stop sinning"

but under grace

To be "under grace" means that God's free gift provides the power to keep from sinning. You can make the full meaning explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "but you are bound to God's grace, which does give you the power to stop sinning"

Romans 6:15

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law, but under grace? May it never be

Paul is using a question to emphasize that living under grace is not a reason to sin. Alternate translation: "However, just because we are bound to grace instead of the law of Moses certainly does not mean we are allowed to sin"

May it never be

"We would never want that to happen!" or "May God help me not to do that!" This expression shows an extremely strong desire that this does not take place. You may have a similar expression in your language that you could use here. See how you translated it in Romans 3:31.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that if you present yourselves as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey?

Paul uses a question to scold anyone who may think God's grace is a reason to keep sinning. You can translate this as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You should know that if you present yourselves as slaves to anyone, you are slaves to whomever you obey!"

which leads to death ... which leads to righteousness

"which results in death ... which results in righteousness"

Romans 6:17

But thanks be to God!

"But I thank God!"

For you were slaves of sin

Being "slaves of sin" is a metaphor meaning they have such a strong desire to sin that they are unable to keep from sinning. It is as if sin controls the person. Alternate translation: "you were like slaves of sin" or "you were unable to keep from sinning"

but you have obeyed from the heart

Here the word "heart" refers to having sincere or honest motives for doing something. Alternate translation: "but you truly obeyed"

the pattern of teaching that you were given

Here "pattern" refers to the way of living that leads to righteousness. The believers change their old way of living to match this new way of living that Christian leaders teach to them. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "the teaching that Christian leaders gave you"

Romans 6:18

You have been made free from sin

Here "free from sin" is a metaphor for them no longer having a strong desire to sin and therefore being able to stop themselves from sinning. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Christ has freed you from sin" or "Your strong desire to sin has been taken away" or "You have been made free from sin's control over you" (See: and)

you have been made slaves of righteousness

Slavery of righteousness is a metaphor meaning having a strong desire to do what is right. It is as if righteousness controls the person. Alternate translation: "you have been made like slaves of righteousness" or "you are now controlled by righteousness"

you have been made slaves of righteousness

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Christ has made you slaves of righteousness" or "Christ has changed you so that now you are controlled by righteousness"

Romans 6:19

I speak like a man

Paul may have expected his readers to wonder why he was speaking of slavery and freedom. Here he is saying that he is using these ideas from their everyday experience to help them understand that people are controlled either by sin or by righteousness. Alternate translation: "I am speaking about this in human terms" or "I am using examples from everyday life"

because of the weakness of your flesh

Often Paul uses the word "flesh" as the opposite of "spirit." Alternate translation: "because you do not fully understand spiritual things"

presented the members of your bodies as slaves to uncleanness and to lawlessness

Here, the word "members" refers to the whole person. Alternate translation: "offered yourselves as slaves to everything that is evil and not pleasing to God"

present the members of your bodies as slaves to righteousness for sanctification

Here the word "members" refers to the whole person. Alternate translation: "offer yourselves as slaves to what is right before God so that he might set you apart and give you the power to serve him"

Romans 6:20

you were free from righteousness

Here "free from righteousness" is a metaphor for not having to do what is righteous. The people were living as though they thought that they did not have to do what was right. Alternate translation: "it was as though you were free from righteousness" or "you behaved as though you did not have to do what was right" or

Romans 6:21

At that time, what fruit then did you have of the things of which you are now ashamed?

"Fruit" here is a metaphor for "result" or "outcome." Paul is using a question to emphasize that sinning results in nothing good. Alternate translation: "Nothing good came from those things that now cause you shame." or "You gained nothing by doing those things that now cause you shame."

Romans 6:22

But now that you have been made free from sin and are enslaved to God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "But now that you have become free

from sin and have become God's slaves" or "But now that God has freed you from sin and made you his slaves"

But now that you have been made free from sin

Being "free from sin" is a metaphor for being able not to sin. Alternate translation: "But now that God has made you able not to sin"

and are enslaved to God

Being "enslaved" to God is a metaphor for being able to serve and obey God. Alternate translation: "and God has made you able to serve him"

you have your fruit for sanctification

Here "fruit" is a metaphor for "result" or "benefit." Alternate translation: "the benefit is your sanctification" or "the benefit is that you live in a holy way"

The result is eternal life

"The result of all of this is that you will live forever with God"

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin are death

The word "wages" refers to a payment given to someone for their work. "For if you serve sin, you will receive spiritual death as payment" or "For if you continue sinning, God will punish you with spiritual death"

but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

"but God gives eternal life to those who belong to Christ Jesus our Lord"

Chapter 7

¹ Or do you not know, brothers (for I am speaking to people who know about law), that the law rules over a person for whatever time he lives? ² For the married woman is bound by law to the husband while he lives, but if the husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. ³ So then, while her husband is living, if she lives with another man, she will be called an adulteress. But if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so she is not an adulteress if she lives with another man. ⁴ Therefore, my brothers, you were also made dead to the law through the body of Christ. This is so that you could be joined to another, that is, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might produce fruit for God. ⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in the members of our bodies to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the law. We have died to that by which we were bound. This is so that we might serve in newness of the Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.

⁷ What will we say then? Is the law itself sin? May it never be. However, I would never have known sin, if it were not through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law said, "You must not covet." ⁸ But sin took the opportunity through the commandment and produced every kind of coveting in me. For apart from the law, sin was dead. ⁹ At one time I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin regained life ¹⁰ and I died. The commandment that was to bring life turned out to be death for me. ¹¹ For sin took the opportunity through the commandment and deceived me. Through the commandment it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

¹³ So did what is good become death to me? May it never be. But sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin, brought about death in me through what was good, and through the commandment sin might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh. I have been sold under slavery to sin. ¹⁵ For what I do, I do not really understand. For what I want to do, I do not do, and what I hate, I do. ¹⁶ But if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law that the law is good. ¹⁷ But now it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that lives in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, lives no good thing. For the desire for good is with me, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but the evil that I do not want, that I do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, then it is no longer I who am acting, but rather sin that lives in me. ²¹ So, I find this law: When I want to do good, evil is present with me. ²² For I rejoice in the law of God with my inner person. ²³ But I see a different law in the members of my body. It fights against that new law in my mind. It takes me captive by the law of sin that is in the members of my body. ²⁴ I am a miserable man! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind. However, with the flesh I serve the law of sin.

Romans 7 General Notes

Structure and formatting

"Or do you not know"

Paul uses this phrase to discuss a new topic and connects what follows with the previous teaching.

Special concepts in this chapter

"We have been released from the law"

Paul explains that the law of Moses is no longer in effect. While this is true, the timeless principles behind the law reflect the character of God. (See: lawofmoses)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Marriage

Scripture commonly uses marriage as a metaphor. Here Paul uses it to describe how the church relates to the law of Moses and now to Christ.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Flesh

This is a complex issue. "Flesh" is possibly a metaphor for our sinful nature. Paul is not teaching that our physical bodies are sinful. Paul appears to be teaching that as long as Christians are alive ("in the flesh"), we will continue to sin. But our new nature will be fighting against our old nature. (See: flesh and sin)

Romans 7:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul explains how the law controls those who want to live under the law.

Or do you not know, brothers ... that the law rules over a person for whatever time he lives?

Paul asks this question to add emphasis. Alternate translation: "So you certainly know brothers ... that people have to obey laws only while they are alive"

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

Romans 7:2

Connecting Statement:

This verse begins a description of what Paul means by "the law controls a person for as long as he lives" ([Romans 7:1](#)).

the married woman is bound by law to the husband

Here "bound by law to the husband" is a metaphor for a woman being united to her husband according to the law of marriage. Alternate translation: "according to the law, the married woman is united to the husband"

the married woman

This refers to any woman who is married.

Romans 7:3

Connecting Statement:

This verse ends a description of what Paul means by "the law controls a person for as long as he lives" ([Romans 7:1](#)).

she will be called an adulteress

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will consider her an adulteress" or "people will call her an adulteress"

she is free from the law

Here being free from the law means not having to obey the law. In this case, the woman does not have to obey the law that says that a married woman cannot marry another man. Alternate translation: "she does not have to obey that law"

Romans 7:4

Therefore, my brothers

This relates back to Romans 7:1.

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

you were also made dead to the law through the body of Christ

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "you also died to the law when through Christ you died on the cross"

to him who was raised from the dead

"Raised" here is an idiom for "caused to live again." This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "to him who was caused to live again" or "to him whom God raised from the dead" or "to him whom God caused to live again"

we might produce fruit for God

Here "fruit" is a metaphor for actions that please God. Alternate translation: "we might be able to do things pleasing to God"

Romans 7:5

to bear fruit for death

Here "fruit" is a metaphor for a "result of one's actions" or "outcome of one's actions." Alternate translation: "which resulted in spiritual death" or "the outcome of which was our own spiritual death"

Romans 7:6

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds us that God does not make us holy by the law.

we have been released from the law

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God has released us from the law"

we

This pronoun refers to Paul and the believers.

to that by which we were bound

This refers to the law. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "to the law, which bound us"

the letter

This refers to the law of Moses. Alternate translation: "the law of Moses"

Romans 7:7

What will we say then?

Paul is introducing a new topic.

May it never be

"Of course that is not true!" This expression gives the strongest possible negative answer to the preceding rhetorical question. You may have a similar expression in your language that you could use here. See how you translated this in Romans 9:14.

I would never have known sin, if it were not through the law

Paul is speaking of sin as if it were a person who can act.

sin

"my desire to sin"

Romans 7:8

But sin took the opportunity ... produced every kind of coveting

Paul continues comparing sin to a person who can act.

coveting

This word includes both the desire to have what belongs to other people and wrong sexual desire.

apart from the law, sin was dead

"if there were no law, there would be no breaking of the law, so there would be no sin"

Romans 7:9

sin regained life

This can mean 1) "I realized that I was sinning" or 2) "I strongly desired to sin"

Romans 7:10

The commandment that was to bring life turned out to be death for me

Paul speaks of God's condemnation as if it resulted primarily in physical death. Alternate translation: "God gave me the commandment so I would live, but it killed me instead"

Romans 7:11

For sin took the opportunity through the commandment and deceived me. Through the commandment it killed me

As in [Romans 7:7-8]

sin

"my desire to sin"

took the opportunity through the commandment

Paul is comparing sin to a person who can act. See how you translated this in [Romans 7:8]

it killed me

Paul speaks of God's condemnation on sinners as if it resulted primarily in physical death. Alternate translation: "it separated me from God"

Romans 7:12

the law is holy

Possible meanings are that it is holy because 1) it comes from God or 2) it reveals God's true nature.

Romans 7:13

Connecting Statement:

Paul talks about the struggle inside his inner man between sin in his inner man and his mind with the law of God—between sin and good.

So

Paul is introducing a new topic.

did what is good become death to me?

Paul uses this question to add emphasis.

what is good

This refers to God's law.

become death to me

"cause me to die"

May it never be

This expression gives the strongest possible negative answer to the preceding rhetorical question. You may have a similar expression in your language that you could use here. Alternate translation: "Of course that is not true"

sin ... brought about death in me

Paul speaks of sin as though it were a person who could act.

brought about death in me

Paul speaks of being separated from God as if he were literally dead. Alternate translation: "separated me from God"

through the commandment

"because I disobeyed the commandment"

Romans 7:14

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Romans 7:15

Connecting Statement:

Paul talks about the struggle inside his inner man between his flesh and the law of God—between sin and good.

For what I do, I do not really understand

"I am not sure why I do some of the things that I do"

For what I do

"Because what I do"

what I want to do, I do not do

The words "I do not do" are an exaggeration to emphasize that Paul does not do what he wants to do as often as he would like or that he does what he does not want to do too often. Alternate translation: "I do not always do what I want to do"

what I hate, I do

The words "I do," which implies that he always does what he hates to do, are an exaggeration to emphasize that Paul does what he does not want to do too often. Alternate translation: "the things that I know are not good are the things that I sometimes do"

Romans 7:16

But if I do

"However, if I do"

I agree with the law that the law is good

To agree with the law here is to agree with God about the law. Alternate translation: "I agree with God that the law is good"

Romans 7:17

the sin that lives in me

Paul describes sin as a living being that has the power to influence him.

Romans 7:18

my flesh

Here "flesh" is a metonym for the sinful nature. Alternate translation: "my sinful nature"

Romans 7:19

the good

"the good deeds" or "the good actions"

the evil

"the evil deeds" or "the evil actions"

Romans 7:20

rather sin that lives in me

Paul speaks of "sin" as if it were alive and living inside him.

Romans 7:21

this law: When I want to do good, evil is present with me

The words "this law" refer to the natural human desire to rebel against God and disobey him. Paul calls this a law because he has observed that this is the way people live. It is not a collection of written commands.

evil is present with me

Paul speaks of evil here as if it were alive and living with him.

Romans 7:22

with my inner person

Here the phrase "inner person" refers to the personality, heart, or soul. Alternate translation: "with my heart" or "with my soul"

Romans 7:23

a different law in the members of my body ... fights against that new law in my mind

Paul has a desire to obey God, but at times he also has a desire to do things that God hates. He writes of the two desires he has as if they were two men fighting each other.

a different law

These words refer to the natural human desire to rebel against God and disobey him. Paul calls this a law because he has observed that this is the way people live. It is not a collection of written commands.

in the members of my body

The phrase "the members of my body" is another way of saying "my flesh"

that new law in my mind

These words refer to the law of Moses, which was God's commands in written form ([Romans 7:22](#)).

the law of sin that is in the members of my body

This "law of sin" is the same as the "different law," the natural human desire to rebel against God and disobey him. Paul calls this a law because he has observed that this is the way people live. It is not a collection of written commands.

Romans 7:24

Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Paul uses this question to express great emotion. If your language has a way of showing great emotion

through an exclamation or a question, use it here.
Alternate translation: "I want someone to set me free from the control of what my body desires!"

deliver me
"rescue me"

this body of death
This is a metaphor that means a body that will experience physical death.

Romans 7:25

But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord
This is the answer to the question in [7:24](#).

So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind. However, with the flesh I serve the law of sin
The law of God and the law of sin are spoken of as if they were masters whom Paul serves as a slave.

With the mind or intellect Paul chooses to please and obey God, and with the flesh or physical nature he chooses to disobey God and to sin. Alternate translation: "My mind chooses to please God by obeying the law of Moses, but my flesh chooses to disobey God and sin"

the law of God
These words refer to the law of Moses, which was God's commands in written form.

the law of sin
These words refer to the natural human desire to rebel against God and disobey him. Paul calls this a law because he has observed that this is the way people live. It is not a collection of written commands.

Chapter 8

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was unable to do because it was weak through the flesh, God did. He sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be an offering for sin, and he condemned sin in the flesh. ⁴ He did this in order that the requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, we who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ⁵ Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not submit to God's law, nor is it able to do so. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, the body is dead with respect to sin, but the spirit is alive with respect to righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, but not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you are about to die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the body's actions, you will live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ You did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you live in fear again; but you received the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry, "Abba, Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. ¹⁷ If we are children, then we are also heirs, heirs of God. And we are joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the eager expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be delivered from slavery to decay, and that it will be brought into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors in pain together even now. ²³ Not only that, but even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly, as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he can see? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit also helps in our weakness. For we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groans. ²⁷ He who searches out the hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes on behalf of God's holy people according to the will of God. ²⁸ We know that for those who love God, he works all things together for good, ^[1] for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ Because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ Those whom he predestined, these he also called. Those whom he called, these he also justified. Those whom he justified, these he also glorified.

³¹ What, therefore, can we say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up on behalf of us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any accusation against God's chosen ones? God is the one who justifies. ³⁴ Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written,

"For your benefit we are killed all day long.
We were considered as sheep for the slaughter."

³⁷ In all these things we are more than conquerors through the one who loved us. ³⁸ For I have been convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor governments, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Footnotes

8:28 ^[1]Instead of

Romans 8 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The first verse of this chapter is a transitional sentence. Paul concludes his teaching of Chapter 7 and leads into the words of Chapter 8.

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with verse 36. Paul quotes these words from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Indwelling of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is said to live inside a person or inside their heart. If the Spirit is present, this signifies that a person is saved. (See: save)

"These are sons of God"

Jesus is the Son of God in a unique way. God also adopts Christians to be his children. (See: sonofgod and adoption)

Predestination

Twice in verses 29-30 Paul uses the word "predestined." Some take this to indicate that God has, from before the foundation of the world, chosen his own people to be eternally saved. Christians have different views on what the Bible teaches on this subject. So translators need to take extra care when translating this chapter, especially with regards to elements of causation. (See: predestine and save)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

Paul poetically presents his teaching in verses 38 and 39 in the form of an extended metaphor. He explains that nothing can separate a person from the love of God in Jesus.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

No condemnation

This phrase must be translated carefully to avoid doctrinal confusion. People are still guilty of their sin. God disapproves of sinful acts, even those that believers in Jesus commit. God still punishes the sins of believers, but Jesus has paid the punishment for their sin. This is what Paul expresses here. The word "condemn" has several possible meanings. Here Paul emphasizes that people who believe in Jesus are no longer punished eternally for their sin by being "condemned to hell." (See: guilt and faith and condemn)

Flesh

This is a complex issue. "Flesh" is possibly a metaphor for our sinful nature. Paul is not teaching that our physical bodies are sinful. Paul appears to be teaching that as long as Christians are alive ("in the flesh"), we will continue to sin. But our new nature will be fighting against our old nature. (See: flesh)

Romans 8:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives the answer to the struggle he has with sin and good.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

Here "condemnation" refers to the punishment of people. Alternate translation: "God will not condemn and punish those who are joined to Christ Jesus"

There is therefore now

"For that reason, there is now" or "Because what I have just told you is true, there is now"

Romans 8:2

the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus

This refers to God's Spirit. Alternate translation: "God's Spirit in Christ Jesus"

has set you free from the law of sin and death

Being free from the law of sin and death is a metaphor for not being controlled by the law of sin and death. Alternate translation: "has caused the law of sin and death to no longer control you"

the law of sin and death

Possible meanings are that this refers to 1) the written law, which provokes people to sin, which in turn causes them to die. Alternate translation: "the law which causes sin and death" or 2) the "different law" (see Romans 7:23) that people sin and die.

Romans 8:3

For what the law was unable to do because it was weak through the flesh, God did

Here the law is described as a person who could not break the power of sin. Alternate translation: "For the law did not have the power to stop us from sinning, because the power of sin within us was too strong. But God did stop us from sinning"

through the flesh

"because of people's sinful nature"

He ... sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh ... an offering for sin ... he condemned sin

The Son of God forever satisfied God's holy anger against our sin by giving his own body and human life as the eternal sacrifice for sin.

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

in the likeness of sinful flesh

"who looked like a sinful human being"

to be an offering for sin

"so that he could die as a sacrifice for our sins"

he condemned sin in the flesh

Possible meanings are 1) "flesh" refers to our human nature or lives. Alternate translation: "he destroyed sin in our human nature" or 2) "flesh" refers to Christ's body, and "in the flesh" refers to Christ's death. Alternate translation: "in Christ's flesh God condemned sin" or "by Christ's death God condemned sin."

he condemned sin

In this verse, "condemned" is a metonym for "destroyed." Alternate translation: "he destroyed sin" or "he broke the power of the sin"

Romans 8:4

the requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "we might fulfill what the law requires"

we who walk not according to the flesh

Walking on a path is a metaphor for how a person lives his life. The flesh is an idiom for sinful human nature. Alternate translation: "we who do not obey our sinful desires"

but according to the Spirit

"but who obey the Holy Spirit"

Romans 8:5

General Information:

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Romans 8:6

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to contrast the flesh with the Spirit we now have.

the mind set on the flesh ... the mind set on the Spirit

Here Paul speaks of both the "flesh" and the "spirit" as if they were living persons. Alternate translation: "the way sinful people think ... the way people who listen to the Holy Spirit think"

death

Here this means the separation of a person from God.

Romans 8:7

General Information:

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Romans 8:8

Those who are in the flesh

This refers to people who do what their sinful nature tells them to do.

Romans 8:9

in the flesh

"acting according to your sinful natures." See how "the flesh" was translated in Romans 8:5.

in the Spirit

"acting according to the Holy Spirit"

Spirit ... God's Spirit ... Spirit of Christ

These all refer to the Holy Spirit.

if indeed

This phrase does not mean Paul doubts that some of them have God's Spirit. Paul wants them to realize that they all have God's Spirit. Alternate translation: "since" or "because"

Romans 8:10

If Christ is in you

How Christ lives in a person could be made explicit. Alternate translation: "If Christ lives in you through the Holy Spirit"

the body is dead with respect to sin

Possible meanings are 1) a person is spiritually dead to the power of sin or 2) the physical body will still die because of sin.

the spirit is alive with respect to righteousness

Possible meanings are 1) a person is spiritually alive because God has given him power to do what is right or 2) God will bring the person back to life after he dies because God is righteous and gives believers eternal life.

Romans 8:11

If the Spirit ... lives in you

Paul assumes that the Holy Spirit lives in his readers. Alternate translation: "Since the Spirit ... lives in you"

of him who raised ... from the dead lives

"of God, who raised ... from the dead, lives"

raised Jesus

Here to raise is an idiom for causing someone who has died to become alive again. Alternate translation: "caused Jesus to live again"

mortal bodies through his Spirit

"physical bodies through his Spirit" or "bodies, which will die someday, through his Spirit"

Romans 8:12

So then

"Because what I have just told you is true"

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

we are debtors, but not to

Paul is speaking of obedience as if it were paying back a debt. Alternate translation: "we need to obey, but not"

but not to the flesh to live according to the flesh

Again Paul speaks of obedience as if it were paying back a debt. You can include the implied word "debtors." Alternate translation: "but we are not debtors to the flesh, and we do not have to obey our sinful desires"

Romans 8:13

For if you live according to the flesh

"Because if you live only to please your sinful desires"

you are about to die

"you will certainly be separated from God"

but if by the Spirit you put to death the body's actions

Paul speaks of the "old man," crucified with Christ, as the person who is responsible for his sinful desires. Alternate translation: "but if by the power of the Holy Spirit you stop obeying your sinful desires"

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "For all the people whom the Spirit of God leads"

sons of God

Here this means all believers in Jesus and is often translated as "children of God."

Romans 8:15

by which we cry

"who causes us to cry out"

Abba, Father

"Abba" is "Father" in the Aramaic language.

Romans 8:16

General Information:

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Romans 8:17

heirs of God

Paul speaks of the Christian believers as if they will inherit property and wealth from a family member.

Alternate translation: "and we also will one day receive what God has promised us"

we are joint heirs with Christ

Paul speaks of the Christian believers as if they will inherit property and wealth from a family member. God will give to us what he gives to Christ. Alternate translation: "we will also receive what God has promised us and Christ together"

that we may also be glorified with him

God will honor Christian believers when he honors Christ. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "that God may glorify us along with him"

Romans 8:18

Connecting Statement:

Paul begins to remind the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

For

This emphasizes "I consider." It does not mean "because."

I consider that ... are not worthy to be compared with
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "I cannot compare ... with"

will be revealed

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will reveal" or "God will make known"

Romans 8:19

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

the eager expectation of the creation waits for
Paul describes everything that God created as a person who eagerly waits for something.

for the revealing of the sons of God

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "for the time when God will reveal his children"

sons of God

Here this means all believers in Jesus. You can also translate this as "children of God."

Romans 8:20

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

For the creation was subjected to futility

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "For God caused what he had created to be unable to achieve what he intended"

not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it
Here Paul describes "creation" as a person who can desire. Alternate translation: "not because this is what the created things wanted, but because it is what God wanted"

in hope

Here the word "hope" is confident expectation that what one desires really will happen. The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "confidently expect" or "confidently wait." God could be absolutely sure that what he intended would happen. Alternate translation: "confidently expecting" or "confidently waiting"

Romans 8:21

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

the creation itself will be delivered

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will save creation"

from slavery to decay

Here being in slavery to decay is a metaphor for being certain to decay. Alternate translation: "from being like a slave to decay"

that it will be brought into the freedom of the glory of the children of God

"Freedom" here is in contrast with slavery to decay. It is a metaphor meaning that the creation will not decay. Alternate translation: "that it will become gloriously free from decay like the children of God"

Romans 8:22

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors in pain together even now

The creation is compared to a woman groaning while giving birth to a baby. Alternate translation: "For we know that everything that God created wants to be free and groans for it the way a woman giving birth groans for her baby to be born"

Romans 8:23

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our body

The abstract nouns "adoption" and "redemption" can be stated as verbs. Alternate translation: "as we wait eagerly for God to adopt us and redeem our bodies"

Romans 8:24

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

For in this hope we were saved

This can be stated in active form. Possible meanings are 1) "For God saved us so that we might have this hope" 2) "For God saved us because we have this hope"

in this hope we were saved

Here the word "hope" is a person's confident expectation that what he desires really will happen. The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "confidently expect" or "confidently wait" or "trust." Alternate translation: "it was so that we might confidently wait for this that we were saved" or "we were saved that we might trust God to do this"

this hope

The phrase "this hope" refers to the hope of our adoption, the redemption of our bodies (8:23).

Now hope that is seen is not hope

"Hope that is seen" is hope that has already been fulfilled. Alternate translation: "If we already have what we hope for, that is not hope" or "If we have what we want, we would not say that we hope for it"

For who hopes for what he can see?

Paul uses a question to help his audience understand what "hope" is. Alternate translation: "No one hopes for what he already has." or "No one waits for what has already happened."

Romans 8:25

Connecting Statement:

Paul finishes reminding the believers in Rome that sometime in the future, God will change their bodies in a glorious way.

if we hope for what we do not see

Here the word "hope" means confidently expect that what one desires will happen. The person who hopes in this way believes that what he desires will happen. Alternate translation: "If we confidently expect to receive what we do not see" or "if we trust God for what we do not see"

what we do not see

Not seeing what we hope for represents not yet having it or experiencing it. Alternate translation: "what we do not yet have" or "what has not yet happened"

we wait for it with patience

"we wait for it patiently"

Romans 8:26

Connecting Statement:

Though Paul has been emphasizing that there is a struggle in believers between the flesh and the Spirit, he affirms that the Spirit is aiding us.

inexpressible groans

"groanings that we cannot express in words"

Romans 8:27

He who searches out the hearts knows

Here "He" refers to God. Here "hearts" is a metonym for a person's thoughts and emotions. The phrase "searches out the hearts" is a metaphor for examining thoughts and emotions. Alternate translation: "God, who knows what all our thoughts and feelings are, knows"

Romans 8:28

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the believers that nothing can separate them from God's love.

for those who are called

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "for those whom God chose"

Romans 8:29

those whom he foreknew

"those whom he knew before he even created them"

he also predestined to be conformed

"he also planned in advance that they would be conformed"

to be conformed to the image of his Son

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "that he would change them to be like his Son"

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

that he might be the firstborn

"so that his Son would be the firstborn"

among many brothers

Here "brothers" refers to all believers, both male and female. Alternate translation: "among many brothers and sisters who belong to the family of God"

Romans 8:30

Those whom he predestined

"Those whom God made plans for in advance"

these he also justified

Here "justified" is in the past tense to emphasize that this will certainly happen. Alternate translation: "these he also put right with himself"

these he also glorified

The word "glorified" is in the past tense to emphasize that this will certainly happen. Alternate translation: "these he will also glorify"

Romans 8:31

What, therefore, can we say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Paul uses questions to emphasize the main point of what he said previously. Alternate translation: "This is what we should know from all of this: since God is helping us, no one can defeat us."

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son

God the Father sent the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to the cross as the holy, infinite sacrifice necessary to satisfy God's infinite, holy nature against the sin of humanity. Here "Son" is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

but delivered him up

"but put him under the control of his enemies"

how will he not also with him freely give us all things?

Paul is using a question for emphasis. Alternate translation: "he will certainly and freely give us all things!"

freely give us all things

"kindly give us all things"

Romans 8:33

Who will bring any accusation against God's chosen ones? God is the one who justifies

Paul uses a question for emphasis. Alternate translation: "No one can accuse us before God because he is the one who makes us right with him"

Romans 8:34

Who is the one who condemns?

Paul uses a question for emphasis. He does not expect an answer. Alternate translation: "No one will condemn us!"

who is at the right hand of God

To be at the "right hand of God" is a symbolic action of receiving great honor and authority from God. Alternate translation: "who is at the place of honor beside God"

Romans 8:35

Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

Paul uses this question to teach that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Alternate translation: "No one will ever separate us from the love of Christ!" or "Nothing will ever separate us from the love of Christ!"

Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

The words "shall separate us from the love of Christ" are understood from the previous question. Alternate translation: "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword separate us from the love of Christ?"

Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that even these things cannot separate us from the love of Christ. Alternate translation: "Even tribulation, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, and sword cannot separate us from the love of Christ."

Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

The abstract nouns can be expressed with verb phrases. Here "sword" is a metonym that represents being killed violently. Alternate translation: "Even if people cause us trouble, hurt us, take away our clothes and food, or kill us, they cannot separate us from the love of Christ."

Tribulation, or distress

These words both mean the same thing.

Romans 8:36

For your benefit

Here "your" is singular and refers to God. Alternate translation: "For you"

we are killed all day long

Here "we" refers to the writer and to other people, but not his audience, who was God. The phrase "all day long" is an exaggeration to emphasize how much danger they are in. Paul uses this part of Scripture to show that all who belong to God should

expect difficult times. This can be translated in an active form. Alternate translation: "our enemies continually seek to kill us"

We were considered as sheep for the slaughter

Here Paul compares to livestock those whom people kill because they are loyal to God. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Our lives have no more value to them than the sheep they kill"

Romans 8:37

we are more than conquerors

"we have complete victory"

through the one who loved us

You can make explicit the kind of love that Jesus showed. Alternate translation: "because of Jesus, who loved us so much he was willing to die for us"

Romans 8:38

I have been convinced

"I am convinced" or "I am confident"

governments

Possible meanings are 1) demons or 2) human kings and rulers.

nor powers

Possible meanings are 1) spiritual beings with power or 2) human beings with power.

Romans 8:39

General Information:

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Chapter 9

¹ I tell the truth in Christ. I do not lie, and my conscience bears witness with me in the Holy Spirit ² that for me there is great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself would be cursed and set apart from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites. They have adoption, the glory, the covenants, the gift of the law, the ministry in the temple, and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs from whom Christ has come with respect to the flesh—he who is God over all. May he be praised forever. Amen.

⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For it is not everyone in Israel who truly belongs to Israel. ⁷ Neither are all Abraham's descendants truly his children. But, "It is through Isaac that your descendants will be called." ⁸ That is, the children of the flesh are not the children of God. But the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come, and a son will be given to Sarah." ¹⁰ Not only this, but after Rebekah also had conceived by one man, our father Isaac— ¹¹ for the children were not yet born and had not yet done anything good or bad, so that the purpose of God according to choice might stand, ¹² not because of actions, but because of him who calls—it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ It is just as had been written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

¹⁴ What then will we say? Is there unrighteousness with God? May it never be. ¹⁵ For he says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

¹⁶ So then, it is not because of him who wills, nor because of him who runs, but because of God, who shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, so that I might demonstrate my power in you, and so that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ So then, God has mercy on whom he wishes, and whom he wishes, he makes stubborn.

¹⁹ You will say then to me, "Why does he still find fault? For who has ever withstood his will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, man, who are you who answers against God? Will what has been molded say to the one who molds it, "Why did you make me this way?" ²¹ Does the potter not have the right over the clay to make from the same lump a container for honorable use, and another container for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, who is willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience containers of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ What if he did this in order that he might make known the riches of his glory upon containers of mercy, which he had previously prepared for glory? ²⁴ What if he did this also for us, whom he also called, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles? ²⁵ As he says also in Hosea:

"I will call them 'my people' who were not my people,
and her 'beloved' who was not beloved.

²⁶ Then it will be that where it was said to them,
'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

²⁷ Isaiah cries out concerning Israel,

"Though the number of the sons of Israel were as the sand of the sea,
it will be a remnant that will be saved,

²⁸ for the Lord will execute his word
on the earth completely and without delay."

²⁹ As Isaiah had said previously,

"If the Lord of hosts
had not left us descendants,
we would be like Sodom,
and we would have become like Gomorrah."

³⁰ What will we say then? That the Gentiles, who were not pursuing righteousness, laid hold of righteousness, the righteousness by faith. ³¹ But Israel, who did pursue a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. ³² Why not? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if by works. They stumbled over the stone of stumbling, ³³ as it has been written,

"Look, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling
and a rock of offense.
He who believes in it will not be ashamed."

Romans 9 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In this chapter, Paul changes what he is teaching about. In Chapters 9-11, he focuses on the nation of Israel.

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 25-29 and 33 of this chapter. Paul quotes all of these words from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Flesh

Paul uses the word "flesh" in this chapter only to refer to Israelites, people physically descending from Abraham through Jacob, whom God named Israel. (See: flesh)

In other chapters, Paul uses the word "brother" to mean fellow Christians. However, in this chapter, he uses "my brothers" to mean his kinsmen the Israelites.

Paul refers to those who believe in Jesus as "children of God" and "children of the promise."

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Stone of stumbling

Paul explains that while some Gentiles accepted Jesus as their savior by believing in him, most Jews were trying to earn their salvation and so rejected Jesus. Paul, quoting the Old Testament, describes Jesus as a stone that the Jews stumble over when walking. This "stone of stumbling" causes them to "fall."

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"It is not everyone in Israel who truly belongs to Israel"

Paul uses the word "Israel" in this verse with two different meanings. The first "Israel" means the physical descendants of Abraham through Jacob. The second "Israel" means those who are God's people through faith. The UDB reflects this.

Romans 9:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells of his personal desire that the people of the nation of Israel will be saved. Then he emphasizes the different ways in which God has prepared them to believe.

I tell the truth in Christ. I do not lie

These two expressions mean basically the same thing. Paul uses them to emphasize that he is telling the truth.

my conscience bears witness with me in the Holy Spirit

"the Holy Spirit controls my conscience and confirms what I say"

Romans 9:2

that for me there is great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart

Here "unceasing pain in my heart" is an idiom that Paul uses to share his emotional distress. Alternate translation: "that I grieve very greatly and deeply"

great sorrow and unceasing pain

These two expressions mean basically the same thing. Paul uses them together to emphasize how great his emotions are.

Romans 9:3

For I could wish that I myself would be cursed and set apart from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "I personally would be willing to let God curse me and keep me apart from Christ forever if that would help my fellow Israelites, my own people group, to believe in Christ"

Romans 9:4

They are Israelites

"They, like me, are Israelites. God chose them to be Jacob's descendants"

They have adoption, the glory

Here Paul uses the metaphor of "adoption" to indicate that the Israelites are like God's children. Alternate translation: "They have God as their father, and they have the glory"

Romans 9:5

General Information:

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Romans 9:6

Connecting Statement:

Paul emphasizes that those who are born in the family of Israel can really only be a true part of Israel through faith.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed

The word "word" is a metonym for the promise that God used the words to make. Alternate translation: "But we should not think that God has failed to keep his promises" or "We should know that God has kept his promises"

For it is not everyone in Israel who truly belongs to Israel

God did not make his promises to all the physical descendants of Israel (or Jacob), but to his spiritual descendants, that is, those who trust in Jesus.

Romans 9:7

Neither are all Abraham's descendants truly his children

"Nor are they all children of God just because they are Abraham's descendants"

Romans 9:8

the children of the flesh are not

Here "children of the flesh" is a metonym that refers to the physical descendants of Abraham. Alternate translation: "not all of Abraham's descendants are"

children of God

This is a metaphor that refers to people who are spiritual descendants, those who have faith in Jesus.

children of the promise

This refers to people who will inherit the promises that God gave to Abraham.

Romans 9:9

this is the word of promise

"these are the words God used when he made the promise"

a son will be given to Sarah

You can translate this in an active form to express that God will give a son to Sarah. Alternate translation: "I will give Sarah a son"

Romans 9:10

our father

Paul refers to Isaac as "our father" because Isaac was the ancestor of Paul and of the Jewish believers in Rome.

had conceived

"had become pregnant"

Romans 9:11

for the children were not yet born and had not yet done anything good or bad

"before the children were born and before they had done anything, whether good or bad"

so that the purpose of God according to choice might stand

"so that what God wants to happen according to His choice will happen"

for the children were not yet born

"before the children were born"

Romans 9:12

Connecting Statement:

It may be necessary in your language to place this verse between verse 10 and verse 11: "... our father Isaac, it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.' For the children were not yet born and had not yet done anything good or bad, but so that the purpose of God according to choice might stand—not because of actions, but because of him who calls. It is just...."

because of him
because of God

it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."
"God said to Rebekah, 'The older son will serve the younger son'"

Romans 9:13

Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated

The word "hated" is an exaggeration. God loved Jacob much more than he loved Esau. He did not literally hate Esau.

Romans 9:14

What then will we say?

Paul is using the question to get the attention of his readers.

Is there unrighteousness with God?

"Is God unrighteous?" or "Is God unjust?"

May it never be

"That is not possible!" or "Certainly not!" This expression strongly denies that this could happen. You may have a similar expression in your language that you could use here.

Romans 9:15

For he says to Moses

Paul speaks about God's talking with Moses as if it is being done in the present time. Alternate translation: "For God said to Moses"

Romans 9:16

it is not because of him who wills, nor because of him who runs

"it is not because of what people want or because they try hard"

nor because of him who runs

Paul speaks of a person who does good things in order to gain God's favor as if that person were running a race.

Romans 9:17

For the scripture says

Here the scripture is personified as if God were talking to Pharaoh. Alternate translation: "The scripture records that God said"

I ... my

God is referring to himself.

you

The word "you" in this verse is singular.

I raised you up

"Raised" here is an idiom for "caused something to be what it is." Alternate translation: "I made you the powerful man that you are"

so that my name might be proclaimed

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "that people might proclaim my name"

my name

This metonym refers either 1) to God in all of his being. Alternate translation: "who I am" or 2) To his reputation. Alternate translation: "how great I am"

in all the earth

"wherever there are people"

Romans 9:18

whom he wishes, he makes stubborn

God makes stubborn whomever he wishes to make stubborn.

Romans 9:19

You will say then to me

Paul is talking to the critics of his teaching as though he were only talking to one person. You may need to use the plural here.

Why does he still find fault? For who has ever withstood his will?

These rhetorical questions are complaints against God. You can translate them as strong statements. Alternate translation: "He should not find fault with us. No one has ever been able to withstand his will."

he ... his

The words "he" and "his" here refer to God.

has ... withstood his will

"has ... stopped him from doing what he wanted to do"

Romans 9:20

Will what has been molded say to the one who molds it, "Why ... way?"

Paul uses the potter's right to make any kind of container he wants from the clay as a metaphor for the creator's right to do whatever he wants with his creation. Paul asks questions to emphasize his point. This can be translated as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "What a person has molded should never say to the one who molds it, 'Why ... way?'"

Why did you make me this way?

This question is a rebuke and can be translated as a strong statement. Alternate translation: "You should not have made me this way!"

Romans 9:21

Does the potter not have the right ... for dishonorable use?

This rhetorical question is a rebuke. Alternate translation: "The potter certainly has the right ... for dishonorable use."

honorable use ... dishonorable use

Some modern translations read, "special use ... daily use."

Romans 9:22

containers of wrath prepared for destruction

Paul speaks of people as if they were containers. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "people to whom he would show wrath and whom he will certainly destroy"

Romans 9:23

he ... his

The words "he" and "his" here refer to God.

containers of mercy, which

Paul speaks of people as if they were containers. Alternate translation: "those to whom he would show mercy, whom"

the riches of his glory upon

Paul compares God's wonderful actions here to great "riches." Alternate translation: "his glory, which is of great value, upon"

which he had previously prepared for glory

Here "glory" refers to life in heaven with God. Alternate translation: "whom he prepared ahead of time in order that they might live with him"

Romans 9:24

also for us

The word "us" here refers to Paul and fellow believers.

called

Here "called" means God has appointed or chosen people to be his children, to be his servants and proclaimers of his message of salvation through Jesus.

Romans 9:25

Connecting Statement:

In this section Paul explains how Israel's unbelief as a nation was told ahead of time by the prophet Hosea.

As he says also in Hosea

Here "he" refers to God. Alternate translation: "As God says also in the book that Hosea wrote"

Hosea

Hosea was a prophet.

I will call them 'my people' who were not my people

"I will choose those who were not my people to be my people"

her 'beloved' who was not beloved

Here "her" refers to Hosea's wife, Gomer, who represents the nation of Israel. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "I will choose her whom I did not love to be one whom I love"

Romans 9:26

sons of the living God

The word "living" may refer to the fact that God is the only true God, and not like the false idols. Alternate translation: "children of the true God"

Romans 9:27

cries out

"calls out"

as the sand of the sea

Here Paul compares the number of the people of Israel to the number of grains of sand in the sea. Alternate translation: "too many to count"

will be saved

Paul uses the word "saved" in a spiritual sense. If God saves a person, it means that through believing in Jesus's death on the cross, God has forgiven him and rescued him from being punished for his sin. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will save"

Romans 9:28

the Lord will execute his word on the earth

"the Lord will punish people on the earth as he has said he will"

Romans 9:29

us ... we

Here the words "us" and "we" refer to Isaiah and those to whom he spoke.

we would be like Sodom, and we would have become like Gomorrah

God killed all of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sin. Alternate translation: "we all would have been destroyed like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah" or "God would have destroyed all of us as he destroyed the people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah"

Romans 9:30

What will we say then?

Paul uses this question to get the attention of his readers. Alternate translation: "So this is what we must say."

That the Gentiles

"We will say that the Gentiles"

who were not pursuing righteousness

"who were not trying to get righteousness" or "who were not trying to be righteous"

righteousness, the righteousness by faith

Here "by faith" refers to placing one's trust in Christ. You can make this explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "righteousness because God made them right with him when they trusted in Christ"

Romans 9:31

who did pursue a law of righteousness

"who tried to obey a law in order to get righteousness" or "who tried to be righteous by obeying a law"

did not arrive at that law

"could not keep that law" or "did not succeed at keeping that law"

Romans 9:32

Why not? Because they

You can translate this rhetorical question as a statement and include the words from the ellipsis in your translation. Paul asks this question to get the attention of his readers. Alternate translation: "Why could they not attain righteousness? Because they" or "This is why they could not attain righteousness: they"

by works

This refers to things that people do to try to please God. You can make this explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "by trying to do things that would please God" or "by keeping the Law"

Romans 9:33

as it has been written

You can indicate that Isaiah wrote this. You can also translate it in an active form. Alternate translation: "as Isaiah the prophet wrote"

in Zion

Here Zion is a metonym that represents Israel. Alternate translation: "in Israel"

stone of stumbling and a rock of offense

These phrases mean basically the same thing and are metaphors that refer to Jesus and his death on the cross. It was as if the people stumbled over a stone because they were disgusted when they considered Jesus's death on the cross.

believes in it

Because the words "stone" and "rock" are a metaphors for a person, you may need to translate this as "believes in him."

Chapter 10

¹ Brothers, my heart's desire and my plea to God is for them, for their salvation. ² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, failing to understand the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes. ⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that comes from the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." ⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith says this: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down); ⁷ and do not say, 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." That is the word of faith, which we proclaim. ⁹ For if with your mouth you confess Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and has righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For scripture says, "Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all, and he is rich to all who call upon him. ¹³ For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. ¹⁴ How then can they call on him in whom they have not believed? How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? How can they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ Then how can they preach, unless they are sent?—As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news!"

¹⁶ But not all of them obeyed the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. ¹⁸ But I say, "Did they not hear?" Yes, most certainly.

"Their sound has gone out into all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world."

¹⁹ Moreover, I say, "Did Israel not know?" First Moses says,

"I will provoke you to jealousy by what is not a nation.
By means of a nation without understanding, I will stir you up to anger."

²⁰ Then Isaiah was very bold when he says,

"I was found by those who did not seek me.
I appeared to those who did not ask for me."

²¹ But to Israel he says,

"All the day long I reached out my hands
to a disobedient and stubborn people."

Romans 10 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 18-20 of this chapter. These lines of poetry are from the Old Testament.

Some translations also set prose quotations from the Old Testament farther to the right than the rest of the text. The ULB does this with the quoted words in verse 8.

Special concepts in this chapter

God's righteousness

Paul teaches here that while many Jews earnestly tried to be righteous, they did not succeed. We cannot earn God's righteousness. God gives us Jesus's righteousness when we believe in him. (See: righteous and faith)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses many rhetorical questions in this chapter. He does this to convince his readers that God does not save only the Hebrew people, so Christians must be ready to go and share the gospel with the whole world. (See: and save)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"I will provoke you to jealousy by what is not a nation"

Paul uses this prophecy to explain that God will use the church to make the Hebrew people jealous. This is so they will seek God and believe the gospel.

Romans 10:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues stating his desire for Israel to believe but emphasizes that both those who are Jews and those who are not can only be saved by faith in Jesus.

Brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

my heart's desire

Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's emotions or inner being. Alternate translation: "my greatest desire"

is for them, for their salvation

"is that God will save the Jews"

Romans 10:2

I testify about them

"I declare truthfully about them"

Romans 10:3

For, failing to understand the righteousness that comes from God

Here "righteousness" refers to the way God puts people right with himself. You can make this explicit in the translation. Alternate translation: "For because they did not know how God puts people right with himself"

they did not submit to God's righteousness.

"they did not accept God's way of putting people right with himself"

Romans 10:4

For Christ is the fulfillment of the law

"For Christ completely fulfilled the law"

law for righteousness for everyone who believes

Here "believes" means "trusts." Alternate translation: "law, and he makes everyone who trusts in him right before God"

Romans 10:5

the righteousness that comes from the law

Paul speaks of "righteousness" as if it were alive and able to move. Alternate translation: "how the law makes a person right before God"

"The man who does these things will live by them."

In order to be made right with God through the law, a person would have to keep the law perfectly, which is not possible. Alternate translation: "The person who perfectly obeys the law will live because the law will make him right before God"

will live

The words "will live" can refer to 1) eternal life or 2) mortal life in fellowship with God.

Romans 10:6

But the righteousness that comes from faith says this

Here "righteousness" is described as a person who can speak. Alternate translation: "But Moses writes this about how faith makes a person right before God"

Do not say in your heart

Moses was addressing the people as if he were speaking to only one person. Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's mind or inner being. Alternate translation: "Do not say to yourself"

Who will ascend into heaven?

Moses uses a question to teach his audience. His previous instruction of, "Do not say" requires a negative answer to this question. You can translate this question as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one is able to go up to heaven"

that is, to bring Christ down

"in order that they might have Christ come down to earth"

Romans 10:7**Who will descend into the abyss?**

Moses uses a question to teach his audience. His previous instruction of, "Do not say" requires a negative answer to this question. You can translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "No person can go down and enter the place where the spirits of dead persons are."

the dead

All those who have died. This expression describes all dead people together in the underworld. To be brought up from among them is to become alive again.

dead

This word speaks of physical death.

Romans 10:8**But what does it say?**

The word "it" refers to the scripture. Alternate translation: "But this is what Moses says"

The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart

Paul speaks of God's message as if it were a person who can move. The word "mouth" is a metonym that refers to what a person says. The phrase "in your heart" is metonym that refers to what a person thinks and believes. Alternate translation: "You have heard the message. You know how to speak it, and you know what it means"

the word of faith

"God's message that tells us that we must believe in him"

Romans 10:9**if with your mouth you confess Jesus as Lord**

"if you confess that Jesus is Lord"

believe in your heart

Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's mind or inner person. Alternate translation: "believe in your mind" or "truly believe"

raised him from the dead

"Raised" here is an idiom for "caused to live again." Alternate translation: "caused him to live again"

you will be saved

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will save you"

Romans 10:10**For with the heart one believes and has righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved**

Here "heart" is a metonym that represents the mind or will. Alternate translation: "For it is with the mind that a person trusts and is right before God, and it is with the mouth that a person confesses so that God saves him"

with the mouth

Here "mouth" is a synecdoche that represents a person's capacity to speak.

Romans 10:11**For scripture says**

Paul speaks of the scripture as if it were alive and had a voice. You can make explicit who wrote the scripture that Paul uses here. Alternate translation: "For Isaiah wrote in the scripture"

Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame

This is equivalent to: "If a person believes, then that person will not be shamed." The negative is used here for emphasis. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will honor everyone who believes in him" or "God will shame only those who do not believe in Jesus"

Romans 10:12**For there is no difference between Jew and Greek**

Paul implies that God will treat all people the same. You can make this explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "In this way, God treats the Jews and the non-Jews the same"

he is rich to all who call upon him

Here "he is rich" means that God blesses richly. You can make this explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "he richly blesses all who trust in him"

Romans 10:13**For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**

Here the word "name" is a metonym for Jesus. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "The Lord will save everyone who trusts in him"

Romans 10:14**How then can they call on him in whom they have not believed?**

Paul uses a question to emphasize the importance of taking the good news of Christ to those who have not heard. The word "they" refers to those who do

not yet belong to God. Alternate translation: "Those who do not believe in God cannot call on him!"

How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

Paul uses another question for the same reason. Alternate translation: "And they cannot believe in him if they have not heard his message!" or "And they cannot believe in him if they have not heard the message about him!"

believe in

trust and desire to obey

How can they hear without a preacher?

Paul uses another question for the same reason. Alternate translation: "And they cannot hear the message if someone does not tell them!"

Romans 10:15

How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news

Paul uses "feet" to represent those who travel and take the message to those who have not heard it. The feet were considered a dirty and ugly part of the body, so the idea of beautiful feet would have seemed odd to Paul's readers. Alternate translation: "How beautiful are even the feet of those who proclaim good news" or "It is wonderful when messengers go and tell others the good news"

Romans 10:16

not all of them obeyed

Here "they" refers to the Jews. "not all of the Jews obeyed"

Lord, who has believed our report?

Paul is using this question, which Isaiah prophesied in the Scriptures, to emphasize that many Jews would not believe in Jesus. You can translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "Lord, so many of them do not believe our message!"

our report

Here, "our" refers to God and Isaiah and so is inclusive.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing

The abstract noun "faith" can be stated as the verb "believes." There are also words that Paul left out, but they are understood. Alternate translation: "So a person believes in Christ by hearing the message about Christ"

and hearing by the word of Christ

Here "word" is a metonym that means "message." There are also words that Paul left out, but they are understood. Alternate translation: "and a person hears the message by someone preaching the message about Christ"

Romans 10:18

But I say, "Did they not hear?" Yes, most certainly

Paul uses a question for emphasis. You can translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "But, I say the Jews certainly have heard the message about Christ"

Their sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

Both of these statements mean basically the same thing and Paul uses them for emphasis. The word "their" refers to the sun, moon, and stars. Here they are described as human messengers that tell people about God. This refers to how their existence shows God's power and glory. You can make explicit that Paul is quoting Scripture here. Alternate translation: "As the Scriptures record, 'The sun, moon, and the stars are proof of God's power and glory, and everyone in the world sees them and knows the truth about God.'"

Romans 10:19

Moreover, I say, "Did Israel not know?"

Paul uses a question for emphasis. The word "Israel" is a metonym for the people who lived in the nation of Israel. Alternate translation: "Again I tell you the people of Israel did know the message."

First Moses says, "I will provoke you ... I will stir you up

This means that Moses wrote down what God said. "I" refers to God, and "you" refers to the Israelites. Alternate translation: "First Moses says that God will provoke you ... God will stir you up"

by what is not a nation

"by those you do not consider to be a real nation" or "by people who do not belong to any nation"

By means of a nation without understanding

Here "without understanding" means that the people do not know God. Alternate translation: "By a nation with people who do not know me or my commands"

I will stir you up to anger

"I will make you angry" or "I will cause you to become angry"

you

This refers to the nation of Israel.

Romans 10:20

General Information:

Here the words "I" and "me" refer to God.

Then Isaiah was very bold when he says

This means the prophet Isaiah wrote what God had said.

I was found by those who did not seek me

Prophets often speak of things in the future as if they have already happened. This emphasizes that the prophecy will certainly come true. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Even though the Gentile people will not look for me, they will find me"

I appeared

"I made myself known"

he says

"He" refers to God, who is speaking through Isaiah.

Romans 10:21

General Information:

Here the word "my" refers to God.

All the day long I

This phrase is used to emphasize God's continual effort. "I continually"

I reached out my hands to a disobedient and stubborn people

"I tried to welcome you and to help you, but you refused my help and continued to disobey"

Chapter 11

¹ I say then, did God reject his people? May it never be. For I also am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says about Elijah, how he pleaded with God against Israel? ³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have broken down your altars. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." ⁴ But what does God's answer say to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand men who have not bent the knee to Baal." ⁵ Even so then, at this present time also there is a remnant because of the choice of grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer based on works. Otherwise grace would no longer be grace. ¹⁷ What then? The thing that Israel was seeking, it did not obtain, but the chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened. ⁸ It is just as it is written:

"God has given them a spirit of dullness,
eyes so that they should not see,
and ears so that they should not hear,
to this very day."

⁹ Then David says,

"Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened so that they may not see,
and bend their backs continually."

¹¹ I say then, "Did they stumble so as to fall?" May it never be. Instead, by their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles, in order to provoke them to jealousy. ¹² Now if their trespass is the riches of the world, and if their loss is the riches of the Gentiles, how much greater will their fulfillment be? ¹³ But now I am speaking to you Gentiles, and as long as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry. ¹⁴ Perhaps I will provoke to jealousy those who are of my own flesh. Perhaps we will save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the firstfruits are holy, so is the lump of dough. If the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, if you, a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them, and if you shared with them in the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast over the branches. But if you do boast, it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ That is true. Because of their unbelief they were broken off, but you stand firm because of your faith. Do not be arrogant in your thoughts, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²² Look at, then, the kind actions and the severity of God: severity came on the Jews who fell, but God's kindness comes on you, if you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in. For God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into a good olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree?

²⁵ For I do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, of this mystery, so that you may not be wise in your own thinking: A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the full number of the Gentiles comes in. ²⁶ Thus all Israel will be saved, just as it is written:

"Out of Zion will come the Deliverer.
He will remove ungodliness from Jacob,

²⁷ and this will be my covenant with them,
when I will take away their sins."

²⁸ As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake. But as far as election is concerned, they are beloved because of the patriarchs. ²⁹ For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For just as you were formerly disobedient to God, now you have received mercy because of their disobedience. ³¹ In the same way, now these Jews have been disobedient. The result was that by the mercy shown to you

they may also now receive mercy. ³² For God has shut up all into disobedience in order that he might show mercy on all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments,
and his ways beyond discovering!

³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord
or who has become his advisor?

³⁵ Or who has first given anything to God,
that God must repay him?"

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever. Amen.

Footnotes

11:6 ^[1]Some old copies read

Romans 11 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 9-10, 26-27, and 34-35, which is from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Grafting

Paul uses the image of "grafting" to refer to the place of the Gentiles and Jews in the plans of God. Making one plant to be permanently part of another plant is called "grafting." Paul uses the picture of God grafting the Gentiles as a wild branch into his saving plans. But God has not forgotten about the Jews, who are spoken of as the natural plant. God will also save Jews who believe in Jesus.

Romans 11:1

Connecting Statement:

Though Israel as a nation has rejected God, God wants them to understand salvation comes by grace without works.

I say then

"I, Paul, say then"

did God reject his people?

Paul asks this question so that he can answer the questions of other Jews who are upset that God has included the Gentiles among his people, while the hearts of the Jewish people have been hardened.

May it never be.

"That is not possible!" or "Certainly not!" This expression strongly denies that this could happen. You may have a similar expression in your language that you could use here. See how you translated this in Romans 9:14.

tribe of Benjamin

This refers to the tribe descended from Benjamin, one of the 12 tribes into which God divided the people of Israel.

Romans 11:2

whom he foreknew

"whom he knew ahead of time"

Do you not know what the scripture says about Elijah, how he pleaded with God against Israel?

You can translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "Surely you know what the Scriptures record about when Elijah pleaded with God against Israel."

what the scripture says

Paul is referring to the scripture as if they were able to speak.

Romans 11:3

they have killed

"They" refers to the people of Israel.

I alone am left

The pronoun "I" here refers to Elijah.

seeking my life

"desiring to kill me"

Romans 11:4

But what does God's answer say to him?

Paul is using this question to bring the reader to his next point. Alternate translation: "But this is God's answer to him:"

him

The pronoun "him" refers to Elijah.

seven thousand men

"7,000 men"

Romans 11:5

remnant

Here this means a small part of people whom God chose to receive his grace.

Romans 11:6

But if it is by grace

Paul continues to explain how God's mercy works. Alternate translation: "But since God's mercy works by grace"

Romans 11:7

What then?

"What should we conclude?" Paul asks this question to move his reader to his next point. You can translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "This is what we need to remember" or "So"

Romans 11:8

God has given them a spirit of dullness, eyes so that they should not see, and ears so that they should not hear

This is a metaphor about the fact that the people are spiritually dull. They are not able to hear or receive spiritual truth.

spirit of

Here this means "having the characteristics of," such as the "spirit of wisdom."

eyes so that they should not see

The concept of seeing with one's eyes was considered to be equivalent to gaining understanding.

ears so that they should not hear

The concept of hearing with the ears was considered to be equivalent to obedience.

Romans 11:9

Let their table become a snare and a trap

"Table" here is a metonym that represents feasting, and "snare" and "trap" are metaphors that represent punishment. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Please, God, make their feasts like a trap that catches them"

a stumbling block

A "stumbling block" is anything that causes a person to trip so that he falls down. Here it represents something that tempts a person to sin. Alternate translation: "something that tempts them to sin"

a retribution for them

"something that allows you to take revenge on them"

Romans 11:10

bend their backs continually

Here "bend their backs" is a metonym for forcing slaves to carry heavy loads on their backs. This is a metaphor for making them suffer. Alternate translation: "make them suffer like people carrying heavy loads"

Romans 11:11

Connecting Statement:

With Israel as a nation rejecting God, Paul warns the Gentiles to be careful they do not make the same mistake.

Did they stumble so as to fall?

Paul uses this question to add introduce the next thing he wants to say. If your language uses a different way to introduce new topics, you can use it here. Here the words "stumble" and "fall" are metaphors for sinning and having God reject the sinner. Alternate translation: "Has God rejected them forever because they sinned?"

May it never be.

"That is not possible!" or "Certainly not!" This expression strongly denies that this could happen. You may have a similar expression in your language that you could use here. See how you translated this in Romans 9:14.

provoke ... to jealousy

See how you translated this phrase in Romans 10:19.

Romans 11:12

if their trespass is the riches of the world, and if their loss is the riches of the Gentiles

Both of these phrases mean basically the same thing. If you need to, you can combine them in your translation. Alternate translation: "when the Jews trespassed, the result was that God abundantly blessed the non-Jews"

the riches of the world

Because the Jews rejected Christ, God richly blessed the Gentiles by giving them the opportunity to receive Christ.

the world

Here the "world" is a metonym that refers to the people who live in the world, especially the Gentiles.

how much greater will their fulfillment be?

This can be translated as a statement. The words "their fulfillment" refer to either 1) the time when God blesses the Jews 2) when the Jews believe in Jesus. Alternate translation: "their fulfillment will be much greater." or "how much better will it be for the non-Jews when all the Jews believe in Jesus?" or "how much better will it be for the non-Jews when God fully blesses the Jews?"

Romans 11:13

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Romans 11:14

provoke to jealousy

See how you translated this phrase in Romans 10:19.

those who are of my own flesh

This refers to "my fellow Jews."

Perhaps we will save some of them

God will save those who believe. Alternate translation: "Perhaps some will believe and therefore God will save them"

Romans 11:15

For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world

"For if because God rejected them, he will reconcile the rest of the world to himself"

their rejection

The pronoun "their" refers to Jewish unbelievers.

the world

Here "the world" is a metonym for the people who live in the world. Alternate translation: "the people in the world"

what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Paul asks this question to emphasize that when God accepts the Jews, it will be a wonderful thing. The abstract noun "acceptance" can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: "how will it be when God accepts them? It will be like they have come back to life from among the dead!" or "then when God accepts them, it will be like they have died and become alive again!"

the dead

These words speak of all dead people together in the underworld.

Romans 11:16

If the firstfruits are holy, so is the lump of dough

Paul is speaking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Israelites' ancestors, as if they were the first grain or "firstfruits" to be harvested. He is also speaking of the Israelites who are descendants of those men as if they were a "lump of dough" made from the grain. Alternate translation: "If Abraham is counted as the first of what has been offered to God, all of our ancestors who followed should also be counted as God's possession"

firstfruits

The people always dedicated to God the first crops that they harvested. Here "firstfruits" stands for the first people to believe in Christ.

If the root is holy, so are the branches

Paul is speaking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Israelites' ancestors, as if they were the root of a tree, and the Israelites, who are descendants of those men, as if they were the tree's "branches."

Romans 11:17

But if some of the branches were broken off

Here Paul refers to the Jews who rejected Jesus as "broken branches." You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "But if someone broke off some of the branches"

if you, a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them

Here Paul speaks of the Gentile Christians as if they were "grafted branches." You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "if God grafted you, a wild olive branch, among them"

if you, a wild olive branch

The pronoun "you" is singular. Here "you" and the phrase "a wild olive branch," refer to a Gentile person, in general, who has accepted salvation through Jesus.

the rich root of the olive tree

Here "the rich root" is a metaphor that refers to the promises of God.

Romans 11:18

do not boast over the branches

Here "the branches" is a metaphor that stands for the Jewish people. Alternate translation: "do not say you are better than the Jewish people God has rejected"

it is not you who supports the root, but the root that supports you

Again Paul implies that the Gentile believers are branches. God saves them only because of the covenant promises that he made to the Jews.

Romans 11:19

Branches were broken off

Here "branches" refers to the Jews who rejected Jesus and whom God has now rejected. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God broke branches off"

I might be grafted in

Paul uses this phrase to refer to the Gentile believers whom God has accepted. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "he might attach me in"

Romans 11:20

their ... they

The pronouns "their" and "they" refer to the Jewish people who did not believe.

but you stand firm because of your faith

Paul speaks of the Gentile believers remaining faithful as if they were standing firm and no one could move them. Alternate translation: "but you remain because of your faith"

be arrogant in your thoughts

"think that you are better than you are" or "be proud"

Romans 11:21

For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you

Here the "natural branches" refers to the Jewish people who rejected Jesus. Alternate translation: "Since God did not spare those unbelieving Jews, who grew up like a tree's natural branches that came from the root, then know that if you do not believe, he will not spare you either"

Romans 11:22

the kind actions and the severity of God

Paul is reminding the Gentile believers that although God may act very kindly toward them, he will not hesitate to judge and punish them.

severity came on the Jews who fell ... God's kindness comes on you

This can be restated to remove the abstract nouns "severity" and "kindness." Alternate translation: "God dealt harshly with the Jews who fell ... God acts kindly toward you"

the Jews who fell

Here "fell" is a metaphor that means to have done something wrong. Alternate translation: "the Jews who have done wrong" or "the Jews who have refused to trust in Christ"

if you continue in his kindness

This can be restated to remove the abstract noun "kindness." Alternate translation: "if you continue doing what is right so that he continues being kind to you"

Otherwise you also will be cut off

Paul again uses the metaphor of a branch, which God can "cut off" if he needs to. Here "cut off" is a metaphor for rejecting someone. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Otherwise God will also cut you off" or "Otherwise God will also reject you"

Romans 11:23

if they do not continue in their unbelief

The phrase "do not continue in their unbelief" is a double negative. You can translate this in a positive form. Alternate translation: "if they start believing"

will be grafted in

Paul speaks of the Jews as if they were branches that could be grafted back into a tree if they start to believe in Jesus. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will graft back in"

graft

This is a common process in which the end of a live branch of one tree is inserted into another tree so that the new branch will continue to grow in that tree.

they ... them

All occurrences of "they" or "them" refer to the Jews.

Romans 11:24

For if you were cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were grafted into a good olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree?

Paul continues speaking of the Gentile believers and Jews as if they were branches of a tree. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "For if God had cut you out of what is by nature a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature had grafted you into a good olive tree, how much

more will he graft these Jews, who are the natural branches, into their own olive tree?"

how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree?

This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "then these Jews, who are the natural branches, will certainly be grafted back into their own olive tree."

branches

Paul is speaking of the Jews and Gentiles as if they were branches. The "natural branches" represent the Jews, and the "grafted branches" represent the Gentile believers.

Romans 11:25

I do not want you to be uninformed

Here Paul uses a double negative to emphasize the positive. You can translate this in a positive form. Alternate translation: "I very much want you to be informed"

brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

I

The pronoun "I" refers to Paul.

you ... you ... your

The pronouns "you" and "your" refer to the Gentile believers.

so that you may not be wise in your own thinking

Paul does not want the Gentile believers to think they are wiser than the Jewish unbelievers. Alternate translation: "so that you will not think you are wiser than you are"

A partial hardening has come upon Israel

This is the mystery that Paul referred to earlier in the sentence. This can be made a explicit. "A partial hardening" is a metaphor for many of the people remaining stubborn. Paul said this because some of the Jews stubbornly refused to trust Jesus. Alternate translation: "This mystery is that a partial hardening has come upon Israel" or "Many people of Israel remain stubborn"

until the full number of the Gentiles

Here "full number" means the amount determined by God. It does not mean all Gentiles. Alternate translation: "until the number of Gentiles determined by God"

comes in

This is a metaphor meaning to be saved or to become a Christian. Alternate translation: "is saved" or "believes in Christ"

Romans 11:26

Connecting Statement:

Paul says that, to the glory of God, a deliverer will come out of Israel.

Thus all Israel will be saved

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Thus God will save all Israel"

just as it is written

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "just as the scriptures record"

Out of Zion

Here "Zion" is used as a metonym for the place where God dwells. Alternate translation: "From where God is among the Jews"

the Deliverer

"the one who brings his people to safety"

He will remove ungodliness

Paul speaks of ungodliness as if it were an object that someone could remove, such as a garment..

from Jacob

Here "Jacob" is used as a metonym for Israel. Alternate translation: "from the Israelite people"

Romans 11:27

I will take away their sins

Here Paul speaks of sins as if they were objects that someone could take away. Alternate translation: "I will remove the burden of their sins"

Romans 11:28

As far as the gospel is concerned

You can make explicit why Paul mentions the gospel. Alternate translation: "Because the Jews rejected the gospel"

they are enemies for your sake

You can make explicit whose enemies they are, and how this was for the Gentiles' sake. Alternate translation: "they are God's enemies for your sake" or "God has treated them as enemies in order that you also might hear the gospel"

as far as election is concerned

You can make explicit why Paul mentions election. Alternate translation: "because God has elected the Jews" or "because God has chosen the Jews"

they are beloved because of the patriarchs

You can make explicit who loves the Jews and why Paul mentions their forefathers. You can also translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God still loves them because of what he promised to do for their ancestors"

Romans 11:29

For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable

Paul speaks of the spiritual and material blessings that God promised to give his people as if they were gifts. The call of God refers to the fact that God called the Jews to be his people. Alternate translation: "For God will never change his mind about what he has promised to give them, and about how he has called them to be his people" or "God will never take back his gifts or his call"

are irrevocable

"can never be taken back"

Romans 11:30

you were formerly disobedient to God

"you did not obey God in the past"

you have received mercy because of their disobedience

Here mercy means God's undeserved blessings. Alternate translation: "because the Jews have rejected Jesus, you have received blessings that you did not deserve"

you

This refers to Gentile believers, and is plural.

Romans 11:31

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Romans 11:32

God has shut up all into disobedience

God has treated people who disobey him like prisoners who are unable to escape from prison. Alternate translation: "God has made prisoners of those who disobey him. Now they cannot stop disobeying God"

Romans 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God

Here "wisdom" and "knowledge" mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "How amazing

are the many benefits of both God's wisdom and knowledge"

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering

"We are completely unable to understand the things that he has decided and to find out the ways in which he acts toward us"

Romans 11:34

For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has become his advisor?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that no one is as wise as the Lord. You can translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one has ever known the mind of the Lord, and no one has become his advisor."

the mind of the Lord

Here "mind" is a metonym for knowing things or thinking about things. Alternate translation: "all that the Lord knows" or "what the Lord thinks about"

Romans 11:35

Or who has first given anything to God, that God must repay him?"

Paul uses this question to emphasize his point. Alternate translation: "No one has ever given anything to God that he did not first receive from God"

Romans 11:36

For from him ... through him ... to him

Here, all occurrences of "him" refers to God.

To him be the glory forever

This expresses Paul's desire for all people to honor God. You can make this explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "May all people honor him forever"

Chapter 12

¹ I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. This is your reasonable service. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Do this so that you can test and approve what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

³ For by the grace that was given to me I say to everyone among you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather, think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has given you. ⁴ For we have many members in one body, but not all the members have the same function. ⁵ In the same way, we who are many are one body in Christ, and are individually members of each other. ⁶ We have different gifts according to the grace that was given to us. If one's gift is prophecy, let it be done according to the proportion of his faith. ⁷ If one's gift is service, let him serve. If one has the gift of teaching, let him teach. ⁸ If one's gift is encouragement, let him encourage. If one's gift is giving, let him do it generously. If one's gift is leading, let it be done with diligence. If one's gift is in showing mercy, let it be done with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; hold on to that which is good. ¹⁰ Concerning love of the brothers, be affectionate to one another. Concerning honor, respect one another. ¹¹ Concerning diligence, do not be hesitant. Concerning the spirit, be eager. Concerning the Lord, serve him. ¹² Rejoice in hope, endure tribulation, be faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share in the needs of God's holy people. Find many ways to show hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not think in proud ways, but accept lowly people. Do not be wise in your own thoughts. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Do good things in the sight of all people. ¹⁸ If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all people. ¹⁹ Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but give way to the wrath of God. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay," says the Lord."

²⁰ But "if your enemy is hungry, feed him.
If he is thirsty, give him a drink.
For if you do this, you will heap coals of fire on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verse 20, which is from the Old Testament.

Many scholars believe Paul uses the word "therefore" in [Romans 12:1](#) to refer back to all of Chapters 1-11. Having carefully explained the Christian gospel, Paul now explains how Christians should live in light of these great truths. Chapters 12-16 focus on living out one's Christian faith. Paul uses many different commands in these chapters to give these practical instructions. (See: faith)

Special concepts in this chapter

Christian living

Under the law of Moses, people were required to offer temple sacrifices of animals or grain. Now Christians are required to live their lives as a type of sacrifice to God. Physical sacrifices are no longer required. (See: lawofmoses)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Body of Christ

The body of Christ is an important metaphor or image used in Scripture to refer to the church. Each church member has a unique and important function. Christians need each other.

Romans 12:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells what the life of a believer should be and how believers should serve.

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present

Here "brothers" refers to fellow believers, both male and female. Alternate translation: "Fellow believers, because of the great mercy that God has given you I very much want you to present"

to present your bodies a living sacrifice

Here Paul uses the word "bodies" to refer to the entire beings of all those he is addressing. Paul is comparing a believer in Christ who completely obeys God to the animals that the Jews killed and then offered to God. Alternate translation: "to offer yourselves completely to God while you are alive as if you were a dead sacrifice on a temple altar"

holy, acceptable to God

Possible meanings are 1) "a sacrifice that you give to God alone and that pleases him" or 2) "acceptable to God because it is morally pure"

This is your reasonable service

"This is the right way to worship God"

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Do not behave as this world behaves" or "Do not do what this world does"

this world

This refers to unbelievers who live in the world.

but be transformed by the renewal of your mind

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "but let God change the way you think and behave"

Romans 12:3

by the grace that was given to me I say

Here "grace" refers to God's choosing Paul to be an apostle and leader of the church. You can make this explicit in your translation. You can also translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "because God freely chose me to be an apostle, I can say"

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought

"Do not think you are better than other people"

rather, think with sober judgment

"instead, you should be wise in how you think about yourselves"

each according to the measure of faith that God has given you

Paul implies here that believers have different abilities that correspond to their faith in God. Alternate translation: "since God has given each of you different abilities because of your trust in him"

Romans 12:4

For

Paul uses this word to show that he will now explain why some Christians should not think they are better than others.

we have many members in one body

Paul refers to all the believers in Christ as if they were different parts of the human body. He does this to illustrate that although believers may serve Christ in different ways, each person belongs to Christ and serves in an important way.

members

Such parts of the body as eyes, ears, and hands.

Romans 12:5

are individually members of each other

Paul speaks of the believers as if God had physically joined them together like the parts of the human body. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God has joined each believer together with all other believers"

Romans 12:6

We have different gifts according to the grace that was given to us

Paul speaks of believers' different abilities as being free gifts from God. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God has freely given each of us different abilities to do things for him"

let it be done according to the proportion of his faith

Possible meanings are 1) "let him speak prophecies that do not go beyond the amount of faith God has given us" or 2) "let him speak prophecies that agree with the teachings of our faith."

Romans 12:7

General Information:

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Romans 12:8

If one's gift is giving, let him do it

Here "giving" refers to giving money and other things to people. You can make this meaning explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "If one has the gift of giving money or other goods to people in need, let him give"

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "You must love people sincerely and truly"

love

The kind of love that comes from God is focused on having good things happen to others even when those good things do not happen to the one who loves.

Romans 12:10

Concerning love of the brothers, be affectionate

Here Paul begins a list of nine items, each of the form "Concerning ... be" to tell the believers what kind of people they should be. You may need to translate some of the items as "Concerning ... do." The list continues to Romans 12:13.

Concerning love of the brothers

"As for how you love your fellow believers"

love

In the original language a different word is used for "love" here than is used in 12:9. This word means brotherly love or love for a friend or family member. This is natural human love between friends or relatives.

be affectionate

"show affection"

Concerning honor, respect one another

"Honor and respect one another" or "Honor your fellow believers by respecting them"

Romans 12:11

Concerning diligence, do not be hesitant. Concerning the spirit, be eager. Concerning the Lord, serve him
"Do not be lazy in your duty, but be eager to follow the Spirit and to serve the Lord"

Romans 12:12

Rejoice in hope

"Rejoice because of your hope" or "Rejoice as you hope." Here the word "hope" is a person's confident expectation that what he desires really will happen. The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "confidently expect" or "confidently wait" or "trust." Alternate translation: "Rejoice because of what you confidently wait for" or "Rejoice as you confidently wait"

endure tribulation

"be patient when you suffer" or "wait patiently whenever you have troubles"

be faithful in prayer

"pray faithfully"

Romans 12:13

General Information:

This is the last item in the list that began in [Romans 12:9](#).

Share in the needs of God's holy people

"When fellow Christians are in trouble, help them with what they need"

Find many ways to show hospitality

"Always welcome Christians into your home when they need a place to stay"

Romans 12:14

General Information:

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Romans 12:15

General Information:

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Romans 12:16

Be of the same mind toward one another

This is an idiom that means to live in unity. Alternate translation: "Agree with one another" or "Live in unity with each other"

Do not think in proud ways

"Do not think that you are more important than others"

accept lowly people

"welcome people who do not seem important"

Do not be wise in your own thoughts

"Do not think of yourselves as having more wisdom than everyone else"

Romans 12:17

Repay no one evil for evil

"Do not do evil things to anyone who has done evil things to you"

Do good things in the sight of all people

"Do things that everyone considers to be good"

Romans 12:18

as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all people

"do whatever you can to live in peace with everyone"

Romans 12:19

give way to the wrath of God

Here "wrath" is a metonym for God's punishment. Alternate translation: "allow God to punish those who harm you"

For it is written

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "For someone has written"

Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that God will avenge his people. Alternate translation: "I will certainly avenge you"

Romans 12:20

your enemy ... feed him ... give him a drink ... if you do this, you will heap

All forms of "you" and "your" are addressed as to one person.

But "if your enemy is hungry ... his head."

Paul quotes another part of scripture. Alternate translation: "But the scripture also says, 'If your enemy is hungry ... his head.'"

feed him

"give him some food"

you will heap coals of fire on his head

Paul speaks of the blessings that the enemies will receive as if someone were pouring hot coals on their heads. Possible meanings are 1) "you will make the person who harmed you feel ashamed about how he has mistreated you" or 2) "you will give God a reason to judge your enemy more harshly"

Romans 12:21

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good

Paul describes "evil" as though it were a person. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Do not let those who are evil defeat you, but defeat those who are evil by doing what is good"

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil

These verbs are addressed as to one person and so are singular.

Chapter 13

¹ Let every soul be subject to higher authorities, for there is no authority unless it comes from God. The authorities that exist have been appointed by God. ² Therefore he who rebels against that authority opposes the command of God; and those who oppose it will receive judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to those who do good deeds, but to those who do evil deeds. Do you desire to have no fear of the one in authority? Do what is good, and you will receive his praise. ⁴ For he is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for he does not carry the sword for no reason. For he is a servant of God, an avenger for wrath on the one who does evil. ⁵ Therefore you must be subject, not only because of the wrath, but also because of conscience. ⁶ Because of this you pay taxes also. For authorities are servants of God, who attend to this very thing continually. ⁷ Pay to everyone what is owed to them: tax to whom tax is due, toll to whom toll is due, fear to whom fear is due, honor to whom honor is due.

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet," and if there is any other commandment it is summed up in this, "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

¹¹ Because of this, you know the time, that it is already the hour for you to awake out of sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night has advanced, and the day is near. Let us therefore put aside the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk appropriately, as in the day, not in drunken celebrations or drunkenness; and let us not walk in sexual immorality or in uncontrolled lust, and not in strife or jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its lusts.

Romans 13 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In the first part of this chapter, Paul teaches Christians to obey rulers who govern them. At that time, ungodly Roman rulers governed the land. (See: godly)

Special concepts in this chapter

Ungodly rulers

Some readers will find it difficult to understand what Paul teaches about obeying rulers, especially if they are in places where rulers persecute the church. Christians must obey their rulers as well as obey God, unless the rulers do not allow Christians to do something God explicitly commands them to do. There are times when a believer must submit to these rulers and suffer at their hands. Christians understand that this world is temporary and they will ultimately be with God forever. (See: eternity)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Flesh

This is a complex issue. "Flesh" is possibly a metaphor for our sinful nature. Paul is not teaching that our physical bodies are sinful. Paul appears to be teaching that as long as Christians are alive ("in the flesh"), we will continue to sin. But our new nature will be fighting against our old nature. (See: flesh and sin)

Romans 13:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells believers how to live under their rulers.

Let every soul be subject to

Here "soul" is a synecdoche for the whole person. "Every Christian should obey" or "Everyone should obey"

higher authorities

"government officials"

for
because

there is no authority unless it comes from God
"all authority comes from God"

The authorities that exist have been appointed by God
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "And the people who are in authority are there because God put them there"

Romans 13:2

that authority
"that government authority" or "the authority that God placed in power"

those who oppose it will receive judgment on themselves
You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will judge those who oppose government authority"

Romans 13:3

For
Paul uses this word to begin his explanation of Romans 13:2 and to tell about what will result if the government condemns a person.

rulers are not a terror to those who do good deeds, but to those who do evil deeds
"rulers do not cause terror for those who do good deeds, but for those who do evil deeds"

Do you desire to have no fear of the one in authority?
Paul uses this question to get people to think about what they need to do in order not to be afraid of rulers. Alternate translation: "Let me tell you how you can be unafraid of the ruler."

you will receive his praise
"the one in authority will say good things about you"

Romans 13:4

he does not carry the sword for no reason
You can translate this in a positive form. Alternate translation: "he carries the sword for a very good reason" or "he has the power to punish people, and he will punish people"

carry the sword
Roman governors carried a short sword as a symbol of their authority.

an avenger for wrath on the one who does evil
Here "wrath" represents the punishment people receive when they do evil deeds. Alternate translation: "a person who punishes, on God's behalf, those who do evil"

Romans 13:5

not only because of the wrath, but also because of conscience
"not only so the government will not punish you, but also so you will have a clear conscience before God"

Romans 13:6

Because of this
"Because the government punishes evildoers"

you pay
Paul is addressing the believers here, so this is plural.

For authorities
"This is why you should pay taxes: authorities"

attend to
"administer" or "work on"

Romans 13:7

Pay to everyone
Paul is addressing the believers here, so this is plural.

tax to whom tax is due, toll to whom toll is due, fear to whom fear is due, honor to whom honor is due
The word "pay" is understood from the previous phrase in the general sense of "give." Alternate translation: "pay tax to whom tax is due, pay toll to whom toll is due, pay fear to whom fear is due, and pay honor to him to whom honor is due"

fear to whom fear is due, honor to whom honor is due
Here paying fear and honor is a metaphor for fearing and honoring those who deserve to be feared and honored. Alternate translation: "fear those who deserve to be feared, and honor those who deserved to be honored" or "respect those whom you ought to respect, and honor those whom you ought to honor"

toll
This is a kind of tax.

Romans 13:8

Connecting Statement:
Paul tells believers how to act toward neighbors.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another
This is a double negative. You can translate it in a positive form. Alternate translation: "Pay all you owe to everyone, and love one another"

Owe
This verb is plural and applies to all the Roman Christians.

anything, except to love one another

This elliptical command includes the idea of "owe" from earlier in the sentence. Owing things or service to other people is a metaphor for the duty Christians have, in this case to love one another. Alternate translation: "anything, but remember that God has given you the duty to love one another"

love

The kind of love that comes from God is focused on having good things happen to others even when those good things do not happen to the one who loves.

Romans 13:9

covet

To covet is to desire to have or possess something that another person possesses.

Romans 13:10

Love does no harm to a neighbor

This phrase portrays love as a person who is being kind to other people. Alternate translation: "People who love their neighbors do not harm them"

Romans 13:11

you know the time, that it is already the hour for you to awake out of sleep

Paul speaks of the need for the Roman believers to change their behavior as if they needed to wake up from being asleep.

hour

"time"

Romans 13:12

The night has advanced

Paul speaks of the time when people do evil deeds as night. Alternate translation: "The sinful time is almost over" or "It is as though the night is almost finished"

the day is near

Paul speaks of the time when people do what is right as the day. Alternate translation: "the time of righteousness will begin soon" or "it is as though it will soon be day"

Let us therefore put aside the works of darkness

Paul speaks of "works of darkness" as if they are clothing that a person puts aside. Here to "put

aside" means to stop doing something. Here "darkness" is a metaphor for evil. Alternate translation: "Let us therefore stop doing the evil things that people do in the dark"

let us put on the armor of light

Here "light" is a metaphor for what is good and right. Paul speaks of people who are doing what is right as if they were putting on armor to protect themselves. Alternate translation: "let us start doing what is right. Doing this will protect us from what is evil, like armor protects a soldier"

Romans 13:13

Let us

Paul includes his readers and other believers with himself.

Let us walk appropriately, as in the day

Paul speaks of people living as true believers as if they were walking while it is day. Alternate translation: "Let us walk in a visible way knowing, that everyone can see us"

sexual immorality or in uncontrolled lust

These concepts mean basically the same thing. You can combine them in your translation. Alternate translation: "sexually immoral acts"

strife

This refers to plotting against and arguing with other people.

jealousy

This refers to negative feelings against another person's success or advantage over others.

Romans 13:14

put on the Lord Jesus Christ

Paul speaks of accepting the moral nature of Christ as if he were our outer clothing that people can see.

put on

If your language has a plural form for commands, use it here.

make no provision for the flesh

Here the "flesh" refers to the self-directed nature of people who oppose God. This is the sinful nature of human beings. Alternate translation: "do not allow your old evil heart any opportunity at all for doing wicked things"

Chapter 14

¹ Receive anyone who is weak in faith, without giving judgment about arguments. ² One person has faith to eat anything, another who is weak eats only vegetables. ³ May the one who eats everything not despise the one who does not; and may the one who does not eat everything not judge the other who eats everything. For God has accepted him. ⁴ Who are you, you who judge a servant belonging to someone else? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. But he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵ One person values one day above another. Another has concluded that every day is equal. Let each person be convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord; and he who eats, eats for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God. He who does not eat, refrains from eating for the Lord; he also gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives for himself, and none dies for himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Then whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this purpose Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and those who are living. ¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? And you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written,

"As I live," says the Lord, "
to me every knee will bend,
and every tongue will confess to God."

¹² So then, each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

¹³ Therefore, let us no longer judge one another, but instead decide this, that no one will place a stumbling block or a snare for his brother. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean by itself. Only for him who considers anything to be unclean, for him it is unclean. ¹⁵ If because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not allow what you consider to be good to be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not about food and drink, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For the one who serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and approved by people. ¹⁹ So then, let us pursue the things of peace and the things that build up one another. ²⁰ Do not destroy the work of God on account of food. All things are clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone to stumble. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything over which your brother stumbles. ²² The faith you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. ²³ He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because it is not from faith. And whatever is not from faith is sin.

Romans 14 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verse 11 of this chapter, which Paul quotes from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Weak in faith

Paul teaches that Christians can have real faith and at the same time be "weak in faith" in a given situation. This describes Christians whose faith is immature, not strong, or misunderstood. (See: faith)

Dietary restrictions

Many religions in the ancient Near East restricted what was eaten. Christians have freedom to eat what they want. But they need to use this freedom wisely, in a way that honors the Lord and does not cause others to sin. (See: sin)

The judgment seat of God

The judgment seat of God or Christ represents a time when all people, including Christians, will be held accountable for the way they lived their lives.

Romans 14:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul encourages believers to remember that they are answerable to God.

weak in faith

This refers to those who felt guilty over eating and drinking certain things.

without giving judgment about arguments

"and do not condemn them for their opinions"

Romans 14:2

One person has faith to eat anything

Here "faith" refers to doing what a person believes God is telling him to do.

another who is weak eats only vegetables

This describes a person who believes God does not want him to eat meat.

Romans 14:3

General Information:

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Romans 14:4

Who are you, you who judge a servant belonging to someone else?

Paul is using a question to scold those who are judging others. You can translate this as a statement. Alternate translation: "You are not God, and you are not allowed to judge one of his servants!"

you, you

The form of "you" here is singular.

It is before his own master that he stands or falls

Paul speaks of God as if he were a master who owned servants. Alternate translation: "Only the master can decide if he will accept the servant or not"

But he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand

Paul speaks of the servant who is acceptable to God as if he were being "made to stand" instead of falling. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "But the Lord will accept him because he is able to make the servant acceptable"

Romans 14:5

One person values one day above another. Another has concluded that every day is equal

"One person thinks one day is more important than some of the others, but another person thinks that all days are the same"

Let each person be convinced in his own mind

You can make the full meaning explicit. You can also translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Let each person be sure what he is doing is to honor the Lord"

Romans 14:6

He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord

Here "observes the day" refers to considering a day as a special day on which to worship the Lord. Alternate translation: "Whoever treats a day as special does so to honor the Lord" or "The person who worships on a certain day does it to honor the Lord"

he who eats

The word "everything" is understood from [Romans 14:3]

eats for the Lord

"eats to honor the Lord" or "eats that way in order to honor the Lord"

He who does not eat

The word "everything" is understood from [Romans 14:3]

refrains from eating for the Lord

His purpose in refraining from eating certain foods is to honor the Lord. Alternate translation: "refrains from eating certain foods in order to honor the Lord"

Romans 14:7

For none of us lives for himself

Here "lives for himself" means to live only to please oneself. Alternate translation: "None of us should live merely to please himself"

none of us

Paul is including his readers, so this is inclusive.

none dies for himself

Here "dies for himself" means to die only to please oneself. Alternate translation: "None of us should die merely to please himself"

Romans 14:8

General Information:

Paul is speaking of both himself and his readers, so all instances of "we" are inclusive.

Romans 14:9

General Information:

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Romans 14:10

why do you judge your brother? And you, why do you despise your brother?

By using these questions, Paul is demonstrating how he might need to scold individuals among his readers. Alternate translation: "it is wrong for you to judge your brother, and it is wrong for you to despise your brother!" or "stop judging and despising your brother!"

brother

Here this means a fellow Christian, male or female.

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God

The "judgment seat" refers to God's authority to judge. Alternate translation: "For God will judge us all"

Romans 14:11

For it is written, "As

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "For someone has written in the Scriptures: 'As"

As I live

This phrase is used to start an oath or solemn promise. Alternate translation: "You can be certain that this is true"

to me every knee will bend, and every tongue will confess to God

Paul uses the words "knee" and "tongue" to refer to the whole person. Also, the Lord uses the word "God" to refer to himself. Alternate translation: "every person will bow and give praise to me"

Romans 14:12

will give an account of himself to God

"will have to explain his actions to God"

Romans 14:13

but instead decide this, that no one will place a stumbling block or a snare for his brother

Here "stumbling block" and "snare" mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: "but instead make it your goal not to do or say anything that might cause a fellow believer to sin"

brother

Here this means a fellow Christian, male or female.

Romans 14:14

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus

Here the words "know" and "am persuaded" mean basically the same thing; Paul uses them to emphasize his certainty. Alternate translation: "I am certain because of my relationship with the Lord Jesus"

nothing is unclean by itself

You can translate this in a positive form. Alternate translation: "everything by itself is clean"

by itself

"by its nature" or "because of what it is"

Only for him who considers anything to be unclean, for him it is unclean

Paul implies here that a person should stay away from anything that he thinks is unclean. You can make this explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "But if a person thinks something is unclean, then for that person it is unclean and he should stay away from it"

Romans 14:15

If because of food your brother is hurt

"If you hurt your fellow believer's faith over the matter of food." Here the word "your" refers to those who are strong in faith and "brother" refers to one who is weak in faith.

brother

Here this means a fellow Christian, male or female.

you are no longer walking in love

Paul speaks of the behavior of believers as if it were a walk. Alternate translation: "then you are no longer showing love"

Romans 14:16

So do not allow what you consider to be good to be spoken of as evil

"If someone thinks that something is evil, do not do it, even if you consider it to be good"

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not about food and drink, but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit

Paul argues that God set up his kingdom so he could give us a right relationship with himself, and could provide peace and joy. Alternate translation: "For God did not set up his kingdom so that he could rule over what we eat and drink. He set up his kingdom so we could have a right relationship with him, and so he could give us peace and joy"

Romans 14:18

approved by people

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "people will approve of him" or "people will respect him"

Romans 14:19

let us pursue the things of peace and the things that build up one another

Here "build up one another" refers to helping each other grow in faith. Alternate translation: "let us seek to live peacefully together and help one another grow stronger in faith"

Romans 14:20

Do not destroy the work of God on account of food

You can make explicit the full meaning of this sentence. Alternate translation: "Do not undo what God has done for a fellow believer just because you want to eat a certain kind of food"

but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone to stumble

Here anything that "causes someone to stumble" means it causes a weaker brother to do something that is against his conscience. Alternate translation: "but it would be a sin for someone to eat food that another brother thinks is wrong to eat, if by eating this causes the weaker brother to do something that is against his conscience"

Romans 14:21

It is good not to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything over which your brother stumbles

"It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that might cause your brother to sin"

brother

Here this means a fellow Christian, male or female.

your

This refers to the strong in faith and "brother" refers to the weak in faith.

Romans 14:22

The faith you have

This refers back to the beliefs about food and drink.

you ... yourself

singular. Because Paul is addressing the believers, you may have to translate this using plural.

Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves

"Blessed are those who do not feel guilty for what they decide to do"

Romans 14:23

He who doubts is condemned if he eats

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "God will say that a person does wrong if he is not sure if it is right to eat a certain food, but he eats it anyway" or "A person who is not sure if it is right to eat a certain food, but then eats it anyway, will have a troubled conscience"

because it is not from faith

Anything that is "not from faith" is something that God does not want you to do. You can make explicit the full meaning here. Alternate translation: "and God will say that he is wrong because he is eating something he believes God does not want him to eat"

whatever is not from faith is sin

Anything that is "not from faith" is something that God does not want you to do. You can make explicit the full meaning here. Alternate translation: "you are sinning if you do something that you do not believe God wants you to do"

Chapter 15

¹ Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak, and ought not to please ourselves. ² Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, in order to build him up. ³ For even Christ did not please himself. Instead, it was just as it is written, "The insults of those who insulted you fell on me." ⁴ For whatever was previously written was written for our instruction in order that through patience and through encouragement of the scriptures we would have hope. ⁵ Now may the God of patience and of encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with each other according to Christ Jesus. ⁶ May he do this in order that with one mind you may glorify with one mouth the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Therefore receive one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ has been made a servant of the circumcision on behalf of God's truth, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and for the Gentiles to glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

"Therefore I will give praise to you among the Gentiles
and sing praise to your name."

¹⁰ Again it says,

"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

¹¹ And again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
let all the peoples praise him."

¹² Again, Isaiah says,

"The root of Jesse will come,
the one who rises to rule over the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles will have hope."

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

¹⁴ I myself am also convinced about you, my brothers. I am convinced that also you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge. I am convinced that you are also able to instruct one another. ¹⁵ But I am writing more boldly to you about some things in order to remind you again, because of the grace given me by God. ¹⁶ This grace was that I should be a servant of Christ Jesus sent to the Gentiles, to offer as a priest the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ In Christ Jesus I have reason to boast of my service for God. ¹⁸ For I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me for the obedience of the Gentiles. These are things done by word and action, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit of God. This was so that from Jerusalem, and round about as far as Illyricum, I might fully carry out the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ In this way, my desire has been to proclaim the gospel, but not where Christ is known by name, in order that I might not build upon another man's foundation. ²¹ It is as it is written:

"Those to whom no report of him came will see him,
and those who have not heard will understand."

²² Therefore I was also hindered many times from coming to you. ²³ But now, I no longer have any place in these regions, and I have been longing for many years to come to you. ²⁴ I hope to see you when I pass through there on my way to Spain, and to be helped by you on my journey there, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ But now I am going to Jerusalem, serving God's holy people. ²⁶ For it was the

good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution to the poor among God's holy people who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Yes, it was their good pleasure, and they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they owe it to the Jews to minister to them with their material things. ²⁸ Therefore, when I have completed this task and have made sure that they receive all that was collected, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰ Now I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. ³¹ Pray that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to God's holy people. ³² Pray that I may come to you in joy through the will of God, and that I may, together with you, find rest. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Romans 15 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 9-11 and 21 of this chapter. These lines of poetry are from the Old Testament.

Some translations also set prose quotations from the Old Testament farther to the right than the rest of the text. The ULB does this with the quoted words in verse 12.

In [Romans 15:14](#), Paul begins to speak more personally. He shifts from teaching to telling of his personal plans.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Strong/Weak

These terms are used to refer to people who are mature and immature in their faith. Paul teaches that those who are strong in faith need to help those who are weak in faith. (See: faith)

Romans 15:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul concludes this section about believers' living for others by reminding them how Christ lived.

Now

Translate this using the words your language uses to introduce a new idea into an argument.

we who are strong

Here "strong" refers to the people who are strong in their faith. They believe that God allows them to eat any kind of food. Alternate translation: "we who are strong in faith"

we

This refers to Paul, his readers, and other believers.

the weak

Here "the weak" refers to the people who are weak in their faith. They believe that God does not allow them to eat some kinds of food. Alternate translation: "those who are weak in faith"

Romans 15:2

to build him up

By this, Paul means to strengthen someone's faith. Alternate translation: "to strengthen his faith"

Romans 15:3

it was just as it is written

Here Paul refers to a scripture where Christ

The insults of those who insulted you fell on me

Those who blasphemed God insulted Christ. This is an indirect way of saying that those who slandered Christ were blaspheming God.

Romans 15:4

For whatever was previously written was written for our instruction

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "For in times past, the prophets wrote everything in the Scriptures to teach us"

our ... we

Paul includes his readers and other believers.

in order that through patience and through encouragement of the scriptures

The meanings in the abstract nouns "patience" and "encouragement" can be expressed with the verbs "endure" and "encourage." Alternate translation "in order that by enduring and by being encouraged by the scriptures" or "in order that as we endure and as the scriptures encourage us"

we would have hope

Here the word "hope" is a person's confident expectation that what he desires really will happen. The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "confidently expect" or "confidently wait" or "trust." What the hope is about can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "we would confidently wait for God" or "we would confidently expect that God will do what he has promised"

Romans 15:5

Now

This word is used here to mark a break in the main teaching. Here Paul starts to tell a new part of the teaching.

may ... God ... grant

"I pray that ... God ... will grant"

to be of the same mind with each other

Here to be of the "same mind" is a metonym that means to be in agreement with each other. Alternate translation: "to be in agreement with each other" or "to be united"

Romans 15:6

with one mind you may glorify with one mouth

The phrases "one mind" and "one mouth" both represent people being united together. Alternate translation: "you may be united when you praise"

with one mind

This phrase translates a word that speaks of people who agree with each other and who work together to accomplish a common purpose.

Romans 15:7

receive one another ... received you

"accept one another ... accepted you"

Romans 15:8

For I say

The word "I" refers to Paul.

Christ has been made a servant of the circumcision

Here "the circumcision" is a metonym that refers to the Jews. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "Jesus Christ has become a servant of the Jews"

in order to confirm the promises

This is one of the two purposes for which Christ became a servant of the circumcision.

the promises given to the patriarchs

Here "the fathers" refers to the ancestors of the Jewish people. You can translate this in active form. Alternate translation: "the promises that God gave to the ancestors of the Jews"

Romans 15:9

and for the Gentiles to glorify God for his mercy

This is the second reason for which Christ became a servant of the circumcision. Alternate translation: "and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy"

As it is written

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "As someone has written in the Scriptures"

sing praise to your name

Here "your name" is a metonym that refers to God. Alternate translation: "sing praise to you"

Romans 15:10

Again it says

"Again the scripture says"

with his people

This refers to God's people. You can make this explicit in your translation. Alternate translation: "with the people of God"

Romans 15:11

praise him

"praise the Lord"

Romans 15:12

root of Jesse

Jesse was the physical father of King David. Alternate translation: "descendant of Jesse"

in him the Gentiles will have hope

Here "him" refers to the descendant of Jesse and King David, the Messiah. The Gentiles will trust him to fulfill his promises. The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "trust" or "confidently wait" or "confidently expect." Alternate translation: "the Gentiles will trust in him" or "the Gentiles will confidently wait for him to fulfill his promises"

Romans 15:13

the God of hope

"the God who gives hope" or "the God who causes us to hope." The abstract noun "hope" can be translated here with the verbs "confidently expect" or "confidently wait" or "trust." Alternate translation: "the God who causes us to confidently wait for him to fulfill his promises" or "the God who helps us to trust in him"

fill you with all joy and peace

Here "fill you" is a metaphor for "cause you to have." Alternate translation: "cause you to have great joy and peace" or "give you great joy and peace"

in believing

"as you believe in him"

Romans 15:14

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the believers in Rome that God chose him to reach the Gentiles.

I myself am also convinced about you, my brothers

Paul is quite sure that the believers in Rome are honoring each other in their behavior. Alternate translation: "I myself am completely sure that you yourselves have acted toward others in a completely good way"

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

filled with all knowledge

Paul exaggerates here to emphasize his point. Alternate translation: "filled with sufficient knowledge to follow God"

Romans 15:15

the grace given me by God

Paul speaks of grace as if it were a physical gift that God had given him. God had appointed Paul an apostle even though he had persecuted believers before he decided to follow Jesus. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "the grace that God gave me"

Romans 15:16

the offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable

Paul speaks of the Gentiles as if they were an offering brought to God. Alternate translation: "the Gentiles might be like an offering that pleases God"

sanctified by the Holy Spirit

"having been made holy by the Holy Spirit." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation:

"which the Holy Spirit made holy" or "which the Holy Spirit dedicated to God"

Romans 15:17

General Information:

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Romans 15:18

I will not dare to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished

This double negative emphasizes that what Christ has accomplished is the only thing that Paul wants to speak about. Alternate translation: "I will dare to speak only of what Christ has accomplished"

for the obedience of the Gentiles

"so that the Gentiles will obey God"

These are things done by word and action

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: Alternate translation: "These are things that Christ has accomplished through what I have said and done"

Romans 15:19

signs and wonders

These two words mean basically the same thing and refer to various kinds of miracles.

so that from Jerusalem, and round about as far as Illyricum

This is from the city of Jerusalem as far as the province of Illyricum, a region close to Italy.

Romans 15:20

In this way, my desire has been to proclaim the gospel, but not where Christ is known by name

Paul only wants to preach to people who have never heard of Christ. Alternate translation: "And so, my desire has been to preach the good news in places where people have never heard of Christ"

in order that I might not build upon another man's foundation

Paul speaks of his ministry work as if he were building a house on a foundation. Alternate translation: "in order that I might not be simply continuing the work that someone else already started. I do not want to be like a man who builds a house on someone else's foundation"

Romans 15:21

It is as it is written

Here Paul refers to what Isaiah wrote in the scriptures. You can translate this in an active form and make the meaning explicit. Alternate translation: "What is happening is like what Isaiah wrote in the scriptures"

Those to whom no report of him came

Here Paul speaks of the "report" or message about Christ as if it were alive and able to move by itself. Alternate translation: "Those whom no one had told the news about him"

Romans 15:22

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells the believers in Rome about his personal plans to visit them and asks the believers to pray.

I was also hindered

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "they also hindered me" or "people also hindered me"

Romans 15:23

I no longer have any place in these regions

Paul implies that the reason he no longer has any place is because the Gospel had been preached in all these regions. Alternate translation: "there are no more places in these regions where people have not heard about Christ"

Romans 15:24

I hope to see you

Paul wanted to see the believers in Rome. He did not know if he actually would be able to see them. Alternate translation: "I want to see you" or "I plan to see you"

Spain

This is a roman province west of Rome that Paul desired to visit.

to be helped by you on my journey

Here Paul implies that he wants the Roman believers to provide some financial assistance to him for his journey to Spain. You may have to translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "that you will help me on my journey"

have enjoyed your company

"have enjoyed spending some time with you" or "have enjoyed visiting you"

Romans 15:25

serving God's holy people

You may need to make explicit how Paul was serving the people. Alternate translation: "bringing aid to God's holy people")

Romans 15:26

it was the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia

Here the words "Macedonia" and "Achaia" are synecdoches for the people who live in those areas.

Alternate translation: "the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia were happy"

Romans 15:27

Yes, it was their good pleasure

"The believers in Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to do it"

and they owe it to them

"and the people of Macedonia and Achaia owe it to God's people in Jerusalem" or "and they are obligated to help them"

if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things

"since the Gentiles have shared in the spiritual things of the Jerusalem believers"

minister to them

The word "minister" here means to serve in a formal way as part of their service to God, much like the priests offered sacrifices in the temple.

with their material things

"by giving them material things"

Romans 15:28

and have made sure that they receive all that was collected

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "and have safely delivered this offering to them"

Romans 15:29

I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ

This phrase means that Christ will bless Paul and the Roman believers. Alternate translation: "And I know that when I visit you, Christ will abundantly bless us"

Romans 15:30

Now

If your language has a way to show that Paul has stopped talking about the good things he is confident of (Romans 15:29) and is now starting to talk about the dangers he faces, use it here.

I urge you

"I encourage you"

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

you strive

"you work hard" or "you struggle"

Romans 15:31

I may be rescued from those who are disobedient

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God may rescue me from those who are disobedient" or "God may keep those who are disobedient from harming me"

that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to God's holy people

Here Paul expresses his desire that the believers in Jerusalem will gladly accept the money from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Alternate translation: "pray that the believers in Jerusalem

will be glad to receive the money that I am bringing them"

Romans 15:32

General Information:

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Romans 15:33

May the God of peace

The "God of peace" means the God who causes believers to have inner peace. Alternate translation: "I pray that God, who causes all of us to have inner peace, will"

Chapter 16

¹ I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is in Cenchreae, ² in order that you may receive her in the Lord. Do this in a manner worthy of God's holy people, and provide her with whatever help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many and to myself as well.

³ Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who for my life risked their own lives. I give thanks to them, and not only I, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

⁵ Greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epänetus my beloved, who is the firstfruit of Asia to Christ.

⁶ Greet Mary, who has labored hard for you.

⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners. They are well known among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

⁸ Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

⁹ Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved.

¹⁰ Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus.

¹¹ Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

¹² Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, laborers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has labored much in the Lord.

¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

¹⁵ Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all God's holy people who are with them.

¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and stumbling contrary to the teaching that you have learned. Turn away from them. ¹⁸ For people such as these do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own stomach. By their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent. ¹⁹ For your example of obedience reaches everyone. I rejoice, therefore, over you, but I want you to be wise as to that which is good, and innocent to that which is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen. ²² I, Tertius, who write this epistle down, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius, the host for me and for the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, with Quartus the brother. ²⁴[\[1\]](#)

²⁵ Now to him who is able to make you strong according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ,

according to the revelation of the mystery that had been kept secret for long ages

²⁶ but now has been revealed and made known through the prophetic writings to all nations, by the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—

²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be glory forever. Amen.

Footnotes

16:24 ^[1]The best ancient copies do not have this verse. (See: Romans 16:20). v. 24

Romans 16 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In this chapter, Paul gives personal greetings to some of the Christians in Rome. It was common to end a letter in the ancient Near East with this type of personal greeting.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Because of the personal nature of this chapter, much of the context is unknown. This will make translation more difficult.

Romans 16:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul now greets many of the believers in Rome by name.

I commend to you Phoebe

"I want you to respect Phoebe"

Phoebe

This is a woman's name.

our sister

The word "our" refers to Paul and all believers.
Alternate translation: "our sister in Christ"

Cenchreae

This was a town in Greece.

Romans 16:2

receive her in the Lord

Paul encourages the Roman believers to welcome Phoebe as a fellow believer. Alternate translation: "welcome her because we all belong to the Lord"

in a manner worthy of God's holy people

"in the way that believers should welcome other believers"

provide her with whatever help she may need from you
"help her by giving her whatever she needs"

has been a great help to many and to myself as well

"has supported many people, and she has also supported me"

Romans 16:3

Priscilla and Aquila

Priscilla was the wife of Aquila.

my fellow workers in Christ Jesus

Paul's "fellow workers" are people who also tell others about Jesus. Alternate translation: "who work with me to tell people about Christ Jesus"

Romans 16:4

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Romans 16:5

Greet the church that is in their house

"Greet the believers who meet in their house to worship"

Epaenetus

This is the name of a man.

firstfruit of Asia to Christ

Paul speaks of Epaenetus as if he were a fruit that he harvested. Alternate translation: "first person in Asia to believe in Jesus"

Romans 16:6

Mary

This is a woman's name.

Romans 16:7

Andronicus

This is a man's name.

Junia

"Junia" is a woman's name. Some versions have "Junias," which would be a man's name.

They are well known among the apostles

You can translate this in an active form. "The apostles Alternate translations: "The apostles know them very well"

Romans 16:8

Ampliatius

This is a man's name.

my beloved in the Lord

"my dear friend and fellow believer"

Romans 16:9

Urbanus ... Stachys

These are the names of men.

Romans 16:10

Apelles ... Aristobulus

These are the names of men.

the approved in Christ

The word "approved" refers to someone who has been tested and proved to be genuine. Alternate translation: "whom Christ has approved"

Romans 16:11

Herodion ... Narcissus

These are the names of men.

who are in the Lord

This refers to those who trust in Jesus. Alternate translation: "who are believers" or "who belong to the Lord"

Romans 16:12

Tryphaena ... Tryphosa ... Persis

These are women's names.

Romans 16:13

Rufus

This is a man's name.

chosen in the Lord

You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "whom the Lord has chosen"

his mother and mine

Paul speaks of the mother of Rufus as if she were his own mother. Alternate translation: "his mother, whom I also think of as my mother"

Romans 16:14

Asyncritus ... Phlegon ... Hermes ... Patrobas ... Hermas

These are men's names.

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

Romans 16:15

Philologus ... Nereus ... Olympas

These are men's names.

Julia

The name of a woman. Julia was probably the wife of Philologus.

Romans 16:16

a holy kiss

an expression of affection for fellow believers

All the churches of Christ greet you

Here Paul speaks in a general manner concerning the churches of Christ. Alternate translation: "The believers in all the churches in this area send their greetings to you"

Romans 16:17

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives one last warning to the believers about unity and living for God.

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

who cause divisions and stumbling

This refers to those who argue and cause others to stop trusting in Jesus. Alternate translation: "who cause believers to argue with one another and to stop having faith in God"

contrary to the teaching that you have learned

"teaching things that do not agree with the truth you have already learned"

Turn away from them

"Turn away" here is an metaphor for "refuse to listen." Alternate translation: "Do not listen to them"

Romans 16:18

Christ, but their own stomach

The words "they serve" are understood from the previous phrase. This can be expressed as a separate sentence. Alternate translation: "Christ. Rather, they serve their own stomach"

but their own stomach

Here "stomach" is a metonym that refers to physical desires. Serving there stomach represents satisfying their desires. Alternate translation: "but they only want to satisfy their own selfish desires"

By their smooth and flattering speech

The words "smooth" and "flattering" mean basically the same thing. Paul is emphasizing how these people are deceiving believers. Alternate translation: "By saying things that seem to be good and true"

they deceive the hearts of the innocent

Here "hearts" is a metonym for the minds and inner beings of people. Alternate translation: "they deceive the innocent believers"

innocent

This refers to those who are simple, inexperienced, and naive. Alternate translation: "those who innocently trust them" or "those who do not know these teachers are fooling them"

Romans 16:19

For your example of obedience reaches everyone

Here Paul speaks of the Roman believers' obedience as if it were a person who could go to people. Alternate translation: "For everyone has heard how you obey Jesus"

innocent to that which is evil

"not involved in doing evil things"

Romans 16:20

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet
To say that a person will crush their enemy under their feet means that the person will have complete victory over their enemy. Here Paul speaks of the victory over Satan as if the Roman believers were trampling an enemy under their feet. Alternate translation: "Soon God will give you peace and complete victory over Satan"

Romans 16:21

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives greetings from the believers who are with him.

Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater

These are men's names.

Romans 16:22

Tertius, who write this epistle down

Tertius is the man who wrote down what Paul spoke.

greet you in the Lord

"greet you as a fellow believer"

Romans 16:23

Gaius ... Erastus ... Quartus

These are men's names.

the host

This refers to Gaius, the person in whose house Paul and his fellow believers gathered for worship.

the treasurer

This is a person who takes care of the money for a group.

Romans 16:24

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Romans 16:25

Connecting Statement:

Paul closes with a prayer of blessing.

Now

Here the word "now" marks the closing section of the letter. If you have a way of doing this in your language, you can use it here.

to make you strong

"to make your faith strong"

according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ

"by the good news that I have preached about Jesus Christ"

according to the revelation of the mystery that had been kept secret for long ages

Paul says that God has revealed previously hidden truths to the believers. He speaks of these truths as if they were a secret. You can translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "because God has revealed to us believers the secret that he was keeping for long ages"

for long ages

since the beginning of time

Romans 16:26

but now has been revealed and made known through the prophetic writings to all nations, by the command of the eternal God

The verbs "revealed" and "made known" mean basically the same thing. Paul uses both of them to emphasize his point. You can combine these words and translate this in an active form. Alternate translation: "but the eternal God has now made known to all the nations through the prophetic writings"

to bring about the obedience of faith

Here "obedience" and "faith" are abstract nouns. You can use the verbs "obey" and "trust" in your translation. You may need to make explicit who will obey and trust. Alternate translation: "so that all nations will obey God because they trust in him"

Romans 16:27

to the only wise God ... be glory forever. Amen

Here "through Jesus Christ" refers to what Jesus did. To give "glory" means to praise God. Alternate translation: "Because of what Jesus Christ has done for us, we will praise forever the one who alone is God and who alone is wise. Amen"

Book: 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians

Chapter 1

¹ Paul, called by Christ Jesus to be an apostle by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

² to the church of God at Corinth, those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy people, together with all those in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is their Lord and ours.

³ May grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I always give thanks to my God for you because of the grace of God that Christ Jesus gave to you. ⁵ He has made you rich in every way, in all speech and with all knowledge, ⁶ just as the testimony about Christ has been confirmed as true among you. ⁷ Therefore you lack no spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who called you into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹⁰ Now I urge you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and that there be no divisions among you. I urge that you be joined together with the same mind and by the same purpose. ¹¹ For I have been informed concerning you, my brothers, by Chloe's people that there are factions among you. ¹² I mean this: Each one of you says, "I am with Paul," or "I am with Apollos," or "I am with Cephas," or "I am with Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius. ¹⁵ This was so that no one would say that you were baptized into my name. ¹⁶ (I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know if I baptized any others.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel—not with clever speech, in order that the cross of Christ would not be emptied of its power.

¹⁸ For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But among those who are being saved, it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.
I will set aside the understanding of the intelligent."

²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this world? Has not God turned the wisdom of the world into foolishness? ²¹ Since the world in its wisdom did not know God, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching. ²² For Jews ask for miraculous signs and Greeks seek wisdom. ²³ But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. ²⁴ But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, we preach Christ as the power and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than people, and the weakness of God is stronger than people.

²⁶ Look at your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to the flesh. Not many of you were powerful. Not many of you were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame what is strong. ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world. He even chose things that are regarded as nothing, to bring to nothing things that are held as valuable. ²⁹ He did this so that no flesh would have a reason to boast before him. ³⁰ Because of what God did, now you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God. He became our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. ³¹ As a result, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The first three verses are a greeting. In the ancient Near East, this was a common way of starting a letter.

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verse 19, which is from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Disunity

In this chapter, Paul scolds the church for being divided and for following different apostles. (See: apostle)

Spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are specific supernatural abilities to help the church. The Holy Spirit gives these gifts to Christians after they come to believe in Jesus. Paul lists spiritual gifts in Chapter 12. Some scholars believe the Holy Spirit gave some of these gifts only in the early church to help establish the developing church. Other scholars believe all the gifts of the Spirit are still available to help all Christians throughout the church history. (See: faith)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Idioms

In this chapter, Paul refers to the return of Christ using two different phrases: "the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses rhetorical questions to scold the Corinthians for dividing into factions and for relying on human wisdom.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Stumbling block

A stumbling block is a rock people stumble over. Here it represents the difficulty Jews have in believing that God allowed his Messiah to be crucified.

1 Corinthians 1:1

Paul

Your language may have a particular way of introducing the author of a letter. Alternate translation: "I, Paul"

Sosthenes our brother

This indicates that both Paul and the Corinthians knew Sosthenes. Alternate translation: "Sosthenes, the brother you and I know"

1 Corinthians 1:2

to the church of God at Corinth

Your language may have a particular way of introducing the intended audience. Alternate translation: "am writing this letter to you in Corinth who believe in God"

those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus

Here "sanctified" refers to people who have been set apart as God's people. This can be stated in

active form. Alternate translation: "to those whom Christ Jesus has set apart for God" or "to those whom God has set apart for himself because they belong to Christ Jesus"

called to be holy people

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "whom God has called to be holy people"

together with all those in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Possible meanings are 1) this phrase tells who else is called to be holy, or 2) this phrase tells who else this letter is written to.

who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

The word "name" here is a metonym for person of Jesus Christ. Alternate translation: "who call on the Lord Jesus Christ"

their Lord and ours

The word "ours" includes Paul's audience. Jesus is the Lord of Paul and the Corinthians and all the churches.

1 Corinthians 1:3

General Information:

Paul and Sosthenes wrote this letter to the Christians who belonged to the church in Corinth. Unless otherwise noted, such words as "you" and "your" refer to Paul's audience and so are plural.

1 Corinthians 1:4

Connecting Statement:

Paul describes the believers' position and fellowship in Christ as they wait for his coming.

because of the grace of God that Christ Jesus gave to you

Paul speaks of grace as though it were a physical object that Jesus gives Christians as a gift. Alternate translation: "because Christ Jesus has made it possible for God to be kind to you"

1 Corinthians 1:5

He has made you rich

Possible meanings are 1) "Christ has made you rich" or 2) "God has made you rich."

made you rich in every way

Paul is speaking in general terms. Alternate translation: "made you rich with all kinds of spiritual blessings"

in all speech

God has enabled you to tell others about God's message in many ways.

all knowledge

God has enabled you to understand God's message in many ways.

1 Corinthians 1:6

the testimony about Christ has been confirmed as true among you

Possible meanings are 1) "you saw for yourselves that what we had said about Christ was true" or 2) "other people learned from seeing how you now live that what we and you say about Christ is true."

1 Corinthians 1:7

Therefore

"Because what I have just said is true,"

you lack no spiritual gift

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "you have every spiritual gift"

the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ

Possible meanings are 1) "the time when God will reveal the Lord Jesus Christ" or 2) "the time when our Lord Jesus Christ will reveal himself."

1 Corinthians 1:8

you will be blameless

There will be no reason for God to condemn you.

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, who called ... our Lord

"God, who called ... our Lord, will do everything he has said he will do"

his Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that they are to live in unity with each other and that the message of the cross of Christ, not baptism by people, is what saves.

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

"Name" here is a metonym for the person of Jesus Christ. Alternate translation: "by means of our Lord Jesus Christ"

that you all agree

"that you live in harmony with one another"

that there be no divisions among you

"that you do not divide into separate groups among yourselves"

be joined together with the same mind and by the same purpose

"live in unity, agree with other, and work together to accomplish the same things"

1 Corinthians 1:11

Chloe's people

This refers to family members, servants, and others who are part of the household of which Chloe, a woman, is the head.

there are factions among you

"you are in groups that quarrel one with another"

1 Corinthians 1:12

Each one of you says

Paul is expressing a general attitude of division.

1 Corinthians 1:13

Is Christ divided?

Paul used a question to emphasize that there is only Christ, so it does not make sense for Christians to be divided among themselves. Alternate translation: "Christ is certainly not divided!" or "There is only one Christ!"

Was Paul crucified for you?

Paul used a question to emphasize that it was Christ, not Paul or Apollos, who was crucified. This can also be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "It certainly was not Paul whom they put to death on the cross for your salvation!"

Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

Paul used a question to emphasize that we all are baptized into the name of Christ. This can also be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "It was not into the name of Paul that people baptized you!"

into the name of Paul

"In the name of" here is a metonym for "by the authority of." Alternate translation: "by Paul's authority"

1 Corinthians 1:14

I baptized none of you, except
"among you I baptized only"

Crispus

He was a synagogue ruler who became a Christian.

Gaius

He traveled with the Apostle Paul.

1 Corinthians 1:15

This was so that no one would say that you were baptized into my name

Here "name" represents "authority." This means Paul did not baptize others because they may claim that they became Paul's disciples. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "For some of you might have claimed that I baptized you to make you my disciples"

1 Corinthians 1:16

the household of Stephanas

This refers to the family members and slaves in the house where Stephanas, a man, was the head.

1 Corinthians 1:17

Christ did not send me to baptize

This means that baptism was not the primary goal of Paul's ministry.

not with clever speech, in order that the cross of Christ would not be emptied of its power

The phrase "in order ... would not" can be stated in positive form, and "be emptied" can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "not with clever speech, because clever speech would empty the cross of its power" or "not with clever speech, because this would cause the cross of Christ to lose its power"

in order that the cross of Christ would not be emptied of its power

Paul speaks of God's power to save people who trust in Christ as if the cross on which Christ died had power. The cross being emptied of its power represents people not recognizing God's power to save them through Christ's death. If Paul were to use clever speech, people might pay more attention to his clever speech than to Christ's death. Alternate translation: "in order that people might recognize God's power to save them through Jesus's death on the cross" or "because clever speech would distract people from God's power as shown in the cross"

1 Corinthians 1:18

Connecting Statement:

Paul emphasizes God's wisdom rather than man's wisdom.

the message about the cross

"the preaching about the crucifixion" or "the message of Christ's dying on the cross"

is foolishness

"is senseless" or "is silly"

to those who are perishing

"dying." This refers to dying in rebellion against God.

it is the power of God

"it is God working powerfully in us"

1 Corinthians 1:19

I will set aside the understanding of the intelligent

"I will confuse intelligent people" or "I will make the plans that intelligent people make completely fail"

1 Corinthians 1:20

Where is the wise person? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this world?

Paul emphasizes that truly wise people are nowhere to be found. Alternate translation: "Compared with the wisdom of the gospel, there are no wise people, no scholars, no debaters!"

the scholar

a person who is recognized as someone who has studied a great deal

the debater

a person who argues about what he knows or who is skilled in such arguments

Has not God turned the wisdom of the world into foolishness?

Paul uses this question to emphasize what God has done to the wisdom of this world. Alternate translation: "God has shown that everything they call wisdom is really foolishness"

1 Corinthians 1:21

those who believe

Possible meanings are 1) "all who believe the message" or 2) "all who believe in Christ."

1 Corinthians 1:22

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 1:23

General Information:

Here the word "we" refers to Paul and other Bible teachers.

Christ crucified

"about Christ, who died on a cross"

a stumbling block

Just as a person can stumble over a block on a road, so the message of salvation through the crucifixion of the Christ keeps Jews from believing in Jesus. Alternate translation: "not acceptable" or "very offensive"

1 Corinthians 1:24

to those whom God has called

"to the people God calls"

we preach Christ

"we teach about Christ" or "we tell all people about Christ"

we preach Christ as the power and the wisdom of God

Possible meanings are 1) "we preach that God acted powerfully and wisely by sending Christ to die for us" or "we preach that through Christ God has shown how strong and wise he is."

the power ... of God

Another possible meaning is that Christ is powerful and it is through Christ that God saves us.

the wisdom of God

Another possible meaning is that God shows the content of his wisdom through Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:25

the foolishness of God is wiser than people, and the weakness of God is stronger than people

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is speaking ironically about God's foolishness and weakness. Paul knows God is not foolish or weak. Alternate translation: "what seems to be the foolishness of God is wiser than people's wisdom, and what seems to be the weakness of God is stronger than the people's strength" or 2) Paul is speaking from the point of view of the Greek people who may think God is foolish or weak. Alternate translation: "what people call God's foolishness is really wiser than what people call wisdom, and what people call God's weakness is really stronger than people's strength"

1 Corinthians 1:26

Connecting Statement:

Paul emphasizes the believer's position before God.

Not many of you

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "Very few of you"

wise according to the flesh

"wise according to human standards" or "what most people would call wise"

of noble birth

"special because your family is important"

1 Corinthians 1:27

God chose ... wise. God chose ... strong

Paul repeats many of the same words in two sentences that mean almost the same thing to emphasize the difference between God's way of doing things and how people think God should do them.

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise

"God chose to use the things that the world thinks are foolish to shame those whom the world thinks are wise"

God chose what is weak in the world to shame what is strong

"God chose to use things that the world thinks are weak to shame the things that the world thinks are strong"

1 Corinthians 1:28

what is low and despised

"the things that are humble and hated"

things that are regarded as nothing

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "that which people usually regard as without value"

nothing, to bring to nothing things that are held as valuable

"nothing. He did this so he could show that the things that are held as valuable are really worthless"

things that are held as valuable

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "things that people think are worth money" or "things that people think are worth respect"

1 Corinthians 1:29

He did this

"God did this"

no flesh

The word "flesh" here is a metonym for people, who are made of flesh. Alternate translation: "no people"

1 Corinthians 1:30

Because of what God did

This refers to the work of Christ on the cross.

us ... our

These words refer to Paul, those with him, and the Corinthians.

Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God

Possible meanings are 1) "Christ Jesus, who has made clear to us how wise God is" or 2) "Christ Jesus, who has given us God's wisdom."

1 Corinthians 1:31

Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord

"If a person boasts, he should boast about how great the Lord is"

Chapter 2

¹ When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence of speech or wisdom as I proclaimed hidden truths about God. ^[1]² For I decided to know nothing when I was among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ And my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not be in the wisdom of humans, but in the power of God.

⁶ Now we do speak wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this world, or of the rulers of this age, who are passing away. ⁷ Instead, we speak God's wisdom in hidden truth, the hidden wisdom that God predestined before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But as it is written,

"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no human heart has imagined
what God has prepared for those who love him"—

¹⁰ For God has revealed these things to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything out, even the deep things of God. ^[2]¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of the person in him? So also, no one knows the deep things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² But we did not receive the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the things freely given to us by God. ¹³ We speak about these things in words not taught by human wisdom but by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people. ¹⁴ The unspiritual person does not receive the things that belong to the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. He cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The one who is spiritual judges all things, but he is not judged by others.

¹⁶ "For who can know the mind of the Lord,
that he can instruct him?"

But we have the mind of Christ.

Footnotes

2:1 ^[1]A few important and ancient Greek copies read,

2:10 ^[2]Some ancient Greek copies say

1 Corinthians 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 9 and 16. These poetic lines are from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Wisdom

Paul continues the discussion from the first chapter that contrasts human wisdom and God's wisdom. For Paul, human wisdom can be foolish. He says the wisdom from the Holy Spirit is the only true wisdom. Paul uses the phrase "hidden wisdom" when he refers to previously unknown truths. (See: wise and foolish)

1 Corinthians 2:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul contrasts human wisdom and God's wisdom. He emphasizes that spiritual wisdom comes from God.

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

1 Corinthians 2:2

I decided to know nothing ... except Jesus Christ

When Paul said that he "decided to know nothing" he exaggerated to emphasize that he decided to focus on and teach about nothing other than Jesus Christ. Alternate translation: "I decided to teach nothing ... except Jesus Christ" or "I decided not to teach anything ... except Jesus Christ"

to know nothing when I was among you except Jesus Christ

The double negative here emphasizes that Jesus Christ was the only thing Paul wanted to think about. Alternate translation: "when I was among you to know only Jesus Christ"

1 Corinthians 2:3

I was with you

"I was visiting with you"

in weakness

Possible meanings are: 1) "physically weak" or 2) "feeling like I could not do what I needed to do."

1 Corinthians 2:4

my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom

The ideas in the nouns "message" and "proclamation" can be expressed with the verbs "speak" and "preach." Alternate translation: "I did not speak and preach with persuasive words of wisdom"

persuasive words of wisdom

These are words that sound wise and with which the speaker hopes to cause people to do or believe something. Alternate translation: "wise and persuasive words"

1 Corinthians 2:5

so that your faith might not be in the wisdom of humans
"so that you will not trust in human wisdom"

but in the power of God

"but your faith will be in the power of God" or "but you will trust in the power of God"

1 Corinthians 2:6

General Information:

Paul interrupts his main argument to explain what he means by "wisdom" and to whom he desires to speak.

Now we do speak

The word "Now" is used here to mark a break in the main teaching. Paul begins to explain that true wisdom is God's wisdom.

speak wisdom

The abstract noun "wisdom" can be stated as the adjective "wise." Alternate translation: "speak wise words" or "speak a wise message"

the mature

"mature believers"

1 Corinthians 2:7

before the ages

"before God created anything"

for our glory

"in order to ensure our future glory"

1 Corinthians 2:8

the Lord of glory

"Jesus, the glorious Lord"

1 Corinthians 2:9

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart has imagined

This is a triplet referring to all parts of a person to emphasize that no man has ever been aware of the things that God has prepared.

what God has prepared for those who love him

The Lord has created in heaven wonderful surprises for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:10

these things

the truths about Jesus and his death on the cross

the Spirit searches everything out

"the Spirit studies everything accurately" or "the Spirit investigates everything." This implies that the Spirit knows everything.

1 Corinthians 2:11

For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of the person in him?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that no one knows what a person is thinking except the person

himself. Alternate translation: "No one knows what a person is thinking except that person's spirit"

spirit of the person

This refers to a person's inner being, his own spiritual nature.

no one knows the deep things of God except the Spirit of God

"only the Spirit of God knows the deep things of God"

1 Corinthians 2:12

General Information:

Here the word "we" includes both Paul and his audience.

freely given to us by God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "that God freely gave to us" or "that God has kindly given us"

1 Corinthians 2:13

interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people

The meaning of the original language here is uncertain. Other translations of the Bible translate this as "interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words."

to spiritual people

Here "spiritual people" refers to those who are led by the Holy Spirit to obey God.

1 Corinthians 2:14

General Information:

Here the word "we" includes both Paul and his audience.

unspiritual person

the non-Christian person, who has not received the Holy Spirit

because they are spiritually discerned

"because understanding these things requires the aid of the Spirit"

1 Corinthians 2:15

The one who is spiritual

"The believer who has received the Spirit"

he is not judged by others

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "others cannot judge him" or "no one can judge him"

1 Corinthians 2:16

For who can know the mind of the Lord, that he can instruct him?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that no one knows the mind of the Lord. No one is as wise as the Lord. Alternate translation: "No one can know the mind of the Lord, so no one can teach him anything he does not already know"

Chapter 3

¹ And I, brothers, could not speak to you as spiritual people, but instead as to fleshly people, as to little children in Christ. ² I fed you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it; and even now you are not yet ready. ³ For you are still fleshly. For where jealousy and strife exist among you, are you not living according to the flesh, and are you not walking by human standards? ⁴ For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another says, "I follow Apollos," are you not merely human beings? ⁵ Who then is Apollos? Who is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, just as the Lord gave tasks to each. ⁶ I planted and Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So then, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. But it is God who gives the growth. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own wages according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's garden, God's building.

¹⁰ According to the grace of God that was given to me as a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation and another is building on it. But let each man be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid, that is, Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, ¹³ his work will be revealed, for the day will reveal it. For it will be revealed in fire. The fire will test the quality of what each one has done. ¹⁴ If anyone's work remains, he will receive a reward; ¹⁵ but if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, as though escaping through fire.

¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and so are you.

¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a "fool" that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written,

"He catches the wise in their craftiness."

²⁰ And again,

"The Lord knows that the reasoning of the wise is futile."

²¹ For this reason, let no one boast in men. All things are yours, ²² whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. All things are yours, ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

1 Corinthians 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set quotations from the Old Testament farther to the right on the page to make them easier to read. The ULB does this with the quoted words of verses 19 and 20.

Special concepts in this chapter

Fleshly people

The Corinthian believers were immature because of their unrighteous actions. He calls them "fleshly," meaning acting as nonbelievers. This term is used in opposition to those who are "spiritual." Christians following their "flesh" are acting foolishly. They are following the wisdom of the world. (See: righteous, flesh, spirit and foolish and wise)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

There are many metaphors in this chapter. Paul uses "little children" and "milk" to illustrate spiritual immaturity. He uses the metaphors of planting and watering to describe the roles he and Apollos played

in growing the church in Corinth. Paul uses other metaphors to help teach spiritual truths to the Corinthians and to help them to understand his teachings.

1 Corinthians 3:1

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

spiritual people

people who obey the Spirit

fleshly people

people who follow their own desires

as to little children in Christ

The Corinthians are compared to children very young in age and understanding. Alternate translation: "as to very young believers in Christ"

1 Corinthians 3:2

I fed you milk, not solid food

Babies can only drink milk because they have not grown enough to eat solid food. Paul uses this image as a metaphor to mean that the Corinthians can only understand easy truths. They are not mature enough to understand greater truths.

you are not yet ready

It is implied that they are not ready to understand more difficult teachings. Alternate translation: "you still are not ready to understand the harder teachings about following Christ"

1 Corinthians 3:3

still fleshly

still behaving according to sinful or worldly desires

are you not living according to the flesh, and are you not walking by human standards?

Paul uses questions to rebuke the Corinthians for their sinful behavior. Here "walking" is a metaphor for how a person lives or behaves. Alternate translation: "you should be ashamed because you are behaving according to your sinful desires and you are living according to human standards!"

1 Corinthians 3:4

are you not merely human beings?

Paul uses a question to rebuke the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "you should be ashamed because you are living the same way that people who do not have the Spirit live."

1 Corinthians 3:5

Who then is Apollos? Who is Paul?

Paul is emphasizing that he and Apollos are not the original source of the gospel, and therefore the

Corinthians should not follow them. Alternate translation: "It is wrong to form groups to follow Apollos or Paul!" or

Who is Paul?

Paul is speaking of himself as though he were speaking of someone else. Alternate translation: "I am not important!" or "Who am I?"

Servants through whom you believed

Paul answers his own question by saying that he and Apollos are God's servants. Alternate translation: "Paul and Apollos are servants of Christ, and you believed in Christ because we served him"

Servants through whom you believed, just as the Lord gave tasks to each

This can be stated with the understood information. Alternate translation: "We are servants through whom you believed, and to each of us the Lord gave different tasks"

1 Corinthians 3:6

I planted

The knowledge of God is compared to a seed which must be planted in order to grow. Alternate translation: "When I preached God's word to you, I was like one who plants seeds in a garden"

Apollos watered

As seeds need water, faith needs further teaching in order for it to grow. Alternate translation: "and when Apollos continued to teach you God's word, he was like one who waters a garden"

but God gave the growth

As plants grow and develop, so faith and knowledge in God also grow and become deeper and stronger. Alternate translation: "but God caused you to grow" or "but just as God causes plants to grow, he caused you to grow spiritually"

1 Corinthians 3:7

neither he who plants ... is anything. But it is God who gives the growth

Paul stresses that neither he nor Apollos is responsible for the believers' spiritual growth, but it is God's doing.

it is God who gives the growth

Here to give growth means to cause growth. The abstract noun "growth" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "it is God who causes you to grow"

1 Corinthians 3:8

he who plants and he who waters are one

Paul speaks of telling people the good news and teaching those who have accepted it as if they were planting and watering plants.

are one

Possible meanings are "one" are 1) "united in purpose" or 2) "equal in importance."

wages

an amount of money that a worker receives for his work

1 Corinthians 3:9

we

This refers to Paul and Apollos but not the Corinthian church.

God's fellow workers

Paul considers himself and Apollos as working together.

You are God's garden

Possible meanings are 1) being God's garden represents belonging to God. Alternate translation: "You are like a garden that belongs to God" or 2) being God's garden represents God causing us to grow. Alternate translation: "You are like a garden that God makes grow"

God's building

Possible meanings are 1) being God's building represents belonging to God. Alternate translation: "and you are like a building that belongs to God" or 2) being God's building represents God causing us to become what he wants. Alternate translation: "and you are like a building that God is constructing"

1 Corinthians 3:10

According to the grace of God that was given to me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "According to the task that God freely gave me to do"

I laid a foundation

Paul equates his teaching of faith and salvation in Jesus Christ to laying a foundation for a building.

another is building on it

Paul is referring to the person or people who are teaching the Corinthians at that time as if they are carpenters who are constructing the building above the foundation.

let each man

This refers to God's workers in general. Alternate translation: "let each person who serves God"

1 Corinthians 3:11

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues his metaphor about a foundation.

no one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid

The phrase "has been laid" can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "no one can lay a foundation other than the one and only foundation"

1 Corinthians 3:12

General Information:

Paul speaks of what builders usually do when constructing a building to describe what the teachers in Corinth are actually doing. Builders usually only use gold, silver, or precious stones as decorations on buildings.

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw

The building materials used to build a new building are being compared to the spiritual values used to build a person's behavior and activities during his lifetime. Alternate translation: "Whether a person builds with valuable materials that will last or with cheap materials that burn easily"

precious stones

"expensive stones"

1 Corinthians 3:13

his work will be revealed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will show everyone what the builder has done"

for the day will reveal it

The "day" refers to the time when God will judge everyone. When God shows everyone what these teachers have done, it will be like the sun has come up to reveal what happened during the night.

For it will be revealed in fire. The fire will test the quality of what each one has done

Just as fire will reveal the strengths or destroy the weaknesses of a building, God's fire will judge man's efforts and activities. Alternate translation: "God will use fire to show the quality of his work"

1 Corinthians 3:14

work remains

"work lasts" or "work survives"

1 Corinthians 3:15

if anyone's work is burned up

This is a metaphor for a person's work being shown to have no value. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "if the fire destroys anyone's"

work" or "if the judgement shows that a person's work has no value"

he will suffer loss

The abstract noun "loss" can be expressed with the verb "lose." Alternate translation: "he will lose his reward"

but he himself will be saved, as though escaping through fire

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "but God will save him as though through fire"

as though escaping through fire

This is a simile showing the danger that such a person is in if his works have no value. (See:

1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

Paul uses a question to rebuke the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "You act as though you do not know that you are God's temple and the Spirit of God lives in you!"

Do you ... you are ... in you

All instances of "you" in this verse are plural.

1 Corinthians 3:17

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 3:18

Let no one deceive himself

Nobody should believe the lie that he himself is wise in this world.

in this age

according to the way people who do not believe decide what is wise

let him become a "fool"

"that person should be willing to have people who do not believe call him a fool"

1 Corinthians 3:19

He catches the wise in their craftiness

God traps the people who think they are clever and uses their own schemes to trap them.

1 Corinthians 3:20

The Lord knows that the reasoning of the wise is futile

"The Lord knows that what people who think they are wise plan to do is futile"

futile

useless

1 Corinthians 3:21

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 3:22

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 3:23

you are Christ's, and Christ is God's

"you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God"

Chapter 4

¹ This is how a person should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the hidden truths of God. ² Now what is required of stewards is that they are found to be trustworthy. ³ But for me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. For I do not even judge myself. ⁴ I am not aware of any charge being made against me, but that does not justify me. The one who judges me is the Lord. ⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment about anything before the time, before the Lord comes. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his praise from God.

⁶ Now, brothers, I applied these principles to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that from us you might learn the meaning of the saying,

"Do not go beyond what is written."

This is so that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against the other. ⁷ For who sees any difference between you and others? What do you have that you did not receive? If you have received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? ⁸ Already you have all you could want! Already you have become rich! You began to reign—and that quite apart from us! Indeed, I wish you did reign, so that we could reign with you. ⁹ For I think God has put us apostles on display as the last in line, in a procession and like men sentenced to death. We have become a spectacle to the world—to angels, and to human beings. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we are held in dishonor. ¹¹ Up to this present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed, we are beaten, and we are homeless. ¹² We labor hard, working with our own hands. When we are slandered, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure. ¹³ When we are slandered, we speak with kindness. We have become as the refuse of the world and the filthiest of all things, even till now.

¹⁴ I do not write these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For even if you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶ So I urge you to be imitators of me. ¹⁷ That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of my ways in Christ, just as I teach them everywhere and in every church. ¹⁸ Now some of you have become puffed up, acting as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills. Then I will know not merely the words of these who are so puffed up, but I will see their power. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. ²¹ What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod or with love and in a spirit of gentleness?

1 Corinthians 4 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Pride

Paul contrasts the Corinthians' pride with the apostles' humility. The Corinthian believers had no reason to be proud. All that they had, and all they were, was a gift from God. (See: apostle)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

Paul uses many metaphors in this chapter. He describes the apostles as servants. Paul speaks of a victory parade where the apostles are the prisoners who will be killed. He uses a rod to stand for punishment. He calls himself their father because he is their "spiritual father." (See: and spirit)

Irony

Paul uses irony to shame the Corinthians for being proud. The Corinthian believers are reigning but the apostles are suffering.

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses several rhetorical questions in this chapter. He uses them to emphasize important points as he teaches the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 4:1

Connecting Statement:

Having just reminded the people not to be proud concerning who had taught them about the Lord and who had baptized them, Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that all believers are to be humble servants.

1 Corinthians 4:2

of stewards is that they

Paul is speaking of himself as if he were speaking about other people. Alternate translation: "of us stewards is that we"

1 Corinthians 4:3

it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you
Paul is comparing the difference between human judgment and God's judgment. Man's judgment is not important compared to God's true judgment upon man.

1 Corinthians 4:4

I am not aware of any charge being made against me
"I have not heard anyone accuse me of doing wrong"

that does not justify me

It would still be possible for Paul to be guilty even if there were no charge against him. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "that does not mean that God has declared me innocent"

The one who judges me is the Lord

"It is the Lord who will decide if I am innocent or guilty"

1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore

"Because what I have just said is true,"

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the purposes of the heart

Here "bring to light the hidden things of darkness" is a metaphor for making known to everyone things that were done in secret. Here "heart" is a metonym for people's thoughts and intentions. Alternate translation: "Like a light that shines on things in darkness, God will show what people have secretly done and what they secretly planned"

1 Corinthians 4:6

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

for your sakes

"for your welfare"

1 Corinthians 4:7

between you ... do you have that you did not receive ... you have received ... do you boast ... you did not

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so all instances of "you" here are singular.

For who sees any difference between you and others?

Paul is rebuking the Corinthians who think they are better than those who heard the gospel from someone else. Alternate translation: "For there is no difference between you and others." or "For you are not superior to other people."

What do you have that you did not receive?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that they did not earn the things they have. Alternate translation: "Everything that you have is what you have received." or "God gave to you everything that you have!"

why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Paul was rebuking them for boasting in what they had. Alternate translation: "you should not boast as if you had not received it." or "you have no right to boast!"

1 Corinthians 4:8

General Information:

Paul uses irony here to shame the Corinthians and make them realize that they are sinning when they are proud of themselves and their teachers.

1 Corinthians 4:9

God has put us apostles on display

Paul expresses two ways that God has put his apostles on display for the world to see.

has put us apostles on display

God has displayed the apostles just like prisoners who are at the end of a Roman military parade and who are humiliated before their execution.

like men sentenced to death

God put the apostles on display like men who are about to be executed.

to the world—to angels, and to human beings

Possible meanings are 1) "the world" consists of both supernatural

1 Corinthians 4:10

We are fools ... in dishonor

Paul uses irony to shame the Corinthians so they will think about what he is saying.

You are held in honor

"People treat you Corinthians as though you were important people"

we are held in dishonor

"people shame us apostles"

1 Corinthians 4:11

Up to this present hour

"Until now" or "Up to now"

we are beaten

This refers to hitting with the hand, not with whips or clubs. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "people beat us"

we are homeless

Paul means that they have to move around from place to place. Although they have places to stay, they have no permanent home.

1 Corinthians 4:12

When we are slandered, we bless

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "When people slander us, we bless them" or "When people scorn us, we bless them"

When we are persecuted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "When people persecute us"

1 Corinthians 4:13

When we are slandered

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "When people slander us"

We have become as the refuse of the world

"People began to consider us—and they still consider us—to be the garbage of the world"

the refuse of the world

"the worst kind of garbage in the world"

1 Corinthians 4:14

I do not write these things to shame you, but to warn you

"I do not intend to shame you, but I want to correct you"

my beloved children

Because Paul had led the Corinthians to Christ, they are like his spiritual children.

1 Corinthians 4:15

ten thousand guardians

This is an exaggeration of the number of people guiding them, to emphasize the importance of the one spiritual father. Alternate translation: "very many guardians" or "a large crowd of guardians"

I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel

Paul is emphasizing firstly that his relationship with the Corinthians is most importantly "in Christ," secondly that it came because he told them the good news, and thirdly that he is the one who is like a father to them. Alternate translation: "it was because God joined you to Christ when I told you the good news that I was the one who became your father"

I became your father

Because Paul had led the Corinthians to Christ, he is like a father to them.

1 Corinthians 4:16

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 4:17

my beloved and faithful child in the Lord

"whom I love and whom I teach about the Lord as if he were my own child"

1 Corinthians 4:18

Now

This word indicates that Paul is shifting his topic. Here he begins to rebuke the arrogant behavior of the Corinthian believers.

1 Corinthians 4:19

I will come to you

"I will visit you"

1 Corinthians 4:20

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 4:21

What do you want?

Paul was making a last appeal to the Corinthians, as he has been rebuking them for the errors they had made. Alternate translation: "Tell me what you want to happen now."

Should I come to you with a rod or with love and in a spirit of gentleness?

Paul is offering the Corinthians two opposing attitudes he could use when approaching them.

Alternate translation: "If you want, I can come to

punish you, or I can come to show you how much I love you by being gentle with you."

of gentleness

"of kindness" or "of tenderness"

Chapter 5

¹ We heard a report that there is sexual immorality among you, a kind of immorality that is not even permitted among the pagans: A man has his father's wife. ² You are puffed up! Should you not mourn instead, so that the one who did this deed might be removed from among you? ³ For even though I am absent in body, I am present in spirit. I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as though I were there. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ deliver this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole loaf? ⁷ Cleanse yourselves of the old yeast so that you may be a new batch of dough, unleavened, just as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ So let us then celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of bad behavior and wickedness. Instead, let us celebrate with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰ In no way did I mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy, or swindlers, or idolaters, since to stay away from them you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who is called a brother but who is living in sexual immorality, or who is greedy, or is an idolater, or is verbally abusive, or is a drunkard, or a swindler. Do not even eat a meal with such a person. ¹² For how am I involved with judging those who are outside the church? Instead, are you not to judge those who are inside the church? ¹³ But God judges those who are on the outside.

"Remove the evil person from among you."

1 Corinthians 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set quotations from the Old Testament farther to the right on the page to make them easier to read. The ULB does this with the quoted words of verse 13.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Euphemisms

Paul uses euphemisms to describe sensitive topics. This chapter deals with sexual immorality of one church member. (See: and fornication)

Metaphor

Paul uses an extended comparison that contains many metaphors. Yeast represents evil. The loaf probably represents the whole congregation. The unleavened bread represents living purely. So the whole passage means: Don't you know that a little evil will affect the whole congregation? So get rid of the evil so you can live purely. Christ has been sacrificed for us. So let us be sincere and truthful and not wicked and behaving badly. (See: evil, unleavenedbread, purify, and passover)

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses rhetorical questions in this chapter. He uses them to emphasize important points as he teaches the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 5:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul now specifically states about what sin of theirs he has heard, and how the Corinthian believers are proud of their acceptance of that man and his sin.

that is not even permitted among the pagans

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "that not even the Gentiles permit"

A man has his father's wife

"A man among you is committing adultery with his father's wife"

father's wife

the wife of his father, but probably not his own mother

1 Corinthians 5:2

Should you not mourn instead ... among you?

This rhetorical question is used to scold the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "You should mourn over this instead ... among you!"

the one who did this deed might be removed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "you can remove from among you the one who did this deed"

1 Corinthians 5:3

I am present in spirit

"I am with you in spirit." Being with them in spirit represents caring about them or wanting to be with them. Alternate translation: "I care about you" or "I want to be with you"

I have already passed judgment on the one who did this

Possible meanings are 1) "I have decided what you should do with the one who did this" or 2) "I have found the person who did this guilty"

1 Corinthians 5:4

When you are assembled

"When you are together" or "When you meet together"

in the name of our Lord Jesus

Possible meanings are 1) the name of the Lord Jesus is a metonym that represents his authority. Alternate translation: "with the authority of our Lord Jesus" or 2) being assembled in the Lord's name implies meeting together to worship him. Alternate translation: "to worship our Lord Jesus"

1 Corinthians 5:5

deliver this man over to Satan

This means make the man leave the Christian community so that he will no longer be protected from Satan. Alternate translation: "hand this man over to Satan by sending him away from the Christian community"

for the destruction of the flesh

Possible meanings are 1) "flesh" refers to his physical body. Alternate translation: "so that Satan may harm his body" or 2) "flesh" is a metaphor for the sinful nature. Alternate translation: "so that his sinful nature will be destroyed" or "so that he will not continue to live according to his sinful nature"

so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so that God may save his spirit on the day of the Lord"

1 Corinthians 5:6

Your boasting is not good

"Your boasting is bad"

Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole loaf?

Paul uses this proverb to mean that a small part of something affects the whole thing. In this case, one person who is sinning can harm the entire Christian community.

Do you not know that a little yeast ... loaf?

Here Paul uses a rhetorical question to teach his audience. Alternate translation: "You know that a little yeast ... loaf." or "A little yeast ... loaf."

1 Corinthians 5:7

Cleanse yourselves of the old yeast so that you may be a new batch of dough, unleavened

Paul uses the proverb from 5:6 to teach his audience. Here "old yeast" is a metaphor for the sins that the people were committing. "Unleavened dough" is the type of bread that God told the Israelites was acceptable to eat when celebrating Passover. Paul is telling his audience to stop sinning so that they may be acceptable to God.

Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed

As the Passover lamb covered the sins of Israel by faith each year, so did Christ's death cover the sins of all who trust in Christ by faith for eternity. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the Lord has sacrificed Christ, our Passover lamb"

1 Corinthians 5:8

not with the old yeast, the yeast of bad behavior and wickedness ... the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth

Paul continues using the proverb from 5:6 to teach his audience. Here "yeast" is a metaphor for sin, and "unleavened bread" is metaphor for behaviors acceptable to God.

1 Corinthians 5:9

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 5:10

the immoral people of this world

This means unbelievers who have chosen to live immoral lives.

the greedy

"those who are greedy" or "those who are willing to be dishonest to get what others have"

swindlers

This means people who cheat to get others' property.

you would need to go out of the world

"you would need to avoid all people"

1 Corinthians 5:11

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells them how to treat believers in the church who refuse to be corrected for their involvement in sexual immorality or other obvious sins.

anyone who is called

"anyone who calls himself"

brother

Here this means a fellow Christian, either a man or a woman.

1 Corinthians 5:12

how am I involved with judging those who are outside the church?

Paul uses a question to emphasize that he is not the one to judge people outside the church. This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I am not the one who should judge people who do not belong to the church."

are you not to judge those who are inside the church?

Paul is using a question to scold the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "you should know that you are the ones who should judge those who are inside the church."

1 Corinthians 5:13

General Information:

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Chapter 6

¹ When one of you has a dispute against another, does he dare to bring a lawsuit before the unrighteous rather than before God's holy people? ² Do you not know that God's holy people will judge the world? If then you will judge the world, are you not able to settle matters of little importance? ³ Do you not know that we will judge the angels? How much more, then, can we judge matters of this life? ⁴ If then you have to make judgments that pertain to daily life, why do you lay such cases as these before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Is there no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between brothers? ⁶ But one brother brings a lawsuit against another brother—and this before unbelievers! ⁷ The fact that you have lawsuits with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer the wrong? Why not rather allow yourselves to be cheated? ⁸ But you yourselves do wrong and you cheat, and you do this to your own brothers! ⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who submit to homosexual acts, nor men who perform homosexual acts, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ That is what some of you were like. But you have been cleansed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

¹² "Everything is lawful for me," but not everything is profitable. "Everything is lawful for me," but I will not be mastered by any of them. ¹³ "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food," but God will do away with both of them. The body is not intended for sexual immorality. Instead, the body is for the Lord, and the Lord will provide for the body. ¹⁴ God both raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I then take the members of Christ and join them to a prostitute? May it not be! ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? As scripture says, "The two will become one flesh." ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Run away from sexual immorality! Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives within you, whom you have from God? Do you not know that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God with your body and in your spirit, which belong to God.

1 Corinthians 6 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Lawsuits

Paul teaches that a Christian should not take another Christian to court before a non-Christian judge. It is better to be cheated. Christians will judge the angels. So they should be able to solve problems among themselves. (See: judge)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

The temple of the Holy Spirit is an important metaphor. It refers to the place where the Holy Spirit stays and is worshiped.

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses several rhetorical questions in this chapter. He uses them to emphasize important points as he teaches the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 6:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul explains how believers are to settle disagreements with other believers.

dispute

in this case a legal complaint, argument, or disagreement

does he dare ... holy people?

Paul is angry because the Corinthians are doing a great wrong by taking their disputes with each other to the civil court. Alternate translation: "it is wrong for him to dare ... holy people." or "he should fear God and not ... God's holy people."

to bring a lawsuit before the unrighteous rather than before God's holy people

to ask unrighteous people, rather than God's holy people, to judge who is right and who is wrong

1 Corinthians 6:2

Do you not know that God's holy people will judge the world?

Paul uses a question to shame the Corinthians for their behavior. Alternate translation: "You act like you do not know that God's holy people will judge the world."

If then you will judge the world, are you not able to settle matters of little importance?

Because they will be given greater responsibility later, they should be responsible for lesser things now. Alternate translation: "You will judge the world in the future, so you should be able to settle this small matter now."

1 Corinthians 6:3

judge matters of this life

"stop arguments about things that have to do with this life"

Do you not know that we will judge the angels?

Paul is surprised that they do not seem to know. Alternate translation: "You know that we will judge the angels."

we

Paul includes himself and the Corinthians.

How much more, then, can we judge matters of this life?

Because they will be given greater responsibility later, they should be responsible for lesser things now. Alternate translation: "Because we know we will judge the angels, we can also be sure that God will enable us to judge matters in this life."

1 Corinthians 6:4

If then you have to make judgments that pertain to daily life

"If you are called upon to make decisions about daily life" or "If you must settle matters that are important in this life"

do you lay such cases as these before those who have no standing in the church?

Possible meanings are that 1) this is a rhetorical question and Paul is rebuking the Corinthians for laying their cases before people of no standing in

the church. Alternate translation: "you should not lay such cases as these before those who have no standing in the church." or 2) this is a command to lay their cases before even people of no standing in the church, rather than to people outside of the church. Alternate translation: "lay cases such as these even before people in the church who have no standing, not before people outside of the church."

1 Corinthians 6:5

to your shame

"to your dishonor" or "to show how you have failed in this matter"

Is there no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between brothers?

Paul is shaming the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "You should be ashamed that you cannot find a wise believer to settle arguments between brothers"

brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

dispute

argument or disagreement

1 Corinthians 6:6

But one brother brings a lawsuit against another brother—and this before unbelievers

"But brothers who have disputes with each other ask judges who do not believe in Christ to make decisions for them" or "It is bad that brothers have such bad disputes with each other that they go to court; it is even worse that those courts are run by unbelievers"

brother brings a lawsuit against another brother

Here "brother" means fellow Christian, including both men and women.

brings a lawsuit

asks the civil court to judge the matter

and this before unbelievers

Possible meanings are 1) "and the brothers have unbelieving judges make decisions for them" or 2) "and unbelievers in the community see brothers disputing with one another"

1 Corinthians 6:7

is already a defeat

"is already a failure"

Why not rather suffer the wrong? Why not rather allow yourselves to be cheated?

Paul continues to shame the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "It would be better to let others wrong you and cheat you than to take them to court."

1 Corinthians 6:8

your own brothers

Here "brothers" means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

1 Corinthians 6:9

Do you not know that ... kingdom of God?

Paul emphasizes that they should already know this truth. Alternate translation: "You already know that ... kingdom of God."

inherit

Receiving what God has promised believers is spoken of as if it were inheriting property and wealth from a family member.

inherit the kingdom of God

God will not judge them as righteous at the judgment, and they will not enter eternal life.

nor men who submit to homosexual acts, nor men who perform homosexual acts

Both of these phrases refer to men who have sex with other men.

1 Corinthians 6:10

thieves

people who steal from others

the greedy

people who are willing to use evil means to take others' property

1 Corinthians 6:11

you have been cleansed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has cleansed you"

you have been sanctified

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has set you apart for himself"

you have been justified

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has made you right with him"

in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

"Name" here is a metonym for the power and authority of Jesus Christ. Alternate translation: "by the power and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ"

1 Corinthians 6:12

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that God wants them pure because Christ has bought them with his death. Their bodies are now God's temple.

He does so by saying what the Corinthians might say and then correcting them.

"Everything is lawful for me," but

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is saying what some Corinthians might be thinking. Alternate translation: "People say, 'I am allowed to do anything,' but" or 2) Paul is saying what he thinks is true. Alternate translation: "I am allowed to do anything, but"

but not everything is profitable

Paul is answering whoever says, "Everything is lawful for me." Alternate translation: "but not everything is good for me"

I will not be mastered by any of them

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I will not allow these things to rule over me like a master"

1 Corinthians 6:13

"Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food," but God will do away with both of them

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is correcting what some Corinthians might be thinking, "food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food," by answering that God will do away with both the stomach and food or 2) Paul actually agrees that "food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food," but he is adding that God will do away with both of them.

Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food

One possible meaning is that the speaker is speaking indirectly of the body and sex, but you should translate this literally as "stomach" and "food."

do away with

"destroy"

1 Corinthians 6:14

raised the Lord

"caused the Lord to live again"

1 Corinthians 6:15

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?

The word translated as "members" refers to parts of a body. Our belonging to Christ is spoken of as if we were parts of his body. We belong to him so much that even our bodies belong to him. Paul uses this question to remind the people of something they should already know. Alternate translation: "You should know that your bodies belong to Christ."

Should I then take the members of Christ and join them to a prostitute? May it not be!

Paul uses this question to emphasize how wrong it is for someone who belongs to Christ to go to a

prostitute. Alternate translation: "I am part of Christ. I will not take my body and join myself to a prostitute!" or "We are parts of Christ's body. We must not take our bodies and join ourselves to prostitutes!"

May it not be!

"That should never happen!" or "We must never do that!"

1 Corinthians 6:16

Do you not know that ... her?

Paul begins to teach the Corinthians by emphasizing a truth that they already know. "I want to remind you that ... her."

he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her

This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "when a man joins his body to the body of a prostitute, it is as if their bodies become one body"

1 Corinthians 6:17

he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him

This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "when the Lord joins his spirit to the spirit of a person, it is as if their spirits become one spirit"

1 Corinthians 6:18

Run away from

Paul speaks of a person rejecting sexual sin as if that person were running away from danger. Alternate translation: "Get away from"

immorality! Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is showing that sexual sin is especially bad because it is not only against others but against the sinner's own body or 2) Paul is quoting what some Corinthians were thinking. Alternate translation: "immorality! Some of you are saying, 'Every sin that a person commits is outside the body,' but I say that"

sin that a person commits

"evil deed that a person does"

1 Corinthians 6:19

Do you not know ... God? Do you not know that you are not your own?

Paul is continuing to teach the Corinthians by emphasizing what they already know. Alternate translation: "I want to remind you ... God and that you are not your own."

your body

the body of each individual Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit

temple of the Holy Spirit

A temple is dedicated to divine beings, and it is also where they dwell. In the same way, the bodies of believers are like temples because the Holy Spirit lives within them.

1 Corinthians 6:20

For you were bought with a price

God paid for the freedom of the Corinthians from the slavery of sin. This can be stated in an active form. Alternate translation: "God paid for your freedom"

Therefore

"Because what I have just said is true,"

Chapter 7

¹ Now concerning the issues you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." ² But because of temptations for many immoral acts, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. ³ The husband should fulfill his duty to have sexual relations with his wife, and in the same way the wife to her husband. ⁴ It is not the wife who has authority over her own body, it is the husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive each other, except by mutual agreement and for a specific period of time. Do this so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then you should come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

⁶ But I say these things to you as a concession and not as a command. ⁷ I wish that everyone were as I am. But each one has his own gift from God. One has this kind of gift, and another that kind. ⁸ To the unmarried and to widows I say that it is good for them if they remain unmarried, as I am. ⁹ But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better for them to marry than to burn with passion. ¹⁰ Now to the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord—the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹ (but if she does separate from her husband, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. ¹² But to the rest I say—I, not the Lord—that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and if she is content to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³ If a woman has an unbelieving husband, and if he is content to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is set apart because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is set apart because of the brother. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but actually they are set apart. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever departs, let him go. In such cases, the brother or sister is not bound to their vows. God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, woman, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, man, whether you will save your wife? ¹⁷ However, as the Lord has given each one his portion, let each one walk as God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was anyone circumcised when he was called to believe? He should not try to appear uncircumcised. Was anyone uncircumcised when he was called to faith? He should not be circumcised. ¹⁹ For it is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision that matters. What matters is obeying the commandments of God. ²⁰ Each one should remain in the calling he was in when God called him to believe. ²¹ Were you a slave when God called you? Do not be concerned about it. But if you can become free, take advantage of it. ²² For someone who is called by the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freeman. In the same way, the one who was free when he was called to believe is Christ's slave. ²³ You have been bought with a price, so do not become slaves of men. ²⁴ Brothers, in whatever situation he was in when he was called, let each one remain with God in that.

²⁵ Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord. But I give my opinion as one who, by the Lord's mercy, is trustworthy. ²⁶ Therefore, I think that because of the disaster that is coming, it is good for a man to remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek a divorce. If you are free of a wife, do not seek a wife. ²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who do will have many kinds of fleshly trouble, and I want to spare you from this. ²⁹ But this I say, brothers: The time is short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none. ³⁰ Those who weep should act as though they were not weeping, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they did not possess anything, ³¹ and those who use the world should not act as though they are using it to the full. For the world in its present form is coming to an end. ³² I would like you to be free from worries. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord, how to please him. ³³ But the married man is concerned about the things of the world, how to please his wife— ³⁴ he is divided. The unmarried woman or the virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, how to be set apart in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world, how to please her husband. ³⁵ I say this for your own benefit, and not to put any constraint on you. I say this for what is right, so that you may be devoted to the Lord without any distraction. ³⁶ But if anyone thinks that he is not treating his virgin with respect—if she is beyond the age of marriage and it must be so—he should do what he wants. He is not sinning. They should marry. ³⁷ But if he is standing firm in his heart, if he is not under pressure but can control his own will, and if he has decided in his own heart to do this, to keep his own a virgin, he will do well. ³⁸ So the one who marries his virgin does well, and the one who chooses not to marry will do even better. ³⁹ A woman is bound to

her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ Yet in my judgment she would be happier if she lives as she is. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 7 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul begins to answer a series of questions that the Corinthians may have asked him. The first question is about marriage. The second question is about a slave trying to become free, a Gentile becoming a Jew, or a Jew becoming a Gentile.

Special concepts in this chapter

Divorce

Paul says married Christians should not divorce. A Christian married to an unbeliever should not leave their husband or wife. If the unbelieving husband or wife leaves, this is not a sin. Paul advises that, because of the difficult times and because it is near to the time that Jesus will return, it is good to remain unmarried. (See: believe and sin)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Euphemisms

Paul uses many euphemisms to discreetly refer to sexual relations. This is often a sensitive topic. Many cultures do not wish to speak openly about these matters.

1 Corinthians 7:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives the believers some specific instructions on marriage.

Now

Paul is introducing a new topic in his teaching.

the issues you wrote about

The Corinthians had written a letter to Paul to ask for answers to certain questions.

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is quoting what the Corinthians had written. Alternate translation: "you wrote, 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman.'" or 2) Paul is saying what he really thinks. Alternate translation: "my answer is that yes, it is good for a man not to touch a woman."

It is good

"It is most helpful"

for a man

Possible meanings are 1) "a man" refers to a married man. Alternate translation: "a husband" or 2) "a man" refers to any man.

not to touch a woman

Possible meanings are 1) "touch a woman" is a euphemism for having sexual relations. Alternate translation: "not to have sexual relations with his wife for a while" or 2) "touch a woman" is a

metonym for marry. Alternate translation: "not to marry"

1 Corinthians 7:2

But because

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is responding to what the Corinthians had written. Alternate translation: "That is true, but because" or 2) Paul is saying what he really thinks.

But because of temptations for many immoral acts, each
"But because Satan tempts people to commit sexual sin, each" or "But we desire to commit sexual sin because of our sinful nature, so each"

1 Corinthians 7:3

fulfill his duty to have sexual relations with his wife

Husbands should regularly have sexual relations with their wives. Alternate translation: "should give to his wife her sexual rights"

in the same way the wife to her husband

The words "should fulfill" and "duty to have sexual relations" are understood from the previous phrase, as is the meaning of the euphemism. Alternate translation: "in the same way, the wife should fulfill her duty to have sexual relations with her husband" or "in the same way, the wife should give to her husband his sexual rights"

1 Corinthians 7:4

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 7:5

Do not deprive each other, except by mutual agreement and for

This double negative emphasizes that mutual agreement is necessary. Alternate translation: "Only if you both agree to deprive each other should you do so, and even then only do so for"

Do not deprive each other

The word "deprive" means to keep from someone something that the other person has the right to receive, in this case marital relations. "Do not refuse to have marital relations with your spouse"

so that you may devote yourselves to prayer
in order to have a period of especially deep prayer

devote yourselves
"commit yourselves"

come together again
"sleep together again"

because of your lack of self-control
"because after some days, your sexual desires will be harder to keep under control"

1 Corinthians 7:6

I say these things to you as a concession and not as a command
Possible meanings are Paul is telling the Corinthians that he is allowing them, but not commanding them, 1) to marry and sleep together or 2) to stop sleeping together for a time.

1 Corinthians 7:7

were as I am
Either Paul had never married or his wife had died. It is unlikely that he had been through a divorce.

But each one has his own gift from God. One has this kind of gift, and another that kind
"But God enables people to do different things. He enables one person to do one thing and another person to do something different"

1 Corinthians 7:8

the unmarried
"those who are not married"

to widows
"to women whose husbands have died"

it is good
See how you translated this in 1 Corinthians 7:1.

1 Corinthians 7:9

to burn with passion
"to live with the constant desire to sleep with someone"

1 Corinthians 7:10

should not separate from
Paul's readers knew no difference between separating and divorcing. To stop living with someone was to end the marriage. Alternate translation: "should not divorce"

1 Corinthians 7:11

be reconciled to her husband
This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "she should make peace with her husband and return to him"

should not divorce
Paul's readers knew no difference between divorcing and simply separating. To do either was to end the marriage. Alternate translation: "should not separate from"

1 Corinthians 7:12

content
willing or satisfied

1 Corinthians 7:13

General Information:
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1 Corinthians 7:14

For the unbelieving husband is set apart because of his wife
Possible meanings are 1) "For God has set apart the unbelieving husband for himself because of his believing wife" or 2) "God treats the unbelieving husband as he would treat a son for the sake of his believing wife"

the unbelieving wife is set apart because of the brother
Possible meanings are 1) "God has set apart the unbelieving wife for himself because of her husband who believes" or 2) "God treats the unbelieving wife as he would treat a daughter for the sake of her husband who believes"

the brother
the believing man or husband

they are set apart

Possible meanings are 1) "God has set them apart for himself" or 2) "God treats them as he would treat his own children"

1 Corinthians 7:15

In such cases, the brother or sister is not bound to their vows

Here "brother" and "sister" refers to a Christian husband or wife. Here "not bound to their vows" is a metaphor that mean the person is not obligated to do what they vowed to do. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "In such cases, God does not require the believing spouse to continue to obey the marriage vow"

1 Corinthians 7:16

do you know, woman ... you will save your husband ... do you know, man ... you will save your wife

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so all instances of "you" and "your" here are singular.

how do you know, woman, whether you will save your husband?

Paul uses a question to cause women to think deeply about what he is saying. Alternate translation: "you cannot know if you will save your unbelieving husband."

how do you know, man, whether you will save your wife?

Paul uses a question to cause men to think deeply about what he is saying. Alternate translation: "you cannot know if you will save your unbelieving wife."

1 Corinthians 7:17

However

No matter what is true for the people in any of the situations Paul has just been discussing, he addresses the following words to everyone.

as the Lord has given each one his portion

God giving people skills and work to do and guiding the events of their lives is spoken of as if he were dividing physical objects and giving parts out to them. Alternate translation: "as the Lord has assigned each one his life"

each one

"each believer"

let each one walk as God has called him

The word "walk" is a metaphor for "live." Possible meanings of the word "called" are 1) it refers to people responding to the gospel. Alternate translation: "each one should live as he was when he became a Christian." Or 2) it is a metaphor for "commanded" or "instructed." Alternate translation: "each one should live as God has instructed him to"

or "each one should follow God's commands as he lives his life"

This is my rule in all the churches

Paul was teaching believers in all the churches to act in this manner.

1 Corinthians 7:18

Was anyone circumcised when he was called to believe? He

Paul was addressing the circumcised ones

Was anyone uncircumcised when he was called to faith? He

Paul was now addressing the uncircumcised ones. Alternate translation: "If someone was uncircumcised when God called him to believe, he"

1 Corinthians 7:19

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 7:20

remain in the calling

Here "calling" refers to the work or social position in which you were involved. Alternate translation: "live and work as you did"

1 Corinthians 7:21

Were you ... called you? Do not be ... you can become

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so all instances of "you" and the command "be" here are singular.

Were you a slave when God called you? Do not be concerned

This can be stated as a statement. Alternate translation: "To anyone who was a slave when God called you to believe, I say this: do not be concerned"

1 Corinthians 7:22

the Lord's freeman

This freeman is forgiven by God and therefore free from Satan and sin.

1 Corinthians 7:23

You have been bought with a price

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Christ bought you by dying for you"

1 Corinthians 7:24

Brothers

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women.

whatever situation he was in when he was called
"whether he was married or unmarried, slave or free, when he was called"

he was called
You may need to make explicit who called and use an active verb. Alternate translation: "God called him"

called
called to believe in Christians

let each one remain
"each one should remain." That is, each one should remain slave, free, married, or unmarried, as he was when he first believed in Christ.

with God
"as a person responsible to God"

1 Corinthians 7:25

Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord
Paul knows no teaching of Jesus that speaks about this situation. Alternate translation: "The Lord has not commanded me to say anything to people who have never married"

virgins
This is probably a synecdoche for anyone who has never married. Alternate translation: "people who have never married"

I give my opinion
"I tell you what I think"

as one who, by the Lord's mercy, is trustworthy
"because, by the Lord's mercy, I am trustworthy"

1 Corinthians 7:26

General Information:
This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 7:27

General Information:
Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if he were speaking to each person, so all these instances of "you" and the command "do not seek" here are singular.

Are you bound to a wife? Do not ...
Paul uses this question to introduce a possible condition. The question can be translated as a phrase with "if." Alternate translation: "If you are bound to a wife, do not"

bound
married

Do not seek a divorce
"Do not try to divorce her" or "Do try to separate from her"

do not seek a wife
"do not try to get married"

1 Corinthians 7:28

fleshly trouble
The word "fleshly" is a metonym for mortal life. Alternate translation: "trouble in this life"

I want to spare you from this
The word "this" refers to the kinds of worldly trouble that married people might have. Alternate translation: "I want to help you not to have worldly trouble"

virgin
This is probably a synecdoche for anyone who has never married. See how you translated "virgins" in [1 Corinthians 7:25]

1 Corinthians 7:29

The time is short
"There is little time" or "Time is almost gone"

1 Corinthians 7:30

weep
cry or grieve with tears

1 Corinthians 7:31

those who use the world
"those who deal every day with unbelievers"

should not act as though they are using it to the full
"should show by their actions that they have their hope in God"

1 Corinthians 7:32

free from worries
Being "free from" something is an idiom which means having the ability to live without it. Alternate translation: "without needing to worry"

concerned about
"focused on"

1 Corinthians 7:33

General Information:
This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 7:34

he is divided

"he is trying to please God and please his wife at the same time"

The unmarried woman or the virgin

Possible meanings are 1) "virgin" refers only to virgins, while "unmarried woman" could be a divorcée or any other unmarried non-virgin, and 2) "unmarried woman" explains what Paul means by "virgin."

1 Corinthians 7:35

constraint

restriction

may be devoted to

"can concentrate on"

1 Corinthians 7:36

not treating his virgin with respect

"not being kind to his virgin" or "not honoring his virgin"

his virgin

Possible meanings are 1) "the woman whom he promised to marry" or "his fiancée" or 2) "his virgin daughter."

They should marry

Possible meanings are 1) "He should marry his fiancée" or 2) "He should let his daughter get married."

1 Corinthians 7:37

But if he is standing firm in his heart

Here "standing firm" is a metaphor for deciding something with certainty. Here "heart" is metonym

for a person's mind or thoughts. Alternate translation: "But if he has decided firmly in his own mind"

1 Corinthians 7:38

So the one who marries his virgin does well, and the one who chooses not to marry will do even better

Or "So the one who allows his virgin daughter to marry does well, and the one who chooses not to have her marry will do even better." See how you translated "virgin" and "He should marry" in [1 Corinthians 7:36](#).

1 Corinthians 7:39

A woman is bound to her husband

Here "bound" is a metaphor for a close relationship between people in which they support each other emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Here it means the union of marriage. Alternate translation: "A woman is married to her husband" or "A woman is united with her husband"

while he lives

"for as long as he lives" or "until he dies"

in the Lord

"if the new husband is a believer"

1 Corinthians 7:40

my judgment

"my understanding of God's word"

happier

more contented, more joyful

lives as she is

"remains unmarried"

Chapter 8

¹ Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ² If anyone thinks he knows something, that person does not yet know as he should know. ³ But if anyone loves God, that person is known by him. ⁴ Therefore, concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol in this world is nothing and that there is no God but one. ⁵ For even if there were so-called gods, either in heaven or on earth (just as there are many "gods" and many "lords"), ⁶ yet for us there is only one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we live, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things exist, and through whom we exist.

⁷ However, this knowledge is not in everyone. Instead, some previously practiced idol worship, and they eat this food as if it were something sacrificed to an idol. Their conscience is thereby defiled because it is weak. ⁸ But food will not present us to God. We are not worse if we do not eat, nor better if we do eat it. ⁹ But take care that your freedom does not become a reason for someone who is weak in faith to stumble.

¹⁰ For suppose that someone sees you, who have knowledge, eating a meal in an idol's temple. Is not his weak conscience emboldened to eat what is offered to idols? ¹¹ So because of your understanding about the true nature of idols, the weaker one, the brother for whom Christ died, is destroyed. ¹² Thus, when you sin against your brothers and wound their weak consciences, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not cause my brother to fall.

1 Corinthians 8 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In Chapters 8-10, Paul answers the question: "Is it acceptable to eat meat that has been sacrificed to an idol?"

Special concepts in this chapter

Meat sacrificed to idols

Paul answers the question about eating meat sacrificed to idols by saying that idols are supposed to be gods but that those gods do not really exist. Therefore nothing is wrong with the meat. Christians are free to eat it. However, someone who does not understand this may see a Christian eating it. They may then be encouraged to eat the meat as an act of worship to the idol.

1 Corinthians 8:1

General Information:

"We" means Paul and, though specifically writing to the Corinthian believers, includes all believers.

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the believers that though idols have no power, believers must be careful not to affect the weaker believers who might think that the believers care about idols if the believers eat food that was sacrificed to idols. He tells believers to be careful with the freedom that they have in Christ.

Now concerning

Paul uses this phrase to move on to the next question the Corinthians had asked him.

food sacrificed to idols

Gentile worshipers would offer grain, fish, fowl, or meat to their gods. The priest would burn a portion of it on the altar. Paul is speaking of the portion the

priest would give back for the worshiper to eat or sell in the market.

Knowledge puffs up

"Knowledge puffs people up." Here "puffs up" is a metaphor for making someone proud. The abstract noun "knowledge" can be expressed with the verb "know." Alternate translation: "Knowledge makes people proud" or "People who think that they know a lot become proud"

but love builds up

The abstract noun "love" can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: "but when we love people, we build them up"

love builds up

Building people up represents helping them become mature and strong in their faith. Alternate translation: "love strengthens people" or "when we love people, we strengthen them"

1 Corinthians 8:2

thinks he knows something

"believes he knows everything about something"

1 Corinthians 8:3

that person is known by him

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God knows that person"

1 Corinthians 8:4

General Information:

"We" here refers to all believers and include Paul's audience.

We know that an idol in this world is nothing and that there is no God but one

Paul is probably quoting phrases that some Corinthians used. Being "nothing" represents having no power. Alternate translation: "We all know, as you yourselves like to say, that an idol in this world has no power and that there is no God but one"

1 Corinthians 8:5

so-called gods

"things that people call gods"

many "gods" and many "lords"

Paul does not believe that many gods and many lords exist, but he recognizes that the pagans believe they do.

1 Corinthians 8:6

General Information:

"Us" and "we" here refer to all believers and include Paul's audience.

yet for us there is only one God

"yet we know that there is only one God"

1 Corinthians 8:7

General Information:

Paul is speaking here of "weak" brothers, people who cannot separate food sacrificed to idols from the worship of those idols. If a Christian eats food that has been sacrificed to an idol, weak brothers might think that God will allow them to worship the idol by eating the food. Even if the eater has not worshiped the idol and is simply eating the food, he has still corrupted his weak brothers' conscience.

everyone ... some

"all people ... some people who are now Christians"

defiled

ruined or harmed, especially as regards the person's relationship with God

1 Corinthians 8:8

food will not present us to God

Paul speaks of food as though it were a person who could make God welcome us. Alternate translation: "food does not give us favor with God" or "the food we eat does not make God pleased with us"

We are not worse if we do not eat, nor better if we do eat it

"Some people might think that if we do not eat some things, God will love us less. But they are wrong. Those who think that God will love us more if we do eat those things are also wrong"

1 Corinthians 8:9

someone who is weak

believers not strong in their faith

1 Corinthians 8:10

sees you, who have

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so these words are singular.

his ... conscience

what he understands to be right and wrong

emboldened to eat

"encouraged to eat"

1 Corinthians 8:11

your understanding

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so the word "your" here is singular.

the weaker one ... is destroyed

The brother or sister who is not strong in his or her faith will sin or lose his or her faith.

1 Corinthians 8:12

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 8:13

Therefore

"Because what I have just said is true"

if food causes

"Food" here is a metonym for the eating of food. Alternate translation: "if by eating I cause" or "if I, because of what I eat, cause"

Chapter 9

¹ Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? ² If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³ This is my defense to those who examine me: ⁴ Do we not have the right to eat and drink? ⁵ Do we not have the right to take along a wife who is a believer, as do the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? ⁶ Or do only I and Barnabas not have the right to not work at a trade? ⁷ Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not drink milk from it? ⁸ Do I say these things based on human authority? Does not the law also say this? ⁹ For it is written in the law of Moses, "Do not put a muzzle on an ox when it is threshing the grain." Is it really the oxen that God cares about? ¹⁰ Is he not speaking about us? It was written for us, because the one who plows should plow in hope, and the one who threshes should thresh in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹ If we sowed spiritual things among you, is it too much for us to reap physical things from you? ¹² If others exercised this right from you, do we not have even more? But we did not claim this right. Instead we endured everything rather than be a hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do you not know that those who perform sacred duties get their food from the temple? Do you not know that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living from the gospel. ¹⁵ But I have not claimed any of these rights. And I do not write this so something might be done for me. It would be better for me to die than—No one will make my boast empty! ¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have no reason for boasting, because I must do this. And woe be to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this willingly, I have a reward. But if not willingly, I still have a stewardship that was entrusted to me. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? That when I preach, I may offer the gospel without charge and so not take full use of my right in the gospel. ¹⁹ For though I am free from all, I became a servant to all, in order that I might win more. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law in order to win those under the law. I did this even though I myself was not under the law. ^[1]²¹ To those outside the law, I became like one outside the law, although I was not outside the law of God myself, but under the law of Christ. I did this so that I may win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, so that I may win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some. ²³ I do all things for the gospel's sake, so that I may participate in its blessings. ²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run the race, but that only one receives the prize? So run to win the prize. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a wreath that is perishable, but we do it to receive one that is imperishable. ²⁶ Therefore this is how I run, as not without purpose; this is how I box, not as one beating the air. ²⁷ But I subdue my body and make it a slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself may not be disqualified.

Footnotes

9:20 ^[1]The ULB has:

1 Corinthians 9 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul defends himself in this chapter. Some people claimed that he was trying to gain financially from the church.

Special concepts in this chapter

Earning money from the church

People accused Paul of just wanting money from the church. Paul answered that he rightfully could get money from the church. The Old Testament taught that those who worked should get their living from their work. He and Barnabas purposefully never used this right and earned their own living.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

Paul uses many metaphors in this chapter. These metaphors teach complex truths.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Contextualization

This passage is important because Paul "contextualizes" ministering the gospel to different audiences. This means that Paul makes himself and the gospel understandable without his actions hindering the gospel being received. The translator should take extra care to preserve aspects of this "contextualization" if possible. (See: goodnews)

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses many rhetorical questions in this chapter. He uses them to emphasize various points as he teaches the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 9:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul explains how he uses the liberty he has in Christ.

Am I not free?

Paul uses this rhetorical question to remind the Corinthians of the rights he has. Alternate translation: "I am a free person."

Am I not an apostle?

Paul uses this rhetorical question to remind the Corinthians of who he is and the rights he has. Alternate translation: "I am an apostle."

Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?

Paul uses this rhetorical question to remind the Corinthians of who he is. Alternate translation: "I have seen Jesus our Lord."

Are you not my work in the Lord?

Paul uses this rhetorical question to remind the Corinthians of their relationship to him. Alternate translation: "You believe in Christ because I have worked the way the Lord wants me to."

my work

"the result of the work that I have done"

1 Corinthians 9:2

you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord

The word "seal" here is a metaphor for the evidence needed to prove something. Alternate translation: "you are evidence I can use to prove that the Lord has chosen me to be an apostle"

1 Corinthians 9:3

This is my defense ... me:

Possible meanings are 1) the words that follow are Paul's defense or 2) the words in 1 Corinthians 9:1-2 are Paul's defense. Alternate translation: "This is my defense ... me."

1 Corinthians 9:4

Do we not have the right to eat and drink?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to challenge what some people think about him and Barnabas. Alternate translation: "We have the right to receive food and drink from the churches."

we

Here "we" refers to Paul and Barnabas.

1 Corinthians 9:5

Do we not have the right ... Cephas?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to challenge what some people think about him and Barnabas. Alternate translation: "We certainly have the right ... Cephas."

a wife who is a believer

"a believing wife" or "a Christian wife"

1 Corinthians 9:6

Or do only I and Barnabas not have the right to not work at a trade?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to challenge what some people think about him and Barnabas. Alternate translation: "You seem to think that Barnabas and I are the only apostles who have no authority to not work at a trade"

not have the right to not work at a trade

If this double negative causes confusion in your language, you can state it as a simple positive. Alternate translation: "have to work at a trade" or "have to have another job"

1 Corinthians 9:7

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?

Paul uses this rhetorical question as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "We all know that no soldier

has to buy his own supplies." or "We all know that every soldier receives his supplies from the government."

Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit?

Paul uses this rhetorical question as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "We all know that the one who plants a vineyard will be allowed to eat its fruit." or "No one expects that someone who plants a vineyard will be forbidden to eat its fruit."

Or who shepherds a flock and does not drink milk from it?

Paul uses this rhetorical question as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "We all know that those who shepherd flocks may drink milk from the flocks"

1 Corinthians 9:8

Do I say these things based on human authority? Does not the law also say this?

Paul uses these rhetorical questions as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "I am not saying these things based on human authority. The law also says this."

1 Corinthians 9:9

Do not put

Moses was speaking to the Israelites as if they were one person, so this command is singular.

Is it really the oxen that God cares about?

Paul uses this rhetorical question as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "God does not only care about the oxen."

1 Corinthians 9:10

Is he not speaking about us?

Paul uses this rhetorical question as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "Instead, God was certainly speaking about us."

should plow in hope

"should plow, expecting to receive something for his work" or "should plow, expecting to share in the harvest"

should thresh in the hope of sharing in the harvest

"should thresh, expecting to share in the harvest"

sharing in the harvest

"receiving some of the crop that is collected"

1 Corinthians 9:11

If we sowed spiritual things among you, is it too much for us to reap physical things from you?

Here "sowed spiritual things" and "reap physical things" are metaphors meaning Paul and Barnabas taught the Corinthians about Christ and spiritual things, so they deserve for the church to support them for their work. Alternate translation: "If we taught you about Christ and spiritual truths, is it too much for us to receive money from you for our work?"

is it too much for us to reap physical things from you?

Paul uses this rhetorical question as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "then it should not be too much for us to reap physical things from you."

1 Corinthians 9:12

If others exercised ... you, do we not have even more?

Paul uses this rhetorical question as a part of his argument to show that he and Barnabas have the right to be supported by the church for their work. Alternate translation: "If others exercised ... you, then we have that right even more."

If others exercised this right

Paul and the Corinthians both know that others exercised the right. Alternate translation: "Since others exercised this right"

others

other workers of the gospel

this right

the right to have the believers at Corinth provide for the living expenses of those who told them the good news

be a hindrance to

"be a burden to" or "stop the spread of"

1 Corinthians 9:13

Do you not know that those who perform sacred duties get their food from the temple?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to remind the Corinthians of what they know so he can add new information. Alternate translation: "I want to remind you that those who perform sacred duties get their food from the temple."

perform sacred duties

"perform sacred duties in the temple" or "work in the temple"

Do you not know that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to remind the Corinthians of what they know so he can add new

information. Alternate translation: "I want to remind you that those who serve at the altar get some of the foods and meat that people offer on the altar."

1 Corinthians 9:14

get their living from the gospel

The words "the gospel" here are a metonym for 1) the people to whom they tell the gospel, "receive their food and other things they need from those to whom they teach the good news," or 2) the result of working to tell the gospel, "receive their food and other things they need because they work to tell the good news."

1 Corinthians 9:15

these rights

"these things that I deserve"

so something might be done for me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so you will do something for me"

It would be better for me to die than—No one will make my boast empty!

Paul seems to have started a new sentence before finishing the first one. Some modern translations read, "It would be better for me to die than to have someone deprive me of this boast."

It would be better for me to

"I would rather." Paul is speaking of what he desires, not necessarily of what God thinks is best.

make my boast empty

"take away this opportunity I have to boast" or "make it so I have nothing to boast about"

1 Corinthians 9:16

I must do this

"I must preach the gospel"

woe be to me if

"may I suffer misfortune if"

1 Corinthians 9:17

if I do this willingly

"if I preach willingly" or "if I preach because I want to"

But if not willingly

The words "I do this" are understood from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "But if I do this unwillingly" or "But if I do this even though I do not want to" or "But if I do this because I was forced to do it"

I still have a stewardship that was entrusted to me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I still must complete this work that

God entrusted to me" or "I still must do this work that God gave me to complete"

1 Corinthians 9:18

What then is my reward?

Paul is preparing them for the new information he is going to give them. Alternate translation: "This is my reward."

That when I preach, I may offer the gospel without charge

"My reward for preaching is that I can preach without receiving payment"

offer the gospel

"preach the gospel"

so not take full use of my right in the gospel

"so not ask people to support me as I travel and preach"

1 Corinthians 9:19

I am free from all

Paul uses the image of freedom from slavery to talk about not being obligated to others. Alternate translation: "I am free of obligation to all" or "Though I am not obligated to anyone"

I became a servant to all

Paul uses the image of slavery to talk about his willingness to meet others' needs. Alternate translation: "I became like a servant to all" or "I became willing to serve all"

win more

"persuade others to believe" or "help others trust in Christ"

1 Corinthians 9:20

I became like a Jew

"I acted like a Jew" or "I practiced Jewish customs"

I became like one under the law

"I became like one committed to following the demands of the Jewish leadership, accepting their understanding of the Jewish scriptures"

1 Corinthians 9:21

To those outside the law, I became like one outside the law

To be "outside the law" is a metaphor that means not to be obligated to obey the law. "The "law" refers to the law of Moses, and "those outside the law" refers to the Gentiles. Alternate translation: "To Gentiles, who are not obligated to follow the law of Moses, I became like them"

although I was not outside the law of God myself, but under the law of Christ

The phrases "not outside the law" and "under the law" are metaphors that mean to be obligated to obey the law. Alternate translation: "although I was not one of those who is not obligated to obey the law of God, but I was obligated to obey the law of Christ"

1 Corinthians 9:22

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 9:23

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 9:24

Connecting Statement:

Paul explains that he uses the liberty he has in Christ to discipline himself.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run the race, but that only one receives the prize?

Paul is reminding the Corinthians of what they know so he can add new information. Alternate translation: "Let me remind you that although all runners run the race, only one runner receives the prize."

run the race

Paul compares living the Christian life and working for God to running a race and being an athlete. As in a race, the Christian life and work require strict discipline on the part of the runner, and, as in a race, the Christian has a specific goal.

run to win the prize

Paul is speaking of the reward God will give his faithful people as if it were a prize given for an athletic contest.

1 Corinthians 9:25

a wreath that is perishable ... one that is imperishable

A wreath is a bunch of leaves twisted together. Wreaths were given as prizes to athletes who won games and races. Paul speaks of eternal life as if it were a wreath that would never dry up.

1 Corinthians 9:26

run ... box

These are both metaphors for living the Christian life and serving God by working as hard as one can to succeed and so gain something good and to avoid failing and so losing something good.

run

This is running in a race to win a prize.

run, as not without purpose

If this double negative would confuse the reader in your language, you can state it as a simple positive. Alternate translation: "run: with purpose"

box

to beat another person with the fists in a sporting contest

1 Corinthians 9:27

I myself may not be disqualified

This passive sentence can be rephrased to an active form. The judge of a race or competition is a metaphor for God. Alternate translation: "the judge will not disqualify me" or "God will not say that I have failed to obey the rules"

Chapter 10

¹ I do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. ² All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food. ⁴ All drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵ But God was not well pleased with most of them, and their corpses were scattered about in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things were examples for us, so we would not be those who lust for evil things as they lusted. ⁷ Do not be idolaters, as some of them were. This is as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." ⁸ Let us not commit sexual immorality, as many of them did. In one day, twenty-three thousand people died because of it. ⁹ Neither let us put Christ to the test, as many of them tested him and were destroyed by snakes. ¹⁰ Also do not grumble, as many of them did and were destroyed by an angel of death. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as examples for us. They were written for our instruction—for us on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to all humanity. Instead, God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. With the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it.

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved ones, run away from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak to you as people who have understanding, so you may judge what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one loaf of bread, we who are many are one body. We all take of one loaf of bread together. ¹⁸ Look at the Israel that is according to the flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹ What am I saying then? That an idol is anything? Or that food sacrificed to an idol is anything? ²⁰ But I say about the things they sacrifice, that they offer these things to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons! ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot participate at the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he is?

²³ "Everything is lawful," but not everything is profitable. "Everything is lawful," but not everything builds people up. ²⁴ No one should seek his own good. Instead, each one should seek the good of his neighbor. ²⁵ Eat everything sold in the market without asking questions of conscience. ²⁶ For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness of it." ²⁷ If an unbeliever invites you to eat a meal, and you wish to go, eat whatever is set before you without asking questions of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—^[1]²⁹ the conscience of the other man, I mean, and not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? ³⁰ If I partake of the meal with gratitude, why am I being insulted for that for which I gave thanks? ³¹ Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Be blameless both to Jews and to Greeks, and to the church of God. ³³ In the same way I try to please all people in all things. I do not seek my benefit, but that of the many. I do this so that they may be saved.

Footnotes

10:28 ^[1] Some ancient copies of the Greek text add,

1 Corinthians 10 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapters 8-10 together answer the question: "Is it acceptable to eat meat that has been sacrificed to an idol?"

In this chapter, Paul uses the exodus to warn people not to sin. Then he returns to discussing meat offered to idols. He uses the Lord's Supper as an example. (See: sin)

Special concepts in this chapter

Exodus

Paul uses the experiences of Israel leaving Egypt and roaming the desert as a warning to the believers. Although the Israelites all followed Moses, God did not allow most of them to enter the Promised Land. Some worshiped an idol, some tested God, and some grumbled. Paul warns Christians not to sin. We can resist temptation because God provides a way of escape. (See: promisedland)

Eating meat sacrificed to idol

Paul discusses meat offered to idols. Christians are allowed to eat, but doing so may hurt others. So when buying meat or eating meat with a friend, do not ask if it has been offered to idols. But if someone tells you it has been offered to idols, don't eat it for the sake of that person. Do not offend anyone. Seek to save them instead. (See: save)

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses many rhetorical questions in this chapter. He uses them to emphasize important points as he teaches the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 10:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the example of their ancient Jewish fathers' experiences with immorality and idolatry.

our fathers

Paul is referring to the time of Moses in the book of Exodus when Israel fled through the Red Sea as the Egyptian army pursued them. Here "our" refers to Paul and includes the Corinthians. The Corinthians were not actual descendants of the Israelites who escaped Egypt. Paul means that all Christians are spiritual descendants of Israel. Alternate translation: "our ancestors"

were all under the cloud

When the Israelites left Egypt, God traveled with them in a pillar of cloud. Alternate translation: "were all led by God who was in the cloud"

passed through the sea

This sea is known by two names, the Red Sea and the Sea of Reeds.

passed through

"walked through" or "traveled through"

1 Corinthians 10:2

All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea

To be "baptized into Moses" means to become united with or to become a follower of Moses through baptism. The Israelites were not baptized in the way that Christians were baptized in the New Testament. Paul is comparing Christian being baptized as followers of Christ with the Israelites, who became followers of Moses as they walked across the Red Sea with God leading them in the cloud. Alternate translation: "It was like all of them were baptized when they followed Moses across the sea as God led them in the cloud"

All were baptized

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "All received baptism"

1 Corinthians 10:3

all ate the same spiritual food

Here "spiritual food" refers to the manna that God supernaturally supplied to the Israelites while they traveled in the wilderness. Alternate translation: "All ate the same food that God supernaturally provided from heaven"

1 Corinthians 10:4

drank the same spiritual drink ... spiritual rock

Here "spiritual drink" refers to the water that God supernaturally caused to flow out of a rock. Alternate translation: "drank the same water that God supernaturally caused to come out of the rock ... supernatural rock"

that rock was Christ

The "rock" was a literal, physical rock, so it would be best to translate this literally. If your language cannot say that a rock "was" a person's name, treat the word "rock" as a metonym for the power of Christ that worked through the rock. Alternate translation: "it was Christ who worked through that rock"

1 Corinthians 10:5

not well pleased

"displeased" or "angry"

most of them

"most of the Israelite fathers" or "most of our ancestors"

their corpses were scattered about

"God scattered their dead bodies around" or "God killed them and scattered their bodies"

in the wilderness

the desert land between Egypt and Israel through which the Israelites wandered for 40 years

1 Corinthians 10:6

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 10:7

idolaters

people who worship idols

sat down to eat and drink

"sat down to eat a meal"

play

Paul is quoting the Jewish scriptures. His readers would have understood from this one word that the people were worshipping an idol by singing and dancing and engaging in sexual activities, not simply enjoying innocent fun.

1 Corinthians 10:8

In one day, twenty-three thousand people died

"God killed 23,000 people in one day"

because of it

"because they committed those unlawful sexual acts"

1 Corinthians 10:9

as many of them tested him

or "as many of them did"

tested him and were destroyed by snakes

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "tested him. As a result, snakes destroyed them"

1 Corinthians 10:10

grumble

"complain"

did and were destroyed by an angel of death

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "did. As a result, an angel of death destroyed them"

1 Corinthians 10:11

these things happened to them

"God punished our ancestors"

examples for us

Here "us" refers to all believers.

the end of the ages

"the last days"

1 Corinthians 10:12

does not fall

does not sin or reject God

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to all humanity

This can be stated as a positive. Alternate translation: "Every temptation that has overtaken you is common to all humanity" or "The temptations that affect you are temptations that all people experience"

He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability

"He will only allow you to be tempted in ways that you are strong enough to resist"

will not let you be tempted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "will not allow anyone to tempt you"

1 Corinthians 10:14

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind them to be pure and to stay away from idolatry and immorality as he talks about communion, which represents the blood and body of Christ.

run away from idolatry

Paul is speaking of the practice of worshipping idols as if it were a physical thing like a dangerous animal. Alternate translation: "do all you can to get away from worshipping idols"

1 Corinthians 10:15

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 10:16

The cup of blessing

Paul is speaking of God's blessing as though it were the wine in the cup used in the ritual of the Lord's Supper.

that we bless

"for which we thank God"

is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?

Paul is reminding the Corinthians of what they already know, that the cup of wine that we share represents us sharing in the blood of Christ. Alternate translation: "we share in the blood of Christ."

The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

Paul is reminding the Corinthians of what they already know. Alternate translation: "We share in the body of Christ when we share bread."

a sharing in

"taking part in" or "equally participating with others in"

1 Corinthians 10:17

loaf of bread

a single unit of baked bread that is sliced or broken into pieces before it is eaten

1 Corinthians 10:18

the Israel that is according to the flesh

This refers to people who belonged to Israel because they were descendants of Israel. Alternate translation: "the natural Israel" or "the physical Israel" or "the people of Israel"

Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?

Paul uses a question to remind the Corinthians of what they already know so that he can give them new information. Alternate translation: "Those who eat the sacrifices share in the activities and the blessings of the altar."

1 Corinthians 10:19

What am I saying then? That an idol is anything? Or that food sacrificed to an idol is anything?

Paul uses these rhetorical questions to clear up any confusion the Corinthians might have about what he meant. The second and third questions are elliptical, and the understood words can be provided. Alternate translation: "I am not saying that an idol is anything or that food sacrificed to an idol is anything." or "I am not saying that an idol is a real god or that food that has been sacrificed to idols has any power." or "What am I saying then? Am I saying that an idol is anything? Or am I saying that food sacrificed to an idol is anything?"

1 Corinthians 10:20

the things they sacrifice

You may need to make explicit that the word "they" refers to Gentile pagans. Alternate translation: "the things that the Gentile pagans sacrifice"

1 Corinthians 10:21

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons

Drinking from the cup of the Lord is a symbol of being united to the Lord, and drinking from the cup of demons is a symbol of being united to demons. It is impossible to be united to both the Lord and

demons. Alternate translation: "You cannot be united to the Lord by drinking from his cup and also be united to demons by drinking from their cup"

You cannot drink the cup

Here "cup" is a metonym for the wine in the cup. Alternate translation: "You cannot drink from the cup" or "You cannot drink the wine from the cup"

the cup of the Lord

This refers to the cup of wine that people drink from when celebrating the Lord's supper.

the cup of demons

This refers to anything people might drink during a meal dedicated to demons.

You cannot participate at the table of the Lord and the table of demons

Here "participate at the table" refers to eating a meal together. The "table of the Lord" refers to a meal that people eat to honor the Lord. Alternate translation: "You cannot eat together at the table of the Lord and at the table of demons" or "You cannot join in eating to honor the Lord and join in eating to honor demons"

1 Corinthians 10:22

Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to remind the people of what they already know. Alternate translation: "Surely you do not want to provoke the Lord to jealousy."

provoke

to anger or irritate

Are we stronger than he is?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to remind the people of what they already know. Alternate translation: "You are not stronger than he is."

1 Corinthians 10:23

Connecting Statement:

In the rest of this chapter, Paul reminds the Corinthians that though they are free, they must care about others and not do things that could lead others to sin.

Everything is lawful

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is saying what some Corinthians might be thinking. Alternate translation: "People say, 'I am allowed to do anything'" or 2) Paul is saying what he thinks is true. Alternate translation: "I am allowed to do anything." This should be translated as in 1 Corinthians 6:12.

not everything is profitable

"some things are not profitable" or "some things do not help people"

not everything builds people up

Building people up represents helping them become mature and strong in their faith. See how you translated "builds up" in [1 Corinthians 8:1]

1 Corinthians 10:24

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 10:25

Eat everything sold in the market

Or "You may eat anything sold in the market." Paul is granting permission, not issuing a command.

without asking questions of conscience

Questions of conscience are questions that a person asks because he wants to know if something is sinful or not. In this case, a person might ask if the food at the market was offered to idols; if he thinks that it is sinful to eat food sacrificed to idols, he would feel guilty about eating it. Paul is saying that the person does not need to ask if the food has been sacrificed to an idol or not. Alternate translation: "without asking questions that could make the conscience feel guilty" or "without asking questions about whether it is sinful to eat it"

1 Corinthians 10:26

General Information:

This quotation is from the Psalms in the Old Testament.

and the fullness of it

"and everything in it." This means that everything on the earth belongs to the Lord. By saying this, Paul shows that even meat at the market that was offered to idols belongs to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:27

without asking questions of conscience

See how you translated a similar phrase in 1 Corinthians 10:25.

1 Corinthians 10:28

General Information

Some translations put verse 28 and the first part of verse 29 in parentheses because the second part of verse 29 appears to give a reason for what Paul taught in verses 25-27 about not asking questions of conscience.

This has been offered in sacrifice

Here being offered in sacrifice means that it was offered to idols. This was the part of the meat that the worshiper was allowed to bring home after killing an animal as a sacrifice to an idol.

for the sake of the one who informed you

This is the first reason not to eat the meat. Alternate translation: "for the good of the one who informed you"

and for the sake of conscience

This is the second reason not to eat the meat. Alternate translation: "and because of conscience" or "and in order not to cause concerns about whether or not it is sinful"

1 Corinthians 10:29

General Information

Some translations put verse 28 and the first part of verse 29 in parentheses because the second part of verse 29 appears to give a reason for what Paul taught in verses 25-27 about not asking questions of conscience.

the conscience of the other man, I mean, and not yours

Here Paul explains whose conscience he was writing about in verse 28.

For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?

This is a rhetorical question, and it can be expressed as a statement. The verb "be judged" can be translated with an active form. Alternate translation: "For another person's conscience should not judge my freedom."

my freedom

The abstract noun "freedom" can be expressed with the adjective "free." Alternate translation: "my being free" or "what I do because I am free"

1 Corinthians 10:30

If I partake of the meal with gratitude

The meaning of the abstract noun "gratitude" can be expressed with the phrase "give thanks." It can be made explicit that the thanksgiving is to God. Alternate translation: "If I give thanks to God for the food when I share in the meal"

why am I being insulted for that for which I gave thanks?

This is a rhetorical question, and it can be expressed as a statement. The verb "be insulted" can be translated with an active form. Alternate translation: "I should not be insulted for that for which I gave thanks." or "People should not be insult me for eating food that I have thanked God for." (See: and)

1 Corinthians 10:31

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 10:32

Be blameless both to Jews and to Greeks, and to the church of God

"Be blameless in the opinion of both Jews and Greeks, and of the church of God" or "Make sure that neither Jews nor Greeks nor the church of God can accuse you of doing wrong"

1 Corinthians 10:33

please all people

"make all people glad"

I do not seek my benefit, but that of the many

"I do not do things I desire for myself, but things that help as many people as possible"

Chapter 11

¹ Be imitators of me, just as I am an imitator of Christ.

² Now I praise you because you remember me in everything. I praise you because you hold firmly to the traditions just as I delivered them to you. ³ Now I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, that a man is the head of a woman, and that God is the head of Christ. ⁴ Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ But any woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. For it is the same thing as if her head were shaved. ⁶ For if a woman will not cover her head, she should cut her hair short. If it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or for her to shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷ 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. ⁸ For man was not made from woman. Instead, woman was made from man. ⁹ For neither was man created for woman. Instead, woman was created for man. ¹⁰ This is why the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord, the woman is not independent from the man, nor is the man independent from the woman. ¹² For as the woman comes from the man, so does the man come from the woman. And all things come from God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor for him? ¹⁵ Does not nature teach you that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair has been given to her as a covering. ¹⁶ But if anyone wants to argue about this, we do not have any other practice, nor do the churches of God.

¹⁷ But in the following instructions, I do not praise you. For when you come together, it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For in the first place, I hear that when you come together in the church, there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. ²⁰ For when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. ²¹ When you eat, each one eats his own food before the others have their meal. One is hungry, and another becomes drunk. ²² Do you not have houses to eat and to drink in? Do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I will not praise you for this! ²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread. ²⁴ After he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this to remember me." ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup after supper, and he said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, to remember me." ²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself first, and in this way let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment to himself. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and ill, and some of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we examine ourselves, we will not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned along with the world. ³³ Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. And about the other things you wrote, I will give instructions when I come.

1 Corinthians 11 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This is the beginning of a new section of the letter (Chapters 11-14). Paul now talks about proper church services. In this chapter, he deals with two different problems: women in the church services (verses 1-16) and the Lord's Supper (verses 17-34).

Special concepts in this chapter

Proper conduct in a church service

Disorderly women

Paul's instructions here are debated among scholars. There may have been women who were abusing their Christian freedom and causing disorder in the church by going against established cultural customs. The disorder that their actions created would have caused him to be concerned.

The Lord's Supper

There were problems in how the Corinthians were handling the Lord's Supper. They did not act in a unified manner. During the feast celebrated along with the Lord's Supper, some of them ate their own food without sharing. Some of them got drunk while the poor people remained hungry. Paul taught that the believers dishonored Christ's death if they participated in the Lord's Supper while they were sinning or while they were in broken relationships with each other. (See: sin and reconcile)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses rhetorical questions to scold the people for their unwillingness to follow the rules for worship he has suggested.

The head

Paul uses "head" as a metonym for authority in verse 3 and also to refer to a person's actual head in verse 4 and following. Since the verses are so close together, it is likely that Paul intentionally used "head" in this way. This would show that the ideas in these verses are connected.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Connecting Statement:

After reminding them to follow him in the same way that he follows Christ, Paul gives some specific instructions about how women and men are to live as believers.

1 Corinthians 11:2

you remember me in everything

"you think of me at all times" or "you always try act as I would want you to act" The Corinthians had not forgotten who Paul was or what he had taught them.

you hold firmly

Paul speaks of the Corinthians believing what he taught them and obeying his commands as if he had given them a solid object that they were holding on to while someone tried to take it away. Alternate translation: "you believe and practice"

1 Corinthians 11:3

Now I want

Possible meanings are 1) "Because of this, I want" or 2) "However, I want."

is the head of

has authority over

a man is the head of a woman

Possible meanings are 1) "men are to have authority over women" or 2) "the husband is to have authority over the wife"

1 Corinthians 11:4

with his head covered

This means to have some kind of garment on his head that covers his hair.

dishonors his head

Possible meanings are 1) "brings disgrace on himself" or 2) "brings disgrace on Christ, who is his head."

1 Corinthians 11:5

woman who prays ... dishonors her head

Possible meanings are 1) "woman who prays ... brings disgrace on herself" or 2) "wife who prays ... brings disgrace on her husband."

with her head uncovered

That is, without the cloth that was worn on the top of the head and that covered the hair and shoulders.

as if her head were shaved

as if she had removed all the hair on her head with a razor

1 Corinthians 11:6

If it is disgraceful for a woman

It was a mark of disgrace or humiliation for a woman to have her hair shaved off or cut short.

cover her head

place on her head the cloth that was worn on the top of the head and that covered the hair and shoulders

1 Corinthians 11:7

should not have his head covered

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: Possible meanings are 1) "must not cover his head" or 2) "does not need to cover his head"

glory of the man

Just as man reflects God's greatness, the woman reflects the man's character.

1 Corinthians 11:8

For man was not made from woman. Instead, woman was made from man

God made the woman by taking a bone from the man and making the woman from that bone. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God did not make the man from the woman. Instead, he made the woman from the man"

1 Corinthians 11:9

For neither ... for man

These words and all of 1 Corinthians 11:8 could be put in parentheses so that the reader can see that the word "this" in "this is why ... the angels" clearly refers back to the words "the woman is the glory of the man" in 1 Corinthians 11:7.

1 Corinthians 11:10

have a symbol of authority on her head

Possible meanings are 1) "to symbolize that she has man as her head" or 2) "to symbolize that she has the authority to pray or prophesy."

1 Corinthians 11:11

Nevertheless, in the Lord

"While what I have just said is all true, the most important thing is this: in the Lord"

in the Lord

Possible meanings are 1) "among Christians, who belong to the Lord" or 2) "in the world as created by God."

the woman is not independent from the man, nor is the man independent from the woman

This can be stated positively. Alternate translation: "the woman depends on the man, and the man depends on the woman"

1 Corinthians 11:12

For as the woman comes from the man, so does the man come from the woman

This means that the first woman, Eve, was made from the rib of the first man, Adam, and since then all men have been born by women.

all things come from God

"God created everyone and everything" or "God created all"

1 Corinthians 11:13

Judge for yourselves

"Judge this issue according to the local customs and church practices you know"

Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

Paul expects the Corinthians to agree with him. This can be stated in active form. "To honor God as she prays to him, a woman should have a covering on her head."

1 Corinthians 11:14

Does not even nature itself teach you ... for him?

Paul expects the Corinthians to agree with him. Alternate translation: "Nature itself even teaches you ... for him."

Does not even nature itself teach you ... for him?

He is speaking of the way people in society normally act as if it were a person who teaches. Alternate translation: "You know just from looking at the way people normally act ... for him."

1 Corinthians 11:15

For her hair has been given to her

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "For God created woman with hair"

1 Corinthians 11:16

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 11:17

Connecting Statement:

As Paul talks about communion, the Lord's supper, he reminds them to have right attitudes as well as unity. He reminds them that if they fail in those things when taking communion, they will become

sick and die, as has already happened to some of them.

in the following instructions, I do not praise you. For when

Another possible meaning is "as I give you these instructions, there is something for which I cannot praise you: when"

the following instructions

"the instructions I am about to talk about"

come together

"gather together" or "meet"

it is not for the better but for the worse

"you do not help each other; instead, you harm each other"

1 Corinthians 11:18

in the church

"as believers." Paul is not talking about being inside a building.

there are divisions among you

"you divide yourselves into opposing groups"

1 Corinthians 11:19

For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you

Possible meanings 1) Paul is being ironic to shame the Corinthians for dividing the people they thought were more important from those they thought were less important. Alternate translation: "For you seem to want to have factions among you so that everyone will know whom you consider to be most important" or 2) Paul means factions are necessary so that God can show those whom he approves. Alternate translation: "For it is necessary for there to be factions among you so that you will know which people God has approved"

factions

opposing groups of people

1 Corinthians 11:20

come together

"gather together"

it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat

"you may believe you are eating the Lord's Supper, but you are not, because you do not treat it with respect"

1 Corinthians 11:21

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 11:22

to eat and to drink in

"in which to gather for a meal"

despise

hate or treat with dishonor and disrespect

humiliate

embarrass or cause to feel shame

What should I say to you? Should I praise you?

Paul is rebuking the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "I can say nothing good about this. I cannot praise you."

1 Corinthians 11:23

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord

"For it was from the Lord that I heard what I told you, and it was this: the Lord"

on the night when he was betrayed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "on the night that Judas Iscariot betrayed him"

1 Corinthians 11:24

he broke it

"he pulled pieces from it"

This is my body

"The bread I am holding is my body"

1 Corinthians 11:25

the cup

It is best to translate this literally. The Corinthians knew which cup he took, so it is not simply "a cup" or "some cup" or "any cup." Possible meanings are that it was 1) the cup of wine that one would expect him to use or 2) the third or fourth of the four cups of wine that the Jews drank at the Passover meal.

Do this as often as you drink it, to remember me

"Drink from this cup, and as often as you drink from it, remember me"

1 Corinthians 11:26

proclaim the Lord's death

teach about the crucifixion and resurrection

until he comes

Where Jesus comes to can be made explicit.

Alternate translation: "until Jesus comes back to the earth"

1 Corinthians 11:27

eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord

"eats the bread of the Lord or drinks the cup of the Lord"

1 Corinthians 11:28

examine

Paul speaks of a person looking at his relationship to God and how he has been living his life as if that person is looking over something he wants to buy. See how "test the quality" is translated in [1 Corinthians 3:13]

1 Corinthians 11:29

without discerning the body

Possible meanings are 1) "and does not recognize that the church is the body of the Lord" or 2) "and does not consider that he is handling the Lord's body."

1 Corinthians 11:30

weak and ill

These words mean almost the same thing and can be combined, as in UDB.

and some of you have fallen asleep

"Sleep" here is a euphemism for death. Alternate translation: "and some of you have died" .

some of you

If this would sound like Paul is talking to those who have died, you may need to make explicit that he is

not. Alternate translation: "some of the members of your group"

1 Corinthians 11:31

examine

Paul speaks of a person looking at his relationship to God and how he has been living his life as if that person is looking over something he wants to buy. See how this is translated in [1 Corinthians 11:28]

we will not be judged

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will not judge us"

1 Corinthians 11:32

we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the Lord judges us, he disciplines us, so that he will not condemn us"

1 Corinthians 11:33

wait for one another

"allow the others to arrive before beginning the meal"

1 Corinthians 11:34

let him eat at home

"let him eat before attending this gathering"

it will not be for judgment

"it will not be an occasion for God to discipline you"

Chapter 12

¹ About spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to idols who could not speak, in whatever ways you were led by them. ³ Therefore I want you to know that no one who speaks by the Spirit of God can say, "Jesus is accursed." No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different ministries, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are different kinds of work, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ Now to each one is given the outward display of the Spirit for the benefit of all. ⁸ For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. ⁹ To another is given faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit. ¹⁰ To another is given miraculous works, and to another prophecy. To another is given the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, giving the gifts to each one individually, as he chooses.

¹² For as the body is one and has many members and all are members of the same body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not a single member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, "Since I am not the hand, I am not part of the body," it is not any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not part of the body," it is not any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But God has appointed each member, each one of them, into the body as he has desired. ¹⁹ If they were all the same member, where would the body be? ²⁰ So now they are many members, but only one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you." Nor does the head say to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² But the members of the body that appear to be weaker are essential, ²³ and the parts of the body that we think are less honorable, we give them greater honor, and our unpresentable members have more dignity. ²⁴ Now our presentable members have no such need. Rather, God has composed the body, giving greater honor to those members that lack it. ²⁵ He did this so there may be no division within the body, but that the members should care for one another with the same affection. ²⁶ So when one member suffers, all the members suffer together; or when one member is honored, all the members rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who do miracles, then gifts of healing, those who provide helps, those who do the work of administration, and those who have various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all of them apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? ³⁰ Do all of them have gifts of healing? Do all of them speak with tongues? Do all of them interpret tongues? ³¹ Zealously seek the greater gifts. And now I will show you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 12 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

This chapter begins a new section. Chapters 12-14 discuss spiritual gifts within the church.

Special concepts in this chapter

The church, the body of Christ

This is an important metaphor in Scripture. The church has many different parts. Each part has different functions. They combine to make one church. All of the different parts are necessary. Each part is to be concerned for all the other parts, even those that seem less important.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

In reading the Old Testament, the Jews would have substituted the word "Lord" for the word "Yahweh." This sentence probably means that no one can say that Jesus is Yahweh, God in the flesh, without the Holy Spirit's influence drawing them to accept this truth. If this statement is translated poorly, it can have unintended theological consequences.

1 Corinthians 12:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul lets the Corinthians know that God has given special gifts to believers. These gifts are to help the body of believers.

I do not want you to be uninformed

This can be stated as a positive. Alternate translation: "I want you to be informed"

1 Corinthians 12:2

you were led astray to idols who could not speak, in whatever ways you were led by them

Here "led astray" is a metaphor for being persuaded to do something wrong. Being led astray to idols represents being wrongly persuaded to worship idols. The phrases "were led astray" and "you were led by them" can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "you were persuaded in some way to worship idols who cannot speak" or "you believed lies somehow and so you worshiped idols who cannot speak"

1 Corinthians 12:3

no one who speaks by the Spirit of God can say

Possible meanings are 1) "no Christian who has the Spirit of God in him can say" or 2) "no one who is prophesying by the power of the Spirit of God can say."

Jesus is accursed

"God will punish Jesus" or "God will make Jesus suffer"

No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit

This double negative emphasizes that "by the Holy Spirit" is what makes it possible for one to say, "Jesus is Lord." Alternate translation: "One can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' only by the Holy Spirit"

by the Holy Spirit

"with the help of the Holy Spirit" or "by the power that the Holy Spirit gives him"

1 Corinthians 12:4

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 12:5

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 12:6

works all in all

Possible meanings are 1) "makes active all the gifts in everyone who has received them" or 2) "works all things in all people."

1 Corinthians 12:7

to each one is given

This can be stated in active form. God is the one who does the giving

1 Corinthians 12:8

to one is given by the Spirit the word

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "by means of the Spirit God gives to one person the word"

the word

"the message"

by the Spirit

God gives the gifts through the work of the Spirit.

wisdom ... knowledge

The difference between these two words is not as important here as the fact that God gives them both by the same Spirit.

the word of wisdom

Paul is communicating one idea through two words. Alternate translation: "wise words"

the word of knowledge

Paul is communicating one idea through two words. Alternate translation: "words that show knowledge"

1 Corinthians 12:9

is given

This can be stated in active form. See how this is translated in [1 Corinthians 12:8]

to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit

The words "are given" are understood from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit are given"

1 Corinthians 12:10

to another prophecy

The phrase "is given by the same Spirit" is understood from the previous phrases. Alternate translation: "to another prophecy is given by the same Spirit"

to another various kinds of tongues

The phrase "are given by the same Spirit" is understood from the previous phrases. Alternate translation: "to another various kinds of tongues are given by the same Spirit"

various kinds of tongues

Here "tongues" represents languages. Alternate translation: "the ability to speak different languages"

to another the interpretation of tongues

The phrase "is given by the same Spirit" is understood from the previous phrases. Alternate translation: "to another the interpretation of tongues is given by the same Spirit"

the interpretation of tongues

This is the ability to listen to what someone says in one language and use another language to tell people what that person is saying. Alternate translation: "the ability to interpret what is said in other languages"

1 Corinthians 12:11

one and the same Spirit

God gives the gifts through the work of the one and only Holy Spirit. See how this is translated in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

1 Corinthians 12:12

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to talk of the variety of gifts God gives believers. God gives different gifts to different believers, but Paul wants them to know that all believers are made into one body, which is called the body of Christ. For this reason believers should have unity.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized

Possible meanings are 1) the Holy Spirit is the one who baptizes us, "For one Spirit baptized us" or 2) that the Spirit, like the water of baptism, is the medium through which we are baptized into the body, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized"

all were made to drink of one Spirit

This is a metaphor meaning everyone received and share in the same Spirit. The phrase "all were made" can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God gave us all the same Spirit, which we share as people might share a drink"

1 Corinthians 12:14

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 12:15

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 12:16

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 12:17

where would the sense of hearing be? ... where would the sense of smell be?

This can be made a statement. Alternate translation: "you could not hear anything. ... you could not smell anything."

1 Corinthians 12:18

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 12:19

the same member

The word "member" is a general word for the parts of the body, like the head, arm, or knee. Alternate translation: "the same part of the body"

where would the body be?

This can be made a statement. Alternate translation: "there would be no body."

1 Corinthians 12:20

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 12:21

I have no need of you

"I do not need you"

1 Corinthians 12:22

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 12:23

less honorable
"less important"

our unpresentable members
This probably refers to the private parts of the body, which people keep covered.

1 Corinthians 12:24

General Information:
This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 12:25

there may be no division within the body, but
"the body may be unified, and"

1 Corinthians 12:26

one member is honored
This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "someone gives honor to one member"

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are
Here the word "now" is used to draw attention to the important point that follows.

1 Corinthians 12:28

first apostles
Possible meanings for "first" are 1) the first in the list or 2) the most important in the list.

those who provide helps
"those who provide help to other believers"

those who do the work of administration
"those who govern the church"

those who have various kinds of tongues
Here "tongues" represents languages. Alternate translation: "those who have the ability to speak different languages"

1 Corinthians 12:29

General Information:
Paul is reminding his readers of what they already know.

Are all of them apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles?
The answer Paul expects to all of these rhetorical questions is no. You may need to translate them as statements. Alternate translation: "Not all of them are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all do miracles, do they?" or "You and I all know that not all of them are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are teachers, and not all do powerful deeds."

1 Corinthians 12:30

Do all of them have gifts of healing?
This can be a statement. Alternate translation: "Not all of them have gifts of healing."

Do all of them speak with tongues?
This can be a statement. Alternate translation: "Not all of them speak with tongues."

speak with tongues
Here "tongues" represents languages. Alternate translation: "speak different languages"

Do all of them interpret tongues?
This can be a statement. Alternate translation: "Not all of them interpret tongues."

interpret tongues
Here "tongues" represents languages. To "interpret tongues" means to listen to what someone says in one language and use another language to tell people what that person is saying. Alternate translation: "interpret what is said in other languages"

1 Corinthians 12:31

Zealously seek the greater gifts.
Possible meanings are 1) "You must eagerly seek from God the gifts that best help the church." or 2) "You are eagerly looking for gifts that you think are greater because you think they are more exciting to have."

Chapter 13

¹ Suppose that I speak with the tongues of men and of angels. But if I do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² Suppose that I have the gift of prophecy and understand all hidden truths and knowledge, and that I have all faith so as to remove mountains. But if I do not have love, I am nothing. ³ Suppose that I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and that I give my body to be burned. But if I do not have love, I gain nothing. ^[1]⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous and does not boast. It is not puffed up ⁵ or rude. It does not seek its own. It is not provoked, nor does it keep a count of wrongs. ⁶ It does not rejoice in unrighteousness. Instead, it rejoices in the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. If there are prophecies, they will pass away. If there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when the perfect comes, that which is incomplete will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see indirectly in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I have been fully known. ¹³ But now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Footnotes

13:3 ^[1]Most important and ancient Greek copies, and ancient translations read,

1 Corinthians 13 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul seems to interrupt his teaching about spiritual gifts to speak about love.

Special concepts in this chapter

Love

Love is the most important characteristic of the believer. This chapter fully describes love. Paul tells why love is more important than the gifts of the Spirit. (See: love)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

Paul uses many different metaphors in this chapter. He uses these metaphors to instruct the Corinthians, especially on difficult topics. Readers often need spiritual discernment to understand these teachings.

1 Corinthians 13:1

Connecting Statement:

Having just talked about the gifts that God gives to believers, Paul emphasizes what is more important.

the tongues of ... angels

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is exaggerating for the sake of effect and does not believe that people speak the language that angels use or 2) Paul thinks that some who speak in tongues actually speak the language that angels use.

I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal

I have become like instruments that make loud, annoying sounds

gong

a large, thin, round metal plate that is hit with a padded stick to make a loud, low-pitched sound

a clanging cymbal

a thin, round metal plate that is hit with a padded stick to make a loud, high-pitched sound

1 Corinthians 13:2

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 13:3

I give my body to be burned

The phrase "to be burned" can be made active.
Alternate translation: "I allow those who persecute me to burn me to death"

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is ... Love is not ... It is not

Paul describes the characteristics of love by speaking about love as if it were a person. Alternate translation: "Whoever loves is ... He is not ... He is not"

1 Corinthians 13:5

It does not ... It is not ... does it keep

Paul continues to describe the characteristics of love by speaking about love as if it were a person. Alternate translation: "He does not ... He does not ... does he keep"

seek its own

The word "seek" here means to desire and work for something. The person who loves wants and works for what is good for others as much as or more than what is good for himself.

It is not provoked

"It does not become angry easily." The person who loves controls his anger.

nor does it keep a count of wrongs

The person who loves others does not keep a record of the wrongs that people have done to him.

1 Corinthians 13:6

It does not ... it rejoices

Paul continues to describe the characteristics of love by speaking about love as if it were a person. Alternate translation: "He does not ... he rejoices"

does not rejoice in unrighteousness. Instead, it rejoices in the truth

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "rejoices only in righteousness and truth"

1 Corinthians 13:7

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues speaking about love as if it were a person.

bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things

The phrase "all things" here appears to be an idiom meaning "always". Alternate translation: "always

perseveres, always believes, always hopes, and always endures"

hopes all things

This means that whoever loves others always expects that what is good will happen.

1 Corinthians 13:8

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 13:9

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 13:10

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 13:11

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see indirectly in a mirror

Mirrors in Paul's day were made of polished metal rather than glass and provided a dim, vague reflection.

now we see

Possible meanings are 1) "now we see Christ" or 2) "now we see God."

but then face to face

The understood words "we will see" can be supplied. Seeing face to face is a metaphor or synecdoche for being physically present with the one we will see. Alternate translation: "but then we will see face to face"

I will know fully

The word "Christ" is understood. Alternate translation: "I will know Christ fully"

just as I have been fully known

This can be stated as active. Alternate translation: "just as Christ has known me fully"

1 Corinthians 13:13

faith, hope, and love

These abstract nouns can be expressed in phrases with verbs. Alternate translation: "we must trust the Lord, be confident that he will do what he has promised, and love him and others"

Chapter 14

¹ Pursue love and be zealous for spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ² For the one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. For no one understands him because he speaks mysteries in the Spirit. ³ But the one who prophesies speaks to people to build them up, to exhort them, and to comfort them. ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. ⁵ Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues. But even more than that, I wish that you would prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues (unless someone interprets so that the church may receive edification). ⁶ But now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you? I cannot, unless I speak to you with revelation, or knowledge, or prophecy, or teaching. ⁷ In the same way, when lifeless instruments are producing sounds—like the flute or the harp—if they do not produce different tones, how will anyone know what tune the flute or harp is playing? ⁸ For if the trumpet is played with an uncertain sound, how will anyone know when it is time to prepare for battle? ⁹ It is the same way for you with the tongue. If you utter speech that is not clear, how will what is said be understood? You will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are doubtless many kinds of languages in the world, and none is without meaning. ¹¹ But if I do not know the meaning of a language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker will be a foreigner to me. ¹² So it is with you. Since you are eager for the manifestations of the Spirit, seek for the edification of the church so that you might abound. ¹³ So the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind. I will sing with my spirit, and I will also sing with my mind. ¹⁶ Otherwise, if you bless God with the spirit, how will the outsider say "Amen" when you are giving thanks if he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷ For you certainly give thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up. ¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹ But in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding so that I might instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

²⁰ Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Rather, in regard to evil, be like infants. But in your thinking be mature. ²¹ In the law it is written,

"By men of strange tongues
and by the lips of strangers
I will speak to this people.
Even then they will not hear me,"
says the Lord.

²² So then, tongues are a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers. But prophecy is for a sign, not for unbelievers, but for believers. ²³ If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders and unbelievers come in, would they not say that you are insane? ²⁴ But if you all were prophesying and an unbeliever or an outsider came in, he would be convicted by all he hears. He would be judged by all that is said. ²⁵ The secrets of his heart would be revealed. As a result, he would fall on his face and worship God. He would declare that God is really among you.

²⁶ What is next then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Do everything so that you build up the church. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at most three, and each one in turn, and then someone should interpret what is said. ²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in the church. Let each one speak to himself alone and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others listen with discernment to what is said. ³⁰ But if there is a revelation to one who is sitting, let the first be silent. ³¹ For each of you can prophesy one by one so that each one may learn and all may be exhorted. ³² For the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

This is the rule in all the churches of God's holy people. ³⁴ The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak. Instead, they should be in submission, as also the law says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. ³⁶ Did the word of God come from you? Are you the only ones it has reached?

³⁷ If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I write to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸ But if anyone does not recognize this, let him not be recognized.

³⁹ So then, brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid anyone from speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But let all things be done properly and in order.

1 Corinthians 14 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In this chapter, Paul returns to discussing spiritual gifts.

Some translations set what is quoted from the Old Testament farther to the right on the page than the rest of the text. The ULB does this with the words of verse 21.

Special concepts in this chapter

Tongues

Scholars disagree on the exact meaning of the gift of tongues. Paul describes the gift of tongues as a sign for unbelievers. It does not serve the whole church, unless someone interprets what is spoken. It is very important that the church uses this gift properly.

Prophecy

Scholars disagree on the exact meaning of prophecy as a spiritual gift. Paul says prophets can build up the entire church. He describes prophecy as a gift for believers. (See: prophet)

1 Corinthians 14:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul wants the Corinthians to know that though teaching is more important because it instructs people, it must be done with love.

Pursue love

Paul speaks of love as if it were a person. Alternate translation: "Follow after love" or "Work hard to love people"

especially that you may prophesy

"and work especially hard to be able to prophesy"

1 Corinthians 14:2

in the Spirit

Possible meanings are 1) the person speaks by the power of the Holy Spirit or 2) he speaks in his own spirit.

1 Corinthians 14:3

to build them up

Building people up represents helping them become mature and strong in their faith. See how you translated "builds up" in [1 Corinthians 8:1]

to exhort them

or "to encourage them"

1 Corinthians 14:4

builds up

Building people up represents helping them become mature and strong in their faith. See how you translated "builds up" in [1 Corinthians 8:1]

1 Corinthians 14:5

spoke in tongues

Here "tongues" represents languages. Alternate translation: "had the ability to speak different languages"

The one who prophesies is greater

Paul is emphasizing that the gift of prophecy is greater than the gift of speaking in tongues. Alternate translation: "The one who prophesies has a greater gift"

interprets

This means to listen to what someone says in one language and use another language to tell people what that person is saying.

the church may receive edification

The abstract noun "edification" can be translated using the verb "edify," which means to build something up. This is a metonym for the words through which the people in the church learn God's word and love God more, and the word "church" here is a metonym for the people who make up the church. Alternate translation: "the people in the church may become stronger" or "the one who

prophesies may help the people know and love God better"

1 Corinthians 14:6

how will I benefit you?

This can be a statement. Alternate translation: "I will not benefit you." or "I will not have done anything that helps you."

1 Corinthians 14:7

they do not produce different tones

This refers to sounds of different pitch that make up the melody, not to the difference between a flute sound and a harp sound.

how will anyone know what tune the flute or harp is playing?

Paul wants the Corinthians to answer this themselves. Alternate translation: "no one will know what tune the flute or harp is playing."

tune

melody or song

1 Corinthians 14:8

how will anyone know when it is time to prepare for battle?

Paul wants the Corinthians to answer this themselves. Alternate translation: "no one would know when it is time to prepare for battle."

1 Corinthians 14:9

you with the tongue. If you utter speech

or "you. If with the tongue you utter speech"

with the tongue

The word "tongue" here is a synecdoche for all the parts of the body which a person uses in order to speak.

If you utter speech that is not clear

Clear speech is language that people can understand. Paul was talking about people speaking in other languages during church services. Alternate translation: "If you speak in a language that people do not know"

how will what is said be understood

These passive clauses can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "how will anyone understand what you have said"

1 Corinthians 14:10

none is without meaning

This can be stated as a positive. Alternate translation: "they all have meaning"

1 Corinthians 14:11

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 14:12

General Information:

All instances of "you" and the imperatives are plural.

for the manifestations of the Spirit

"to do things that show that the Spirit controls you"

seek for the edification of the church so that you might abound

Some modern translations read, "seek that you might abound in those things that edify the church." Paul speaks of the church as if it were a house that one could build. Alternate translation: "try to succeed greatly in making God's people more able to serve God so that things will go well with you"

1 Corinthians 14:13

interpret

This means to listen to what someone says in one language and use another language to tell people what that person is saying.

1 Corinthians 14:14

my mind is unfruitful

The mind not understanding what is being prayed and, therefore, receiving no benefit from the prayer is spoken of as if the "mind is unfruitful." Alternate translation: "I do not understand it in my mind" or "my mind does not benefit from the prayer, because I do not understand the words I am saying"

1 Corinthians 14:15

What am I to do?

Paul is introducing his conclusion. Alternate translation: "This is what I will do."

pray with my spirit ... pray with my mind ... sing with my spirit ... sing with my mind

Prayers and songs must be in a language that the people present can understand.

with my mind

"with words that I understand"

1 Corinthians 14:16

you bless God ... you are giving thanks ... you are saying

Though "you" is singular here, Paul is addressing everyone who prays only in the spirit, but not with the mind.

how will the outsider say "Amen" ... saying?

This can be a statement. Alternate translation: "the outsider will never be able to say 'Amen' ... saying."

the outsider

Possible meanings are 1) "another person" or 2) "people who are new to your group."

say "Amen"
"agree"

1 Corinthians 14:17

you certainly give

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so the word "you" here is singular.

the other person is not built up

Building people up represents helping them become mature and strong in their faith. This can be stated in active form. See how you translated "builds up" in [1 Corinthians 8:1]

1 Corinthians 14:18

I speak in tongues

Here "tongues" represents languages. Alternate translation: "I speak different languages"

1 Corinthians 14:19

than ten thousand words in a tongue

Paul was not counting words, but used exaggeration to emphasize that a few understandable words are far more valuable than even a great number of words in a language that people cannot understand. Also, here "tongue" represents a language. Alternate translation: "10,000 words in a different language" or "a great many words in a different language"

1 Corinthians 14:20

General Information:

Paul tells the Corinthians that people being able to speak in different languages was told ahead of time by the prophet Isaiah, many years before such speaking happened at the start of Christ's church.

do not be children in your thinking

Here "children" is a metaphor for being spiritually immature. Alternate translation: "do not think like children"

1 Corinthians 14:21

In the law it is written,

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "The prophet wrote these words in the law:"

By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are used together for emphasis.

1 Corinthians 14:22

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives specific instructions about an orderly way to use gifts in the church.

sign, not for unbelievers, but for believers

"sign only for believers"

1 Corinthians 14:23

would they not say that you are insane?

This can be a statement. Alternate translation: "they would say that you are insane."

1 Corinthians 14:24

he would be convicted by all he hears. He would be judged by all that is said

Paul says basically the same thing twice for emphasis. Alternate translation: "he would realize that he is guilty of sin because he hears what you are saying"

1 Corinthians 14:25

The secrets of his heart would be revealed

Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's thoughts. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God would reveal to him the secrets of his heart" or "He would recognize his own private inner thoughts"

he would fall on his face and worship God

"Fall on his face" here is an idiom, meaning to bow down. Alternate translation: "He would bow down and worship God"

1 Corinthians 14:26

What is next then, brothers?

Paul uses a question to introduce the next part of his message. Alternate translation: "Because everything I have just told you is true, this is what you need to do, my fellow believers."

interpretation

This is the ability to listen to what someone says in one language and use another language to tell people what that person is saying.

1 Corinthians 14:27

speaks in a tongue

Here "tongue" represents a language. Alternate translation: "speaks in a different languages"

and each one in turn

"and they should speak one after another" or "and they should speak one at a time"

interpret what is said

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "interpret what they said"

interpret

This means to listen to what someone says in one language and use another language to tell people what that person is saying.

1 Corinthians 14:28

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 14:29

Let two or three prophets speak

Possible meanings are 1) only two or three prophets speak at any one meeting or 2) only two or three prophets take turns speaking at any one time.

to what is said

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "to what they say"

1 Corinthians 14:30

there is a revelation

"God reveals something" or "God speaks"

to one who is sitting

"to one of the people sitting there listening to the prophets"

the first

the person who has been speaking

1 Corinthians 14:31

prophecy one by one

Only one person should prophesy at a time.

all may be exhorted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "you may exhort all"

1 Corinthians 14:32

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 14:33

God is not a God of confusion

God does not create confusing situations by making people all speak at the same time.

1 Corinthians 14:34

keep silent

Possible meanings are 1) stop speaking, 2) stop speaking when someone is prophesying, or 3) be absolutely silent during the church service.

1 Corinthians 14:35

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 14:36

Did the word of God come from you? Are you the only ones it has reached?

Paul emphasizes that the Corinthians are not the only ones who understand what God wants Christians to do. Alternate translation: "The word of God did not come from you in Corinth; you are not the only people who understand God's will."

the word of God

"Word of God" here is a metonym for the message from God. Alternate translation: "God's message"

1 Corinthians 14:37

he should acknowledge

A true prophet or truly spiritual person will accept Paul's writings as coming from the Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:38

if anyone does not recognize this, let him not be recognized

"if anyone ignores this, let him be ignored"

let him not be recognized

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "you should not recognize him"

1 Corinthians 14:39

do not forbid anyone from speaking in tongues

Paul makes it clear that speaking in tongues at a church gathering is permissible and acceptable.

1 Corinthians 14:40

But let all things be done properly and in order

Paul is stressing that church gatherings should be held in an orderly manner. Alternate translation: "But do all things properly and in order" or "But do everything in an orderly, appropriate way"

Chapter 15

¹ Now I want to make known to you, brothers, the gospel I proclaimed to you, which you received and on which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. ⁵ Christ appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve; ⁶ then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once. Most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, he appeared to me, as if to one born prematurely. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles. I am unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace in me was not in vain. Instead, I labored harder than all of them. Yet it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Therefore whether it is I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

¹² Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith also is in vain. ¹⁵ Also, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we testified that God raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him, if indeed the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. ¹⁹ If only in this life we hope in Christ, of all people we are most to be pitied.

²⁰ But now Christ has been raised from the dead as the firstfruits of those who sleep. ²¹ For since death came by a man, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ, who is the firstfruits, and then those who belong to Christ will be made alive at his coming. ²⁴ Then will be the end, when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, when he will abolish all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For "he has put everything under his feet." But when it says "he has put everything," it is clear that this does not include the one who put everything in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected under him, then the Son himself will be subjected under the one who put all things into subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

²⁹ Or else what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are they baptized for them? ³⁰ Why then are we in danger every hour? ³¹ I die every day! This is as sure as my boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³² What do I gain, from a human point of view, if I fought with beasts at Ephesus, if the dead are not raised?

"Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die."

³³ Be not deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." ³⁴ Sober up! Live righteously! Do not keep sinning. For some of you have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

³⁵ But someone will say, "How are the dead raised, and with what kind of body will they come?" ³⁶ You fool! What you sow will not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ What you sow is not the body that will be, but a bare grain. It may become wheat or something else. ³⁸ But God will give it a body as he chooses, and to each seed its own body. ³⁹ Not all flesh is the same. Instead, there is one flesh for human beings, and another flesh for animals, and another flesh for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the glory of the heavenly body is one kind and the glory of the earthly is another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. For one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, and what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a

natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So also it is written, "The first man Adam became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But the spiritual did not come first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man is of the earth, made of dust. The second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ Just as the one made from dust is, so also are those who are made of the dust, and as the man of heaven is, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither does what is perishable inherit what is imperishable. ⁵¹ Look! I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed. ⁵² We will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on what is imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable body has put on what is imperishable, and when this mortal body has put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "Death, where is your victory?
Death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! ⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast and immovable. Always abound in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Resurrection

This chapter includes a very important teaching about the resurrection of Jesus. The Greek people did not believe that people could live after they died. Paul defends the resurrection of Jesus. He teaches why it is important to all believers. (See: resurrection and believe)

Special concepts in this chapter

Resurrection

Paul presents the resurrection as the ultimate proof that Jesus is God. Christ is the first of many whom God will raise to life. The resurrection is central to the gospel. Few doctrines are as important as this one. (See: goodnews and raise)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Paul uses many different figures of speech in this chapter. He uses them to express difficult theological teachings in a way that people can understand.

1 Corinthians 15:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Corinthians that it is the gospel that saves them and he tells them again what the gospel is. Then he gives them a short history lesson which ends with what will yet happen.

make known to you, brothers, the gospel

Possible meanings are 1) Paul wants to remind them by making the gospel known again, "help you remember, brothers, the gospel" or 2) he wants to make sure they understand the gospel, "make clear to you, brothers, the gospel."

on which you stand

Paul is speaking of the Corinthians as if they were a house and the gospel as if it were the foundation on which the house was standing.

1 Corinthians 15:2

you are being saved

This can be stated in active form. "God will save you"

the word I preached to you

"the message I preached to you"

1 Corinthians 15:3

as of first importance

Possible meanings are 1) as the most important of many things or 2) as the first in time of important things.

for our sins

"to pay for our sins" or "so that God could forgive our sins"

according to the scriptures

"just as the propets predicted in the scriptures." Here "scriptures" means the Old Testament.

1 Corinthians 15:4

he was buried

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "they buried him"

he was raised

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God raised him"

was raised

"was caused to live again"

1 Corinthians 15:5

appeared to

"showed himself to"

and then to the twelve

The information that is understood here can be included. Alternate translation: "and then he appeared to the twelve disciples"

to the twelve

Paul used the term "the twelve" to mean the original disciples, known as apostles, that followed Jesus. Although, when Jesus appeared to the apostles, Judas had already died, Paul still refers to the groups as "twelve." Alternate translation: "to the rest of the apostles"

1 Corinthians 15:6

five hundred

500

some have fallen asleep

"Sleep" here is a common euphemism for death. Alternate translation: "some have died"

1 Corinthians 15:7

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 15:8

Last of all

"Finally, after he had appeared to the others"

Last of all, he appeared to me, as if to one born prematurely

This is a simile, but its meaning is unclear. These words could refer to 1) a baby that is born unexpectedly early, in which case Paul means that he was unexpectedly called to be an apostle, or 2) a baby who is born early and is very small, in which case Paul means that he had not learned from Christ and grown spiritually as the other apostles had, or 3) a baby who is born dead, in which case Paul means that Christ appeared to him when he was spiritually dead.

one born prematurely

"a baby born too early"

1 Corinthians 15:9

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 15:10

the grace of God I am what I am

God's grace or kindness has made Paul as he is now.

his grace in me was not in vain

Paul is emphasizing through litotes that God worked through Paul. Alternate translation: "because he was kind to me, I was able to do much good work"

the grace of God that is with me

Paul speaks of the work he was able to do because God was kind to him as if grace were actually doing the work. Alternate translation: Possible meanings are 1) this is literally true, and God actually did the work and kindly used Paul as a tool or 2) Paul is using a metaphor and saying that God was kind to let Paul do the work and to make Paul's work have good results.

1 Corinthians 15:11

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 15:12

how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul is using this question to begin a new topic. Alternate translation: "you should not be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead!"

raised

made alive again

1 Corinthians 15:13

if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised

Paul uses this statement to argue that there is a resurrection of the dead. He knows that Christ has been raised and so infers that all who die will be resurrected. To say that there is no resurrection is to say that Christ has not been raised, but this is false because Paul has seen the resurrected Christ

not even Christ has been raised

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has not raised even Christ"

1 Corinthians 15:14

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 15:15

Connecting Statement:

Paul wants to assure the Corinthians that Christ rose from the dead.

we are found to be false witnesses about God

Paul is arguing that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then they are bearing false witness or lying about Christ's coming alive again.

we are found to be

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "everyone will realize that we are"

1 Corinthians 15:16

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 15:17

your faith is in vain and you are still in your sins

Their faith is based on Christ having risen from the dead, so if that did not happen, their faith will do them no good.

1 Corinthians 15:18

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 15:19

If only in this life we hope in Christ

Here to hope in Christ is to confidently expect good from him. Alternate translation: "If only in this life we can confidently expect Christ to help us" or "If we can trust in Christ to save us only in this life"

of all people we are most to be pitied

"people should feel sorry for us more than they do for anyone else"

1 Corinthians 15:20

now Christ

"as it is, Christ" or "this is the truth: Christ"

Christ has been raised from the dead

"Raised" here is an idiom for "caused to live again."

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has raised Christ from the dead"

dead as the firstfruits

Here "firstfruits" is a metaphor, comparing Christ to the first of the harvest, which would be followed by the rest of the harvest. Christ was the first to be raised from the dead, and all who believe in him will also be raised from the dead. Alternate translation: "dead, like the first part of the harvest" or "dead; he is like the first part of the harvest"

those who sleep

Sleep here is a euphemism for death. Alternate translation: "those who have died"

1 Corinthians 15:21

death came by a man

The abstract noun "death" can be expressed with the verb "die." Alternate translation: "people die because of what one man did"

by a man also came the resurrection of the dead

The abstract noun "resurrection" can be expressed with the verb "raise." Alternate translation: "people are raised from the dead because of another man" or "people will become alive again because of what one man did"

1 Corinthians 15:22

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 15:23

who is the firstfruits

Here "firstfruits" is a metaphor, comparing Christ to the first of the harvest, which would be followed by the rest of the harvest. Christ was the first to be raised from the dead. Alternate translation: "who is like the first part of the harvest"

1 Corinthians 15:24

General Information:

Here the word "he" refers to Christ.

he will abolish all rule and all authority and power
 "he will stop those people who rule, who have authority, and who have power, from doing what they are doing"

1 Corinthians 15:25

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet

Possible meanings are 1) all occurrences of "he" and "his" refer to Christ or 2) "For Christ must reign until God the Father has put all Christ's enemies under Christ's feet"

until he has put all his enemies under his feet
 Kings who won wars would put their feet on the necks of those whom they had defeated to their power over their enemies. Alternate translation: "until he has put all his enemies under his power"

1 Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy to be destroyed is death
 Paul speaks of death here as if it were a person who will be killed. The passive verb can be stated as active. Possible meanings are 1) Christ will destroy death or 2) God the Father will destroy death. Alternate translation: "The final enemy that he will destroy is death itself"

1 Corinthians 15:27

he has put everything under his feet
 Possible meanings are 1) "God the Father has put everything under Christ's feet" or 2) "Christ has put everything under his own feet"

put everything under his feet
 Kings who won wars would put their feet on the necks of those whom they had defeated to show they have power over their enemies. See how "put ... under his feet" is translated in [1 Corinthians 15:25]

this does not include the one who put everything in subjection under him
 "this does not include God the Father, who put everything in subjection under the Son"

1 Corinthians 15:28

all things are subjected under him
 This can be stated as active. Alternate translation: "God the Father has made all things subject to the Son"

the Son himself will be subjected
 This can be stated as active. Alternate translation: "the Son himself will become subject"

the Son himself
 In the previous verses he was referred to as "Christ." Alternate translation: "Christ, that is, the Son himself,"

Son
 This is an important title that describes the relationship between Jesus and God.

1 Corinthians 15:29

Or else what will those do who are baptized for the dead?
 Paul uses this question to teach the Corinthians. It can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Otherwise it would be useless for Christians to receive baptism for the dead."

If the dead are not raised at all, why are they baptized for them?
 Paul uses this question to argue that the dead are raised. Apparently some people, probably some members of the church in Corinth, were being baptized for the dead. Paul infers that those people did so because they believed that the dead would be raised.

If the dead are not raised at all
 This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "If God does not raise the dead at all"

are not raised
 "are not caused to live again"

why are they baptized for them?
 Paul uses this question to teach the Corinthians. It can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "there would be no reason for them to have people baptize them on behalf of dead people."

1 Corinthians 15:30

Why then are we in danger every hour?
 Paul uses this question to teach the Corinthians. The reason he and others were in danger is that some people were angry that they taught that Jesus will raise people from death. Alternate translation: "If people will not rise from the dead, we gain nothing by being in danger every hour for teaching that people will rise."

1 Corinthians 15:31

I die every day!
 This exaggeration means he was in danger of dying. He knew that some people wanted to kill him because they did not like what he was teaching. Alternate translation: "Every day I am in danger of dying" or "Every day I risk my life!"

This is as sure as my boasting in you
 Paul uses this statement as evidence that he faces death every day. Alternate translation: "You can

know that this is true, because you know about my boasting in you" or "You can know that this is true, because you know about how much I boast in you"

my boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord

Paul boasted in them because of what Christ Jesus had done for them. Alternate translation: "my boasting in you, which I do because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done for you"

my boasting in you

"the way I tell other people how good you are"

1 Corinthians 15:32

What do I gain ... if I fought with beasts at Ephesus ... not raised?

Paul wants the Corinthians to understand without him having to tell them. This can be a statement. Alternate translation: "I gained nothing ... by fighting with beasts at Ephesus ... not raised."

I fought with beasts at Ephesus

Paul is referring to something that he actually did. Possible meanings are 1) Paul was speaking figuratively about his arguments with learned pagans or other conflicts with people who wanted to kill him or 2) he was actually put into the arena to fight against dangerous animals.

Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die

Paul concludes that if there is no further life after death, it is better for us to enjoy this life as we can, for tomorrow our life will end without any further hope.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Bad company corrupts good morals

If you live with bad people, you will act like them. Paul is quoting a common saying.

1 Corinthians 15:34

Sober up

"You must think seriously about this"

1 Corinthians 15:35

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives some specifics about how the resurrection of the believers' bodies will take place. He gives a picture of natural and spiritual bodies (15:36-44) and compares the first man Adam with the last Adam, Christ (15:45-49).

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised, and with what kind of body will they come?"

Possible meanings are 1) The person is asking sincerely or 2) the person is using the question to mock the idea of a resurrection. Alternate translation: "But some will say that they cannot

imagine how God will raise the dead, and what kind of body God would give them in the resurrection."

someone will say

"someone will ask"

with what kind of body will they come

That is, will it be a physical body or a spiritual body? What shape will the body have? What will the body be made of? Translate using the most general question that someone who wants to know the answers to these questions would ask.

1 Corinthians 15:36

You fool! What you sow

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so both instances of "you" here are singular.

fool

"unthinking person." Paul is accusing them of not thinking carefully, He is not accusing them of moral error.

What you sow will not come to life unless it dies

A seed will not grow unless it is first buried underground. In the same way, a person has to die before God can resurrect him.

1 Corinthians 15:37

What you sow is not the body that will be

Paul uses the metaphor of the seed again to say that God will resurrect the dead body of the believer, but that body will not appear as it was.

What you sow

Paul is speaking to the Corinthians as if they were one person, so the word "you" here is singular.

1 Corinthians 15:38

God will give it a body as he chooses

"God will decide what kind of body it will have"

1 Corinthians 15:39

Not all flesh is the same ... there is one flesh ... another flesh

"Not all kinds of bodies are the same ... there is one kind of body ... another kind of body"

1 Corinthians 15:40

heavenly bodies

"bodies in the sky"

earthly bodies

"bodies on the earth." This refers to the kinds of bodies mentioned in 15:41.

the glory of the heavenly body is one kind and the glory of the earthly is another

"the glory that the bodies in the sky have is different from the glory that the bodies on the earth have"

glory

Possible meanings are 1) "brightness" or "radiance" or 2) "beauty" or "splendor"

1 Corinthians 15:41

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 15:42

What is sown ... what is raised

The writer speaks of a person's body being buried as if it were a seed that is planted in the ground. And he speaks of a person's body being raised from the dead as if it were a plant growing from the seed. The passive verbs can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "What goes into the ground ... what comes out of the ground" or "What people bury ... what God raises"

is raised

"is caused to live again"

is perishable ... is imperishable

"can rot ... cannot rot"

1 Corinthians 15:43

It is sown ... it is raised

The writer speaks of a person's body being buried as if it were a seed that is planted in the ground. And he speaks of a person's body being raised from the dead as if it were a plant growing from the seed. The passive verbs can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "It goes into the ground ... it comes out of the ground" or "People bury it ... God raises it"

1 Corinthians 15:44

It is sown ... it is raised

The writer speaks of a person's body being buried as if it were a seed that is planted in the ground. And he speaks of a person's body being raised from the dead as if it were a plant growing from the seed. The passive verbs can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "It goes into the ground ... it comes out of the ground" or "People bury it ... God raises it"

1 Corinthians 15:45

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 Corinthians 15:46

But the spiritual did not come first but the natural, and then the spiritual

"The natural being came first. The spiritual being is from God and came later."

natural

created by earthly processes, not yet connected to God

1 Corinthians 15:47

The first man is of the earth, made of dust

God made the first man, Adam, from the dust of the earth.

dust

dirt

1 Corinthians 15:48

the man of heaven

Jesus Christ

those who are of heaven

"those who belong to God"

1 Corinthians 15:49

we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven

"we have been just like the man of dust, we will also be just like the man of heaven"

1 Corinthians 15:50

Connecting Statement:

Paul wants the Corinthians to realize that some believers will not die physically but will still get a resurrected body through Christ's victory.

flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Neither does what is perishable inherit what is imperishable

Possible meanings are 1) the two sentences mean the same thing. Alternate translation: "human beings who will surely die cannot inherit the permanent kingdom of God" or 2) the second sentence finishes the thought begun by the first. Alternate translation: "weak human beings cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither can those who will certainly die inherit a kingdom that will last forever"

flesh and blood

Those who inhabit a body that is doomed to die.

inherit

Receiving what God has promised believers is spoken of as if property and wealth were being inherited from a family member.

is perishable ... is imperishable

"can rot ... cannot rot." See how these words are translated in 1 Corinthians 15:42.

1 Corinthians 15:51

We will not all sleep

Sleep here is a euphemism for death. Alternate translation: "We will not all die"

we will all be changed

This can be stated as active. Alternate translation: "God will change us all"

1 Corinthians 15:52

We will be changed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will change us"

in the twinkling of an eye

It will happen as fast as it takes for a person to blink his or her eye.

at the last trumpet

"when the last trumpet sounds"

the dead will be raised

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will raise the dead"

raised

"caused to live again"

imperishable

"in a form that cannot rot." See how a similar phrase is translated in 1 Corinthians 15:42.

1 Corinthians 15:53

this perishable body ... is imperishable

"this body that can rot ... cannot rot." See how similar phrases are translated in 1 Corinthians 15:42.

must put on

Paul is speaking of God making our bodies so they will never die again as if God were putting new clothes on us.

1 Corinthians 15:54

when this perishable body has put on what is imperishable

Here the body is spoken of as if it were a person, and becoming imperishable is spoken of as if being

imperishable were clothing that a body would wear. Alternate translation: "when this perishable body has become imperishable" or "when this body that can rot can no longer rot"

when this mortal body has put on immortality

Here the body is spoken of as if it were a person, and becoming immortal is spoken of as if being immortal was clothing that a body would wear.

Alternate translation: "when this mortal body has become immortal" or "when this body that can die can no longer die"

1 Corinthians 15:55

Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?

Paul speaks as if death were a person, and he uses this question to mock the power of death, which Christ has defeated. Alternate translation: "Death has no victory. Death has no sting."

your ... your

These are singular.

1 Corinthians 15:56

The sting of death is sin

It is through sin that we are destined to face death, that is, to die.

the power of sin is the law

God's law that was passed down by Moses defines sin and shows us how we sin before God.

1 Corinthians 15:57

gives us the victory

"has defeated death for us"

1 Corinthians 15:58

Connecting Statement:

Paul wants believers, while they work for the Lord, to remember the changed, resurrected bodies that God is going to give them.

be steadfast and immovable

Paul speaks of someone who lets nothing stop him from doing what he has decided to do as if he could not be physically moved. Alternate translation: "be determined"

Always abound in the work of the Lord

Paul speaks of efforts made in working for the Lord as if they were objects that a person could acquire more of. Alternate translation: "Always work for the Lord faithfully"

Chapter 16

¹ Now concerning the collection for God's holy people: as I instructed the churches of Galatia, so you are to do. ² On the first day of the week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper. Do this so that there will be no collections when I come. ³ When I arrive, to whomever you approve, I will give letters of introduction to them and will send them with your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it is appropriate for me to go also, they will go with me. ⁵ But I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia. For I will pass through Macedonia. ⁶ Perhaps I may stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my way, wherever I go. ⁷ For I do not wish to see you now for only a passing visit. For I hope to spend more time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ for a wide door has opened for me, and there are many adversaries.

¹⁰ Now when Timothy comes, see that he is with you unafraid, for he is laboring at the work of the Lord, as I am doing. ¹¹ Let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me. For I am expecting him to come along with the brothers. ¹² Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly encouraged him to visit you with the brothers. But it was not at all his will that he come now. However, he will come when the time is right.

¹³ Be watchful, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.

¹⁵ You know the household of Stephanas, that they were the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of God's holy people. Now I urge you, brothers, ¹⁶ to be in submission to such people and to everyone who helps in the work and labors with us. ¹⁷ I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. They have made up for your absence. ¹⁸ For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. So then, acknowledge people like them.

¹⁹ The churches of Asia send greetings to you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you in the Lord, with the church that is in their home. ²⁰ All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

²¹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand. ²² If anyone does not love the Lord, may he be accursed. Our Lord, come! ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴ My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. ^[1]

Footnotes

16:24 ^[1] A few important and ancient Greek copies and some ancient translations have

1 Corinthians 16 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul briefly covers many topics in this chapter. It was common in the ancient Near East for the last part of letters to have personal greetings.

Special concepts in this chapter

Preparation for his coming

Paul gives practical instructions to help prepare the Corinthian church for his visit. He tells them to start collecting money every Sunday for the believers in Jerusalem. He hopes to come and spend the winter with them. He tells them to help Timothy when he comes. He had hopes Apollos would go to them, but Apollos did not think it was the right time. Paul also tells them to obey Stephanus. Finally, he sends his greetings to everyone.

1 Corinthians 16:1

Connecting Statement:

In his closing notes, Paul reminds the Corinthian believers to collect money for the needy believers in Jerusalem.

for God's holy people

Paul was collecting money from his churches for the poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and Judea.

1 Corinthians 16:2

store it up

Possible meanings are: 1) "keep it at home" or 2) "leave it with the church"

as he may prosper

"according to how he prospers" or "according to how much he earns"

so that there will be no collections when I come

"so that you will not have to collect more money while I am with you"

1 Corinthians 16:3

to whomever you approve, I will give letters of introduction to them and will send them

Some modern translations read, "to whomever you have approved by letter of introduction, I will send"

1 Corinthians 16:4

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 16:5

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 16:6

you may help me on my way

This means they might give Paul money or other things he needs so that he and his ministry team could continue to travel.

1 Corinthians 16:7

I hope to spend more time with you, if the Lord permits

Paul wanted to see the believers in Corinth, but he did not know if he actually would be able to do that. Alternate translation: "I expect to spend more time with you, if the Lord permits" or "I plan to spend more time with you, if the Lord permits"

1 Corinthians 16:8

Pentecost

Paul would stay in Ephesus until this festival, which comes in May or June, 50 days after Passover. He would then travel through Macedonia, and later try to arrive in Corinth before winter started.

1 Corinthians 16:9

a wide door has opened

Paul speaks of the opportunity God has given him to win people to the gospel as if it were a door that God had opened so he could walk through it.

1 Corinthians 16:10

Now

"Now" here marks a change in topic. Here Paul begins to talk about Timothy's visit to Corinth.

see that he is with you unafraid

"see that he has no cause to fear being with you"

1 Corinthians 16:11

Let no one despise him

Because Timothy was much younger than Paul, sometimes he was not shown the respect he deserved as a minister of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 16:12

our brother Apollos

Here the word "our" refers to Paul and his readers, so it is inclusive.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be watchful, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong

Paul is describing what he wants the Corinthians to do as if he were giving four commands to soldiers in war. These four commands mean almost the same thing and are used for emphasis.

Be watchful

Paul speaks of people being aware of what is happening as if they were guards keeping watch over a city or vineyard. This can be stated more clearly. Alternate translation: "Be careful whom you trust" or "Watch out for danger"

stand fast in the faith

Paul speaks of people continuing to believe in Christ according to his teaching as if they were soldiers refusing to retreat when the enemy attacks. Possible meanings are 1) "keep strongly believing what we have taught you" or 2) "keep strongly trusting in Christ"

act like men

In the society in which Paul and his audience lived, men usually provided for families by doing the heavy work and fighting against invaders. This can be stated more clearly. Alternate translation: "be responsible"

1 Corinthians 16:14

Let all that you do be done in love

"Everything you do should show people that you love them"

1 Corinthians 16:15

Connecting Statement:

Paul begins to close his letter and sends greetings from other churches, as well as from Prisca, Aquila, and Paul himself.

household of Stephanas

Stephanas was one of the first believers in the church at Corinth.

the firstfruits of Achaia

"the first people in Achaia to believe in Christ"

Achaia

This is the name of a province in Greece.

1 Corinthians 16:16

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 16:17

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus

These men were either some of the first Corinthian believers or church elders who were co-workers with Paul.

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus

These are men's names.

They have made up for your absence

"They made up for the fact that you were not here."

1 Corinthians 16:18

For they have refreshed my spirit

Paul is saying he was encouraged by their visit.

acknowledge people like them

The word "acknowledge" here might be an understatement. Paul wants the Corinthians to honor Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus

1 Corinthians 16:19

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 16:20

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 16:21

I, Paul, write this with my own hand

Paul was making it clear that the instructions in this letter are from him, even though one of his co-laborers wrote what Paul was saying in the rest of the letter. Paul wrote this last part with his own hand.

1 Corinthians 16:22

may he be accursed

"may God curse him." See how "accursed" was translated in 1 Corinthians 12:3.

1 Corinthians 16:23

General Information:

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1 Corinthians 16:24

General Information:

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Book: 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Chapter 1

¹ 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.

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

³ May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised. He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. ⁴ 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. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ abound for our sake, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ 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. ⁷ Our hope concerning you is unshaken, for we know that as you share the sufferings, you also share our comfort. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

¹² 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. ¹³ We write to you nothing that you cannot read and understand, and I hope that you will fully understand ¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Because I was confident about this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might receive a second favor. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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?

¹⁸ But just as God is faithful, our word to you is not "Yes" and "No." ¹⁹ 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."

²⁰ For all the promises of God are "Yes" in him. So also through him we say "Amen" to the glory of God. ²¹ Now it is God who confirms us with you in Christ, and he anointed us, ²² he set his seal on us and he gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee of what is to come.

²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.

2 Corinthians 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The first paragraph reflects a common way to begin a letter in the ancient Near East.

Special Concepts

Paul's integrity

People were criticizing Paul and saying he was not sincere. He refutes them by explaining his motives for what he was doing.

Comfort

Comfort is a major theme of this chapter. The Holy Spirit comforts Christians. The Corinthians probably were afflicted and needed to be comforted.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical question

Paul uses two rhetorical questions to defend himself against a charge of not being sincere.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

We

Paul uses the pronoun "we". This likely represents at least Timothy and himself. It may also include other people.

Guarantee

Paul says the Holy Spirit is the guarantee, which means pledge or down payment, of a Christian's eternal life. Christians are securely saved. But they will not experience all of God's given promises until after they die. The Holy Spirit is a personal guarantee that this will happen. This idea comes from a business term. A person gives some valuable item to another person as a "guarantee" that they will repay money. (See: eternity and save)

2 Corinthians 1:1

Paul ... to the church of God that is in Corinth

Your language may have a particular way of introducing the author of a letter and its intended audience. Alternate translation: "I, Paul ... wrote this letter to you, the church of God that is in Corinth"

Timothy our brother

This indicates that both Paul and the Corinthians knew Timothy and considered him to be their spiritual brother.

Achaia

This is the name of a Roman province in the southern part of modern-day Greece.

2 Corinthians 1:2

General Information:

The word "you" throughout this letter refers to the people of the church in Corinth and to the rest of the Christians in that area.

May grace be to you and peace

This is a common greeting that Paul uses in his letters.

2 Corinthians 1:3

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort

These two phrases express the same idea in two different ways. Both phrases refer to God.

the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort

Possible meanings are 1) that the words "mercies" and "all comfort" describe the character of "Father" and "God" or 2) that the words "Father" and "God" refer to one who is the source of "mercies" and "all comfort."

2 Corinthians 1:4

comforts us in all our tribulation

Here "us" and "our" include the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 1:5

For just as the sufferings of Christ abound for our sake

Paul speaks of Christ's sufferings as if they were objects that could increase in number. Alternate translation: "For just as Christ suffered greatly for our sake"

the sufferings of Christ

Possible meanings are 1) that this refers to the suffering that Paul and Timothy experience because they preach the message about Christ or 2) that this refers to the suffering that Christ experienced on their behalf.

our comfort abounds

Paul speaks of comfort as if it were an object that could increase in size.

2 Corinthians 1:6

But if we are afflicted

Here the word "we" refers to Paul and Timothy, but not to the Corinthians. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "But if people afflict us"

if we are comforted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "if God comforts us"

Your comfort is working effectively

"You experience effective comfort"

2 Corinthians 1:7

Our hope concerning you is unshaken

Hope is spoken of here as if it were a building that could be shaken and destroyed. Paul means that his hope for the Corinthians is strong and he continues to have hope for them. Alternate translation: "Our hope concerning you is strong" or "We have not stopped having hope for you"

Our hope concerning you is unshaken

Paul was probably hoping that the Corinthian Christians would continue to have faith in God, even though they were suffering, and that they would be comforted. Alternate translation: "We continue to be confident concerning you" or "We continue to confidently expect good for you"

2 Corinthians 1:8

we do not want you to be uninformed

This can be stated in positive terms. Alternate translation: "we want you to know"

We were utterly burdened beyond our strength

The word "burdened" is a metaphor for feeling stressed or overwhelmed. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "We felt so overwhelmed beyond our strength" or "The troubles we had caused us so much more stress than we could handle"

we despaired even of life

"we could not see any way we could stay alive" or "we were sure we would die"

2 Corinthians 1:9

we had the sentence of death on us

Paul and Timothy are comparing their feeling of despair to that of someone condemned to die. Alternate translation: "we were in despair like someone who is condemned to die"

but instead in God

The words "put our trust" are left out of this phrase. Alternate translation: "but instead to put our trust in God"

who raises the dead

Here to raise is an idiom for causing someone who has died to become alive again. Alternate translation: "who causes the dead to live again"

2 Corinthians 1:10

He rescued us from such a deadly peril

"He saved us from such a dangerous situation where we could have died"

On him we have set our hope that he will rescue us

Paul and those with him hoped firmly in God. Alternate translation: "We trust in him to rescue us" or "We confidently expect that he will rescue us"

2 Corinthians 1:11

He will do this as you also help us

"God will rescue us from danger as you, the people of the church of Corinth, also help us"

the favor given to us

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the favor that God has given to us"

2 Corinthians 1:12

General Information:

In this verse Paul uses the words "we," "our," and "ourselves" to refer to himself and Timothy and possibly others who served with them. These words do not include the people he was writing to.

Our boast is this

Paul uses the word "boast" ironically here. Boasting is usually a bad thing, but Paul is confident that he has lived "with integrity and godly sincerity," and he is telling the Corinthians so.

Our conscience testifies

Paul speaks of not being guilty as if his conscience were a person that could speak. Alternate translation: "We know by our conscience"

not relying on fleshly wisdom but on the grace of God

Here "fleshly" represents human. Alternate translation: "not relying on human wisdom but on the grace of God"

2 Corinthians 1:13

We write to you nothing that you cannot read and understand

The double negative here emphasizes the positive. This can be stated in positive terms. Alternate translation: "Everything we write to you is something you can read and understand" or "You can read and understand everything we write to you"

I hope that you will fully understand

Paul wanted them to understand, and he expected that they should be able to understand, but he didn't know for sure if they would. Alternate translation: "I expect that you will fully understand" or "I trust you will fully understand"

2 Corinthians 1:14

General Information:

In this vers Paul uses the word "us" to refer to himself and Timothy and possibly others who served with them. This word does not include the people he was writing to.

you can boast

The word "boast" here is used in the positive sense of feeling great satisfaction and joy in something.

2 Corinthians 1:15

Connecting Statement:

Paul explains his sincere expectation with pure motives to come see the believers in Corinth after his first letter.

Because I was confident about this

The word "this" refers to Paul's previous comments about the Corinthians.

so that you might receive a second favor

Paul hoped to visit the Corinthians two times. Each visit would be a favor to the people. Alternate translation: "so that you might benefit from me visiting you twice"

2 Corinthians 1:16

send me on my way to Judea

"assist me on my way to Judea"

2 Corinthians 1:17

was I hesitating?

Paul uses this question to emphasize he was sure about his decision to visit the Corinthians. The expected answer to the question is no. Alternate translation: "I was not hesitating." or "I was confident in my decision."

Do I plan things according to the flesh ... at the same time?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that his plans to visit the Corinthians were sincere. Alternate translation: "I do not plan things according to the flesh ... at the same time"

the flesh

This phrase is a metonym for the way mortal people do things. Alternate translation: "human standards" or "the way most people act"

Do I plan things ... so that I say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time?

This means that Paul did not say both that he would visit and that he would not visit at the same time. The words "yes" and "no" are repeated for emphasis. Alternate translation: "I do not plan things ... so that I say 'Yes, I will certainly visit' and 'No, I will definitely not visit' at the same time!"

2 Corinthians 1:18

our word to you

"what we say to you"

2 Corinthians 1:19

For the Son of God ... is not "Yes" and "No." Instead, he is always "Yes."

Jesus says "Yes" concerning the promises of God, which means that he guarantees that they are true. Alternate translation: "For the Son of God ... does not say 'Yes' and 'No' concerning God's promises. Instead, he always says 'Yes.'"

the Son of God

This is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God.

2 Corinthians 1:20

all the promises of God are "Yes" in him

This means that Jesus guarantees all of God's promises. Alternate translation: "all the promises of God are guaranteed in Jesus Christ"

"Yes" in him ... through him we say

The word "him" refers to Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:21

God who confirms us with you

Possible meanings are 1) "God who confirms our relationship with each other because we are in Christ" or 2) "God who confirms both our and your relationship with Christ."

he anointed us

Possible meanings are 1) "he sent us to preach the gospel" or 2) "he chose us to be his people."

2 Corinthians 1:22

he set his seal on us

Paul speaks of God showing that we belong to him as if God had put a mark on us as a sign that we belong to him. Alternate translation: "he has put his mark of ownership on us" or "he has shown that we belong to him"

gave us the Spirit in our hearts

The word "heart" is often used to refer to the innermost part of a person. Alternate translation: "gave us the Spirit to live within each of us"

the Spirit ... as a guarantee

The Spirit is spoken of as if he were a partial downpayment toward eternal life.

2 Corinthians 1:23

as witness to my soul

The word "soul" here is a metonym for the whole person. Alternate translation: "as witness for me" or "to testify for me"

so that I might spare you

"so that I might not cause you more suffering"

2 Corinthians 1:24

be lords over your faith

"control what your faith should be" or "control what you believe"

we are fellow laborers with you for your joy

"we are working with you so that you may have joy"

stand firm in your faith

The word "stand" can refer to not changing.
Alternate translation: "remain firm in your faith"

Chapter 2

¹ So I decided for my own part that I would not again come to you in sorrow. ² If I caused you sorrow, who could make me glad but the very one who was made sorrowful by me? ³ 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. ⁴ 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.

⁵ 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. ⁶ This punishment of that person by the majority is enough. ⁷ So now rather than punish him, you should forgive and comfort him. Do this so that he is not overwhelmed by too much sorrow. ⁸ So I exhort you to confirm your love for him. ⁹ This was the reason I wrote, so that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ This is so that Satan will not trick us. For we are not ignorant of his schemes.

¹² A door was opened to me by the Lord when I came to the city of Troas to preach the gospel of Christ there. ¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ For we are to God the sweet aroma of Christ, both among those who are saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ 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? ¹⁷ 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.

2 Corinthians 2 General Notes

Special Concepts

Harsh writing

In this chapter, Paul refers to a letter he previously wrote to the Corinthians. Some scholars believe this refers to the letter known as First Corinthians. Other scholars believe this refers to a letter Paul wrote after the letter known as First Corinthians and before this letter. In either case, Paul had told the church to rebuke an erring member. Paul is now encouraging them to be gracious to that person.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Aroma

A sweet aroma is a pleasing smell. Scripture often describes things that are pleasing to God as having a pleasing aroma.

2 Corinthians 2:1

Connecting Statement:

Because of his great love for them, Paul makes it clear that his rebuke in a previous letter to them caused him pain as well as pain to the church people in Corinth and the immoral man.

I decided for my own part
"I made the decision"

in sorrow

Possible meanings are 1) this is a metonym that refers to causing the Corinthians sorrow. Alternate translation: "in a way that would cause you sorrow" or 2) this refers to Paul's own sorrow. Alternate translation: "while I am sorrowful"

sorrow

great sadness

2 Corinthians 2:2

If I caused you sorrow, who could make me glad but the very one who was made sorrowful by me?

Paul uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that neither he nor they would benefit if his coming to them would cause them pain. Alternate translation: "If I caused you sorrow, the only ones who could make me glad would be the very ones whom I had made sorrowful."

sorrow ... sorrowful

See how you translated "sorrow" in 2 Corinthians 2:1.

the very one who was made sorrowful by me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the very one whom I had hurt"

2 Corinthians 2:3

I wrote as I did

Paul is referring to a letter he wrote previously to the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "I wrote as I did in my previous letter"

I might not be hurt by those who should have made me rejoice

Paul is speaking about the behavior of certain Corinthian believers who caused him emotional pain. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "those who should have made me rejoice might not hurt me"

my joy is the same joy you all have

"what gives me joy is what gives you joy, too"

2 Corinthians 2:4

from great tribulation

Here the word "tribulation" refers to emotional pain.

with anguish of heart

Here the word "heart" refers to the location of the emotions. Alternate translation: "with extreme sorrow"

with many tears

"with much crying"

2 Corinthians 2:5

not to burden you

The "burden" here is the message. Possible meanings are 1) Paul does not want to say words that will make the Corinthians sad. Alternate translation: "not to say this too harshly" Or 2) Paul does not want to say more than is true. Alternate translation: "not to exaggerate"

2 Corinthians 2:6

This punishment of that person by the majority is enough

This can be stated in active form. The word "punishment" can be translated using a verb. Alternate translation: "The way that the majority has punished that person is enough"

is enough

"is sufficient"

2 Corinthians 2:7

he is not overwhelmed by too much sorrow

This means to have a strong emotional response of too much sorrow. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "too much sorrow does not overwhelm him"

2 Corinthians 2:8

Connecting Statement:

Paul encourages the church in Corinth to show love and to forgive the person they have punished. He writes that he, also, has forgiven him.

confirm your love for him

"show him that you truly love him"

2 Corinthians 2:9

you are obedient in everything

Possible meanings are 1) "you are obedient to God in everything" or 2) "you are obedient in everything that I have taught you"

2 Corinthians 2:10

it is forgiven for your sake

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I have forgiven it for your sake"

forgiven for your sake

Possible meanings are 1) "forgiven out of my love for you" or 2) "forgiven for your benefit."

2 Corinthians 2:11

For we are not ignorant of his schemes

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "For we know his schemes well"

2 Corinthians 2:12

Connecting Statement:

Paul encourages the believers in Corinth by telling them of the opportunities he has had to preach the gospel in Troas and Macedonia.

A door was opened to me by the Lord ... to preach the gospel

Paul speaks of his opportunity to preach the gospel as if it were a door through which he was allowed to walk. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "The Lord opened a door to me ... to preach the gospel" or "The Lord gave me the opportunity ... to preach the gospel"

2 Corinthians 2:13

I had no relief in my spirit

"My mind was troubled" or "I was worried"

my brother Titus

Paul speaks of Titus as his spiritual brother.

So I left them

"So I left the people of Troas"

2 Corinthians 2:14

God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph

Paul speaks of God as if he were a victorious general leading a victory parade, and of himself and his coworkers as those who take part in that parade. Possible meanings are 1) Paul and his coworkers are being led as prisoners in the parade. Alternate translation: "God, who leads us as prisoners in Christ's victory parade" or 2) Paul and his coworkers are led as victorious soldiers in the parade. Alternate translation: "God, who leads us as victorious soldiers in Christ's triumphal parade"

Through us he reveals the sweet aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere

Paul speaks of people learning about Christ from Paul and his companions as if they were smoke from incense that has a pleasing smell spreading around so people could smell it. He mixes his metaphor by saying that God "reveals" that pleasing smell. Alternate translation: "He causes the knowledge of Christ to spread to everyone who hears us, just as the sweet smell of burning incense spreads to everyone near it"

everywhere

"everywhere we go"

2 Corinthians 2:15

we are to God the sweet aroma of Christ

Paul speaks of his ministry as if it were an offering or incense that was being burned, creating a pleasant smell to God.

the sweet aroma of Christ

Possible meanings are 1) "the sweet aroma which is the knowledge of Christ" or 2) "the sweet aroma that Christ offers."

those who are saved

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "those whom God has saved"

2 Corinthians 2:16

it is an aroma

"the knowledge of Christ is an aroma." This refers back to [2 Corinthians 2:14]

an aroma from death to death

Possible meanings are 1) that the word "death" is repeated for emphasis and the phrase means "an aroma that causes death" or 2) "an aroma of death that causes people to die"

the ones being saved

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the ones whom God is saving"

aroma from life to life

Possible meanings are 1) that the word "life" is repeated for emphasis and the phrase means "an aroma that gives life" or 2) "an aroma of life that gives people life"

Who is worthy of these things?

"Who is qualified to do these things?" The phrase "these things" refers to preaching God's message about Christ. Paul uses a rhetorical question to express amazement that anyone could be worthy of doing this. Alternate translation: "Who is worthy to spread the knowledge of Christ?" or "It is amazing that anyone is worthy of these things!"

2 Corinthians 2:17

who sell the word of God

"Word" here is a metonym for "message." Alternate translation: "who sell God's message"

purity of motives

"pure motives"

we speak in Christ

"we speak as people who are joined to Christ" or "we speak with the authority of Christ"

as we are sent from God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "as people whom God has sent"

in the sight of God

This represents the presence of God. Paul and his coworkers preach the gospel with the awareness that God is watching them. Alternate translation: "speaking in the presence of God"

Chapter 3

¹ Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? We do not need letters of recommendation to you or from you, like some people, do we? ² You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, known and read by all people. ³ 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. ⁴ And this is the confidence that we have through Christ before God. ⁵ We are not competent in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us. Rather, our competence is from God. ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ How much more glorious will the ministry of the Spirit be? ⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, how much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory! ¹⁰ For indeed, that which was once made glorious is no longer glorious in this respect, because of the glory that exceeds it. ¹¹ For if that which was passing away had glory, how much more will what is permanent have glory!

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ But even today, whenever Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But when a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ 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.

2 Corinthians 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul continues his defense. Paul views the Corinthian Christians as the proof of his work.

Special concepts in this chapter

Law of Moses

Paul alludes to God giving the Ten Commandments on stone tablets. This represents the law of Moses. The law was good because it came from God. But God punished the Israelites because they disobeyed it. This chapter may be difficult for translators to understand if the Old Testament has not yet been translated. (See: lawofmoses and covenant and reveal)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

Paul uses many metaphors in this chapter to explain complex spiritual truths. It is unclear whether this makes Paul's teachings easier or more difficult to understand.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"This is a covenant not of the letter but of the Spirit."

Paul contrasts the old and new covenants. The new covenant is not a system of rules and regulations. Here "Spirit" probably refers to the Holy Spirit. It may also refer to the new covenant being "spiritual" in nature. (See: spirit)

2 Corinthians 3:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Corinthians that he is not boasting as he tells them about what he has done through Christ.

Are we beginning to praise ourselves again?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that they are not bragging about themselves. Alternate translation: "We are not beginning to praise ourselves again."

We do not need letters of recommendation to you or from you, like some people, do we?

Paul says this to express that the Corinthians already know about Paul and Timothy's good reputation. The question prompts a negative answer. Alternate translation: "We certainly do not need letters of recommendation to you or from you, like some people do."

letters of recommendation

This is a letter that a person writes to introduce and give their approval of someone else.

2 Corinthians 3:2

General Information:

Paul begins an extended metaphor that speaks of the way that the Corinthians have been obeying Christ as if it were a letter that Christ had written first to Paul and his companions and then to all the people in the world.

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation

Paul speaks of the Corinthians as if they are a letter of recommendation. That they have become believers serves to validate Paul's ministry to others. Alternate translation: "You yourselves are like our letter of recommendation"

written on our hearts

Here the word "hearts" refers to their thoughts and emotions. Possible meanings are 1) Paul and his coworkers are sure about the Corinthians being their letter of recommendation or 2) Paul and his coworkers care very deeply for the Corinthians.

written on our hearts

This can be stated in active form with "Christ" as the implied subject. Alternate translation: "which Christ has written on our hearts"

known and read by all people

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "that all people can know and read"

2 Corinthians 3:3

General Information:

Paul continues the extended metaphor that he began in [2 Corinthians 3:2]

you are a letter from Christ

Paul clarifies that Christ is the one who has written the letter. Alternate translation: "you are a letter that Christ has written"

the result of our ministry

Because of the work Paul and his companions had done, the world could look at the Corinthians and see how Christ blesses people in this life. Some modern translations read, "delivered by us."

It was written not with ink ... on tablets of human hearts

Paul clarifies that the Corinthians are like a spiritual letter, not like a letter that humans write with physical objects.

It was written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "It was written not with ink but it was written by the Spirit of the living God" or "It is not a letter that people wrote with ink but a letter that the Spirit of the living God wrote"

It was not written on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "It is not a letter that people engraved on stone tablets but a letter that the Spirit of the living God wrote on tablets of human hearts"

tablets of human hearts

Paul speaks of their hearts as if they are flat pieces of stone or clay upon which people engraved letters.

2 Corinthians 3:4

this is the confidence

This refers to what Paul has just said. His confidence comes from knowing that the Corinthians are the validation of his ministry before God.

2 Corinthians 3:5

competent in ourselves

"qualified in ourselves" or "sufficient in ourselves"

to claim anything as coming from us

Here the word "anything" refers to anything pertaining to Paul's apostolic ministry. Alternate translation: "to claim that anything we have done in ministry comes from our own efforts"

our competence is from God

"God gives us our sufficiency"

2 Corinthians 3:6

a covenant not of the letter

Here the word "letter" means letters of the alphabet and refers to words that people write

down. The phrase alludes to the Old Testament law. Alternate translation: "a covenant not based on commands that men have written"

but of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the one who establishes God's covenant with people. Alternate translation: "but a covenant of the Spirit" or "but a covenant based on what the Spirit does"

the letter kills

Paul speaks of the Old Testament law as a person who kills. Following that law leads to spiritual death. Alternate translation: "the written law leads to death"

2 Corinthians 3:7

Connecting Statement:

Paul contrasts the fading glory of the old covenant with the superiority and freedom of the new covenant. He contrasts the veil of Moses with the clarity of present revelation. During the time of Moses there was a less clear picture of what is now revealed.

Now the ministry of death ... came in such glory

Paul emphasizes that although the law leads to death, it was still very glorious.

the ministry of death

This refers to the Old Testament law that God gave through Moses. Alternate translation: "the ministry that causes people to die because it is based on the law"

engraved in letters on stones

"carved in letters on stone." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "that God carved in letters on stone"

in such glory

"in so much glory"

This is because

"They could not look because"

2 Corinthians 3:8

How much more glorious will the ministry of the Spirit be?

Paul uses this question to emphasize that "the service that the ministry of the Spirit" must be more glorious than "the ministry of death" [2 Corinthians 3:7]

the ministry of the Spirit

This refers to the new covenant, of which Paul is a minister. Alternate translation: "the ministry that gives life because it is based on the Spirit"

2 Corinthians 3:9

the ministry of condemnation

"the ministry of condemnation." This refers to the Old Testament law. Alternate translation: "the ministry that condemns people because it is based on the law"

how much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory!

Here the word "how" marks this phrase as an exclamation, not as a question. Alternate translation: "then the ministry of righteousness must abound in so much more glory!"

the ministry of righteousness abound in glory

Paul speaks of "the ministry of righteousness" as if it were an object that could produce or multiply another object. He means that "the ministry of righteousness" is far more glorious than the law, which also had glory.

the ministry of righteousness

This refers to the new covenant, of which Paul is a minister. Alternate translation: "the ministry that makes people righteous because it is based on the Spirit"

2 Corinthians 3:10

that which was once made glorious is no longer glorious ... because of the glory that exceeds it

The Old Testament law no longer appears glorious when compared with the new covenant, which is much more glorious.

that which was once made glorious

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the law which God once made glorious"

in this respect

"in this way"

2 Corinthians 3:11

that which was passing away

This refers to "the service of condemnation," which Paul speaks of as if it were an object capable of disappearing. Alternate translation: "that which was becoming useless"

2 Corinthians 3:12

Since we have such a hope

This hope is a confident hope. It refers to what Paul has just said. His hope comes from knowing that the new covenant leads to an eternal glory. Alternate translation: "Since we confidently expect this" or "Since we confidently wait to receive this glory"

such a hope
"such confidence"

2 Corinthians 3:13

the ending of a glory that was passing away
The refers to the glory that shined on Moses's face. Alternate translation: "the glory on Moses's face as it faded away completely"

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were hardened
Paul speaks of the minds of the Israelite people as objects that could be made hard. This expression means that they were unable to understand what they saw. Alternate translation: "But the Israelites could not understand what they saw"

For to this day
to the time at which Paul was writing to the Corinthians

when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains
Just as the Israelites could not see the glory on Moses's face because he covered his face with a veil, there is a spiritual veil that prevents people from understanding when they read the old covenant.

when they read the old covenant
"when they hear someone read the old covenant"

It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away
Here both occurrences of the word "it" refer to "the same veil." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "No one removes the veil, because only in Christ does God remove it"

2 Corinthians 3:15

But even today
This phrase refers to the time at which Paul was writing to the Corinthians.

whenever Moses is read
Here the word "Moses" refers to the Old Testament law. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "whenever someone reads the Mosaic law"

a veil covers their hearts
Here the word "hearts" represents what people think, and the people being unable to understand the old covenant is spoken of as if they have a veil that covers their hearts the way a physical veil would cover their eyes. Alternate translation: "they are unable to understand what they are hearing"

2 Corinthians 3:16

when a person turns to the Lord
Here "turns to" is a metaphor that means to become loyal to someone. Alternate translation: "when a person starts to worship the Lord" or "when a person starts to trust in the Lord"

the veil is taken away
God gives them the ability to understand. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God lifts the veil away" or "God gives them the ability to understand"

2 Corinthians 3:17

General Information:
This page has intentionally been left blank.

2 Corinthians 3:18

Now all of us
Here the word "us" refers to all believers, including Paul and the Corinthians.

with unveiled faces, see the glory of the Lord
Unlike the Israelites who could not see God's glory reflected on Moses's face because he had covered it with a veil, there is nothing to prevent believers from seeing and understanding God's glory.

We are being transformed into the same glorious likeness
The Spirit is changing believers to be glorious like him. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "The Lord is transforming us into his same glorious likeness"

from one degree of glory into another
"from one amount of glory to another amount of glory." This means that the Spirit is constantly increasing the glory of believers.

just as from the Lord
"just as this comes from the Lord"

Chapter 4

¹ Therefore, because we have this ministry, and just as we have received mercy, we do not become discouraged. ² 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. ³ But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ 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. ⁵ For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ 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.

⁷ 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. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not overwhelmed. We are perplexed but not filled with despair. ⁹ We are persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹ 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. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ So we do not become discouraged. Even though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal burden of glory that exceeds all measurement. ¹⁸ 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.

2 Corinthians 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter begins with the word "therefore." This connects it to what the previous chapter teaches. How these chapters are divided may be confusing to the reader.

Special concepts in this chapter

Ministry

Paul ministers to people by telling them about Christ. He does not try to trick people into believing. If they do not understand the gospel, it is because the problem is ultimately spiritual. (See: spirit)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Light and darkness

The Bible often speaks of unrighteous people, people who do not do what pleases God, as if they were walking around in darkness. It speaks of light as if it were what enables those sinful people to become righteous, to understand what they are doing wrong and begin to obey God. (See: righteous)

Life and death

Paul does not refer here to physical life and death. Life represents the new life a Christian has in Jesus. Death represents the old way of living before believing in Jesus. (See: life and death and faith)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Hope

Paul uses a repeated pattern in a purposeful way. He makes a statement. Then he denies a seemingly opposite or contradictory statement or gives an exception. Together these give the reader hope in difficult circumstances. (See: hope)

2 Corinthians 4:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul writes that he is honest in his ministry by preaching Christ, not praising himself. He shows the death and the life of Jesus in how he lives so that life can work in the Corinthian believers.

we have this ministry

Here the word "we" refers to Paul and his coworker, but not to the Corinthians.

and just as we have received mercy

This phrase explains how Paul and his coworkers "have this ministry." It is a gift that God has given to them through his mercy. Alternate translation: "because God has shown us mercy"

2 Corinthians 4:2

we have rejected secret and shameful ways

This means that Paul and his coworkers refuse to do "secret and shameful" things. It does not mean that they had done these things in the past.

secret and shameful ways

The word "secret" describes the things that people do secretly. Things that are shameful should cause people who do them to feel ashamed. Alternate translation: "the things that people do secretly because they cause shame"

walk in craftiness

The word "walk" is a metaphor for the way a person lives his life. Alternate translation: "live by deceiving people"

we do not mishandle the word of God

The phrase "word of God" here is a metonym for the message from God. The words "we do not mishandle" use two negative thoughts to express a positive thought. Alternate translation: "we handle God's message correctly" or "we use the word of God properly"

we recommend ourselves to everyone's conscience

This means that they provide enough evidence for each person who hears them to decide whether they are right or wrong.

in the sight of God

This refers to God's presence. God's understanding and approval of Paul's truthfulness is referred to as God being able to see them. Alternate translation: "before God" or "with God as witness"

2 Corinthians 4:3

But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing

This refers back to what Paul said starting in [2 Corinthians 3:14]

if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "if a veil covers our gospel, that veil covers it"

our gospel

"the gospel that we preach"

2 Corinthians 4:4

the god of this world has blinded their unbelieving minds

Paul speaks of their minds as if they had eyes, and their inability to understand as their minds being unable to see. Alternate translation: "the god of this world has prevented unbelievers from understanding"

the god of this world

"the god who rules this world." This phrase refers to Satan.

they are not able to see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ

As the Israelites could not see God's glory that shined on Moses's face because he covered it with a veil (2 Corinthians 3:13), unbelievers are not able to see Christ's glory that shines in the gospel. This means that they are unable to understand "the gospel of the glory of Christ"

the light of the gospel

"the light that comes from the gospel"

the gospel of the glory of Christ

"the gospel about Christ's glory"

2 Corinthians 4:5

but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants

You can supply the verb for these phrases. Alternate translation: "but we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and we proclaim ourselves as your servants"

for Jesus' sake

"because of Jesus"

2 Corinthians 4:6

Light will shine out of darkness

With this sentence, Paul refers to God creating light, as described in the book of Genesis.

He has shone ... to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God

Here the word "light" refers to the ability to understand. Just as God created light, he also creates understanding for believers. Alternate translation: "He has shone ... to enable us to understand the glory of God"

in our hearts

Here the word "hearts" refers to the mind and thoughts. Alternate translation: "in our minds"

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the presence

"the light, which is the knowledge of the glory of God, in the presence"

the glory of God in the presence of Jesus Christ

"the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Just as God's glory shone upon Moses's face (2 Corinthians 3:7), it also shines upon Jesus's face. This means that when Paul preaches the gospel, people are able to see and understand the message about God's glory.

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have

Here the word "we" refers to Paul and his coworkers, but not to the Corinthians.

we have this treasure in jars of clay

Paul speaks of the gospel as if it were a treasure and their bodies as if they were breakable jars made out of clay. This emphasizes that they are of little value compared to the worth of the gospel that they preach.

so that it is clear

"so that it is clear to people" or "so that people clearly know"

2 Corinthians 4:8

We are afflicted in every way

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "People afflict us in every way"

2 Corinthians 4:9

We are persecuted but not abandoned

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "People persecute us, but God does not abandon us" or "People persecute us, but God does not stop caring for us"

abandoned; struck down but not destroyed

This can be stated in active form and as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "abandoned. People strike us down but do not destroy us"

struck down

"hurt badly"

2 Corinthians 4:10

always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus

Paul speaks of his sufferings as if they are an experience of the death of Jesus. Alternate translation: "often in danger of dying, as Jesus died"

or "always suffering in such a way that we experience the death of Jesus"

the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body

This can be stated in active form. Possible meanings are 1) "people can see that we will live in bodies again because Jesus is alive" or 2) "we can show other people in our bodies the spiritual life that Jesus gives."

2 Corinthians 4:11

we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake

Carrying the death of Jesus represents being in danger of dying because of being loyal to Jesus. Alternate translation: "God is always leading those of us who are alive to face death because we are joined to Jesus" or "People are always causing us who are alive to be in danger of dying because we are joined to Jesus"

so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so that God may reveal the life of Jesus in our mortal flesh"

the life of Jesus may be revealed

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is referring to the life that Jesus lives. Alternate translation: "God may reveal that Jesus is alive" 2) Paul is referring to the life that Jesus gives to his people. Alternate translation: "God may reveal the life that Jesus gives to his people"

our mortal flesh

Paul is referring to our physical bodies, which will die someday.

2 Corinthians 4:12

death is at work in us, but life is at work in you

Paul speaks of death and life as if they are persons who can work. This means that they are always in danger of physical death so that the Corinthians can have spiritual life.

2 Corinthians 4:13

the same spirit of faith

"the same attitude of faith." Here the word "spirit" refers a person's attitude and temperament.

according to that which was written

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "as the one who wrote these words"

I believed, and so I spoke

This is a quote from the Psalms.

2 Corinthians 4:14

that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will

Here to raise up is an idiom for causing someone who has died to become alive again. Alternate translation: "that the one who caused the Lord Jesus to live again will" or "God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will"

2 Corinthians 4:15

For everything is for your sake

Here the word "everything" refers to all of the sufferings that Paul has described in previous verses.

the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of God

Paul speaks of more and more people experiencing God's grace as if grace were "reaching" people. And, Paul speaks of more and more people giving thanks to God as if thanksgiving were an object that could become larger by itself. Alternate translation: "God may show his grace to many people, causing more and more people to give thanks, to the glory of God"

2 Corinthians 4:16

Connecting Statement:

Paul writes that the Corinthian difficulties are minor and do not last long when compared to the unseen eternal things.

So we do not become discouraged

This can be stated as a positive. Alternate translation: "So we remain confident"

outwardly we are wasting away

This refers to their physical bodies decaying and dying. Alternate translation: "our physical bodies are getting weak and dying"

inwardly we are being renewed day by day

This refers to their inward, spiritual lives getting stronger. Alternate translation: "our spiritual beings are being strengthened day by day"

inwardly we are being renewed day by day

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God is renewing our inward being more each day"

2 Corinthians 4:17

this momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal burden of glory

Paul speaks of his sufferings and the glory that God will give him as if they were objects that can be weighed. He uses irony to call affliction, which people usually think of as if it were a heavy burden, a light burden and glory, which people usually think of as relief from suffering, as if it were a heavy burden. Through this metaphor he is saying that the glory to come will be much greater than the affliction.

that exceeds all measurement

The glory that Paul will experience is so great that no one can measure it. The abstract noun "measurement" can be translated as the verb "measure." Alternate translation: "that no one can measure"

2 Corinthians 4:18

things that are seen ... things that are unseen ... things that are unseen

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "things that we can see ... things that we cannot see ... things that we cannot see"

but for things that are unseen

You can supply the verb for this phrase. Alternate translation: "but we are watching for things that are unseen"

Chapter 5

¹ 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. ² For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly residence. ³ We long for this because by putting it on we will not be found to be naked. ⁴ 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. ⁵ The one who prepared us for this very thing is God, who gave us the Spirit as a guarantee of what is to come. ⁶ Therefore always be confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ So we have confidence. We would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal, whether we are at home or away, to please him. ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: That one person died for all, and that therefore all have died. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. See, they have become new. ¹⁸ All these things are from God. He reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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!" ²¹ He made him who knew no sin to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

New bodies in heaven

Paul knows that when he dies he will receive a much better body. Because of this, he is not afraid of being killed for preaching the gospel. So he tells others that they too can be reconciled to God. Christ will take away their sin and give them his righteousness. (See: goodnews, reconcile, sin, and righteous)

New creation

The old and new creation probably refer to how Paul illustrates the old and new self. These concepts are also the same as the old and new man. The term "old" probably does not refer to the sinful nature with which a person is born. It refers to the old way of living or the Christian formerly being bound to sin. The "new creation" is the new nature or new life that God gives a person after they come to believe in Christ. (See: faith)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Home

The Christian's home is no longer in the world. A Christian's real home is in heaven. By using this metaphor, Paul emphasizes that the Christian's circumstances in this world are temporary. It gives hope to those who are suffering. (See: heaven and hope)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"The message of reconciliation"

This refers to the gospel. Paul calls for people who are hostile to God to repent and be reconciled to him. (See: repent and reconcile)

2 Corinthians 5:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues by contrasting believers' earthly bodies to the heavenly ones God will give.

if our earthly house—the tent—is destroyed, we have a building from God

Here a temporary "house" or "tent" is a metaphor for a person's physical body and a permanent "building from God" is a metaphor for the new body that God will give believers after they die.

if our earthly house—the tent—is destroyed, we have

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "if people destroy our earthly house—the tent—we have" or "if people kill our bodies, we have"

if our earthly house—the tent—is destroyed

"if the tent that is our home on earth is destroyed"

It is a house not made by human hands

Here "house" means the same thing as "building from God." Here "hands" is a synecdoche that represents the human as a whole. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "It is a house that humans did not make"

2 Corinthians 5:2

in this tent we groan

Here "this tent" means the same thing as "the earthly dwelling that we live in." A groan is a sound that a person makes when they eagerly desire to have something that is good.

longing to be clothed with our heavenly residence

The words "our heavenly residence" means the same thing as "the place God will give us to live in." Paul speaks of the new body that believers receive after they die as if it were both a house to live in and a piece of clothing that a person can put on.

2 Corinthians 5:3

by putting it on

"by putting on our heavenly dwelling"

we will not be found to be naked

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "we will not be naked" or "God will not find us naked"

2 Corinthians 5:4

while we are in this tent

Paul speaks of the physical body as if it were a "tent."

in this tent, we groan

The word "tent" refers to "the earthly dwelling that we live in." The word groan is a sound that a person makes when they eagerly desire to have something that is good. See how you translated this in 2 Corinthians 5:2.

being burdened

Paul refers to the difficulties that the physical body experiences as if they were heavy objects that are difficult to carry.

We do not want to be unclothed ... we want to be clothed

Paul speaks of the body as if it were clothing. Here "to be unclothed" refers to the death of the physical body; "to be clothed" refers to having the resurrection body that God will give.

to be unclothed

"to be without clothes" or "to be naked"

so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life

Paul speaks of life as if it were an animal that eats "what is mortal." The physical body that will die will be replaced by a resurrection body that will live forever.

so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so that life may swallow up what is mortal"

2 Corinthians 5:5

who gave us the Spirit as a guarantee of what is to come

The Spirit is spoken of as if he were a down payment toward eternal life. See how you translated a similar phrase in [2 Corinthians 1:22]

2 Corinthians 5:6

Connecting Statement:

Because believers will have a new body and have the Holy Spirit as a pledge, Paul reminds them to live by faith so that they may please the Lord.

while we are at home in the body

Paul speaks of the physical body as if it were a place where a person dwells. Alternate translation: "while we are living in this earthly body"

we are away from the Lord

"we are not at home with the Lord" or "we are not in heaven with the Lord"

2 Corinthians 5:7

we walk by faith, not by sight

Here "walk" is a metaphor for "live" or "behave."
Alternate translation: "we live according to faith, not according to what we see"

2 Corinthians 5:8

We would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord

You may need to make explicit that they do not prefer to remain alive in this present world.
Alternate translation: "We would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord than to remain in the body and away from the Lord"

We would prefer to be away from the body

Here the word "body" refers to the physical body.

at home with the Lord

"at home with the Lord in heaven"

2 Corinthians 5:9

whether we are at home or away

Possible meanings are 1) "whether we are at home in the body or away from it" or 2) "whether we are at home with the Lord or away from him." Either way, Paul means that, whether in this life or in the next life, believers should try to please the Lord.

to please him

"to please the Lord"

2 Corinthians 5:10

we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ

Here "judgment seat of Christ" represents Christ himself, who will judge all people. Alternate translation: "we all must stand in the presence of Christ to be judged" or "Christ will judge all of us"

appear

"go" or "be present" or "stand"

each one may receive what is due

"each person may receive what he deserves"

the things done in the body

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the things he has done in the physical body"

whether for good or for bad

"whether those things were good or bad"

2 Corinthians 5:11

knowing the fear of the Lord

"knowing what it means to fear the Lord"

we persuade people

Possible meanings are 1) "we persuade people of the truth of the gospel" or 2) "we persuade people that we are legitimate apostles."

What we are is clearly seen by God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God clearly sees what kind of people we are"

I hope that it is also clear to your conscience

Paul wanted the the Corinthians to know what kind of people he and those with him were. "I expect that it is also clear to your conscience" or "I trust that it is also clear to your conscience"

that it is also clear to your conscience

"that you are also convinced of it"

2 Corinthians 5:12

We are not commending ourselves to you again

"We are not recommending ourselves to you again" or "We are not trying to show you again that we are worthy"

so you may have an answer for those

"so you may have something to say to those"

those who boast about appearances but not about what is in the heart

Here the word "appearances" refers to outward expressions of things like ability and status. The word "heart" refers to the inward character of a person. Alternate translation: "those who praise their own actions, but do not care about what they really are in their inner being"

2 Corinthians 5:13

if we are out of our minds ... if we are in our right minds

Paul is speaking about the way others think of him and his coworkers. Alternate translation: "if people think we are crazy ... if people think we are sane"

2 Corinthians 5:14

the love of Christ

Possible meanings are 1) "our love for Christ" or 2) "Christ's love for us."

died for all

"died for all people"

2 Corinthians 5:15

him who for their sake died and was raised

"him who for their sake died and whom God caused to live again" or "Christ, who died for their sake and whom God raised"

for their sake

Possible meanings are 1) these words refer only to "died" or 2) these words refer to both "died" and "was raised."

2 Corinthians 5:16

Connecting Statement:

Because of Christ's love and death, we are not to judge by human standards. We are appointed to teach others how to be united with and have peace with God through Christ's death and to receive God's righteousness through Christ.

For this reason

This refers to what Paul has just said about living for Christ instead of living for self.

regard anyone

"judge anyone" or "think about anyone"

the flesh

This phrase is a metonym for the way mortal people do things. See how you translated it in [2 Corinthians 1:17]

2 Corinthians 5:17

he is a new creation

Paul speaks of the person who believes in Christ as if that person were a new person that God had created. Alternate translation: "he is a new person"

The old things have passed away

Here "the old things" refers to the things that characterized a person before he trusted in Christ.

See

The word "See" here alerts us to pay attention to the surprising information that follows.

2 Corinthians 5:18

All these things are from God

"God has done all these things." This refers to what Paul has just said in the previous verse about new things replacing old things.

the ministry of reconciliation

This can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "the ministry of reconciling people to him"

2 Corinthians 5:19

That is, in Christ

"This means that in Christ"

in Christ God is reconciling the world to himself

Here the word "world" refers to people in the world. Alternate translation: "in Christ, God is reconciling mankind to himself"

He is entrusting to us the message of reconciliation

God has given Paul the responsibility to spread the message that God is reconciling people to himself.

the message of reconciliation

"the message about reconciliation"

2 Corinthians 5:20

we are appointed as representatives of Christ

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has appointed us as Christ's representatives"

representatives of Christ

"those who speak for Christ"

Be reconciled to God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Let God reconcile you to himself"

2 Corinthians 5:21

General Information:

The words "us" and "we" refer to Paul and his readers and so are inclusive.

He made him who knew no sin to become sin for us

"Christ new no sin, but God made him to become sin for us"

knew no sin

"never sinned"

to become sin for us

The word "sin" is a metonym for the sacrifice that is offered so that God will forgive sin. Alternate translation: "to become the sacrifice for which God will forgive our sins"

us, so that

"us. He did this so that"

so that we might become the righteousness of God in him

The phrase "the righteousness of God" refers to the righteousness that God requires and that comes from God. Alternate translation: "so that through Christ we might have the righteousness that God requires"

Chapter 6

¹ Working together with him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² 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. ³ We do not place a stumbling block in front of anyone, for we do not wish our ministry to be discredited. ⁴ Instead, in every way we commend ourselves as God's servants in much endurance, in affliction, in distress, in hardship, ⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in hard labor, in sleepless nights, in hunger, ⁶ in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, ⁷ in the word of truth, in the power of God; with the armor of righteousness for the right hand and the left. ⁸ We are God's servants in glory and dishonor, in slander and praise; regarded as deceivers and yet truthful; ⁹ as unknown, yet well known; as dying, yet, look, we live; as being disciplined, yet not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet rejoicing; as poor, yet many are enriched; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.

¹¹ We have spoken the whole truth to you, Corinthians, and our heart is wide open. ¹² You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own hearts. ¹³ Now in fair exchange—I speak as to children—open yourselves wide also. ¹⁴ Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what association does righteousness have with lawlessness? For what fellowship does light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What agreement can Christ have with Belial? Or what share does a believer have together with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ 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."

¹⁷ Therefore,

"Come out from among them,
and be set apart," says the Lord.
"Touch no unclean thing,
and I will welcome you."

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

2 Corinthians 6 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verses 2 and 16-18, which are words from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Servants

Paul refers to Christians as servants of God. God calls Christians to serve him in all circumstances. Paul describes some of the difficult circumstances in which he and his companions served God.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Contrasts

Paul uses four pairs of contrasts: righteousness versus lawlessness, light versus darkness, Christ versus Satan, and the temple of God versus idols. These contrasts show a difference between Christians and non-Christians. (See: righteous and light and darkness)

Light and darkness

The Bible often speaks of unrighteous people, people who do not do what pleases God, as if they were walking around in darkness. It speaks of light as if it were what enables those sinful people to become righteous, to understand what they are doing wrong and begin to obey God. (See: righteous)

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses a series of rhetorical questions to teach his readers. All of these questions make essentially the same point: Christians should not intimately fellowship with those who live in sin. Paul repeats these questions for emphasis. (See: and sin)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

We

Paul likely uses the pronoun "we" to represent at least Timothy and himself. It may also include other people.

2 Corinthians 6:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul summarizes how working together for God is supposed to be.

Working together with him

Paul is implying that he and Timothy are working with God. Alternate translation: "Working together with God"

we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain

"we beg you to make use of the grace that you have received from God"

2 Corinthians 6:2

General Information:

In this verse, Paul quotes a portion from the prophet Isaiah.

For he says

"For God says." This introduces a quotation from the prophet Isaiah. Alternate translation: "For God says in scripture"

Look

The word "Look" here alerts us to pay attention to the surprising information that follows.

2 Corinthians 6:3

We do not place a stumbling block in front of anyone

Paul speaks of anything that would prevent a person from trusting in Christ as if it were a physical object over which that person trips and falls. Alternate translation: "We do not want to do anything that will prevent people from believing our message"

we do not wish our ministry to be discredited

The word "discredited" refers to people speaking badly about Paul's ministry, and working against the message he proclaims. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "we do not want anyone to be able to speak badly about our ministry"

2 Corinthians 6:4

General Information:

When Paul uses "we" here, he is referring to himself and Timothy.

in every way we commend ourselves as God's servants

Possible meanings are 1) "Because we are God's servants we recommend ourselves to you in every way" or 2) "in every way we show that we are God's servants"

in every way

This tells how they commend themselves. Alternate translation: "in everything we do"

in much endurance, in affliction, in distress, in hardship

Paul mentions various difficult situations in which they commend themselves as God's servants.

2 Corinthians 6:5

in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in hard labor, in sleepless nights, in hunger

Paul continues to mention various difficult situations in which they commend themselves as God's servants.

2 Corinthians 6:6

in purity ... in sincere love

Paul lists several moral virtues that they maintained in difficult situations, commending themselves as God's servants.

2 Corinthians 6:7

in the word of truth

"by speaking God's message about truth" or "by speaking God's true message"

in the power of God

"by showing God's power to people"

with the armor of righteousness for the right hand and the left

Paul speaks of their righteousness as if it were weapons that they use to fight spiritual battles.

the armor of righteousness

"righteousness as our armor" or "righteousness as our weapons"

for the right hand and the left

Possible meanings are 1) that there is a weapon in one hand and a shield in the other or 2) that they are completely equipped for battle, able to fend off attacks from any direction.

2 Corinthians 6:8

regarded as deceivers

"people regard us as deceivers" or "people say that we are liars"

and yet truthful

You may need to fill in the words left out of the ellipsis. Alternate translation: "but we are truthful"

2 Corinthians 6:9

as if we were unknown, yet we are well known

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "as if people did not know us, and yet people know us well"

as if we were being punished for our actions, yet we are not killed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "as if people were punishing us for our actions, yet they have not killed us"

2 Corinthians 6:10

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

2 Corinthians 6:11

spoken the whole truth to you

"spoken honestly to you"

our heart is wide open

Paul speaks of his great affection for the Corinthians as having a heart that is open. Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's emotions. Alternate translation: "we love you very much"

2 Corinthians 6:12

You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own hearts

Paul speaks of the Corinthians' lack of love for him as if their hearts were squeezed into a tight space. Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's emotions.

You are not restrained by us

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "We have not restrained you" or "We have not given you any reason to stop loving us"

you are restrained in your own hearts

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "your own hearts are restraining you" or "you have stopped loving us for your own reasons"

2 Corinthians 6:13

open yourselves wide also

Paul urges the Corinthians to love him as he has loved them. Alternate translation: "love us back" or "love us much as we have loved you"

2 Corinthians 6:14

Connecting Statement:

Paul encourages the believers at Corinth to be separated from idols and live clean lives for God.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers

This can be stated in positive terms. Alternate translation: "Only be yoked together with believers"

be yoked together with unbelievers

Paul speaks of working together toward a common purpose as if it were two animals tied together to pull a plow or cart. Alternate translation: "team up with" or "have a close relationship with"

For what association does righteousness have with lawlessness?

This is a rhetorical question that anticipates a negative answer. Alternate translation: "For righteousness can have no association with lawlessness."

For what fellowship does light have with darkness?

Paul asks this question to emphasize that light and darkness cannot coexist since light dispels

darkness. The words "light" and "darkness" refer to the moral and spiritual qualities of believers and unbelievers. Alternate translation: "Light can have no fellowship with darkness."

2 Corinthians 6:15

What agreement can Christ have with Belial?

This is a rhetorical question that anticipates a negative answer. Alternate translation: "There is no agreement between Christ and Belial."

Belial

This is another name for the devil.

Or what share does a believer have together with an unbeliever?

This is a rhetorical question that anticipates a negative answer. Alternate translation: "A believer shares nothing in common with an unbeliever."

2 Corinthians 6:16

General Information:

Paul paraphrases portions from several Old Testament prophets: Moses, Zechariah, Amos, and possibly others.

And what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?

This is a rhetorical question that anticipates a negative answer. Alternate translation: "There is no agreement between the temple of God and idols."

we are the temple of the living God

Paul refers to all Christians as forming a temple for God to dwell in. Alternate translation: "we are like a temple where the living God dwells"

I will dwell among them and walk among them.

This is an Old Testament quotation that speaks of God being with the people in two different ways. The words "dwell among" speak of living where others live, while the words "walk among" speak of being with them as they go about their lives. Alternate translation: "I will be with them and help them"

2 Corinthians 6:17

General Information:

Paul quotes portions from the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel.

be set apart

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "set yourselves apart" or "allow me to set you apart"

Touch no unclean thing

This can be stated in positive terms. Alternate translation: "Touch only things that are clean" or "Stay away from things that are unclean"

2 Corinthians 6:18

General Information:

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Chapter 7

¹ 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.

² Make room for us! We have not wronged anyone. We have not corrupted anyone or taken advantage of anyone. ³ 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. ⁴ 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.

⁵ 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. ⁶ But God, who comforts the lowly, comforted us by the arrival of Titus. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow brings about repentance that accomplishes salvation without regret. Worldly sorrow, however, brings about death. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ His affection for you is even greater as he remembers the obedience of all of you, how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. ¹⁶ I rejoice because I have complete confidence in you.

2 Corinthians 7 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In verses 2-4, Paul finishes his defense. He then writes about Titus's return and the comfort it brought.

Special concepts in this chapter

Clean and unclean

Christians are "clean" in the sense that God has cleansed them from sin. They do not need to be concerned with being clean according to the law of Moses. Ungodly living can still make a Christian unclean. (See: clean and lawofmoses)

Sadness and sorrow

The words "sad" and "sorrow" in this chapter indicate that the Corinthians were upset to the point of repenting. (See: repent)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

We

Paul likely uses the pronoun "we" to represent at least Timothy and himself. It may also include other people.

Original situation

This chapter discusses in detail a previous situation. We can figure out some aspects of this situation from the information in this chapter. But it is best not to include this type of implicit information in a translation.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the Corinthians to be separated from sin and to seek holiness purposefully.

Beloved

"You whom I love" or "Dear friends"

let us cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit

Here Paul is saying to stay away from any form of sin that would affect one's relationship with God.

of all defilement of flesh and spirit

"of all things that defile our body and spirit" or "of all things in our body and spirit that make us unacceptable to God"

Let us perfect holiness

"Let us do all we can to be perfectly holy"

in the fear of God

"out of deep respect for God" or "because we fear God"

2 Corinthians 7:2

Connecting Statement:

Having already warned the people of Corinth about other leaders who were striving to get these Corinthian believers to follow them, Paul reminds the people of the way he feels about them.

Make room for us

This refers back to what Paul said starting in [2 Corinthians 6:11]

2 Corinthians 7:3

It is not to condemn you that I say this

"I do not say this to accuse you of having done wrong." The word "this" refers to what Paul just said about not having wronged anyone.

you are in our hearts

Paul speaks of his and his associates' great love for the Corinthians as if they held them in their hearts. Alternate translation: "you are very dear to us"

for us to die together and to live together

This means that Paul and his associates will continue to love the Corinthians no matter what happens. Alternate translation: "whether we live or whether we die"

for us to die

"us" includes the Corinthian believers.

2 Corinthians 7:4

great is my boast about you

"I boast much about you" or "I am very proud of you"

I am filled with comfort

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "You fill me with comfort"

I overflow with joy

Paul speaks of joy as if it is a liquid that fills him until he overflows. Alternate translation: "I am extremely joyful"

even in all our tribulation

"even though we suffer greatly"

2 Corinthians 7:5

When we came to Macedonia

Here the word "we" refers to Paul and Timothy but not to the Corinthians or Titus.

our bodies had no rest

The word "body" often refers to the whole person. Alternate translation: "we had no rest" or "we were very tired"

we were troubled in every way

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "we experienced trouble in every way"

by conflicts on the outside and fears on the inside

Possible meanings for "outside" are 1) "outside of our bodies" or 2) "outside of the church." The word "inside" refers to their inward emotions. Alternate translation: "by conflicts with other people and by fears within ourselves"

2 Corinthians 7:6

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

2 Corinthians 7:7

by the comfort that Titus had received from you

Paul received comfort from knowing that the Corinthians had comforted Titus. Alternate translation: "by learning about the comfort that Titus had received from you"

2 Corinthians 7:8

General Information:

This refers to Paul's previous letter to these Corinthian believers where he rebuked them for their acceptance of a believer's sexual immorality with his father's wife.

Connecting Statement:

Paul praises them for their godly sorrow, their zeal to do right, and the joy that it brought him and Titus.

when I saw that my letter

"when I learned that my letter"

2 Corinthians 7:9

not because you were sorrowful

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "not because what I said in my letter made you sorrowful"

sorrowful ... sorrow ... sorrow

or "distressed ... distress ... distress"

so you suffered no loss because of us

"so you suffered no loss because we rebuked you." This means that although the letter caused them sorrow, they eventually benefited from the letter because it led them to repentance. Alternate translation: "so that we did not harm you in any way"

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly sorrow brings about repentance that accomplishes salvation

The word "repentance" may be repeated to clarify its relationship to what precedes it and what follows it. "For godly sorrow produces repentance, and repentance leads to salvation"

without regret

Possible meanings are 1) Paul has no regret that he caused them sorrow because that sorrow led to their repentance and salvation or 2) the Corinthians will not regret experiencing sorrow because it led to their repentance and salvation.

Worldly sorrow, however, brings about death

This kind of sorrow leads to death instead of salvation because it does not produce repentance. Alternate translation: "Worldly sorrow, however, leads to spiritual death"

2 Corinthians 7:11

See what great diligence

"Look and see for yourselves what great diligence"

How great was the determination in you to prove you were innocent.

Here the word "How" makes this statement an exclamation. Alternate translation: "Your determination to prove you were innocent was very great!"

your indignation

"your anger"

that justice should be done

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "that someone should carry out justice"

2 Corinthians 7:12

the wrongdoer

"the one who did wrong"

your earnestness toward us should be made known to you in the sight of God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so that you would know in the sight of God your earnestness toward us"

earnestness

sincere, serious desire for what is good

in the sight of God

This represents God's presence. See how you translated this in [2 Corinthians 4:2]

2 Corinthians 7:13

It is by this that we are encouraged

Here the word "this" refers to the way the Corinthians responded to Paul's previous letter, as he described in the previous verse. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "This is what encourages us"

his spirit was refreshed by all of you

Here the word "spirit" refers to a person's temperament and disposition. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "all of you refreshed his spirit" or "all of you made him stop worrying"

2 Corinthians 7:14

For if I boasted to him about you

"For although I boasted to him about you"

I was not put to shame

"you did not disappoint me"

our boasting about you to Titus proved to be true

"you proved that our boasting about you to Titus was true"

2 Corinthians 7:15

the obedience of all of you

This noun "obedience" can be stated with a verb, "obey." Alternate translation: "how all of you obeyed"

you welcomed him with fear and trembling

Here "fear" and "trembling" share similar meanings and emphasize the intensity of fear. Alternate translation: "you welcomed him with great reverence"

with fear and trembling

Possible meanings are 1) "with great reverence for God" or 2) "with great reverence for Titus."

2 Corinthians 7:16

General Information:

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Chapter 8

¹ We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia. ² During a great test of tribulation, the abundance of their joy and the extremity of their poverty have produced great riches of generosity. ³ 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 ⁴ they begged us with much earnestness for the privilege of sharing in this service to God's holy people. ⁵ 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. ⁶ So we urged Titus, who had already begun this task, to complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ 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. ¹⁸ I say this not as a command but to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it to the eagerness of other people. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ For this is not to cause relief for others and tribulation for you, but for fairness. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ But thanks be to God, who put into Titus' heart the same earnest care that I have for you. ¹⁷ For he not only accepted our appeal, but he was also very earnest about it. He came to you of his own free will. ¹⁸ We have sent with him the brother who is praised among all of the churches for his work in proclaiming the gospel. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ We are avoiding the possibility that anyone should complain about this act of generosity that we are carrying out. ²¹ We take care to do what is good, not only before the Lord, but also before people. ²² 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. ²³ 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. ²⁴ So show them the proof of your love, and show to the churches the reason for our boasting about you.

Footnotes

8:7 ^[1]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,

2 Corinthians 8 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapters 8 and 9 begin a new section. Paul writes about how churches in Greece helped needy believers in Jerusalem.

Some translations set quotations from the Old Testament farther to the right on the page than the rest of the text. The ULB does this with the quoted words of verse 15.

Special concepts in this chapter

Gift to the church in Jerusalem

The church in Corinth started preparing to give money to the poor believers in Jerusalem. The churches in Macedonia also had given generously. Paul sends Titus and two other believers to Corinth to encourage the Corinthians to give generously. Paul and the others will carry the money to Jerusalem. They want people to know it is being done honestly.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

We

Paul likely uses the pronoun "we" to represent at least Timothy and himself. It may also include other people.

Paradox

A "paradox" is a true statement that appears to describe something impossible. These words in verse 2 are a paradox: "the abundance of their joy and the extremity of their poverty have produced great riches of generosity." In verse 3 Paul explains how their poverty produced riches. Paul also uses riches and poverty in other paradoxes. ([2 Corinthians 8:2](#))

2 Corinthians 8:1

Connecting Statement:

Having explained his changed plans and his ministry direction, Paul talks about giving.

the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the grace that God has given to the churches of Macedonia"

2 Corinthians 8:2

the abundance of their joy and the extremity of their poverty have produced great riches of generosity

Paul speaks of "joy" and "poverty" as if they were living things that can produce generosity. Alternate translation: "because of the people's great joy and extreme poverty, they have become very generous"

the abundance of their joy

Paul speaks of joy as if it were a physical object that could increase in size or quantity.

extremity of their poverty ... riches of generosity

Though the churches of Macedonia have suffered testings of affliction and poverty, by God's grace they have been able to collect money for the believers in Jerusalem.

great riches of generosity

"a very great generosity." The words "great riches" emphasize the greatness of their generosity.

2 Corinthians 8:3

they gave

This refers to the churches in Macedonia.

of their own free will

"voluntarily"

2 Corinthians 8:4

this service to God's holy people

Paul is referring to providing money to the believers in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "this ministry of providing for the believers in Jerusalem"

2 Corinthians 8:5

This did not happen as we had hoped

The Macedonians did even more than Paul and those with him had hoped for. Alternate translation: "This did not happen merely as we had thought it might" or "But even more than we had expected"

2 Corinthians 8:6

who had already begun this task

Paul is referring to the collection of money from the Corinthians for the believers in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "who had encouraged your giving in the first place"

to complete among you this act of grace

Titus was to help the Corinthians to complete the collection of money. Alternate translation: "to encourage you to finish collecting and giving your generous gift"

2 Corinthians 8:7

make sure that you excel in this act of grace

Here "this act of grace" refers the gift that the Corinthians were to give. Alternate translation: "make sure that you are very generous in your giving"

2 Corinthians 8:8

by comparing it to the eagerness of other people

Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to give generously by comparing their generosity with the generosity of the Macedonian churches.

2 Corinthians 8:9

the grace of our Lord

In this context, the word "grace" emphasizes the generosity with which Jesus had blessed the Corinthians.

Even though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor

Paul speaks of Jesus before his incarnation as being rich, and of his becoming human as becoming poor.

through his poverty you might become rich

Paul speaks of the Corinthians becoming spiritually rich as a result of Jesus becoming human.

2 Corinthians 8:10

In this matter

This refers to their collecting money to give to the believers in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "With regard to the collection"

2 Corinthians 8:11

there was an eagerness and desire to do it

This can be stated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "you were eager and desired to do it"

bring it to completion

"complete it" or "finish it"

2 Corinthians 8:12

a good and acceptable thing

Here the words "good" and "acceptable" share similar meanings and emphasize the goodness of the thing. Alternate translation: "a very good thing"

It must be based on what a person has

"Giving must be based on what a person has"

2 Corinthians 8:13

For this is not to cause relief for others and tribulation for you

The word "this" refers to collecting money for the believers in Jerusalem. The abstract nouns "relief" and "tribulation" can be stated as verbs. Alternate translation: "We are not asking you to give money to relieve others and make yourselves suffer"

but for fairness

"but so that there should be equality" or "but so that there might be equality between others and you." Paul is explaining why he is asking the

Corinthians to give money to the believers in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 8:14

This is also so that their abundance may supply your need

Since the Corinthians are acting in the present time, it is implied that the believers in Jerusalem will also help them at some time in the future.

Alternate translation: "This is also so that in the future their abundance may supply your need"

2 Corinthians 8:15

as it is written

Here Paul quotes from Exodus. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "as Moses wrote"

did not have any lack

"had all he needed"

2 Corinthians 8:16

who put into Titus' heart the same earnest care that I have for you

Here the word "heart" refers to the emotions. This means that God caused Titus to love them.

Alternate translation: "who made Titus care for you as much as I do"

same earnest care

"the same enthusiasm" or "same deep concern"

2 Corinthians 8:17

For he not only accepted our appeal

Paul is referring to his asking Titus to return to Corinth and complete the collection. Alternate translation: "For he not only agreed to our request that he help you with the collection"

2 Corinthians 8:18

with him

"with Titus"

the brother who is praised among all of the churches

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the brother whom believers among all of the churches praise"

2 Corinthians 8:19

Not only this

"Not only do believers among all of the churches praise him"

he also was chosen by the churches

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the churches also chose him"

our traveling companion with this act of grace

"to travel with us as we carry out this act of generosity." This refers to taking the offering to Jerusalem.

which is being administered by us

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "which we are taking care of"

for the glory of the Lord himself and our good will

You may need to fill in the ideas missing in the ellipsis. Alternate translation: "so that people will praise the Lord and so that they will see how eager we are to help"

2 Corinthians 8:20

about this act of generosity that we are carrying out

This refers to taking the offering to Jerusalem. The abstract noun "generosity" can be translated with an adjective. Alternate translation: "concerning the way we are handling this generous gift"

2 Corinthians 8:21

We take care to do what is good, not only before the Lord, but also before people.

"We are careful to do not only what the Lord thinks is good but also what people think is good"

before the Lord ... before people

"in the Lord's opinion ... in people's opinion"

2 Corinthians 8:22

with them

The word "them" refers to Titus and the previously mentioned brother.

2 Corinthians 8:23

he is my partner and fellow worker for you

"he is my partner, who works with me to help you"

As for our brothers

This refers to the two other men who will accompany Titus.

they are messengers from the churches

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the churches have sent them as their messengers"

They are a glory to Christ

This can be stated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "They will cause people to see Christ's glory" or "They will cause people to honor Christ"

2 Corinthians 8:24

General Information:

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Chapter 9

¹ Concerning the service for God's holy people, it is not necessary for me to write to you. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.

⁶ 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. ⁷ Let each one give as he has planned in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ 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. ⁹ It is as it is written:

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

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so you can be generous. This will bring about thanksgiving to God through us. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ May thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

2 Corinthians 9 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verse 9, which is quoted from the Old Testament.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

Paul uses three agricultural metaphors. He uses them to teach about giving to needy believers. The metaphors help Paul explain that God will reward those who give generously. Paul does not say how or when God will reward them. (See: and reward)

2 Corinthians 9:1

General Information:

When Paul refers to Achaia, he is talking about a Roman province located in southern Greece where Corinth is located.

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues on the subject of giving. He wants to make sure that the collection of their offering for the needy believers in Jerusalem takes place before he comes so that it does not seem as though he

takes advantage of them. He talks about how giving blesses the giver and glorifies God.

the service for God's holy people

This refers to the collection of money to give to the believers in Jerusalem. The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "the ministry for the believers in Jerusalem"

2 Corinthians 9:2

Achaia has been getting ready

Here the word "Achaia" refers to the people who live in this province, and specifically to the people of the church in Corinth. Alternate translation: "the people of Achaia have been preparing"

2 Corinthians 9:3

the brothers

This refers to Titus and the two men who accompany him.

our boasting about you may not be futile

Paul does not want others to think that the things that he had boasted about the Corinthians were false.

2 Corinthians 9:4

find you unprepared

"find you unprepared to give"

2 Corinthians 9:5

the brothers to come to you

From Paul's perspective, the brothers are going. Alternate translation: "the brothers to go to you"

not as something extorted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "not as something that we have extorted from you" or "not as something that you gave us because we forced you to give it to us"

2 Corinthians 9:6

the one who sows ... reap a blessing

Paul uses the image of a farmer sowing seeds to describe the results of giving. As a farmer's harvest is based on how much he sows, so will God's blessings be little or much, based on how generously the Corinthians give.

2 Corinthians 9:7

give as he has planned in his heart

Here the word "heart" refers to the thoughts and emotions. Alternate translation: "give as he has determined"

not reluctantly or under compulsion

This can be translated with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: "not because he feels guilty or because someone is forcing him to give"

for God loves a cheerful giver

God wants people to give gladly to help provide for fellow believers.

2 Corinthians 9:8

God is able to make all grace overflow for you

Grace is spoken of as if it were a physical object of which a person can have more than he can use. As a person gives financially to other believers, God also gives to the giver everything he needs.

Alternate translation: "God is able to give you many things" or "God is able to give you very much"

grace

This refers here to the physical things a Christian needs, not to the need for God to save him from his sins.

so that you may multiply every good deed

"so that you may be able to do more and more good deeds"

2 Corinthians 9:9

It is as it is written

"This is just as it is written." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "This is just as the writer wrote"

2 Corinthians 9:10

He who supplies

"God who supplies"

bread for food

Here the word "bread" refers to food in general. Alternate translation: "food to eat"

will also supply and multiply your seed for sowing

Paul speaks of the Corinthians' possessions as if they were seeds and of giving to others as if they were sowing seeds. Alternate translation: "will also supply and multiply your possessions so that you can sow them by giving them to others"

He will increase the harvest of your righteousness

Paul compares the benefits that the Corinthians will receive from their generosity to that of a harvest. Alternate translation: "God will bless you even more for your righteousness"

the harvest of your righteousness

"the harvest that comes from your righteous actions." Here the word "righteousness" refers to the righteous actions of the Corinthians in giving their resources to the believers in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 9:11

You will be enriched

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will enrich you"

This will bring about thanksgiving to God through us
The word this refers to the Corinthian's generosity.
Alternate translation: "Because of your generosity, those who receive the gifts we bring them will thank God" or "When we give your gifts to those who need them, they will give thanks to God"

2 Corinthians 9:12

For carrying out this service

Here the word "service" refers to Paul and his companions bringing the contribution to the believers in Jerusalem. Alternate translation: "For our carrying out this service for the believers in Jerusalem"

but it also is overflowing into many acts of thanksgiving to God

Paul speaks of the Corinthian believers' act of service as if it were a liquid of which there is more than a container can hold. Alternate translation: "It also causes people to do many deeds for which people will thank God"

2 Corinthians 9:13

Because of your being tested and proved by this service

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Because this service has tested and proven you"

you will also glorify God by obedience ... by the generosity of your contribution to them and to everyone
Paul says that the Corinthians will glorify God both by being faithful to Jesus and by giving generously to other believers who have need.

the generosity of your contribution

The abstract nouns "generosity" and "contribution" can be stated respectively as an adverb and a verb. Alternate translation: "what you have contributed generously" (

contribution

This word refers here to a gift that is part of a larger gift that many people are giving.

2 Corinthians 9:14

General Information:

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2 Corinthians 9:15

for his inexpressible gift

"for his gift, which words cannot describe." Possible meanings are 1) that this gift refers to "the very great grace" that God has given to the Corinthians, which has led them to be so generous or 2) that this gift refers to Jesus Christ, whom God gave to all believers.

Chapter 10

¹ 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. ² 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. ³ For even though we walk in the flesh, we do not make war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons we fight with are not fleshly. Rather, they have divine power to destroy strongholds. They bring misleading arguments to nothing. ⁵ We also destroy every high thing that rises up against the knowledge of God. We take every thought captive into obedience to Christ. ⁶ And we are getting ready to punish every act of disobedience, as soon as your obedience is complete. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ I do not want it to appear that I am terrifying you by my letters. ¹⁰ For some people say, "His letters are serious and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak. His words are not worth listening to." ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ so that we may preach the gospel even in regions beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area.

¹⁷ "But let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

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

2 Corinthians 10 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set quotations from the Old Testament farther to the right on the page than the rest of the text. The ULB does this with the quoted words of verse 17.

In this chapter, Paul returns to defending his authority. He also compares the way he speaks and the way he writes.

Special concepts in this chapter

Boasting

"Boasting" is often thought of as bragging, which is not good. But in this letter "boasting" means confidently exulting or rejoicing.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

In verses 3-6, Paul uses many metaphors from war. He probably uses them as part of a larger metaphor about Christians being spiritually at war.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Flesh

"Flesh" is possibly a metaphor for a person's sinful nature. Paul is not teaching that our physical bodies are sinful. Paul appears to be teaching that as long as Christians are alive ("in the flesh"), we will continue to sin. But our new nature will be fighting against our old nature. (See: flesh)

2 Corinthians 10:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul shifts the subject from giving to affirming his authority to teach as he does.

by the humility and gentleness of Christ

The word "humility" and "gentleness" are abstract nouns, and can be expressed in another way. Alternate translation: "by Christ, who is humble and gentle"

2 Corinthians 10:2

we are walking

The word "walking" is a metaphor for the way a person lives his life. "we are acting"

according to the flesh

The word "flesh" is a metonym for the mortal body, which in turn is a metaphor for the person himself. See how you translated it in [2 Corinthians 1:17]

2 Corinthians 10:3

we walk in the flesh

Here "walk" is an metaphor for "live" and "flesh" is a metonym for physical life. Alternate translation: "we live our lives in physical bodies"

the flesh

This phrase is a metonym for the way mortal people do things. See how you translated it in [2 Corinthians 1:17]

we do not make war

Paul speaks of his trying to persuade the Corinthians to believe him and not the false teachers as if he were fighting a physical war. These words should be translated literally.

make war according to the flesh

Possible meanings are 1) the word "flesh" is a metonym for physical life. Alternate translation: "fight against our enemies using physical weapons" or 2) the word "flesh" is a metonym for sinful human nature. Alternate translation: "make war in sinful ways"

2 Corinthians 10:4

the weapons we fight with ... bring misleading arguments to nothing

Paul speaks of godly wisdom that shows human wisdom to be false as if it were a weapon with which he is destroying an enemy stronghold. Alternate translation: "the weapons we fight with ... show people that what our enemies say is completely wrong"

we fight

Paul speaks of his trying to persuade the Corinthians to believe him and not the false teachers as if he were fighting a physical war. These words should be translated literally.

are not fleshly

Possible meanings are 1) the word "fleshly" is a metonym for merely physical. Alternate translation: "are not physical" or 2) the word "fleshly" is a metonym for sinful human nature. Alternate translation: "are not sinful" or "do not enable us to do wrong"

2 Corinthians 10:5

every high thing that rises up

Paul is still speaking with the metaphor of a war, as if "the knowledge of God" were an army and "every high thing" were a wall that people had made to keep the army out. Alternate translation: "every false argument that proud people think of to protect themselves"

every high thing

"everything that proud people do"

rises up against the knowledge of God

Paul speaks of arguments as if they were a wall standing high against an army. The words "rises up" mean "stands tall," not that the "high thing" is floating up into the air. Alternate translation: "people use so they will not have to know who God is"

We take every thought captive into obedience to Christ

Paul speaks of people's thoughts as if they were enemy soldiers whom he captures in battle. Alternate translation: "We show how all the false ideas those people have are wrong and teach the people to obey Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:6

punish every act of disobedience

The words "act of disobedience" are a metonym for the people who commit those acts. Alternate translation: "punish every one of you who disobeys us"

2 Corinthians 10:7

Look at what is clearly in front of you.

Possible meanings are 1) this is a command or 2) this is a statement, "You are looking only at what you can see with your eyes." Some think this is a rhetorical question that may also be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "Are you looking at what is clearly in front of you?" or "You seem unable to see what is clearly in front of you."

let him remind himself
"he needs to remember"

that just as he is Christ's, so also are we
"that we belong to Christ just as much as he does"

2 Corinthians 10:8

to build you up and not to destroy you
Paul speaks of helping the Corinthians to know Christ better as if he were constructing a building. Alternate translation: "to help you become better followers of Christ and not to discourage you so you stop following him"

2 Corinthians 10:9

I am terrifying you
"I am trying to frighten you"

2 Corinthians 10:10

serious and powerful
"demanding and forceful"

his bodily presence is weak
"when he is here physically, he is not impressive"

2 Corinthians 10:11

Let such people be aware
"I want such people to be aware"

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
"we will do the same things when we are there with you that we have written about in our letters while we have been away from you"

we ... our
All instances of these words refer to Paul's ministry team but not the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 10:12

We are not so bold as to group ourselves ... praise ourselves
"Bold people would group themselves ... praise themselves, but we are not that bold, so we do not."
Paul is using irony here: most people think of boldness as a good thing, but Paul is saying that those who have the boldness to praise themselves are doing wrong.

to group ourselves or compare ourselves with those
"to say we are as good as those"

they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with each other
Paul is saying much the same thing twice.

they measure themselves by one another
Paul is speaking of goodness as though it were something whose length people could measure. Alternate translation: "they look at each other and try to see who is better"

have no insight
"show everyone that they do not know anything"

2 Corinthians 10:13

General Information:
Paul speaks of the authority he has as if it were a land over which he rules, those things over which he has authority as being within the borders or "limits" of his land, and those things not under his authority as being beyond the "limits."

will not boast beyond limits. Instead
This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "will not boast about things over which we have no authority. Instead" or "will boast only about things over which we have authority. And"

within the limits of what God
"about things under the authority that God"

limits that reach even as far as you
Paul speaks of the authority he has as if it were a land over which he rules. Alternate translation: "and you are within the border of our authority"

2 Corinthians 10:14

we are not overextending ourselves
"we are not doing more than we should." Possible meanings are 1) "we are not boasting more than we should" or 2) "we are not claiming to have more authority than we do."

2 Corinthians 10:15

We have not boasted beyond limits about the labors of others
This is an idiom. See how similar words were translated in [2 Corinthians 10:13]

our hope is that
"we hope that" or "we desire that" or "we trust that"

2 Corinthians 10:16

another's area
"an area God has assigned to someone else"

2 Corinthians 10:17

boast in the Lord
"boast about what the Lord has done"

2 Corinthians 10:18

recommends himself

This means that he provides enough evidence for each person who hears him to decide whether he is right or wrong. See how "recommend ourselves" is translated in 2 Corinthians 4:2.

who is approved

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "whom the Lord approves"

but the one whom the Lord recommends

You can make clear the understood information. Alternate translation: "but it is the one whom the Lord recommends who is approved"

Chapter 11

¹ I wish that you could put up with me in some foolishness. But you are indeed putting up with me! ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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! ⁵ For I think that I am not in the least inferior to those so-called super-apostles. ⁶ 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. ⁷ Did I sin by humbling myself so you might be exalted? For I freely preached the gospel of God to you. ⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them so that I could serve you. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the parts of Achaia. ¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows. ¹² 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. ¹³ For such people are false apostles and deceitful workers. They disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And this is no surprise, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their fate will be what their deeds deserve.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ What I am saying with this boastful confidence—I am not talking the way the Lord would—I am saying as a fool. ¹⁸ Since many people boast according to the flesh, I will also boast. ¹⁹ For you gladly put up with fools. You are wise yourselves! ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³ 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. ²⁴ From Jews I received five times the "forty lashes minus one." ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ I have served in labor and toil, in many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often in fasting, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸ Apart from everything else, there is the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who has been caused to stumble, and I do not burn? ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast about what shows my weaknesses. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, the one who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying!

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

2 Corinthians 11 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In this chapter, Paul continues defending his authority.

Special concepts in this chapter

False teaching

The Corinthians were quick to accept false teachers who taught things about Jesus and the gospel that were different from what Paul taught and that were not true. Unlike these false teachers, Paul sacrificially served the Corinthians. (See: goodnews)

Light

Light is commonly used in the New Testament as a metaphor. Paul here uses light to indicate the revealing of God and his righteousness. Darkness describes sin. Sin seeks to remain hidden from God. (See: light, righteous and darkness and sin)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

Paul begins this chapter with an extended metaphor. He compares himself to a father who is giving his daughter, a pure virgin, as a bride to her bridegroom. Wedding practices change depending on the cultural background. But the idea of helping to present someone as a grown and holy child is explicitly pictured in this passage.

Irony

This chapter is full of irony. Paul is hoping to shame the Corinthian believers with his irony.

"You tolerate these things well enough!" Paul thinks that they should not tolerate the way the false apostles treated them. Paul does not think they are really apostles at all.

The statement, "For you gladly put up with fools. You are wise yourselves!" means that the Corinthian believers think they were very wise but Paul does not agree.

"I will say to our shame that we were too weak to do that." Paul is speaking about behavior he thinks is very wrong in order to avoid it. He is speaking as if he thinks he is wrong for not doing it. He uses a rhetorical question also as irony. "Did I sin by humbling myself so you might be exalted?"

Rhetorical questions

In refuting the false apostles, who claim to be superior, Paul uses a series of rhetorical questions. Each question is coupled with an answer: "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 speak as though I were out of my mind.) I am more."

He also uses a series of rhetorical questions to empathize with his converts: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who has been caused to stumble, and I do not burn?"

"Are they servants of Christ?"

This is sarcasm, a special type of irony used to mock or insult. Paul does not believe these false teachers actually serve Christ, only that they pretend to do so.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Paradox

A "paradox" is a true statement that appears to describe something impossible. This sentence in verse 30 is a paradox: "If I must boast, I will boast about what shows my weaknesses." Paul does not explain why he would boast in his weakness until 2 Corinthians 12:9. ([2 Corinthians 11:30](#))

2 Corinthians 11:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to affirm his apostleship.

put up with me in some foolishness

"allow me to act like a fool"

2 Corinthians 11:2

jealous ... jealousy

These words speak of a good, strong desire that the Corinthians be faithful to Christ, and that no one should persuade them to leave him.

I promised you in marriage to one husband. I promised to present you as a pure virgin to Christ

Paul speaks of his care for the Corinthian believers as if he had promised another man that he would prepare his daughter to marry him and he is most concerned that he be able to keep his promise to the man. Alternate translation: "I was like a father who promised to present his daughter to one husband. I promised to keep you as a pure virgin so I could give you to Christ"

2 Corinthians 11:3

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

"But I am afraid that somehow your thoughts might be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ just as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness"

your thoughts might be led astray away

Paul speaks of thoughts as if they were animals that people could lead along the wrong path. Alternate translation: "someone might cause you to believe lies"

2 Corinthians 11:4

For suppose that ... preached. Or suppose that ... received. Or suppose that ... received. You put

Paul lists three situations that are likely to happen or may have actually happened. These sentences can be combined into one sentence. Alternate translation: "For when ... preached, or when ... received, or when ... received, you put"

a different spirit than what you received. Or suppose that you receive a different gospel than the one you received

"a different spirit than the Holy Spirit, or a different gospel than you received from us"

put up with these things

"deal with these things." See how these words were translated in 2 Corinthians 11:1.

2 Corinthians 11:5

those so-called super-apostles

Paul uses irony here to show that those teachers are less important than people say there are. Alternate translation: "those teachers whom some think are better than anyone else"

2 Corinthians 11:6

I am not untrained in knowledge

This negative phrase emphasizes the positive truth that he is trained in knowledge. The abstract noun "knowledge" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "I am certainly trained in knowledge" or "I am trained to know what they know"

2 Corinthians 11:7

Did I sin by humbling myself so you might be exalted?

Paul is beginning to claim that he treated the Corinthians well. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement, if necessary. Alternate translation: "I think we agree that I did not sin by humbling myself so you might be exalted"

freely preached the gospel of God to you

"preached the gospel of God to you without expecting anything from you in return"

2 Corinthians 11:8

I robbed other churches

This is an exaggeration to emphasize that Paul received money from churches who were not obligated to give to him. Alternate translation: "In a way, I robbed other churches" or "It was as if I robbed other churches"

I could serve you

The full meaning of this can be made explicit.

Alternate translation: "I could serve you at no cost"

2 Corinthians 11:9

In everything I have kept myself from being a burden to you

"I have never in any way been a financial burden to you." Paul speaks of someone for whom one has to spend money as if they were heavy items that people have to carry. The full meaning of this can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "I have done all I can to make sure you do not have to spend money so that I can be with you"

the brothers who came

These "brothers" were probably all male.

I will continue to do that

"I never will be a burden to you"

2 Corinthians 11:10

As the truth of Christ is in me, this

Paul is emphasizing that because his readers know that he tells the truth about Christ, they can know that he is telling the truth here. "As surely as you know that I truly know and proclaim the truth about Christ, you can know that what I am about to say is true. This"

this boasting of mine will not be silenced

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "no one will be able to make me stop boasting and stay silent"

this boasting of mine

This refers to what Paul spoke about starting in (2 Corinthians 11:7).

parts of Achaia

"regions of Achaia." The word "parts" speaks of areas of land, not political divisions.

2 Corinthians 11:11

Why? Because I do not love you?

Paul uses rhetorical questions to emphasize love for the Corinthians. These questions can be combined

or made into a statement. Alternate translation: "Is it because I do not love you that I do not want to be a burden to you?" or "I will continue to keep you from paying for my needs because this shows others that I love you"

God knows

You can make clear the understood information.
Alternate translation: "God knows I love you"

2 Corinthians 11:12

Connecting Statement:

As Paul continues to affirm his apostleship, he talks about false apostles.

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

Paul speaks of a false claim that his enemies state as if it were something that he can cut off. Alternate translation: "so that they have no reason to boast that they are doing the same work that we are doing"

to be found to be like us

"to appear to be like us" or "to appear to be doing the same work we are doing"

us in the things they boast about

"us, as they are boasting that they are"

2 Corinthians 11:13

For such people

"I do what I do because people like them"

deceitful workers

"dishonest workers"

disguise themselves as apostles

"are not apostles, but they try to make themselves look like apostles"

2 Corinthians 11:14

this is no surprise

By stating this in a negative form Paul is emphasizing that the Corinthians should expect to meet many "false apostles"

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light

"Satan is not an angel of light, but he tries to make himself look like an angel of light"

an angel of light

Here "light" is a metaphor for righteousness.
Alternate translation: "an angel of righteousness"

2 Corinthians 11:15

It is no great surprise if

By stating this in a negative form Paul is emphasizing that the Corinthians should expect to meet many "false apostles"

his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness

"his servants are not servants of righteousness, but they try to make themselves look like servants of righteousness"

2 Corinthians 11:16

receive me as a fool so I may boast a little

"receive me as you would receive a fool: let me talk, and consider my boasting the words of a fool"

2 Corinthians 11:17

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

2 Corinthians 11:18

many people boast according to the flesh

These people "boast" in the bad sense of claiming to be better people than they really are.

according to the flesh

Here the metonym "flesh" refers to man in his sinful nature and his achievements. Alternate translation: "about their own human achievements"

I will also boast

Paul uses the word "boast" ironically. See how you translated "boasting" in [2 Corinthians 1:12]

2 Corinthians 11:19

put up with fools

"accept fools." See how a similar phrase was translated in 2 Corinthians 11:1.

You are wise yourselves!

Paul is shaming the Corinthians by using irony.
Alternate translation: "You think you are wise, but you are not!"

2 Corinthians 11:20

enslaves you

Paul uses exaggeration when he speaks of someone forcing others to obey rules as if he were forcing them to be slaves. Alternate translation: "makes you follow rules he has thought of"

he devours you

Paul speaks of the super-apostles' taking people's material resources as if they were eating the people

themselves. Alternate translation: "he takes all your property"

takes advantage of you

A person takes advantage of another person by knowing things that the other person does not and using that knowledge to help himself and harm the other person.

2 Corinthians 11:21

I will say to our shame that we were too weak to do that
"I shamefully admit that we were not bold enough to treat you like that." Paul is using irony to tell the Corinthians that it was not because he was weak that he treated them well. Alternate translation: "I am not ashamed to say that we had the power to harm you, but we treated you well"

Yet if anyone is bold ... I too will be bold

"Whatever anyone boasts about ... I will dare to boast about it also." Paul's boldness here is the boldness to boast.

2 Corinthians 11:22

Are they Hebrews? ... Are they Israelites? ... Are they descendants of Abraham?

Paul is asking questions the Corinthians might be asking and then answering them to emphasize that he is as much a Jew as the super-apostles are. You should keep the question-and-answer form if possible. Alternate translation: "They want you to think they are important and to believe what they say because they are Hebrews and Israelites and descendants of Abraham. Well, so am I."

2 Corinthians 11:23

Connecting Statement:

As Paul continues to confirm his apostleship, he states specific things that have happened to him since he became a believer.

Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as though I were insane.) I am more

Paul is asking questions the Corinthians might be asking and then answering them to emphasize that he is as much a Jew as the super-apostles are. You should keep the question-and-answer form if possible. Alternate translation: "They say they are servants of Christ—I speak as though I were insane—but I am more"

as though I were insane

"as though I were unable to think well"

I am more

You can make clear the understood information. Alternate translation: "I am more a servant of Christ than they are"

in harder labor

"I have worked harder than they have"

in more prisons

"I have been in prison more often"

in beatings beyond measure, in facing

This is an idiom, and is exaggerated to emphasize that he had been beaten many, many times.

Alternate translation: "I have been beaten very many times, and I have faced" or "I have been beaten too many times to bother counting, and I have faced"

in facing many deadly dangers

"and I have almost died many times"

2 Corinthians 11:24

forty lashes minus one

This was a common expression for being whipped 39 times. In Jewish law the most they were allowed to whip a person at one time was forty lashes. So they commonly whipped a person thirty-nine times so that they would not be guilty of whipping someone too many times if they accidentally counted wrong.

2 Corinthians 11:25

I was beaten with rods

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "people beat me with wooden rods"

I was stoned

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "people threw stones at me until they thought I was dead"

I have spent a night and a day on the open sea

Paul was referring to floating in the water after the ship he was on sank.

2 Corinthians 11:26

in danger from false brothers

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "and in danger from people who claimed to be brothers in Christ, but who betrayed us"

2 Corinthians 11:27

I have served in labor

The words "I have served" have been added to shorten the sentence that begins in [2 Corinthians 11:24](#). You can end [2 Corinthians 11:26](#) with a comma and begin this verse with the words "in labor."

labor and toil

This hendiadys emphasizes how hard Paul worked. Alternate translation: "extremely hard work"

nakedness

Here Paul exaggerates to show his need of clothing. Alternate translation: "without enough clothing to keep me warm"

2 Corinthians 11:28

there is the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches

Here Paul's concern for the churches is spoken of as if it were a heavy object weighing him down. Alternate translation: "I am so concerned everyday for all the churches that I feel like I have a heavy object weighing me down"

2 Corinthians 11:29

Who is weak, and I am not weak?

The word "weak" may refer to a spiritual condition or to a physical condition. No one is sure what Paul is speaking of, so it is best to use the same word here. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "Whenever anyone is weak, I feel that weakness also." or "I am weak whenever anyone else is weak."

Who has been caused to stumble, and I do not burn?

Paul uses this question to express his anger when a fellow believer is caused to sin. Here his anger is spoken of as a burning inside him. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "Whenever anyone causes a brother to sin, I am angry."

has been caused to stumble

Paul speaks of sin as if it were tripping over something and then falling. Alternate translation: "has been led to sin" or "has thought that God would permit him to sin because of something that someone else did"

I do not burn

Paul speaks of being angry about sin as if he had a fire inside his body. Alternate translation: "I am not angry about it"

2 Corinthians 11:30

what shows my weaknesses

"what shows how weak I am"

2 Corinthians 11:31

I am not lying

Paul is using litotes to emphasize that he is telling the truth. Alternate translation: "I am telling the absolute truth"

2 Corinthians 11:32

the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city

"the governor whom King Aretas had appointed had told men to guard the city"

to arrest me

"so that they might catch and arrest me"

2 Corinthians 11:33

I was lowered in a basket

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "some people put me in a basket and lowered me to the ground"

from his hands

Paul uses the governor's hands as metonymy for the governor. Alternate translation: "from the governor"

Chapter 12

¹ I must boast, even if it is unprofitable. But I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago who—whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows—was caught up into the third heaven. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body, or out of the body, I do not know, God knows—⁴ was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words that people are not permitted to speak. ⁵ On behalf of such a person I will boast. But on behalf of myself I will not boast, except about my weaknesses. ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, for him to take it away from me. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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. ¹² The true signs of an apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, signs and wonders and miracles. ¹³ 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!

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? ¹⁶ But as it is, I did not burden you. But since I am so crafty, I am the one who caught you by deceit. ¹⁷ Did I take advantage of you by anyone I sent to you? ¹⁸ 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?

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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.

2 Corinthians 12 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul continues defending his authority in this chapter.

When Paul was with the Corinthians, he proved himself to be an apostle by his powerful deeds. He had not ever taken anything from them. Now that he is coming for the third time, he will still not take anything. He hopes that when he visits, he will not need to be harsh with them. (See: apostle)

Special concepts in this chapter

Paul's vision

Paul now defends his authority by telling about a wonderful vision of heaven. Although he speaks in the third person in verses 2-5, verse 7 indicates that he was the person who experienced the vision. It was so great a vision that God gave him a physical handicap to keep him humble. (See: heaven)

Third heaven

Many scholars believe the "third" heaven is the dwelling place of God. This is because Scripture also uses "heaven" to refer to the sky (the "first" heaven) and the universe (the "second" heaven).

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

Paul uses many rhetorical questions as he defends himself against his enemies who accused him: "For how were you less important than the rest of the churches, except that I was not a burden to you?" "Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same way? Did we not walk in the same steps?" and "Do you think all of this time we have been defending ourselves to you?"

Sarcasm

Paul uses sarcasm, a special type of irony, when he reminds them how he had helped them at no cost. He says, "Forgive me for this wrong!" He also uses regular irony when he says: "But, since I am so crafty, I am the one who caught you by deceit." He uses it to introduce his defense against this accusation by showing how impossible it was to be true.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Paradox

A "paradox" is a true statement that appears to describe something impossible. This sentence in verse 5 is a paradox: "I will not boast, except about my weaknesses." Most people do not boast about being weak. This sentence in verse 10 is also a paradox: "For whenever I am weak, then I am strong." In verse 9, Paul explains why both of these statements are true. ([2 Corinthians 12:5](#))

2 Corinthians 12:1

Connecting Statement:

In defending the apostleship that God gave him, Paul continues to state specific things that have happened to him since he became a believer.

even if it is unprofitable

"even if boasting is does not do any good"

I will go on to

"I will continue talking, but now about"

visions and revelations from the Lord

Possible meanings are 1) Paul uses the words "visions" and "revelations" to mean the same thing in hendiadys for emphasis. Alternate translation: "things that the Lord has allowed only me to see" or 2) Paul is speaking of two different things. Alternate translation: "secret things that the Lord has let me see with my eyes and other secrets that he has told me about"

2 Corinthians 12:2

I know a man in Christ

Paul is actually speaking of himself as if he were speaking of someone else, but this should be translated literally if possible.

whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know

Paul continues to describe himself as if this happened to another person. "I do not know if this man was in his physical body or in his spiritual body"

the third heaven

This refers to the dwelling place of God rather than the sky or outer space (the planets, stars, and the universe).

2 Corinthians 12:3

General Information:

Paul continues to speak of himself as though he were speaking of someone else.

2 Corinthians 12:4

was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words

This continues Paul's account of what happened to "this man"

caught up

suddenly and forcefully held and taken

paradise

Possible meanings are 1) heaven or 2) the third heaven or 3) a special place in heaven.

inexpressible words

Possible meanings of "inexpressible" are that 1) Paul means something other than "it is unlawful for people to speak" these words, and so people are unable to communicate the ideas expressed in the words or 2) Paul means the same thing as "it is unlawful for people to speak" these words, emphasizing that God does not permit people to speak the words.

2 Corinthians 12:5

of such a person

"of that person"

I will not boast, except about my weaknesses

This double negative emphasizes that Paul will boast only about his weaknesses. It can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "I will boast only of my weaknesses"

2 Corinthians 12:6

no one will think more of me than what he sees in me or hears from me

"no one will give me more credit than what he sees in me or hears from me"

2 Corinthians 12:7

General Information:

This verse reveals that Paul was speaking about himself beginning in 2 Corinthians 12:2.

Connecting Statement:

As Paul defends his apostleship, he tells of the weakness that God gave him to keep him humble.

because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations

"because those revelations were so much greater than anything anyone else had ever seen"

a thorn in the flesh was given to me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God gave me a thorn in the flesh" or "God allowed me to have a thorn in the flesh"

a thorn in the flesh

Here Paul's physical problems are compared to a thorn piercing his flesh. Alternate translation: "an affliction" or "a physical problem"

a messenger from Satan

"a servant of Satan"

2 Corinthians 12:8

Three times

Paul put these words at the beginning of the sentence to emphasize that he had prayed many times about his "thorn" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Lord about this

"Lord about this thorn in the flesh," or "Lord about this affliction"

2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is enough for you

"I will be kind to you, and that is all you need"

for power is made perfect in weakness

"for my power works best when you are weak"

the power of Christ might reside on me

Paul speaks of Christ's power as if it were a tent built over him. Possible meanings are 1) "people might see that I have the power of Christ" or 2) "I might truly have the power of Christ."

2 Corinthians 12:10

I am content for Christ's sake in weaknesses ... situations

Possible meanings are 1) "I am content in weakness ... situations if these things come because I belong to Christ" or 2) "I am content in weakness ... if these things cause more people to know Christ."

in weaknesses

"when I am weak"

in insults

"when people try to make me angry by saying that I am a bad person"

in troubles

"when I am suffering"

distressing situations

"when there is trouble"

For whenever I am weak, then I am strong

Paul is saying that when he is no longer strong enough to do what needs to be done, Christ, who is more powerful than Paul could ever be, will work through Paul to do what needs to be done. However, it would be best to translate these words literally, if your language allows.

2 Corinthians 12:11

Connecting Statement:

To strengthen them, Paul reminds the believers in Corinth of the true signs of an apostle and of his humility while before them.

I have become a fool

"I am acting like a fool"

You forced me to this

"You forced me to talk this way"

I should have been praised by you

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "it is praise that you should have given me"

praised

"commended"

For I was not at all inferior to

By using the negative form, Paul is saying strongly that those Corinthians who think that he is inferior are wrong. Alternate translation: "For I am just as good as"

super-apostles

Paul uses irony here to show that those teachers are less important than people say they are. See how this is translated in [2 Corinthians 11:5]

2 Corinthians 12:12

The true signs of an apostle were performed

This can be stated in active form, with emphasis on the "signs." Alternate translation: "It is the true signs of an apostle that I performed"

signs ... signs

Use the same word both times.

with all perseverance

"with as much perseverance as we had" or "with great perseverance"

signs and wonders and miracles

These are the "true signs of an apostle" that Paul performed "with complete perseverance."

2 Corinthians 12:13

how were you less important than the rest of the churches, except that ... you?

Paul is emphasizing that the Corinthians are wrong to accuse him of wanting to do them harm. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "I treated you the same way I treated all the other churches, except that ... you."

I was not a burden to you

"I did not ask you for money or other things I needed"

Forgive me for this wrong!

Paul is being ironic to shame the Corinthians. Both he and they know that he has done them no wrong, but they have been treating him as though he has wronged them.

this wrong

not asking them for money and other things he needed

2 Corinthians 12:14

I want you

The full meaning of this statement can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "What I want is that you love and accept me"

children should not save up for the parents

Young children are not responsible for saving money or other goods to give to their healthy parents.

2 Corinthians 12:15

I will most gladly spend and be spent

Paul speaks of his work and his physical life as if they were money that he or God could spend. Alternate translation: "I will gladly do any work and gladly allow God to permit people to kill me"

for your souls

The word "souls" is a metonym for the people themselves. Alternate translation: "for you" or "so you will live well"

If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "If I love you so much, you should not love me so little." or "If I love you so much, you should love me more than you do."

more

It is not clear what it is that Paul's love is "more" than. It is probably best to use "very much" or a "so much" that can be compared to "so little" later in the sentence.

2 Corinthians 12:16

But since I am so crafty, I am the one who caught you by deceit

Paul uses irony to shame the Corinthians who think he lied to them even if he did not ask them for money. Alternate translation: "But others think I was deceptive and used trickery"

2 Corinthians 12:17

Did I take advantage of you by anyone I sent to you?

Both Paul and the Corinthians know the answer is no. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one that I sent to you has taken advantage of you!"

2 Corinthians 12:18

Did Titus take advantage of you?

Both Paul and the Corinthians know the answer is no. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "Titus did not take advantage of you."

Did we not walk in the same spirit?

Paul speaks of living as if it were walking on a road. Possible meanings of "spirit" are 1) Paul and his companions acted rightly with the Corinthians, as had Titus. Alternate translation: "We all had the same attitude and acted the same way" Or 2) Paul, his companions, and Titus all obeyed the Holy Spirit as they served the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "We all lived in obedience to the same Spirit" This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement.

Did we not walk in the same steps?

Paul speaks of living as if it were walking on a road. Both Paul and the Corinthians know the answer to the question is yes. This rhetorical question can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "We all did things the same way."

2 Corinthians 12:19

Do you think all of this time we have been defending ourselves to you?

Paul uses this question to acknowledge something that the people may have been thinking. He does this so that he can assure them that it is not true. Alternate translation: "Perhaps you think that all of this time we have been defending ourselves to you."

in the sight of God

This represents the presence of God. Paul and his coworkers are aware that God is watching them while they teach the Corinthians. Alternate translation: "before God" or "with God as witness" or "in the presence of God"

and all for your strengthening

The reason Paul and his coworkers speak in Christ is so that the Corinthians might be strengthened. Paul speaks of knowing how to obey God and desiring to obey him as if it were physical growth. Alternate translation: "and we do all this in order to strengthen you" or "and we do all this so that you may know God and obey him better"

2 Corinthians 12:20

I may not find you as I wish

"I may not like what I find" or "I may not like what I see you doing"

you might not find me as you wish

"you might not like what you see in me"

there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, rivalries, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder

The abstract nouns "quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, rivalries, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder" can be translated using verbs. Possible meanings are 1) "some of you will be arguing with us, jealous of us, suddenly becoming very angry

with us, trying to take our places as leaders, speaking falsely about us, telling about our private lives, being proud, and opposing us as we try to lead you" or 2) "some of you will be arguing with each other, jealous of each other, suddenly becoming very angry with each other, quarreling with each other over who will be the leader, speaking falsely about each other, telling about each other's private lives, being proud, and opposing those whom God has chosen to lead you"

2 Corinthians 12:21

I might be grieved by many of those who have sinned before now and who did not repent ... that they practiced

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I will grieve because many of you have sinned before now and have not repented ... that you have practiced"

did not repent of the uncleanness and sexual immorality and lustful indulgence

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is saying almost the same thing three times for emphasis. Alternate translation: "did not stop committing the sexual sins that they practiced" or 2) Paul is speaking of three different sins.

of the uncleanness

The abstract noun uncleanness can be translated as "things that do not please God." Alternate translation: "of secretly thinking about and desiring things that do not please God"

of the ... sexual immorality

The abstract noun "immorality" can be translated as "immoral deeds." Alternate translation: "of doing sexually immoral deeds"

of the ... lustful indulgence

The abstract noun "indulgence" can be translated using a verb phrase. Alternate translation: "of ... doing things that satisfy immoral sexual desire"

Chapter 13

¹ This is the third time that I am coming to you. "Every matter must be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses." ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ And I hope that you will recognize that we have not failed the test. ⁷ 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. ⁸ For we are not able to do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ For we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. We also pray that you may be made complete. ¹⁰ 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.

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

¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. ^[2]

Footnotes

13:12 ^[1] Some copies number this sentence as verse 13.

13:13 ^[2] Some translations number this sentence as verse 14.

2 Corinthians 13 General Notes

Structure and formatting

In this chapter, Paul finishes defending his authority. He then concludes the letter with a final greeting and blessing.

Special concepts in this chapter

Preparation

Paul instructs the Corinthians as he prepares to visit them. He is hoping to avoid needing to discipline anyone in the church so he can visit them joyfully. (See: disciple)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Power and weakness

Paul repeatedly uses the contrasting words "power" and "weakness" in this chapter. The translator should use words that are understood to be opposites of each other.

"Examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Test yourselves."

Scholars are divided over what these sentences mean. Some scholars say that Christians are to test themselves to see whether their actions align with their Christian faith. The context favors this understanding. Others say these sentences mean that Christians should look at their actions and question whether they are genuinely saved. (See: faith and save)

2 Corinthians 13:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul establishes that Christ is speaking through him and that Paul is wanting to restore them, encourage them, and unify them.

Every matter must be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses

Here a "matter" is an accusation and "mouth" is a metonym for the testimony a person gives through his mouth. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Believe that someone has done something wrong only after two or three people have given the same testimony"

2 Corinthians 13:2

all the rest

"all you other people"

2 Corinthians 13:3

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

2 Corinthians 13:4

he was crucified

This can be made active. Alternate translation: "they crucified him"

but we will live with him by the power of God

God gives us the power and ability to live life in and with him.

2 Corinthians 13:5

in you

Possible meanings are 1) living inside each individual or 2) "among you," part of and the most important member of the group.

you have failed the test

"you have examined and tested yourself and found that you are not in the faith and Jesus Christ is not in you"

2 Corinthians 13:6

I hope that

"I desire that" or "I trust that"

2 Corinthians 13:7

that you may not do any wrong

"that you will not sin at all" or "that you will not refuse to listen to us when we correct you." Paul is

emphasizing the opposite with his statement.

Alternate translation: "that you will do everything right"

to have passed the test

"to be great teachers and live the truth"

2 Corinthians 13:8

we are not able to do anything against the truth

"we are not able to keep people from learning the truth"

truth, but only for the truth

"truth; everything we do will enable people to learn the truth"

2 Corinthians 13:9

may be made complete

"may become spiritually mature"

2 Corinthians 13:10

so that I may build you up, and not tear you down

Paul speaks of helping the Corinthians to know Christ better as if he were constructing a building. See how you translated a similar phrase in [2 Corinthians 10:8]

2 Corinthians 13:11

Connecting Statement:

Paul closes his letter to the Corinthian believers.

Work for restoration

"Work toward maturity"

think alike

"agree with one another" or "live in harmony with one another"

2 Corinthians 13:12

with a holy kiss

"with Christian love"

God's holy people

"those whom God has set apart for himself"

2 Corinthians 13:13

General Information:

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Book: Galatians

Galatians

Chapter 1

¹ Paul, an apostle—not an apostle from men nor by human agency, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— ² and all the brothers with me, to the churches of Galatia:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins so that he might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

⁶ I am amazed that you are turning away so quickly from him who called you by the grace of Christ. I am amazed that you are turning to a different gospel, ⁷ not that there is another gospel, but there are some men who cause you trouble and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel other than the one we proclaimed to you, let him be cursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, "If someone proclaims to you a gospel other than the one you received, let him be cursed." ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God? Am I seeking to please men? If I am still trying to please men, I am not a servant of Christ.

¹¹ For I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I proclaimed is not man's gospel. ¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it. Instead, it was by revelation of Jesus Christ to me. ¹³ You have heard about my former life in Judaism, how I was persecuting the church of God beyond measure and that I was trying to destroy it. ¹⁴ I advanced in Judaism beyond many of those who were my own age, from out of my own people. That is how extremely zealous I was for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart from my mother's womb, and who called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me, so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. ¹⁷ I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me. Instead, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus.

¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas and I stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ In what I write to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying. ²¹ Then I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² I was still not known by face to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only heard it being said, "The man who once persecuted us is now proclaiming as good news the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ So they glorified God because of me.

Galatians 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul started this letter differently than his other letters. He adds that he was "not an apostle from men nor by human agency, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead ones." Paul probably included these words because false teachers were opposing him and trying to undermine his authority.

Special concepts in this chapter

Heresy

God eternally saves people only through the true, biblical gospel. God condemns any other version of the gospel. Paul asks God to curse those who teach a false gospel. They might not be saved. They should be treated as non-Christians. (See: save, eternity, goodnews and condemn and curse)

Paul's qualifications

Some people in the early church were teaching that Gentiles needed to obey the law of Moses. To refute this teaching, in verses 13-16 Paul explains how he was formerly a zealous Jew. But God still needed to save him and show him the true gospel. As a Jew, and the apostle to Gentile people, Paul was uniquely qualified to address this issue. (See: lawofmoses)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter**"You are turning so quickly to a different gospel"**

The Book of Galatians is one of Paul's earliest letters in Scripture. It shows that heresies troubled even the early church.

Galatians 1:1**General Information:**

Paul, an apostle, writes this letter to the churches in the area of Galatia. Unless noted otherwise, all instances of "you" and "your" in this letter refer to the Galatians and are plural.

who raised him

"who caused him to live again"

Galatians 1:2**brothers**

Here this means fellow Christians, including both men and women, since all believers in Christ are members of one spiritual family, with God as their heavenly Father. Alternate translation: "brothers and sisters"

Galatians 1:3**General Information:**

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Galatians 1:4**for our sins**

"Sins" is a metonym the punishment for sin. Alternate translation: "to take the punishment we deserved because of our sins"

that he might deliver us from this present evil age

Here "this ... age" represents the powers at work in the age. Alternate translation: "that he might bring us to a place of safety from the evil powers at work in the world today"

our God and Father

This refers to "God our Father." He is our God and our Father.

Galatians 1:5**General Information:**

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Galatians 1:6**Connecting Statement:**

Paul gives his reason for writing this letter: he reminds them to continue to understand the gospel.

I am amazed

"I am surprised" or "I am shocked." Paul was disappointed that they were doing this.

you are turning away so quickly from him

Here "turning away ... from him" is a metaphor for started to doubt or no longer trust God. Alternate translation: "you are so quickly starting to doubt him"

him who called you

"God, who called you"

called

Here this means God has appointed or chosen people to be his children, to serve him, and to proclaim his message of salvation through Jesus.

by the grace of Christ

"because of Christ's grace" or "because of Christ's gracious sacrifice"

you are turning to a different gospel

Here "turning to" is a metaphor that means to start to believe something. Alternate translation: "you are instead starting to believe a different gospel"

Galatians 1:7**some men**

"some people"

Galatians 1:8**But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim ... let him be cursed**

Paul said this to show how strongly he felt about anyone who might proclaim a gospel other than the one he had proclaimed. If anyone would do that, that person should be cursed. Alternate translation: "But even if we or an angel from heaven were to proclaim ... let him be cursed"

But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim
The word "even" shows that Paul did not believe that they or an angel from heaven would ever proclaim a different gospel. But he includes himself and angels in his statement to emphasize how wrong it would be for anyone to proclaim a different gospel.

other than the one
"different from the gospel" or "different from the message"

let him be cursed
"God should punish that person forever." If your language has a common way of calling a curse down on someone, you should use that.

Galatians 1:9

General Information:
This page has intentionally been left blank.

Galatians 1:10

For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God? Am I seeking to please men?
These rhetorical questions expect the answer "no." Alternate translation: "I do not seek the favor of men, but instead I seek the favor of God. I am not seeking to please men."

If I am still trying to please men, I am not a servant of Christ
Both the "if" phrase and the "then" phrase are contrary to fact. "I am not still trying to please men; I am a servant of Christ" or "If I were still trying to please men, then I would not be a servant of Christ"

Galatians 1:11

Connecting Statement:
Paul explains that he did not learn the gospel from others; he learned it from Jesus Christ.

brothers
See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

is not man's gospel
By using this phrase, Paul was not trying to say that Jesus Christ is not himself human. Because Christ is both man and God, however, he is not a sinful human being. Paul is writing about where the gospel came from; it did not come from sinful human beings, but it came from Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:12

it was by revelation of Jesus Christ to me
Possible meanings are 1) "Jesus Christ himself revealed the gospel to me" or 2) "God made me know the gospel when he showed me who Jesus Christ was."

Galatians 1:13

former life
"behavior at one time" or "prior life" or "earlier life"

Galatians 1:14

I advanced
This metaphor pictures Paul as being ahead of other Jews his age in their goal to be perfect Jews.

those who were my own age
"the Jewish people who are the same age as I am"

my fathers
"my ancestors"

Galatians 1:15

and who called me through his grace
Possible meanings of "through his grace" are 1) this tells why God called Paul. Alternate translation: "and who called me to serve him because he is gracious" or 2) this tells how God called Paul. Alternate translation: "and who called me by means of his grace."

Galatians 1:16

to reveal his Son in me
Possible meanings are 1) "to allow me to know his Son" or 2) "to show the world through me that Jesus is God's Son."

Son
This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

preach him
"proclaim that he is God's Son" or "preach the good news about God's Son"

consult with flesh and blood
This is an expression that means talking with other people. Alternate translation: "ask people to help me understand the message"

Galatians 1:17

go up to Jerusalem
"go to Jerusalem." Jerusalem was in a region of high hills, making it necessary to climb many hills in order to get there, and so it was common to describe travel to Jerusalem as "going up to Jerusalem."

Galatians 1:18

General Information:
This page has intentionally been left blank.

Galatians 1:19

I saw none of the other apostles except James

This double negative emphasizes that James was the only apostle whom Paul saw. Alternate translation: "I saw only one of the other apostles, and that was James" or "the only other apostle I saw was James"

Galatians 1:20

before God

Paul wants the Galatians to understand that Paul is completely serious and that he knows that God hears what he says and will judge him if he does not tell the truth.

In what I write to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying

Paul uses litotes to emphasize that he is telling the truth. Alternate translation: "I am not lying to you in the messages I write to you" or "in the things I write to you I am telling you the truth"

Galatians 1:21

the regions of Syria and Cilicia

"the parts of the world called Syria and Cilicia"

Galatians 1:22

I was still not known by face to the churches of Judea that are in Christ

"No one in the churches of Judea that are in Christ knew what I looked like" or "None of the people in the churches of Judea that are in Christ had ever met me"

Galatians 1:23

They only heard it being said

"They only knew what they heard others saying about me"

Galatians 1:24

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Chapter 2

¹ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I spoke privately to those who seemed to be important, in order to make sure that I was not running—or had not run—in vain. ³ But not even Titus, who was with me and who was a Greek, was forced to be circumcised. ⁴ The false brothers came in secretly to spy on the liberty we have in Christ Jesus. They desired to enslave us, ⁵ but we did not yield in submission to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. ⁶ But those who seemed to be important (whatever they were does not matter to me, God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed important added nothing to me. ⁷ On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to those who are uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to those who are circumcised. ⁸ For God, who worked in Peter for the apostleship to those who are circumcised, also worked in me to the Gentiles. ⁹ When James, Cephas, and John, who had a reputation as pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles and they should go to the circumcised. ¹⁰ They requested only that we remember the poor, the very thing that I was eager to do.

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. ¹² Before certain men came from James, Cephas was eating with the Gentiles. But when these men came, he stopped and kept away from the Gentiles. He was afraid of those who were demanding circumcision. ¹³ Also the rest of the Jews joined in this hypocrisy. Even Barnabas was led astray with them by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their behavior was not following the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of all of them, "If you are a Jew but are living like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" ¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that no person is justified by the works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law no flesh will be justified. ¹⁷ But if, while we seek to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ For if I rebuild those things I once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. ^{[1]20} It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

Footnotes

2:19 ^[1]Some translations include this sentence with verse 20.

Galatians 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul continues to defend the true gospel. This began in [Galatians 1:11](#).

Special concepts in this chapter

Circumcised and uncircumcised

The law of Moses required Jewish males to be circumcised. The Jews called Gentiles "the uncircumcised."

Slavery and freedom

Paul introduces these ideas in Galatians 2:4. He uses the metaphor of slavery for people who are obligated to obey the law of Moses. He uses the metaphor of freedom, or liberty, for people who are not obligated to obey the law of Moses because they trust in Jesus Christ to make them righteous.

The false brothers

When Paul says that false brothers wanted to make the believers slaves, he is referring to Jews who claimed to be Christians and who wanted to convince Gentile Christians to obey the law of Moses.

The hypocrisy of Cephas

Jews normally did not eat with Gentiles because Gentiles did not obey the law of Moses. Cephas knew that Gentile Christians are not obligated to obey the law of Moses, and because of this, he knew that it was permissible to eat with them. However, when some men came saying that Gentile Christians are obligated to obey the law, Cephas stopped eating with the Gentiles Christians, as if he, too, believed that they need to obey the law of Moses. Paul rebuked Cephas for treating the Gentile Christians like that.

Galatians 2:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to give the history of how he learned the gospel from God, not the apostles.

went up

"traveled." Jerusalem is located in hilly country. The Jews also viewed Jerusalem as the place on earth that is closest to heaven, so Paul may have been speaking figuratively, or it may be that it was reflecting the difficult, uphill, journey to get to Jerusalem.

Galatians 2:2

those who seemed to be important

"the most important leaders among the believers"

I was not running—or had not run—in vain

Paul uses running as a metaphor for work. Alternate translation: "I was doing, or had done, profitable work"

in vain

"for no benefit" or "for nothing"

Galatians 2:3

to be circumcised

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "to have someone circumcise him"

Galatians 2:4

The false brothers came in secretly

"People who pretended to be Christians came into the church," or "People who pretended to be Christians came among us"

spy on the liberty

secretly watch people to see how they live in liberty

liberty

freedom

They desired

"These spies desired" or "These false brothers wanted"

to enslave us

"to make us slaves to the law." Paul is speaking about being forced to follow the Jewish rituals that the law commanded. He is speaking about this as if it were slavery. The most important ritual was circumcision. Alternate translation: "to force us to obey the law"

Galatians 2:5

yield in submission

"submit" or "listen"

Galatians 2:6

added nothing to me

The word "me" here represents what Paul was teaching. Alternate translation: "added nothing to what I teach" or "did not tell me to add anything to what I teach"

Galatians 2:7

On the contrary

"Instead" or "Rather"

I had been entrusted ... Peter had been entrusted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God trusted me ... God trusted Peter"

had been entrusted with the gospel to those

"had been given the responsibility of preaching the gospel to those"

Galatians 2:8

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Galatians 2:9

who had a reputation as pillars

A pillar is a post that supports a building. This is a metaphor meaning important leaders. Alternate translation: "who were known to be important leaders" or "who were known to be important leaders of the church"

recognized the grace that had been given to me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "recognized the grace that God had given to me"

the grace that had been given to me

The abstract noun "grace" can be translated with the phrase "be kind." Alternate translation: "that God had been kind to me"

gave ... the right hand of fellowship

Grasping and shaking the right hand was a symbol of fellowship. Alternate translation: "welcomed ... as fellow workers" or "welcomed ... with honor"

Galatians 2:10

remember the poor

You may need to make explicit what about the poor he was to remember. Alternate translation: "remember to take care of the needs of the poor"

Galatians 2:11

I opposed him to his face

The words "to his face" are a metonym for "where he could see and hear me." Alternate translation: "I confronted him in person" or "I challenged his actions in person"

Galatians 2:12

Before

in relation to time

he stopped

"he stopped eating with them"

He was afraid of those who were demanding circumcision

The reason Cephas was afraid can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "He was afraid that these men who required circumcision would judge that he was doing something wrong" or "He was afraid that these men who required circumcision would blame him for doing something wrong"

those who were demanding circumcision

Jews who had become Christians, but who demanded that those who believe in Christ live according to Jewish customs

kept away from

"stayed away from" or "avoided"

Galatians 2:13

this hypocrisy

Paul calls Peter's staying away from the Gentiles "this hypocrisy" because Peter was pretending to be like those Jews who say that Gentile Christians have to be circumcised.

Even Barnabas was led astray with them by their hypocrisy

Here to be "led astray" is a metaphor for being persuaded to do something wrong. Alternate translation: "Even Barnabas was persuaded to be a hypocrite because of them"

Galatians 2:14

their behavior was not following the truth of the gospel

"they were not living according to the truth of the gospel"

how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

This rhetorical question is a rebuke and can be translated as a statement. The word "you" is singular and refers to Peter. Alternate translation: "you are wrong to force the Gentiles to live like Jews."

force

Possible meanings are 1) force by using words or 2) persuade.

Galatians 2:15

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells the believers that Jews who know the law, as well as Gentiles who do not know the law, are saved only by faith in Christ and not by keeping the law.

not Gentile sinners

"not those whom the Jews call Gentile sinners"

Galatians 2:16

we

This probably refers to Paul and others but not to the Galatians, who were primarily Gentiles.

no flesh

The word "flesh" is a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: "no person"

Galatians 2:17

while we seek to be justified in Christ

The phrase "justified in Christ" means justified because we are united with Christ and justified by means of Christ.

we too were found to be sinners

The words "were found to be" are an idiom that emphasizes that "we are" certainly sinners. Alternate translation: "we see that we also certainly are sinners"

Absolutely not!

"Of course, that is not true!" This expression gives the strongest possible negative answer to the preceding rhetorical question "Does Christ become

a servant of sin?" You may have a similar expression in your language that you could use here.

Galatians 2:18

General Information:

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Galatians 2:19

General Information:

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Galatians 2:20

Son of God

This is an important title for Jesus.

Galatians 2:21

I do not set aside the grace of God

"I do not reject the grace of God" or "I do not consider God's grace to be worthless"

the grace of God

Paul is speaking of God's kindness to us. Christ died for us so that we can be justified.

if righteousness could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing

Paul uses this statement to argue that righteousness cannot be gained through the law. If it could be then there was no need for Christ to die to give us righteousness, because we could gain it ourselves by obeying the law.

if righteousness could be gained through the law

"if people could become righteous by obeying the law"

then Christ died for nothing

"then Christ would have accomplished nothing by dying"

Chapter 3

¹ Foolish Galatians! Who has put a spell on you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly displayed as crucified. ² This is the only thing I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now going to be perfected by the flesh? ⁴ Have you suffered so many things for nothing—if indeed it was for nothing? ⁵ Does he who gives the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? ⁶ Just as Abraham "believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness," ⁷ in the same way, understand, then, that those of faith are the children of Abraham. ⁸ The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you all the nations will be blessed." ⁹ So then, those of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ¹⁰ All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; and so it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law, and do them." ¹¹ Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because "the righteous will live by faith." ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather, "The person who does the works of the law must live by them." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"— ¹⁴ so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

¹⁵ Brothers, let me speak in human terms. Once a man-made contract is established by law, no one can set it aside or add to it. ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. It does not say, "to descendants," referring to many, but instead to only one, "and to your descendant," who is Christ. ¹⁷ Now what I am saying is this: The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God, to nullify the promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes by the law, then it no longer comes by promise. But God freely gave it to Abraham by a promise. ¹⁹ What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the descendant of Abraham would come to whom the promise had been made. The law was ordained through angels by the hand of an intermediary. ²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one person. But God is one. ²¹ So is the law against the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²² But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until faith should be revealed. ²⁴ So then the law became our guardian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ Then if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's descendants, and heirs according to promise.

Galatians 3 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Equality in Christ

All Christians are equally united to Christ. Ancestry, gender, and status do not matter. All are equal with each other. All are equal in the eyes of God.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

Paul uses many different rhetorical questions in this chapter. He uses them to convince the Galatians of their sin. (See: and sin)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter**Flesh**

This is a complex issue. "Flesh" is possibly a metaphor for our sinful nature. Paul is not teaching that the physical part of man is sinful. "Flesh" is used in this chapter to contrast with that which is spiritual. (See: flesh)

"Those of faith are children of Abraham"

Scholars are divided on what this means. Some believe Christians inherit the promises that God gave to Abraham, so Christians replace the physical descendants of Israel. Others believe Christians spiritually follow Abraham, but they do not inherit the promises that God gave to Abraham. In light of Paul's other teachings and the context here, Paul is probably writing about the Jewish and Gentile Christians sharing the same faith as Abraham did.

Galatians 3:1**General Information:**

Paul is rebuking the Galatians by asking rhetorical questions.

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the believers in Galatia that God gave them his Spirit when they believed the gospel, not because they obeyed his law.

Who has put a spell on you?

Paul is using irony and a rhetorical question to say that the Galatians are acting as though someone has put a spell on them. He does not really believe that someone has put a spell on them. Alternate translation: "You behave as if someone has put a spell on you!"

put a spell on you

"done magic on you" or "done witchcraft on you"

It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly displayed as crucified

Paul speaks of his clear teaching of Jesus being crucified as if he had put on public display a picture of Jesus being crucified. And he speaks of the Galatians having heard his teaching as if they had seen the picture. Alternate translation: "You yourselves heard the clear teaching about Jesus being crucified"

Galatians 3:2**This is the only thing I want to learn from you**

This continues the irony from verse 1. Paul knows the answers to the rhetorical questions he is about to ask.

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?

Translate this rhetorical question as a question if you can, because the reader will be expecting a question here. Also, be sure that the reader knows that the answer to the question is "by the hearing of faith," not "by doing what the law says." Alternate translation: "You received the Spirit, not by doing what the law says, but by the hearing of faith."

the hearing of faith

"believing what you heard"

Galatians 3:3**Are you so foolish?**

This rhetorical question shows that Paul is surprised and even angry that the Galatians are foolish. Alternate translation: "You are very foolish!"

by the flesh

The word "flesh" is a metonym for effort. Alternate translation: "by your own effort" or "by your own work"

Galatians 3:4**Have you suffered so many things for nothing—if indeed it was for nothing?**

Paul uses this question to rebuke the Galatians for behaving as though their faith in Christ and their suffering for it were for nothing. Alternate translation: "You have suffered so many things: Do not let it be for nothing!" or "You suffered so many things from those who opposed your faith in Christ. If you now think that righteousness comes by obeying the law, then your suffering was for nothing!"

Have you suffered so many things

The Galatians had believed that God makes people righteous because they trust in Jesus Christ, not because they obey the law. Because of this, they suffered many things from those who opposed their faith in Christ.

for nothing

"uselessly" or "without benefit to you"

Galatians 3:5**Does he ... do so by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?**

Paul asks another rhetorical question to remind the Galatians how people receive the Spirit. Alternate translation: "He ... does not do it by the works of the law; he does it by hearing with faith."

by the works of the law

This represents people doing the works that the law requires. Alternate translation: "because you do what the law tells us to do"

by the hearing of faith

Your language may require that what the people heard and whom they trusted be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "because you heard the message and had faith in Jesus" or "because you listened to the message and trusted in Jesus"

Galatians 3:6

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Galatian believers that even Abraham received righteousness by faith and not by the law.

it was credited to him as righteousness

God saw Abraham's faith in God, so then God considered Abraham righteous.

Galatians 3:7

those of faith

"those who have faith." The meaning of the noun "faith" can be expressed with the verb "believe." Alternate translation: "those who believe"

the children of Abraham

This represents people whom God views as he viewed Abraham. Alternate translation: "righteous in the same way that Abraham was righteous"

Galatians 3:8

The scripture, foreseeing ... faith, preached the gospel
Because God's promise to Abraham was written in the scripture before Christ fulfilled the promise, the scripture is like someone who knows the future before it happens and who preaches the gospel. Alternate translation: "In the scripture, God showed before it happened ... faith, and he presented the gospel"

In you

The word "you" refers to Abraham. Ultimately God would bless the nations through one of Abraham's descendants. Alternate translation: "Because of you" or "Through you"

all the nations

"all the people-groups in the world." God was showing that his plan of salvation was not only for the Jewish people, but for both Jews and non-Jews.

Galatians 3:9

the man of faith

Possible meanings are 1) Abraham was the man who believed and trusted in God or 2) Abraham was faithful to God.

Galatians 3:10

All who rely on ... the law are under a curse

Being under a curse represents being cursed. Here it refers to being eternally punished. "Those who rely on ... the law are cursed" or "God will eternally punish those who rely on ... the law"

the works of the law

"what the law says we must do"

Galatians 3:11

Now it is clear

What is clear can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "The scriptures are clear" or "The scriptures teach clearly"

no one is justified before God by the law

This can be stated with an active verb. Alternate translation: "God justifies no one by the law"

no one is justified before God by the law

Paul is correcting their belief that if they obeyed the law, God would justify them. Alternate translation: "no one is justified before God by obeying the law" or "God does not justify anyone for their obedience to the law"

the righteous will live by faith

The nominal adjective "righteous" refers to righteous people. Alternate translation: "righteous people will live by faith"

Galatians 3:12

must live by them

Possible meanings are 1) "must obey them all" or 2) "will be judged by his ability to do what the law demands."

Galatians 3:13

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds these believers again that keeping the law could not save a person and that the law did not add a new condition to the promise by faith given to Abraham.

from the curse of the law

The noun "curse" can be expressed with the verb "curse." Alternate translation: "from being cursed because of the law" or "from being cursed for not obeying the law"

from the curse of the law ... becoming a curse for us ... Cursed is everyone

The word "curse" here is a metonym for God condemning the person whom he has cursed. Alternate translation: "from us having God condemn us because we broke the law ... having God condemn him instead of us ... God condemns everyone"

hangs on a tree

Paul expected his audience to understand that he was referring to Jesus hanging on the cross.

Galatians 3:14

so that the blessing of Abraham might come

"and because Christ became a curse for us, the blessing of Abraham will come"

so that by faith we might receive

Possible meanings are 1) this is because Christ became a curse for us. Alternate translation: "and because Christ became a curse for us, we will receive by faith" or 2) this is because the blessing in Abraham came in Christ Jesus. Alternate translation: "and because the blessing in Abraham came in Christ Jesus, we will receive by faith"

we might receive the promise

The word "we" includes the people who would read the letter and so is inclusive.

Galatians 3:15

Brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

in human terms

"as a person" or "of things most people understand"

Galatians 3:16

Now

This word shows that Paul has stated a general principle and is now beginning to introduce a specific case.

referring to many

"referring to many descendants"

to your descendant

The word "your" is singular and refers to a specific person, who is a particular descendant of Abraham

Galatians 3:17

The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God

In some languages it might be strange to speak of a law coming or setting aside a covenant. It might be clearer to make explicit who gave the law. Alternate translation: "When God gave the law 430 years

later, he did not set aside the covenant that he had previously established"

set aside

"cancel"

430 years

"four hundred and thirty years"

God, to nullify the promise

"God; that is, it does not nullify the promise"

nullify the promise

"to make the promise worthless" or "to make things as if the promise had never been made"

Galatians 3:18

For if the inheritance comes by the law, then it no longer comes by promise

Paul uses this argument to show that the inheritance does not come by obeying the law but by believing God's promise. Alternate translation: "If people could receive the inheritance by obeying the law, then it would no longer be true that people receive the inheritance by believing God's promise"

the inheritance

Paul speaks of what God has promised to give to believers as if it were an inheritance of property and wealth from a family member. Alternate translation: "the gift"

Galatians 3:19

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells the believers in Galatia why God gave the law.

What, then, was the purpose of the law?

Paul uses a rhetorical question to introduce the next topic he wants to discuss. It can also be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "I will tell you what the purpose of the law is." or "Let me tell you why God gave the law."

It was added

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God added it" or "God added the law"

The law was ordained through angels

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God ordained the law through angels" or "God gave the law through angels"

by the hand of an intermediary

The words "by the hand of" are a metonym for the intermediary himself. An intermediary represents one person to another. Paul was probably talking about Moses, who represented God to the people of Israel. Alternate translation "by an intermediary" or "by his representative, Moses"

Galatians 3:20

Now an intermediary implies more than one person

An intermediary represents one person to another. Alternate translation: "Now if we say that there was an intermediary, that means that there must have been more than one person."

intermediary
representative

But God is one

Paul uses this statement to contrast the law and the promise. Paul seems to be saying that the promise is superior to the law since God used an intermediary to give the law, but he did not use an intermediary when he made the promise. "God is one" is an important statement from the Old Testament, so it would be best to translate it as Paul wrote it. If this does not make sense in your language, you could translate it as "God is one God."

Galatians 3:21

against the promises

"opposed to the promises" or "in conflict with the promises"

if a law had been given that could give life

This can be stated in active form, and the abstract noun "life" can be translated with the verb "live." Alternate translation: "if God had given a law that enabled those who kept it to live"

righteousness would certainly have come by the law

"we could have become righteous by obeying that law"

Galatians 3:22

the scripture imprisoned everything under sin

The idea of being imprisoned under sin represents being controlled by sin. Possible meanings are 1) "the scripture caused everyone to be controlled by sin" or 2) "the scripture says that everyone is controlled by sin."

the promise by faith in Jesus Christ

The word "promise" represents what God promised. Alternate translation: "what God promised to those who have faith in Christ"

Galatians 3:23

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds those in Galatia that believers are free in God's family, not slaves under the law.

we were held captive under the law, imprisoned

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the law held us captive and we were in prison" or "the law held us captive in prison"

we were held captive under the law, imprisoned

The way the law controlled us is spoken of as if the law were a prison guard holding us as captives. Alternate translation: "the law controlled us like a prison guard"

until faith should be revealed

This can be stated in active form, and who this faith is in can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "until God would reveal that he justifies those who have faith in Christ" or "until God would reveal that he justifies those who trust in Christ"

Galatians 3:24

guardian

More than simply "one who gives oversight to a child," this was usually a slave who was responsible for enforcing rules and behaviors given by the parent and would report to the parent on the child's actions.

until Christ came

"until the time when Christ came"

so that we might be justified

Before Christ came, God had planned to justify us. When Christ came, he carried out his plan to justify us. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so that God would declare us to be righteous"

Galatians 3:25

General Information:

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Galatians 3:26

General Information:

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Galatians 3:27

For as many of you who were baptized into Christ

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ"

have clothed yourselves with Christ

Possible meanings are 1) this is a metaphor meaning that they have been united to Christ. Alternate translation: "have become united with Christ" or "belong to Christ" or 2) this is a metaphor meaning that they have become like Christ. Alternate translation: "have become like Christ"

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female
"God sees no difference between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female"

Galatians 3:29

heirs

The people to whom God has made promises are spoken of as if they were to inherit property and wealth from a family member.

Chapter 4

¹ I am saying that the heir, for whatever time he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is owner of the entire estate. ² But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ So also, when we were children, we were enslaved to the elemental principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law ⁵ so that he might redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who cries out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then you are also an heir through God.

⁸ But at that time, when you did not know God, you were made to be slaves to those who are, by their natural powers, not gods at all. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather that you are known by God, how is it that you are turning back to the weak and worthless elemental principles? Do you want to be enslaved all over again? ¹⁰ You observe days and new moons and seasons and years! ¹¹ I am afraid for you that somehow my labor with you may have been for nothing.

¹² I beg you, brothers, become like me, for I also have become like you. You did me no wrong. ¹³ But you know that it was because of a disease of the flesh that I proclaimed the gospel to you the first time, ¹⁴ and though my physical condition put you to the test, you did not despise or reject me. Instead you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ Where then is your blessing now? For I testify to you that, if it were possible, you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ So then, have I become your enemy because I am telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They are zealous to win you over, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out so you may be zealous for them. ¹⁸ It is always good to be zealous for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹ My little children, again I am suffering the pains of childbirth for you until Christ is formed in you. ²⁰ I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.

²¹ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave girl and one by the free woman. ²³ One was born by the slave girl according to the flesh, but the other was born by the free woman through promise. ²⁴ These things may be interpreted as an allegory, for these women represent two covenants. One of them is from Mount Sinai and she bears children into slavery. This is Hagar. ²⁵ Now Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia; and she represents the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written,

"Rejoice, you barren one who does not give birth;
cry out and shout for joy,
you who are not suffering the pains of childbirth;
because the children of the desolate woman are more numerous
than those of the woman who has a husband."

²⁸ But you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the one who was born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit. It is the same now. ³⁰ But what does the scripture say? "Send away the slave girl and her son. For the son of the slave girl will not share in the inheritance with the son of the free woman." ³¹ Therefore, brothers, we are not children of a slave girl, but of the free woman.

Galatians 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verse 27, which is quoted from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Sonship

Sonship is a complex issue. Scholars have many views on Israel's sonship. Paul uses sonship to teach how being under the law differs from being free in Christ. Not all of Abraham's physical descendants inherited God's promises to him. Only his descendants through Isaac and Jacob inherited the promises. And God only adopts into his family those who follow Abraham spiritually through faith. They are children of God with an inheritance. Paul calls them "children of promise." (See: inherit, promise, spirit and faith and adoption)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Abba, Father

"Abba" is an Aramaic word. In ancient Israel, people used it to informally refer to their fathers. Paul "transliterates" its sounds by writing them with Greek letters.

Galatians 4:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to remind the Galatian believers that Christ came to redeem those who were under the law, and that he changed them from being slaves into being sons.

no different from
"the same as"

Galatians 4:2

guardians

people with legal responsibility for children

managers

people whom others trust to control what is valuable, in this case children

Galatians 4:3

General Information:

The word "we" here refers to all Christians, including Paul's readers.

when we were children

Here "children" is a metaphor for being spiritually immature. Alternate translation: "when we were like children"

we were enslaved to the elemental principles of the world

Here "enslaved" is a metaphor for being unable to stop one's self from doing something. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "the elemental principles of the world controlled us" or "we had to obey the elemental principles of the world as if we were slaves"

the elemental principles of the world

These words could refer to 1) the laws or moral principles of the world, or 2) spiritual powers that some people thought control what happens on earth.

Galatians 4:4

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

Galatians 4:5

redeem

Paul uses the metaphor of a person buying back lost property or buying the freedom of a slave as a picture of Jesus paying for his people's sins by dying on the cross.

Galatians 4:6

you are sons

Paul uses the word for male children here because the subject is inheritance. In his culture and that of his readers, inheritance passed most commonly, but not always, to male children. He was neither specifying nor excluding female children here.

God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who cries out, "Abba, Father."

By crying out "Abba, Father" the Spirit assures us that we are God's children and he loves us.

God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts

The heart is metonym for the part of a person that thinks and feels. Alternate translation: "God has sent his Son's Spirit to show us how to think and act"

his Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

who cries

The Spirit is the one who cries.

Abba, Father

This is the way a young child would address his father in Paul's home language, but not in the language of the Galatian readers. To keep the sense of a foreign language, translate this as a word that sounds as much like "Abba" as your language allows.

Galatians 4:7

you are no longer a slave, but a son

Paul uses the word for male child here because the subject is inheritance. In his culture and that of his readers, inheritance passed most commonly, but not always, to male children. He was neither specifying nor excluding female children here.

you are no longer a slave ... you are also an heir

Paul is addressing his readers as though they are one person, so "you" here is singular.

heir

The people to whom God has made promises are spoken of as if they were to inherit property and wealth from a family member.

Galatians 4:8

General Information:

Paul continues to rebuke the Galatians by asking rhetorical questions.

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Galatian believers that they are again trying to live under God's laws rather than living by faith.

those who are

"those things that are" or "those spirits who are"

Galatians 4:9

you are known by God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God knows you"

how is it that you are turning back to ... principles?

Here "turning back to" is a metaphor for starting to pay attention to something again. This is the first of two rhetorical questions. Alternate translation: "you should not start paying attention to ... principles." or "you should not be concerned with ... principles."

elemental principles

See how you translated this phrase in Galatians 4:3.

Do you want to be enslaved all over again?

Paul uses this question to rebuke the people for behaving in a way that would make them like slaves. Alternate translation: "It seems that you want to be slaves again." or "You behave as though you wanted to be like slaves again."

Do you want to be enslaved all over again?

Here being "enslaved" is a metaphor for being obligated to obey certain rules or customs. Alternate translation: "Do you want to have to obey rules again like a slave has to obey his master?" or "It seems that you want to be controlled all over again!"

Galatians 4:10

You observe days and new moons and seasons and years

Paul is speaking of their being careful to celebrate certain times, thinking that doing that will make them right with God. Alternate translation: "You carefully celebrate days and new moons and seasons and years"

Galatians 4:11

may have been for nothing

"may have been useless" or "has not had any effect"

Galatians 4:12

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the Galatian believers how kindly they treated him when he was with them, and he encourages them to continue to trust him while he is not there with them.

beg

Here this means to ask or urge strongly. This is not the word used to ask for money or food or physical objects.

brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

You did me no wrong

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "You treated me well" or "You treated me as you should have"

Galatians 4:13

disease of the flesh

"physical disease" or "disease of the body"

Galatians 4:14

and though my physical condition put you to the test

"and though it was difficult for you to see me so physically ill"

my physical condition

Paul was speaking about a health problem that he had. We do not know what the problem was.

despise

hate very much

Galatians 4:15

General Information:

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Galatians 4:16

General Information:

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Galatians 4:17

to win you over

"to convince you to join them"

to shut you out

"to shut you out from us" or "to make you stop being loyal to us"

zealous for them

"zealous to do what they tell you to do"

Galatians 4:18

General Information:

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Galatians 4:19

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells believers that grace and law cannot work together.

My little children

This is a metaphor for disciples or followers.
Alternate translation: "You who are disciples because of me"

I am suffering the pains of childbirth for you until Christ is formed in you

Paul uses childbirth as a metaphor for his concern about the Galatians. Alternate translation: "I am in pain as though I were a woman having to give birth to you, and I will continue to be in pain until Christ truly controls you"

Galatians 4:20

change my tone

Paul wishes he could sound happy instead of sounding angry or confused. Alternate Translation: "change the way I sound" or "change the way I am speaking to you" or "speak to you differently"

Galatians 4:21

Tell me, you ... law, do you not listen to the law?

Paul is introducing what he will say next. Alternate translation: "I want to tell you something, you ... law; you need to learn what the law really says." or "Let me tell you who ... law what the law really says."

Galatians 4:22

General Information:

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Galatians 4:23

General Information:

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Galatians 4:24

Connecting Statement:

Paul begins a story to illustrate a truth—that law and grace cannot exist together.

These things may be interpreted as an allegory

"This story of the two sons is like a picture of what I will tell you now"

as an allegory

An "allegory" is a story in which the people and things in it represent other things. In Paul's allegory, the two women referred to in Galatians 4:22 represent two covenants.

women represent

"women are a picture of"

Mount Sinai

"Mount Sinai" here is a synecdoche for the law that Moses gave to the Israelites there. Alternate translation: "Mount Sinai, where Moses gave the law to Israel"

she bears children into slavery

Paul treats the law as if it were a person. Alternate translation: "the people under this covenant are like slaves who have to obey the law"

Galatians 4:25

she represents

"she is a picture of"

she is in slavery with her children

Hagar is a slave and her children are slaves with her. Alternate translation: "Jerusalem, like Hagar, is a slave, and her children are slaves with her"

Galatians 4:26

is free

"is not bound" or "is not a slave"

Galatians 4:27

Rejoice

be happy

you barren one ... you who are not suffering

Here "you" refers to the barren woman and is singular.

Galatians 4:28

brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

children of promise

Possible meanings are that the Galatians have become God's children 1) by believing God's

promise or 2) because God worked miracles to fulfill his promises to Abraham, first by giving Abraham a son and then by making the Galatians children of Abraham and thus sons of God.

Galatians 4:29

according to the flesh

This refers to Abraham's becoming Ishmael's father by taking Hagar as a wife. Alternate translation: "by means of human action" or "because of what people did"

according to the Spirit

"because of something the Spirit did"

Galatians 4:30

General Information:

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Galatians 4:31

brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

of a slave girl, but of the free woman

The words "we are children" are understood from the previous phrase. This can be translated as a separate sentence. Alternate translation: "of a slave girl. Rather, we are children of the free woman"

Chapter 5

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not again be subject to a yoke of slavery.

² Look, I, Paul, say to you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will not benefit you in any way.

³ I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. ⁴ You are cut off from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you no longer experience grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has value, but only faith working through love. ⁷ You were running well. Who prevented you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion does not come from him who calls you! ⁹ A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. ¹⁰ I have confidence in the Lord that you will think nothing different. The one who is troubling you will suffer the judgment, whoever he is. ¹¹ Brothers, if I still proclaim circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the stumbling block of the cross has been removed. ¹² As for those who are disturbing you, I wish they would cut themselves off!

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. But do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You must love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these oppose each other, so that you cannot do the things you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, rivalry, dissension, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, drunken celebrations, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, ²³ gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become boastful, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Paul continues writing about the law of Moses as if it were something that traps or enslaves a person. (See: lawofmoses)

Special concepts in this chapter

Fruit of the Spirit

The phrase "the fruit of the Spirit" is not plural, even though it begins a list of several things. Translators should keep the singular form if possible. (See: fruit)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Illustrations

Paul uses several metaphors in this chapter to illustrate his points and help explain complicated issues.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"You are cut off from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you no longer experience grace."

Some scholars think Paul teaches that being circumcised causes a person to lose their salvation. Other scholars think Paul means that obeying the law to try to get right with God will keep a person from being saved by grace. (See: grace)

Galatians 5:1**Connecting Statement:**

Paul applies the allegory in the previous chapter by reminding the believers to use their liberty in Christ because all the law is fulfilled in loving neighbors as ourselves.

For freedom Christ has set us free

"It is so that we can be free that Christ has set us free." It is implied that Christ sets believers free from the old covenant. Here freedom from the old covenant is a metaphor for not being obligated to obey it. Alternate translation: "Christ has set us free from the old covenant so that we might be free" or "Christ has set us free so that we might live as free people"

Stand firm

Standing firm here represents being determined not to change. How they are not to change can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "Do not give in to the arguments of people who teach something else" or "Be determined to stay free"

do not again be subject to a yoke of slavery

Here being under control of a yoke of slavery represents being obligated to obey the law. Alternate translation: "do not live like one who is under the control of a yoke of slavery to the law"

Galatians 5:2**if you let yourselves be circumcised**

Paul is using circumcision as a metonym for Judaism. Alternate translation: "if you turn to the Jewish religion"

Galatians 5:3**I testify**

"I declare" or "I serve as a witness"

to every man who lets himself be circumcised

Paul is using circumcision as a metonym for being Jewish. Alternate translation: "to every person who has become a Jew"

he is obligated to obey

"he must obey"

Galatians 5:4**You are cut off from Christ**

Here "cut off" is a metaphor for separation from Christ. Alternate translation: "You have ended your relationship with Christ" or "You are no longer united with Christ"

you who would be justified by the law

Paul is speaking ironically here. He actually teaches that no one can be justified by trying to do the deeds required by the law. Alternate translation: "all you who think you can be justified by doing the deeds required by the law" or "you who want to be justified by the law"

you no longer experience grace

Who that grace comes from can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "God will not be gracious to you"

Galatians 5:5**General Information:**

Here the word "we" refers to Paul and those who oppose the circumcision of Christians. He is probably including the Galatians.

For through the Spirit

"This is because through the Spirit"

by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness

Possible meanings are 1) "we are waiting by faith for the hope of righteousness" or 2) "we are waiting for the hope of righteousness that comes by faith."

we eagerly wait

"We wait with excitement" or "we wait with great desire"

for the hope of righteousness

They confidently expect that God will make them righteous. Alternate translation: "for the righteousness that we hope for" or "for the righteousness that we confidently expect to receive"

Galatians 5:6**neither circumcision nor uncircumcision**

These are metonymy for being a Jew or a non-Jew. Alternate translation: "neither being a Jew nor not being a Jew"

neither ... has value, but only faith working through love

"neither ... has value; rather, God is concerned with our faith in him, which we show by loving others"

has value

"has meaning" or "gives value to a person" or "makes God think a person is important"

Galatians 5:7**You were running**

"You were practicing what Jesus taught"

Galatians 5:8

This persuasion does not come from him who calls you
"The one who persuades you to do that is not God, the one who calls you"

him who calls you

What he calls them to can be stated clearly.
Alternate translation: "the one who calls you to be his people"

persuasion

To persuade someone is to get that person to change what he believes and so to act differently.

Galatians 5:9

A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough

Paul uses this proverb to mean that a small part of something affects the whole thing. In this case, one person who is teaching something false can harm the entire Christian community.

Galatians 5:10

you will think nothing different

"you will not believe anything different from what I am telling you"

The one who is troubling you will suffer the judgment

"God will punish the one who is troubling you"

is troubling you

"is causing you to be uncertain about what is truth" or "stirs up trouble among you"

whoever he is

Possible meanings are 1) Paul does not know the names of the people who are telling the Galatians that they need to obey the law of Moses or 2) Paul does not want the Galatians to care about whether those who "confuse" them are rich or poor or great or small or religious or not religious.

Galatians 5:11

Brothers, if I still proclaim circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?

Paul uses this rhetorical question to show the evidence that he is not proclaiming circumcision. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "Brothers, you can see that I am not proclaiming circumcision because I am still being persecuted."

Brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

if I still proclaim circumcision

"if I still proclaim that men have to be circumcised"

why am I still being persecuted?

This can be expressed in active form. Alternate translation: "why are the Jews still persecuting me?" (See:

In that case the stumbling block of the cross has been removed

Paul is describing a situation that has not happened as evidence that he does not preach circumcision. Since the stumbling block of the cross has not been removed, that is evidence that Paul does not preach circumcision.

In that case the stumbling block of the cross has been removed

Paul had just said that he was still being persecuted. Here he implies that if the offense of the cross were removed, the Jews would have no reason to persecute him. The relationship between the two sentences can be made clearer by making this implied information explicit. Alternate translation: "If I am still preaching circumcision, then the stumbling block of the cross has been removed, and there is no reason for the Jews to persecute me"

In that case

"If I were still proclaiming circumcision" or "If I were still saying that people need to be circumcised"

the stumbling block of the cross has been removed

This can be expressed without the passive form. Alternate translation: "the cross would no longer be a stumbling block" or "the cross would no longer cause people to stumble"

the stumbling block of the cross

Here the words "stumbling block" are a metaphor for something that angers or offends some people and leads them to reject the truth. In this case, teaching that people are saved by "the cross" offends those who believe a person is saved by obeying the law. These people "stumble" when they reject the teaching about the cross.

the cross

Here "the cross" is a metonym for the teaching that because Jesus Christ died on the cross and is alive again, God saves people who believe in Christ. People do not have to be circumcised or become Jews. Alternate translation: "the message about the cross"

Galatians 5:12

cut themselves off

Possible meanings are 1) literal, to cut off their male organs so as to become eunuchs or 2) metaphorical, completely withdraw from the Christian community.

Galatians 5:13

For

Paul is giving the reason for his words in Galatians 5:12.

you were called to freedom

This can be expressed in an active form. Alternate translation: "Christ has called you to freedom"

you were called to freedom

It is implied that Christ has set believers free from the old covenant. Here freedom from the old covenant is a metaphor for not being obligated to obey it. Alternate translation: "You were called to freedom from the old covenant" or "Christ has chosen you to not be obligated to the old covenant"

brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

an opportunity for the flesh

The word "flesh" here is a metonym for people's sinful nature. The relationship between the opportunity and the sinful nature can be stated more clearly. Alternate translation: "an opportunity for you to behave according to your sinful nature"

Galatians 5:14

the whole law is fulfilled in one word

The word "word" here is a metonym for a commandment. Possible meanings are 1) "you can state the whole law in just one commandment, which is this" or 2) "by obeying one commandment, you obey all the commandments, and that one commandment is this."

You must love your neighbor as yourself

The words "you," "your," and "yourself" are all singular.

Galatians 5:15

General Information:

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Galatians 5:16

Connecting Statement:

Paul explains how the Spirit gives control over sin.

walk by the Spirit

Walking is a metaphor for living. Alternate translation: "conduct your life in the power of the Holy Spirit" or "live your life in dependence on the Spirit"

you will not carry out the desires of the flesh

"you will not do what your sinful nature desires" or "you will not do the sinful things that you, a sinner, want to do"

the desires of the flesh

The word "flesh" here is a metonym for the sinful nature and is spoken of as if it were a person and wanted to sin. Alternate translation: "what you want to do because of your sinful nature" or "the things you want to do because you are sinful"

Galatians 5:17

General Information:

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Galatians 5:18

not under the law

"not obligated to obey the law of Moses"

Galatians 5:19

the works of the flesh

The word "flesh" here is a metonym for the sinful nature. The sinful nature is spoken of as if it were a person who does things. The abstract noun "works" can be translated with the verb "does." Alternate translation: "the things the sinful nature does" or "the things people do because of their sinful nature" or "the things people do because they are sinful"

Galatians 5:20

General Information:

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Galatians 5:21

inherit

Receiving what God has promised believers is spoken of as if it were inheriting property and wealth from a family member.

Galatians 5:22

the fruit of the Spirit is love ... faith

Here "fruit" here is a metaphor for "result" or "outcome." Alternate translation: "what the Spirit produces is love ... faith" or "the Spirit produces in God's people love ... faith"

Galatians 5:23

gentleness ... self-control

The list of characteristics described as "the fruit of the Spirit," which begins in the previous verse with the words "love, joy, peace," ends here. The word "fruit" is a metaphor for "result" or "outcome."

Galatians 5:24

have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires

Paul speaks of the sinful nature of Christians who have refused to live by it as if it were a person and

they have killed it on a cross. Alternate translation: "refuse to live according the sinful nature with its passions and desires, as if they killed it on a cross"

the flesh with its passions and desires

The word "flesh" here is a metonym for the sinful nature. The sinful nature is spoken of as if it were a person that had passions and desires. Alternate translation: "their sinful nature and the things they strongly want to do because of it"

passions and desires

If your language does not have different words for "passions" and "desires," you can treat this as a hendiadys or doublet that simply emphasizes the idea of desires that are wrong, that harm the one who desires and if fulfilled would harm other people.

Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit

"Since God's Spirit has caused us to be alive"

walk by the Spirit

"Walk" here is a metaphor for living every day. Alternate translation: "allow the Holy Spirit to guide us so we do things that please and honor God"

Galatians 5:26

Let us

"We should"

Chapter 6

¹ Brothers, if someone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Be concerned about yourself, so you also may not be tempted. ² Carry one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ Each one should examine his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in someone else. ⁵ For each one will carry his own burden.

⁶ The one who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever a man plants, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who plants seed to his own flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction. The one who plants seed to the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the right time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the household of faith.

¹¹ See what large letters I write to you with my own hand. ¹² Those who want to make a good impression in the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. They do this only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For not even those who circumcised themselves keep the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. ¹⁴ But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but what counts is a new creation. ¹⁶ To all who walk according to this standard, peace and mercy be upon them, even upon the Israel of God.

¹⁷ From now on let no one trouble me, for I carry on my body the marks of Jesus.

¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Galatians 6 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter concludes Paul's letter. His final words address some issues that do not seem to be connected to the rest of his letter.

Brothers

Paul writes the words in this chapter to Christians. He calls them "brothers." This refers to Paul's Christian brothers and not his Jewish brothers.

Special concepts in this chapter

New Creation

People who are born again are a new creation in Christ. Christians have been given new life in Christ. They have a new nature in them after they come to faith in Christ. To Paul, this is more significant than a person's ancestry. (See: bornagain and faith)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Flesh

This is a complex issue. "Flesh" is contrasted with "spirit." In this chapter, flesh is also used to refer to the physical body. (See: flesh and sin and spirit)

Galatians 6:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul teaches believers how they should treat other believers and how God rewards.

Brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

if someone

"if anyone among you"

if someone is caught in any trespass

Possible meanings are 1) someone else found that person in the act. Alternate translation: "if someone is discovered in an act of sin" or 2) that person committed the sin without intending to do evil. Alternate translation: "if someone gave in and sinned"

you who are spiritual

"those of you who are guided by the Spirit" or "you who are living in the guidance of the Spirit"

restore him

"correct the person who sinned" or "exhort the person who sinned to return to a correct relationship with God"

in a spirit of gentleness

Possible meanings are 1) that the Spirit is directing the one who is offering correction or 2) "with an attitude of gentleness" or "in a kind way."

Be concerned about yourself, ... tempted.

These words treat the Galatians as though they are all one person to emphasize that he is talking to each of them. Alternate translation: "Be concerned about yourselves ... tempted." or "I say to each one of you, 'Be concerned about yourself, ... tempted.'"

so you also may not be tempted

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so that nothing will tempt you also to sin"

Galatians 6:2

General Information:

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Galatians 6:3

For if

"Because if." The words that follow tell why the Galatians should 1) "carry one other's burdens" (Galatians 6:2) or 2) be careful that they themselves are not tempted (Galatians 6:1) or 3) "not become conceited" (Galatians 5:26).

he is something

"he is someone important" or "he is better than others"

he is nothing

"he is not important" or "he is not better than others"

Galatians 6:4

Each one should

"Each person must"

Galatians 6:5

each one will carry his own burden

"each person will be judged by his own work only" or "each person will be responsible for his own work only"

each one will

"each person will"

Galatians 6:6

The one

"The person"

the word

"the message," everything God has said or commanded

Galatians 6:7

for whatever a man plants, that he will also reap

Planting represents doing things that end in some kind of result, and gathering in represents experiencing the results of what one has done. Alternate translation: "for just as a farmer gathers in the fruit of whatever kind of seeds he plants, so everyone experiences the results of whatever he does"

whatever a man plants

Paul is not specifying males here. Alternate translation: "whatever a person plants" or "whatever someone plants"

Galatians 6:8

plants seed to his own flesh

Planting seeds is a metaphor for doing deeds that will have consequences later. In this case, the person is doing sinful actions because of his sinful nature. Alternate translation: "plants seed according to what he wants because of his sinful nature" or "does the things he wants to do because of his sinful nature"

will reap destruction

God punishing the person is spoken of as if the person were harvesting a crop. Alternate translation: "will receive punishment for what he did"

plants seed to the Spirit

Planting seeds is a metaphor for doing deeds that will have consequences later. In this case, the person is doing good actions because he is listening to God's Spirit. Alternate translation: "does the things God's Spirit loves"

from the Spirit will reap eternal life

"will receive eternal life as a reward from God's Spirit"

Galatians 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good

"We should continue to do good"

doing good

doing good to others for their well-being

for at the right time

"for in due time" or "because at the time God has chosen"

Galatians 6:10

So then

"As a result of this" or "Because of this"

especially to those

"most of all to those" or "in particular to those"

those who belong to the household of faith

"those who are members of God's family through faith in Christ"

Galatians 6:11

Connecting Statement:

As Paul closes this letter, he gives one more reminder that the law does not save and that the Galatians should remember the cross of Christ.

large letters

This can mean that Paul wants to emphasize 1) the statements that follow or 2) that this letter came from him.

with my own hand

Possible meanings are 1) Paul probably had a helper who wrote most of this letter as Paul told him what to write, but Paul himself wrote this last part of the letter or 2) Paul wrote the whole letter himself.

Galatians 6:12

make a good impression

"cause others to think well of them" or "cause others to think that they are good people"

in the flesh

"with visible evidence" or "by their own efforts"

to compel

"to force" or "to strongly influence"

only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ

"so that the Jews will not persecute them for claiming that the cross of Christ alone is what saves people"

the cross of Christ

These words are a metonym for faith that Christ died on the cross so God would forgive his people's sins. Alternate translation: "believing that God forgives his people's sins because Jesus died on the cross"

Galatians 6:13

so that they may boast about your flesh

"so that they may be proud that they have added you to the people who try to keep the law"

Galatians 6:14

But may I never boast except in the cross

"I do not ever want to boast in anything other than the cross" or "May I boast only in the cross"

the world has been crucified to me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I think of the world as already dead" or "I treat the world like a criminal God has killed on a cross"

I to the world

The words "have been crucified" are understood from the phrase before this. Alternate translation: "and I have been crucified to the world"

I to the world

Possible meanings are 1) "the world thinks of me as already dead" or 2) "the world treats me like a criminal that God has killed on the cross"

the world

Possible meanings are 1) the people of the world, those who care nothing for God or 2) the things that those who care nothing for God think are important.

Galatians 6:15

neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision

"neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is important to God"

a new creation

Possible meanings are 1) a new believer in Jesus Christ or 2) the new life of a believer.

Galatians 6:16

walk according to this standard

The word "walk" here is a metaphor for living life, and a standard is something against which people measure other things. Alternate translation: "live this way"

peace and mercy be upon them, even upon the Israel of God

Possible meanings are 1) that believers in general are the Israel of God or 2) "may peace and mercy be upon Gentile believers and upon the Israel of God" or 3) "may peace be upon those who follow the rule, and may mercy be upon even the Israel of God."

Galatians 6:17

From now on

This can also mean "Lastly" or "As I end this letter."

let no one trouble me

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is commanding the Galatians not to trouble him, "I am commanding you this: do not trouble me," or 2) Paul is telling the Galatians that he is commanding all people not to trouble him, "I am commanding everyone this: do not trouble me," or 3) Paul is expressing a desire, "I do not want anyone to trouble me."

trouble me

Possible meanings are 1) "speak of these matters to me" or 2) "cause me hardship" or "give me hard work."

for I carry on my body the marks of Jesus

These marks were scars from people who beat and whipped Paul because they did not like him teaching about Jesus. Alternate translation: "for the scars on my body show that I serve Jesus"

Galatians 6:18

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit

The word "your" here refers to the Galatians and so is plural. The words "your spirit" are a synecdoche and represent the people themselves. Alternate translation: "May our Lord Jesus Christ be kind to you"

brothers

See how you translated this in Galatians 1:2.

Book: Ephesians

Ephesians

Chapter 1

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful in Christ Jesus. ^[1]

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

³ May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. ⁴ God chose us in him from the foundation of the world, that we may be holy and blameless in his sight in love. ⁵ God predestined us ^[2] for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will. ⁶ Our adoption results in the praise of his glorious grace that he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In Jesus Christ we have redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. ⁸ He multiplied this grace to us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ God made known to us the mystery of his will, according to what pleased him, and which he demonstrated in Christ, ¹⁰ with a view to a plan for the fullness of time, to bring all things together, all things in heaven and on earth, under one head, even Christ. ¹¹ In Christ we were given an inheritance, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything according to the purpose of his will. ¹² God appointed us as heirs so that we, who are the first to hope in Christ, would be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In Christ, you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, you believed in him and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's holy people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you as I mention you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, that you may know the hope to which he has called you and the riches of his glorious inheritance among all God's holy people. ¹⁹ In my prayers I ask that you may know the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of the strength of his might. ²⁰ This is the same power that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. ²¹ He seated Christ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named. Christ will rule, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. ²² God subjected all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as head over all things. ²³ The church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Footnotes

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- 1:1 ^[1]Some important and ancient Greek copies do not have,
1:5 ^[2]Some interpreters place the last phrase of Ephesians 1:4
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Ephesians 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

"I pray"

Paul structures part of this chapter like a prayer of praise to God. But Paul is not just talking to God. He is teaching the church in Ephesus. He also tells the Ephesians how he is praying for them.

Special concepts in this chapter

Predestination

Many scholars believe this chapter teaches on a subject known as "predestination." This is related to the biblical concept of "predestine." Some scholars take this to indicate that God has, from before the foundation of the world, chosen some people to eternally save. Christians have different views on what the Bible teaches on this subject. So translators need to take extra care when translating this chapter. (See: predestine)

Ephesians 1:1

General Information:

Paul names himself as the writer of this letter to the believers at the church at Ephesus. Except where noted, all instances of "you" and "your" refers to the Ephesian believers as well as all believers and so are plural.

Paul, an apostle ... to God's holy people in Ephesus

Your language may have a particular way of introducing the author of a letter and its intended audience. Alternate translation: "I, Paul, an apostle ... write this letter to you, God's holy people Ephesus"

who are faithful in Christ Jesus

"In Christ Jesus" and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

Ephesians 1:2

Grace to you and peace

This is a common greeting and blessing that Paul often uses in his letters.

Ephesians 1:3

General Information:

In this book, unless otherwise stated, the words "us" and "we" refer to Paul and the believers in Ephesus, as well as all believers.

Connecting Statement:

Paul opens his letter by talking about the believers' position and their safety before God.

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised

This can be stated in an active form. Alternate translation: "Let us praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

who has blessed us

"for God has blessed us"

every spiritual blessing

"every blessing coming from the Spirit of God"

in the heavenly places

"in the supernatural world." The word "heavenly" refers to the place where God is.

in Christ

Possible meanings 1) the phrase "in Christ" refers to what Christ has done. Alternate translation: "through Christ" or "through what Christ has done" or 2) "in Christ" is a metaphor referring to our close relationship with Christ. Alternate translation: "by uniting us with Christ" or "because we are united with Christ"

Ephesians 1:4

from the foundation of the world

The author speaks of the world as if it were a building set on a foundation. Alternate translation: "from the time he created the world"

holy and blameless

Paul uses two similar words to emphasize moral goodness.

Ephesians 1:5

God predestined us for adoption

The word "us" refers to Paul, the Ephesian church, and all believers in Christ. Alternate translation: "God planned long ago to adopt us"

God predestined us

"God chose us ahead of time" or "God chose us long ago"

for adoption as sons

Here "adoption" refers to becoming part of God's family. Here the word "sons" refers to males and females. Alternate translation: "to be adopted as his children"

through Jesus Christ

God brought believers into his family by the work of Jesus Christ.

his will

"God's will"

Ephesians 1:6

General Information:

The words "his" and "he" refer to God.

he has freely given us in the One he loves
"he has kindly given to us by means of the One he loves"

the One he loves
"the One he loves, Jesus Christ" or "his Son, whom he loves"

Ephesians 1:7

riches of his grace
Paul speaks of God's grace as if it were material wealth. Alternate translation: "greatness of God's grace" or "abundance of God's grace"

Ephesians 1:8

He multiplied this grace to us
"He gave us this great amount of grace" or "He was extremely kind to us"

with all wisdom and understanding
Possible meanings are 1) "because he has all wisdom and understanding" 2) "so that we might have great wisdom and understanding"

Ephesians 1:9

according to what pleased him
Possible meanings are 1) "because he wanted to make it known to us" or 2) "which was what he wanted."

which he demonstrated in Christ
"he demonstrated this purpose in Christ"

in Christ
"by means of Christ"

Ephesians 1:10

with a view to a plan
A new sentence can be started here. If you start a new sentence here, you will need to end 1:9 with a period instead of a comma. Alternate translation: "He did this with a view to a plan" or "He did this, thinking about a plan"

for the fullness of time
"for when the time is right" or "for the time that he has appointed"

Ephesians 1:11

we were given an inheritance, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works
This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God gave us an inheritance, having predestined us according to his plan. For he works"

Ephesians 1:12

so that we, who are the first to hope in Christ
The pronoun "we" refer to Paul and the other Jewish believers, not to the Ephesian believers.

the first to hope in Christ
"the first people to hope in Christ." They confidently expected that Christ would fulfill God's promises. Alternate translation: "the first to trust in Christ"

so that we, ... Christ, would be for the praise of his glory.
Possible meanings are 1) other people would praise God because of the grace he had shown the believers ([Ephesians 1:6](#)). Alternate translation: "we, ... Christ, would live in a way that brings glory to God." or "people would praise God because of the glorious grace he showed us who ... Christ." Or 2) believers would praise God for his glory. Alternate translation: "so that we, ... Christ, would praise him for his glory as long as we live."

Ephesians 1:13

General Information:
Paul has been speaking in the previous two verses about himself and the other Jewish believers, but now he begins speaking about the Ephesian believers.

the word of truth
Possible meanings are 1) "the message about the truth" or 2) "the true message."

were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit
Wax was placed on a letter and stamped with a symbol representing the person who wrote the letter. Paul uses this custom as a picture to show how God has used the Holy Spirit to assure us that we belong to him. Alternate translation: "God has sealed you with the Holy Spirit that he promised"

Ephesians 1:14

the guarantee of our inheritance
What God has promised and will provide is spoken of as though it were property or wealth that one would inherit from a family member. Alternate translation: "the guarantee that we will receive what God has promised"

the redemption of the possession
The abstract nouns "redemption" and "possession" can be translated using the verbs "redeem" and "possess," respectively. Possible meanings of "possession" are 1) God possesses. Alternate translation: "God redeems us as his own people" Or 2) Christians possess. Alternate translation: "we take possession of our inheritance"

Ephesians 1:15

Connecting Statement:

Paul prays for the Ephesian believers and praises God for the power that believers have through Christ.

Ephesians 1:16

I have not stopped thanking God

Paul uses "not stopped" to emphasize that he continues to thank God. Alternate translation: "I continue to thank God"

Ephesians 1:17

a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him

"spiritual wisdom to understand his revelation"

Ephesians 1:18

that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened

Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's mind. The phrase "eyes of your heart" is a metaphor for one's ability to gain understanding. Alternate translation: "that you may gain understanding and be enlightened"

that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened

This may be stated in the active tense. Alternate translation: "that God may enlighten your heart" or "that God may enlighten your understanding"

may be enlightened

"may be made to see"

the hope to which he has called you

Here "the hope" refers to what God wants us to confidently expect. Alternate translation: "what he has called you to confidently expect" or "what he has called you to confidently wait for"

to which he has called you

to which he has invited you

the riches of his glorious inheritance among all God's holy people

What God has promised and will provide is spoken of as though it were property or wealth that one would inherit from a family member. Alternate translation: "the riches of all the glorious things he has promised to give to all God's holy people"

all God's holy people

"all those whom he has set apart for himself" or "all those who belong completely to him"

Ephesians 1:19

the incomparable greatness of his power

God's power is far beyond all other power.

toward us who believe

"for us who believe"

the working of the strength of his might

"the strength of his might that is at work for us"

the strength of his might

"his mighty strength" or "his very great strength"

Ephesians 1:20

raised him

"made him alive again"

when he raised him from the dead

Here "the dead" is a nominal adjective that means all dead people together in the underworld. To be raised from among them means to become alive again. Alternate translation: "when he brought him back to life" or "when he caused him to be alive again"

seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places

The person who sits "at the right hand" of a king sits at his right side and rules with all the authority of the king at whose right hand or side he sits. This is a metonym of location that represents the authority that the person in that location possesses. Alternate translation: "gave him all authority to rule from heaven"

seated him at his right hand

To sit at the "right hand of God" is a symbolic action of receiving great honor and authority from God. Alternate translation: "seated him in the place of honor and authority beside him"

in the heavenly places

"in the supernatural world." The word "heavenly" refers to the place where God is. See how you translated this in Ephesians 1:3.

Ephesians 1:21

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion

Rulers, authorities, dominions, and powers are different terms for the ranks of supernatural beings, both angelic and demonic. Alternate translation: "far above all types of supernatural beings"

every name that is named

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: Possible meanings are 1) "every name that man gives" or 2) "every name that God gives"

name

Possible meanings are 1) title or 2) position of authority.

in this age

"at this time"

in the age to come
"in the future"

Ephesians 1:22

subjected all things under Christ's feet

Here "feet" represents Christ's lordship, authority, and power. Alternate translation: "put all things under Christ's power" or "made all things subject to Christ"

head over all things

Here "head" refers to the leader or the one who is in charge. Alternate translation: "ruler over all things"

Ephesians 1:23

The church is his body

Just as with a human body, the head

his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all

Possible meanings are 1) the body is the fullness of Christ. This means Christ fills or gives to the church everything that he has to give, and Christ also fills all things in every way or 2) "the fullness" refers back to "him," that is, Christ in 1:22, and "him" in 1:23 refers to God the Father. This means the full deity of the Father dwells within Christ, and the Father fills all things in every way or 3) the body is the completion of Christ. This means that Christ as the "head" is completed by the church, which is "his body," and Christ fills all things in every way.

Chapter 2

¹ And as for you, you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked, according to the ways of this world. You were living according to the ruler of the authorities of the air, the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Once we all lived among these people, fulfilling the evil desires of our flesh, and carrying out the desires of the flesh and of the mind. We were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of humanity. ⁴ But God is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us. ⁵ While we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive together in Christ—by grace you have been saved. ⁶ God raised us up together with Christ, and God made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show to us the immeasurably great riches of his grace expressed in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this did not come from you, it is the gift of God, ⁹ not from works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good deeds that God planned long ago for us, so that we would walk in them.

¹¹ Therefore remember that once you were Gentiles in the flesh. You are called "uncircumcision" by what is called the "circumcision" in the flesh made by human hands. ¹² For at that time you were separated from Christ, foreigners to citizenship in Israel, strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away from God have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, because he made us both one. By his flesh he broke down the dividing wall of hostility. ¹⁵ He set aside the law with its commands and ordinances so that he might create in himself one new man out of two, so making peace. ¹⁶ Christ reconciles both peoples into one body to God through the cross, putting to death the hostility. ¹⁷ Jesus came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Jesus we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then, now you Gentiles are no longer foreigners and strangers. Rather you are fellow citizens with God's holy people and members of the household of God. ²⁰ You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building fits together and grows as a holy temple in the Lord. ²² It is in him that you also are being built together as a dwelling place for God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter focuses on a Christian's life before coming to believe in Jesus. Paul then uses this information to explain how a person's former way of living is distinct from a Christian's new identity "in Christ." (See: faith)

Special concepts in this chapter

One body

Paul teaches about the church in this chapter. The church is made of two different groups of people (Jews and Gentiles). They are now one group or "body." The church is also known as the body of Christ. Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

"Dead in trespasses and sins"

Paul teaches that those who are not Christians are "dead" in their sin. Sin binds or enslaves them. This makes them spiritually "dead." Paul writes that God makes Christians alive in Christ.

Descriptions of worldly living

Paul uses many different ways to describe how non-Christians act. They "lived according to the ways of this world" and are "living according to the ruler of the authorities of the air," "fulfilling the evil desires of our sinful nature," and "carrying out the desires of the body and of the mind."

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"It is the gift of God"

Some scholars believe "it" here refers to being saved. Other scholars believe that it is faith that is the gift of God. Because of how the Greek tenses agree, "it" here more likely refers to all of being saved by God's grace through faith.

Flesh

This is a complex issue. "Flesh" is possibly a metaphor for a person's sinful nature. The phrase "Gentiles in the flesh" indicates the Ephesians once lived without any concern for God. "Flesh" is also used in this verse to refer to the physical part of man. (See: flesh)

Ephesians 2:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the believers of their past and the way they now are before God.

you were dead in your trespasses and sins

This speaks of sinful people being unable to obey God as if they were people who were physically dead.

in your trespasses and sins

The words "trespasses" and "sins" have similar meanings. Paul uses them together to emphasize the greatness of the people's sin. They can also be translated using the verbs "trespass" and "sin," respectively. Alternate translation: "because you had trespassed and sinned"

Ephesians 2:2

in which you once walked

The word "walked" is a metaphor for the way they lived their lives. To say that they "walked in" their trespasses and sins [Ephesians 2:1]

according to the ways of this world

The apostles also used "world" to refer to the selfish behaviors and corrupt values of the people living in this world. Alternate translation: "according to the values of people living in the world" or "following the principles of this present world"

according to the ruler of the authorities of the air

"doing what the ruler of the authorities of the air wants them to do." These words expand upon "according to the age of this world." The "ruler of the authorities of the air" is the devil or Satan.

the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience

These words expand upon "the ruler of the authorities of the air." This is another way of speaking of the devil or Satan.

the sons of disobedience

Ephesians 2:3

the desires of the flesh and of the mind

The words "flesh" and "mind" represent the entire person.

flesh

This word is a metonym for the body, which is made of flesh. Alternate translation: "body"

children of wrath

people with whom God is angry

Ephesians 2:4

God is rich in mercy

"God is abundant in mercy" or "God is very kind to us"

because of his great love with which he loved us

"because of his great love for us" or "because he loves us very much"

Ephesians 2:5

by grace you have been saved

This can be stated in an active form. Alternate translation: "God saved us because of his great kindness toward us"

Ephesians 2:6

God raised us up together with Christ

Here to raise up is an idiom for causing someone who has died to become alive again. Possible meanings are 1) because God has caused Christ to come alive again, God has already given Paul and the believers in Ephesus new spiritual life. Alternate translation: "God has given us new life because we belong to Christ" or 2) because God has caused Christ to come alive again, the believers in Ephesus can know that after they die they will live with Christ, and Paul can speak of the believers living again as if it has already happened. Alternate translation: "We can be sure that God will give us life as he has caused Christ to come alive again"

in the heavenly places

"in the supernatural world." The word "heavenly" refers to the place where God is. See how this is translated in Ephesians 1:3.

in Christ Jesus

"In Christ Jesus" and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

Ephesians 2:7

in the ages to come

"in the future"

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith

God's kindness to us is the reason he made it possible for us to be saved from judgment if we simply trust in Jesus. Alternate translation: "God saved you by grace because of your faith in him"

this did not

The word "this" refers back to "by grace you have been saved by faith."

Ephesians 2:9

not from works, so that no one may boast

You may want to start a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "Salvation does not come from works, so that no one may boast" or "God does not save a person because of what that person does, so no one can boast and say that he earned his salvation"

Ephesians 2:10

in Christ Jesus

"In Christ Jesus" and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

we would walk in them

Walking on a path is a metaphor for how a person lives his life. Here "in them" refers to the "good deeds." Alternate translation: "we would always and continually do those good deeds"

Ephesians 2:11

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds these believers that God has now made Gentiles and Jews into one body through Christ and his cross.

Gentiles in the flesh

This refers to people who were not born Jewish.

uncircumcision

Non-Jewish people were not circumcised as babies and thus the Jews considered them people who do not follow any of God's laws. Alternate translation: "uncircumcised pagans"

circumcision

This was another term for Jewish people because all male infants were circumcised. Alternate translation: "circumcised people"

what is called the "circumcision" in the flesh made by human hands

Possible meanings are 1) "Jews, who are circumcised by humans" or 2) "Jews, who circumcise the physical body."

by what is called

This can be translated with an active form. Alternate translation: "by what people call" or "by those whom people call"

Ephesians 2:12

separated from Christ

"not knowing Christ" or "not belonging to Christ"

foreigners to citizenship in Israel

"foreigners, not citizens of Israel"

strangers to the covenants of the promise

Paul speaks to the Gentile believers as if they had been foreigners, kept out of the land of God's covenant and promise. Alternate translation: "not belonging to those with whom God made the covenants of the promise"

having no hope

They had no reason to confidently expect anything good to happen. Specifically, they had no hope that God would save them and give them eternal life with him. Alternate translation: "not hoping in God" or "not confidently waiting for eternal life with God"

Ephesians 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus

Paul is marking a contrast between the Ephesians before they believed in Christ and after they believed in Christ.

you who once were far away from God have been brought near by the blood of Christ

Not belonging to God due to sin is spoken of as being far away from God. Belonging to God because of the blood of Christ is spoken of as being brought near to God. Alternate translation: "you who once did not belong to God now belong to God because of the blood of Christ"

by the blood of Christ

The blood of Christ is a metonym for his death. Alternate translation: "by Christ's death" or "when Christ died for us"

Ephesians 2:14

he himself is our peace

The word "himself" here emphasizes that Jesus alone is the reason that Jews and Gentiles can worship God as one peaceful community. Alternate translation: "he is the one who enables us to live in peace with each other"

our peace

The word "our" refers to Paul and his readers and so is inclusive.

he made us both one

"he made the Jews and Gentiles one"

By his flesh

The words "his flesh," his physical body, are a metonym for his body dying. Alternate translation: "By the death of his body on the cross" or "By dying on the cross" or "By his actions as a mortal man"

he broke down the dividing wall of hostility

Paul is speaking of Jews and Gentiles being hostile to each other and unable to worship God together as if they were on different sides of a wall. Because Jesus died, Gentiles as well as Jews can now worship God. Alternate translation: "he made it possible for Jews and Gentiles not to be hostile to each other anymore"

Ephesians 2:15

He set aside the law with its commands and ordinances

Jesus's blood satisfied the law of Moses so that both the Jews and Gentiles can live at peace in God.

one new man

a single new people, the people of redeemed humanity

in himself

It is union with Christ that makes reconciliation possible between Jews and Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:16

Christ reconciles both peoples

"Christ brings the Jews and the Gentiles together in peace"

through the cross

The cross here represents Christ's death on the cross. Alternate translation: "by means of Christ's death on the cross"

putting to death the hostility

Stopping their hostility is spoken of as if he killed their hostility. By dying on the cross Jesus eliminated the reason for Jews and Gentiles to be hostile toward each other. Neither are now required to live according to the law of Moses. Alternate translation: "stopping them from hating one another"

Ephesians 2:17

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells the Ephesian believers that present Gentile believers are also now made one with the Jewish apostles and prophets; they are a temple for God in the Spirit.

proclaimed the good news of peace

"proclaimed the good news that tells that God and people can be at peace with each other" or "proclaimed the good news that is itself the way that people can be at peace with each other"

you who were far away

This refers to the Gentiles or non-Jews.

those who were near

This refers to the Jews.

Ephesians 2:18

For through Jesus we both have access

Here "we both" refers the believing Jews

in one Spirit

All believers, both Jewish and Gentile, are given the right to enter into the presence of God the Father by the same Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19

you Gentiles ... the household of God

Paul is using a metaphor to tell his Gentile readers that though God formerly did not consider them part of his people, God now considers them part of his people.

foreigners and strangers ... fellow citizens ... and members of the household

The words "foreigners" and "strangers" mean almost the same thing, so "strangers and foreigners" may be a doublet. However, Paul is contrasting "foreigners and strangers" with "fellow citizens ... and members." The word "citizens" refers to having political rights, so here "foreigners" probably refers to people living in a country not their own and having no political rights. The word "members" refers to being part of a family, so "strangers" probably refers to people who are not part of a family.

Ephesians 2:20

You have been built on the foundation

Paul speaks of God's people as if they were a building. Christ is the cornerstone, the apostles are the foundation, and the believers are the structure.

You have been built

This can be stated in the active tense. Alternate translation: "God has built you"

Ephesians 2:21

the whole building fits together and grows as a holy temple

Paul continues to speak of Christ's family as if it were a building. In the same way a builder fits stones together while building, so Christ is fitting us together.

In him ... in the Lord

"In Christ ... in the Lord Jesus" These metaphors express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

Ephesians 2:22

in him

"in Christ" This metaphor expresses the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

you also are being built together as a dwelling place for God in the Spirit

This describes how believers are being put together to become a place where God will permanently live through the power of the Holy Spirit.

you also are being built together

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God is also building you together"

Chapter 3

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— ² I assume that you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God that was given to me for you. ³ The mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read about this, you will be able to understand my insight into this mystery about Christ. ⁵ In other generations this mystery was not made known to the sons of men. But now it has been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ This hidden truth is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and they share the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ For I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given to me through the working of his power. ⁸ To me—although I am the least of all God's holy people—this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone the plan—the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ This plan was made known through the church so the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places would come to know the many-sided nature of the wisdom of God. ¹¹ This happened according to the eternal plan that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² For in Christ we have boldness and access with confidence because of our faith in him. ¹³ Therefore I ask you not to be discouraged because of my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I bend my knees to the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. ¹⁶ I pray that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through his Spirit, who is in your inner person. ¹⁷ I pray that Christ may live in your hearts through faith and that you may be rooted and founded in his love, ¹⁸ in order that you might be able to understand, along with all God's holy people, what is the width, the length, the height, and the depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ, which goes beyond knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, according to his power that works in us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

"I pray"

Paul structures part of this chapter as a prayer to God. But Paul is not just talking to God. He is both praying for and instructing the church in Ephesus.

Special concepts in this chapter

Mystery

Paul refers to the church as a "mystery." The role of the church in the plans of God was once not known. But God has now revealed it. Part of this mystery involves the Gentiles having equal standing with the Jews in the plans of God.

Ephesians 3:1

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—

Paul started a sentence, but he did not finish it.

For this reason

This refers to what Paul was speaking about in chapter 2. Alternate translation: "Because of God's grace to you Gentiles" or "Because God has made you Gentiles members of his household"

the prisoner of Christ Jesus

Paul was in prison because people did not like him preaching about Christ Jesus. Alternate translation: "the prisoner for Christ Jesus" or "the prisoner for preaching about Christ Jesus"

Ephesians 3:2

the stewardship of the grace of God that was given to me for you

"the responsibility that God gave me to bring his grace to you"

Ephesians 3:3

The mystery was made known to me by revelation

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "I learned about the mystery by revelation" or "God revealed the mystery to me"

The mystery

The mystery is God's plan, which God had not clearly told people about earlier. Alternate translation: "God's secret plan" or "The hidden truth"

as I have written briefly

Paul refers to another letter he had written to these people.

Ephesians 3:4

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 3:5

In other generations this mystery was not made known to the sons of men

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God did not make this truth known to people in the past"

But now it has been revealed by the Spirit

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "But now the Spirit has revealed it" or "But now the Spirit has made it known"

his holy apostles and prophets

"the apostles and prophets whom God set apart to do this work"

Ephesians 3:6

the Gentiles are fellow heirs ... through the gospel

This is the hidden truth Paul began to explain in the previous verse. The Gentiles who receive Christ also receive the same things as the Jewish believers.

fellow members of the body

The church is often referred to as the body of Christ.

in Christ Jesus

"In Christ Jesus" and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

through the gospel

Possible meanings are 1) because of the gospel the Gentiles are fellow sharers in the promise or 2) because of the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs

and members of the body and fellow sharers in the promise.

Ephesians 3:7

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 3:8

unsearchable

unable to be completely known

riches of Christ

Paul speaks of the truth about Christ and the blessings he brings as if they were material wealth.

Ephesians 3:9

the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things

This can be stated in active form. "God, who created all things, kept this plan hidden for long ages in the past"

Ephesians 3:10

This plan was made known through the church

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God made this plan known by means of the church"

rulers and authorities

These words share similar meanings. Paul uses them together to emphasize that every spiritual being will know God's wisdom. See how you translated similar words in [Ephesians 1:21]

in the heavenly places

"in the supernatural world." The word "heavenly" refers to the place where God is. See how this is translated in Ephesians 1:3.

the many-sided nature of the wisdom of God

God's great and complex wisdom is spoken of as if it were an object with many sides. Alternate translation: "the great and complex wisdom of God"

Ephesians 3:11

according to the eternal plan

"in keeping with the eternal plan" or "consistent with the eternal plan"

Ephesians 3:12

Connecting Statement:

Paul praises God in his sufferings and prays for these Ephesian believers.

we have boldness

"we are without fear" or "we have courage"

access with confidence

It may be helpful to state explicitly that this access is into God's presence. Alternate translation: "access into God's presence with confidence" or "freedom to enter into God's presence with confidence"

confidence

"certainty" or "assurance"

Ephesians 3:13

for you, which is your glory

Here "your glory" is a metonym for the pride they should feel or will feel in the future kingdom. The Christians in Ephesus should be proud of what Paul is suffering in prison. This can be stated as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "for you. This is for your benefit" or "for you. You should be proud of this"

Ephesians 3:14

For this reason

You may need to make explicit what the reason is. Alternate translation: "Because God has done all this for you"

I bend my knees to the Father

Bowed knees are a picture of the whole person in an attitude of prayer. Alternate translation: "I bow down in prayer to the Father" or "I humbly pray to the Father"

Ephesians 3:15

from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named

The act of naming here probably also represents the act of creating. Alternate translation: "who created and named every family in heaven and on earth"

Ephesians 3:16

I pray that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power

"I pray that God, because he is so great and powerful, would allow you to become strong with his power." This is the first item for which Paul bends his knees and prays.

would grant

"would give" or "would cause"

in your inner person

Here the phrase "inner person" refers to the personality, heart, or soul. Alternate translation: "in your heart" or "in your soul"

Ephesians 3:17

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues the prayer he began in Ephesians 3:14.

I pray that Christ may live in your hearts through faith and that you may be rooted and founded in his love

This is the second item which Paul prays that God will "grant" the Ephesians "according to the riches of his glory." The first is that they would "be strengthened" (Ephesians 3:16).

that Christ may live in your hearts through faith

Here "heart" represents a person's inner being, and "through" expresses the means by which Christ lives within the believer. Christ lives in the hearts of believers because God graciously allows them to have faith. Alternate translation: "that Christ may live within you because you trust in him"

you may be rooted and founded in his love

Paul speaks of their faith as if it were a tree that has deep roots or a house built on a solid foundation. Alternate translation: "that you will be like a firmly rooted tree and a building built on stone because of his love"

Ephesians 3:18

that you might be able to understand

This is the first item which Paul says will be the result of the Christians being rooted and grounded in Christ's love (Ephesians 3:17).

all God's holy people

"all believers in Christ" or "all the saints"

the width, the length, the height, and the depth

Possible meanings are 1) these words describe the greatness of God's wisdom, Alternate translation: "how very wise God is" or 2) these word describe the intensity of Christ's love for us. Alternate translation: "how much Christ loves us"

Ephesians 3:19

to know the love of Christ, which goes beyond knowledge

This is the second item which Paul says will be the result of the Christians being rooted and grounded in Christ's love (Ephesians 3:17).

that you may be filled with all the fullness of God

This is the third item for which Paul bends his knees and prays (Ephesians 3:14). The first is that they would "be strengthened" (Ephesians 3:16), and the second is that they "can understand" (Ephesians 3:18).

Ephesians 3:20

General Information:

The words "we" and "us" in this book continue to include Paul and all believers.

Connecting Statement:

Paul concludes his prayer with a blessing.

Now to him who

"Now to God, who"

to do far beyond all that we ask or think

"to do much more than all that we ask or think" or
"to do things that are much greater than all that we
ask him for or think about"

Ephesians 3:21

General Information:

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Chapter 4

¹ I, therefore, as the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthily of the calling by which you were called. ² I urge you to live with great humility and gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in love. ³ Do your best to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling. ⁵ And there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ and one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ To each one of us grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ⁸ It is as scripture says:

"When he ascended on high,
he led the captives into captivity,
and he gave gifts to the people."

⁹ What is the meaning of "he ascended," except that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the same person who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. ¹¹ Christ gave some to be apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers ¹² to equip God's holy people for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, so that we become mature and reach the measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Christ builds us up so that we should no longer be children who are tossed back and forth by the waves, carried away by every wind of doctrine and by the trickery of people in their deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ Christ builds the whole body, and it is joined and held together by every supporting ligament, and when each part works together, that makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

¹⁷ Therefore, I say and insist on this in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹ They have become shameless and have committed themselves to sensuality, and they practice every kind of uncleanness with greed. ²⁰ But that is not how you learned about Christ. ²¹ I assume that you have heard about him, and that you were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²² You were taught to put off what belongs to your former manner of life, to put off the old man. It is the old man that is corrupt because of its deceitful desires. ²³ You were taught to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new man that is created in the image of God—in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore, get rid of lies, and let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, because we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. ²⁷ Do not give an opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ The one who had been stealing must steal no longer. Instead, he must labor, working at what is good with his hands, so that he may have something to share with those who are in need. ²⁹ Do not let any harmful talk come out of your mouth. Use only words that are good for the edification of those who need it, so that your words give grace to the hearers. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, for it is by him that you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away all bitterness, rage, anger, quarreling, and insults, along with every kind of evil. ³² Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verse 8, which is quoted from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are specific supernatural abilities that the Holy Spirit gives to Christians after they come to believe in Jesus. These spiritual gifts were foundational to developing the church. Paul lists here only some of the spiritual gifts. (See: faith)

Unity

Paul considers it very important that the church is united. This is a major theme of this chapter.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Old man and new man

The term "old man" probably refers to the sinful nature with which a person is born. The "new man" is the new nature or new life that God gives a person after they come to believe in Christ.

Ephesians 4:1

Connecting Statement:

Because of what Paul has been writing to the Ephesians, he tells them how they should live their lives as believers and again emphasizes that believers are to agree with each other.

as the prisoner for the Lord

"as someone who is in prison because of his choice to serve the Lord"

walk worthily of the calling

Walking is a common way to express the idea of living one's life.

Ephesians 4:2

to live with great humility and gentleness and patience

"to always be very humble, gentle, and patient"

Ephesians 4:3

to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

Here Paul speaks of "peace" as if it were a bond that ties people together. This is a metaphor for being united with other people by living peacefully with them. Alternate translation: "to live peacefully with one another and remain united, as the Spirit made possible"

Ephesians 4:4

one body

The church is often referred to as the body of Christ.

one Spirit

"one Holy Spirit"

you were called in one hope of your calling

Here the word "call" means "invite" or "choose." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God invited you to one hope when he

invited you" or "God chose you to hope for one thing when he chose you"

one hope

Here the word "hope" refers to the thing to hope for. Alternate translation: "one thing to hope for" or "one thing to confidently wait for"

Ephesians 4:5

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 4:6

Father of all ... over all ... through all ... and in all

The word "all" here means "everything."

Ephesians 4:7

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds believers of the gifts that Christ gives believers to use in the church, which is the whole body of believers.

To each one of us grace has been given

This can be stated using an active form. Alternate translation: "God has given grace to each one of us" or "God gave a spiritual gift to each believer"

grace has been given

Here grace refers to a spiritual gift or ability. Alternate translation: "a spiritual gift has been given" or "ability has been given"

according to the measure of the gift of Christ

Here "the gift of Christ" refers to a gift that Christ has given. Alternate translation: "according to the amount that Christ has given us"

Ephesians 4:8

General Information:

The quotation here is from the book of Psalms in the Old Testament. King David wrote this psalm.

When he ascended on high
"When he went up to the very high place"

Ephesians 4:9

he ascended
"he went up"

he also descended
"he also came down"

into the lower regions of the earth
Possible meanings are 1) the lower regions are a part of the earth. Alternate translation: "into the lowest place on earth" or 2) "the lower regions" is another way of referring to the earth. Alternate translation: "into the lower regions, the earth"

Ephesians 4:10

that he might fill all things
"so that he might be present everywhere in his power"

fill
"complete" or "satisfy"

Ephesians 4:11

General Information:
This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 4:12

to equip God's holy people
"to prepare the people he has set apart" or "to provide the believers with what they need"

for the work of service
"so they can serve others"

for the building up of the body of Christ
Paul is speaking of people who grow spiritually as if they were doing exercises to increase the strength of their physical bodies.

building up
"improvement" or "strengthening"

body of Christ
The "body of Christ" refers to all of the individual members of Christ's Church.

Ephesians 4:13

reach the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God
The believers need to know Jesus as the Son of God if they are to be united in faith and mature as believers.

reach the unity of faith
"become equally strong in faith" or "become united together in faith"

Son of God
This is an important title for Jesus.

become mature
"become mature believers"

mature
"fully developed" or "grown up" or "complete"

Ephesians 4:14

be children
Paul refers to believers who have not grown spiritually as if they were children who have had very little experience in life. Alternate translation: "be like children"

tossed back and forth ... carried away by every wind of doctrine
This speaks of a believer who has not become mature and follows wrong teaching as if that believer were a boat that the wind is blowing in different directions on the water.

by the trickery of people in their deceitful schemes
"by crafty people who trick believers with clever lies"

Ephesians 4:15

into him who is the head
Paul uses the human body to describe how Christ causes believers to work together in harmony as the head of a body causes the body parts to work together to grow healthy.

Ephesians 4:16

Christ builds the whole body ... makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love
Paul uses the human body to describe how Christ causes believers to work together in harmony as the head of a body causes the body parts to work together to grow healthy.

by every supporting ligament
A "ligament" is a strong band that connects bones or holds organs in place in the body.

Ephesians 4:17

Connecting Statement:
Paul tells the Ephesians what they should no longer do now that they as believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God.

Therefore, I say and insist on this in the Lord

"Because what I have just said, I will say something more to strongly encourage you because we all belong to the Lord"

that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their minds

The word "walk" here is a metaphor for the way a person lives his life, especially whether he does right or does wrong. Alternate translation: "stop living the way the Gentiles live, with their worthless thoughts"

Ephesians 4:18

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God

Here "darkened in their understanding" is a metaphor that means not to be able to understand the truth. And "alienated from the life of God" is a metaphor that means to not have the life that God gives. Alternate translation: "They do not understand what is true, and they do not have the life that God gives to people"

because of the ignorance that is in them

"because they refuse to learn what is true"

because of the hardness of their hearts

Here "hearts" is a metonym for people's minds. The phrase "hardness of their hearts" is a metaphor that means "stubbornness." Alternate translation: "because they are stubborn" or "because they refuse to listen to God"

Ephesians 4:19

have committed themselves to sensuality

Paul speaks of these people as if they were objects that they themselves were giving to other people, and he speaks of the way they want to satisfy their physical desires as if it were the person to whom they give themselves. Alternate translation: "only want to satisfy their physical desires"

they practice every kind of uncleanness with greed

"they are continually practicing every kind of uncleanness"

uncleanness

This word for ritual uncleanness is a metaphor for the guilt that comes from sinful acts. It can be translated using the word "unclean." Alternate translation: "sinful act"

Ephesians 4:20

But that is not how you learned about Christ

The word "that" refers to the way the Gentiles live, as described in [Ephesians 4:17-19](#). This emphasizes that what the believers learned about Christ was the opposite of that. Alternate translation: "But what you learned about Christ was not like that"

Ephesians 4:21

I assume that you have heard ... and that you were taught

Paul knows that the Ephesians have heard and been taught.

you were taught in him

Possible meanings are 1) "Jesus's people have taught you" or 2) "someone has taught you because you are Jesus's people."

as the truth is in Jesus

"as everything about Jesus is true"

Ephesians 4:22

to put off what belongs to your former manner of life

Paul is speaking of moral qualities as if they were pieces of clothing. Alternate translation: "to stop living according to your former manner of life"

to put off the old man

Paul is speaking of moral qualities as if they were pieces of clothing. Alternate translation: "to stop living as your former self did"

old man

The "old man" refers to the "old nature" or "former self."

that is corrupt because of its deceitful desires

Paul speaks of the sinful human nature as if it were a dead body falling apart in its grave.

Ephesians 4:23

to be renewed in the spirit of your minds

This may be translated with an active form. Alternate translation: "to allow God to change your attitudes and thoughts" or "to allow God to give you new attitudes and thoughts"

Ephesians 4:24

in true righteousness and holiness

"truly righteous and holy"

Ephesians 4:25

get rid of lies

"stop telling lies"

we are members of one another

"we belong to one another" or "we are members of God's family"

Ephesians 4:26

Be angry and do not sin

"You may get angry, but do not sin" or "If you become angry, do not sin"

Do not let the sun go down on your anger

The sun going down represents nightfall or the end of the day. Alternate translation: "You must stop being angry before night comes" or "Do not let the sun set while you are still angry with someone"

Ephesians 4:27

Do not give an opportunity to the devil

"Do not give the devil an opportunity to lead you into sin"

Ephesians 4:28

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 4:29

harmful talk

This refers to speech that is cruel or rude.

for the edification of those

"for encouraging those" or "for strengthening those"

give grace to the hearers

"help those who hear you"

Ephesians 4:30

do not grieve

"do not distress" or "do not upset"

for it is by him that you were sealed for the day of redemption

The Holy Spirit assures believers that God will redeem them. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as if he

were a mark that God puts on believers to show that he owns them. Alternate translation: "for he is the seal that assures you that God will redeem you on the day of redemption" or "for he is the one who assures you that God will redeem you on the day of redemption" or

the day of redemption

Here redemption is a metaphor for causing people to no longer be affected by sin. The idea in the noun "redemption" can be expressed with a phrase. Alternate translation: "the day when God will redeem his people" or "the day when God will free his people from sin"

Ephesians 4:31

Connecting Statement:

Paul finishes his instructions on what believers should not do and ends with what they must do.

Put away all bitterness, rage, anger

"Put away" here is a metaphor for not continuing to have certain attitudes or behaviors. Alternate translation: "You must not allow these things to be part of your life: bitterness, rage, anger"

rage

intense anger

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind

"Instead, be kind"

tenderhearted

"gentle and compassionate towards others"

Chapter 5

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as also Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³ But sexual immorality or any kind of uncleanness or of greed must not even be named among you, for these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness, no foolish talk, and no crude jokes—all of which are improper. Instead there should be thanksgiving. ⁵ For you know and are certain that no sexually immoral, impure, or greedy person—that is, an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore, do not join in with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ and test and approve what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Do not associate with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is disgraceful even to mention the things they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. ¹⁴ For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

"Awake, you sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

¹⁵ Look carefully how you walk—not as unwise but as wise. ¹⁶ Redeem the time because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that leads to reckless behavior. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, ²⁰ always giving thanks for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father, ²¹ being subject to one another in reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ also is the head of the church, himself the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself as glorious, without stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In the same way husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and treats it with care, just as Christ nourishes and treats the church with care, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This hidden truth is great—but I am speaking about Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless, each of you also must love his own wife as himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to show that it is poetry. The ULB does this with the poetry in verse 14.

Special concepts in this chapter

Darkness and Light

In this chapter Paul teaches how God's people should live. He uses the image of darkness to represent sin and the image of light to represent righteousness.

Christ and his church as a model for marriage

Paul teaches husbands and wives to relate to each other as Christ and the church relate to each other.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Wives, submit to your husbands

Scholars are divided over how to understand this passage in its historical and cultural context. Some scholars believe men and women are perfectly equal in all things. Other scholars believe God created men and women to serve in distinctly different roles in marriage and the church. Translators should be careful not to let how they understand this issue affect how they translate this passage.

Ephesians 5:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to tell the believers how they should and should not live as God's children.

Therefore be imitators of God

"Therefore you should do what God does."

Therefore refers back to Ephesians 4:32 which tells why believers should imitate God, because Christ forgave believers.

as beloved children

God desires us to imitate or follow him since we are his children. Alternate translation: "as dearly loved children imitate their fathers" or "because you are his children and he loves you dearly"

Ephesians 5:2

walk in love

Walking is a common way to express the idea of living one's life. Alternate translation: "live a life of love" or "always love each other"

a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God

"like a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God"

Ephesians 5:3

But sexual immorality or any kind of uncleanness or of greed must not even be named among you

"Do not do anything that would let anyone think that you are guilty of sexual immorality or any kind of uncleanness or greed"

any kind of uncleanness

"any moral uncleanness"

uncleanness

This word for ritual uncleanness is a metaphor for the guilt that comes from sinful acts. It can be translated using the word "unclean." Alternate translation: "sinful act"

Ephesians 5:4

Instead there should be thanksgiving

"Instead you should thank God"

Ephesians 5:5

inheritance

Receiving what God has promised believers is spoken of as if it were inheriting property and wealth from a family member.

Ephesians 5:6

empty words

words that have no truth to them

Ephesians 5:7

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 5:8

For you were once darkness

Just as one cannot see in the dark, so people who love to sin lack spiritual understanding.

but now you are light in the Lord

Just as one can see in the light, so people whom God has saved understand how to please God.

Walk as children of light

Walking on a path is a metaphor for how a person lives his life. Alternate translation: "Live as people who understand what the Lord wants them to do"

Ephesians 5:9

the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth

"Fruit" here is a metaphor for "result" or "outcome." Alternate translation: "the result of living in the light is good work, right living, and truthful behavior"

Ephesians 5:10

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 5:11

Do not associate with the unfruitful works of darkness

Paul speaks of the useless, sinful things that unbelievers do as if they are evil deeds people do in the dark so no one will see them. Alternate

translation: "Do not do useless, sinful things with unbelievers"

unfruitful works

actions that do nothing good, useful, or profitable. Paul is comparing evil actions to an unhealthy tree that produces nothing good.

expose them

Speaking against the works of darkness is spoken of as bringing them out into the light so that people can see them. Alternate translation: "bring them out into the light" or "uncover them" or "show and tell people how wrong these actions are"

Ephesians 5:12

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 5:13

when anything is exposed by the light

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "when the light shines on something"

Ephesians 5:14

General Information:

It is unknown if this quotation is a combination of quotations from the prophet Isaiah or a quotation from a hymn sung by the believers.

anything that becomes visible is light

"people can clearly see everything that comes into the light." Paul makes this general statement in order to imply that God's Word shows people's actions to be good or bad. The Bible often speaks of God's truth as if it were light that could reveal the character of something.

Awake, you sleeper, and arise from the dead

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is addressing unbelievers who need to wake up from being dead spiritually just as a person who has died must come alive again in order to respond, or 2) Paul is addressing the Ephesian believers and using death as a metaphor for their spiritual weakness.

the dead

All those who have died. This expression describes all dead people together in the underworld. To arise from among them speaks of becoming alive again.

you sleeper ... shine on you

These instances of "you" refer to the "sleeper" and are singular.

Christ will shine on you

Christ will enable an unbeliever to understand how evil his deeds are and how Christ will forgive him and give him new life, just as light shows what actually is there that darkness hid.

Ephesians 5:15

Look carefully how you walk—not as unwise but as wise

Wise people can identify sin, so they guard themselves from it and flee from it. Alternate translation: "Therefore you must be careful to live as a wise person rather than a foolish person"

Ephesians 5:16

Redeem the time

Using time wisely is spoken of as if it were redeeming the time. Alternate translation: "Do the best things you can with your time" or "Use time wisely" or "Put time to its best use"

because the days are evil

The word "days" is a metonym for what people do during those days. Alternate translation: "because the people around you are doing all kinds of evil things"

Ephesians 5:17

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 5:18

Connecting Statement:

Paul ends his instructions on how all believers should live.

And do not get drunk with wine

"You should not get drunk from drinking wine"

Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit

"Instead, you should be controlled with the Holy Spirit"

Ephesians 5:19

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs

Possible meanings are that 1) Paul is using these words as a merism for "all sorts of songs to praise God" or 2) Paul is listing specific forms of music.

psalms

These are probably songs from the Old Testament book of Psalms that Christians sang.

hymns

These are songs of praise and worship that may have been written specifically for Christians to sing.

spiritual songs

Possible meanings are 1) these are songs that Holy Spirit inspires a person to sing right at that moment or 2) "spiritual songs" and "hymns" are doublets and mean basically the same thing.

with all your heart

Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's thoughts or inner being. The phrase "with all your heart" means to do something with enthusiasm. Alternate translation: "with all of your being" or "enthusiastically"

Ephesians 5:20

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

"because you belong to our Lord Jesus Christ" or "as people who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ"

Ephesians 5:21

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

Ephesians 5:22

Connecting Statement:

Paul begins to explain how Christians are to submit themselves to one another (Ephesians 5:21). He starts with instructions to wives and husbands on how they should act toward each other.

Ephesians 5:23

the head of the wife ... the head of the church

The word "head" represents the leader.

Ephesians 5:24

Christ, so also wives to their husbands

"Christ, so also must wives be subject to their husbands" or "Christ. In the same way, wives also must be subject to their husbands"

Ephesians 5:25

love your wives

"unselfishly serve your wives"

gave himself up

"allowed people to kill him"

for her

Paul speaks of the assembly of believers as though it were a woman whom Jesus will marry. Alternate translation: "for us"

Ephesians 5:26

sanctify her ... cleansed her

Paul speaks of the assembly of believers as though it were a woman whom Jesus will marry. Alternate translation: "sanctified us ... cleansed us"

having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word

Possible meanings are 1) Paul is referring to God making Christ's people clean by God's word and

through water baptism in Christ or 2) Paul speaks of God making us spiritually clean from our sins by the message as if God were making our bodies clean by washing them with water.

Ephesians 5:27

without stain or wrinkle

Paul speaks of the church as though it were a garment that is clean and in good condition. He uses the same idea in two ways to emphasize the church's purity.

holy and blameless

The word "blameless" means basically the same thing as "holy." Paul uses the two together to emphasize the church's purity.

Ephesians 5:28

as their own bodies

That people love their own bodies may be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "as husbands love their own bodies"

Ephesians 5:29

his own flesh

The word "flesh" here is a metonym for the body that is made of flesh. Alternate translation: "his own body"

but nourishes

"but feeds"

Ephesians 5:30

we are members of his body

Here Paul speaks of the close union of believers with Christ as if they were part of his own body, for which he would naturally care.

Ephesians 5:31

General Information:

The quotation is from the writings of Moses in the Old Testament. The words "his" and "himself" refer to a male believer who marries.

Ephesians 5:32

General Information:

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Ephesians 5:33

General Information:

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Chapter 6

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is proper. ² "Honor your father and mother" (which is the first commandment with promise), ³ "so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. Instead, raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

⁵ Slaves, be obedient to your masters according to the flesh with deep respect and trembling, in the honesty of your heart. Be obedient to them as you would be obedient to Christ. ⁶ Be obedient not only when your masters are watching, in order to please them. Instead, be obedient as slaves of Christ, who do the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve with all your heart, as though you were serving the Lord and not people, ⁸ because we know that for whatever good deed each person does, he will receive a reward from the Lord, whether he is slave or free.

⁹ Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them. You know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with him.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the scheming plans of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and after you have done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, by which you will be able to put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit. To this end, always be watching with all perseverance as you offer prayers for all God's holy people. ¹⁹ And pray for me, that a message might be given to me when I open my mouth. Pray that I might make known with boldness the hidden truth about the gospel. ²⁰ It is for the gospel that I am an ambassador who is kept in chains, so that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

²¹ Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make everything known to you, so that you may know how I am doing. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are, and so that he may encourage your hearts.

²³ Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be to all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an incorruptible love.

Ephesians 6 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Slavery

Paul does not write in this chapter about whether slavery is good or bad. Paul teaches about working to please God whether as a slave or as a master. What Paul teaches here about slavery would have been surprising. In his time, masters were not expected to treat their slaves with respect and not threaten them.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Armor of God

This extended metaphor describes how Christians can protect themselves when spiritually attacked.

Ephesians 6:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to explain how Christians are to submit themselves to each other. He gives instructions to children, fathers, workers, and masters.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord

"Children, as followers of the Lord, obey your parents" or "Children, it is your duty as Christians to obey your parents"

Ephesians 6:2

General Information:

Here Paul quotes Moses. Moses was talking to the people of Israel as though they were one person, so "your" is singular. You may need to translate it as plural.

Ephesians 6:3

General Information:

Here Paul continues quoting Moses. Moses was talking to the people of Israel as though they were one person, so "you" is singular. You may need to translate it as plural.

Ephesians 6:4

do not provoke your children to anger

"do not make your children angry" or "do not cause your children to be angry"

raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord

The abstract nouns "discipline" and "instruction" can be expressed as verbs. Alternate translation: "teach them to become adults by making sure that they know and do what the Lord wants them to do"

Ephesians 6:5

be obedient to

"obey." This is a command.

your masters according to the flesh

The word "flesh" here is a metonym for the physical world. Alternate translation: "your human masters" or "your masters in this world"

deep respect and trembling

The phrase "deep respect and trembling" uses two similar ideas to emphasize the importance of slaves honoring their masters.

and trembling

Here "trembling" is an exaggeration used to emphasize how important it is that slaves obey their masters. Alternate translation: "and fear" or "as though you were shaking with fear"

in the honesty of your heart

Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's mind or intentions. Alternate translation: "with honesty" or "with sincerity"

Ephesians 6:6

as slaves of Christ

Serve your earthly master as though your earthly master were Christ himself.

from your heart

Here "heart" is a metonym for "thoughts" or "intentions." Alternate translation: "with sincerity" or "enthusiastically"

Ephesians 6:7

Serve with all your heart

Here "heart" is a metonym for "thoughts" or "inner being." Alternate translation: "Serve with all of your being" or "Be completely dedicated when you serve"

Ephesians 6:8

General Information:

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Ephesians 6:9

treat your slaves in the same way

"you also must treat your slaves well" or "just as slaves must do good to their masters, you also must do good to your slaves" (Ephesians 6:5)

You know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven

"You know that Christ is the Master of both slaves and their masters, and that he is in heaven"

there is no partiality with him

"he judges everyone the same way"

Ephesians 6:10

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives instructions to make believers strong in this battle we live for God.

the strength of his might

"his great power." See how "the strength of his power" is translated near the end of Ephesians 1:21.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the scheming plans of the devil

Christians should use all the resources God gives to stand firmly against the devil just as a soldier puts on armor to protect himself from enemy attacks.

the scheming plans
"the tricky plans"

Ephesians 6:12

flesh and blood

This expression refers to people, not spirits who do not have human bodies.

against the powers over this present darkness

Here it is implied that "the powers" refers to powerful spiritual beings. Here "darkness" is a metaphor for things that are evil. Alternate translation: "against the powerful spiritual beings that rule over people during this present evil time"

Ephesians 6:13

Therefore put on the whole armor of God

Christians should use the protective resources God gives them in fighting the devil in the same way a soldier puts on armor to protect himself against his enemies.

so that you may be able to stand ... to stand firm

The words "stand" and "stand firm" represent successfully resisting or fighting something. Alternate translation: "so that you may be able to resist evil ... to remain strong"

in the evil day

Here the word "day" can refer to any short period of time, even a period longer than a day. Alternate translation: "at the evil time" or "when people do evil deeds"

Ephesians 6:14

Stand firm

Successfully resist or fight against something. You may need to make explicit what it is that the readers are to resist. See how you translated these words in [Ephesians 6:13]

the belt of truth

Truth holds everything together for a believer just as a belt holds the clothing of a soldier together.

truth ... righteousness

We are to know the truth and act in ways that please God.

the breastplate of righteousness

Possible meanings are 1) the gift of righteousness covers a believer's heart just as a breastplate protects the chest of a soldier or 2) our living as God wants us gives us a clear conscience that protects our hearts the way a breastplate protects a soldier's chest.

Ephesians 6:15

and, with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace

Just as a soldier wears shoes to give him solid footing, the believer must have solid knowledge of the gospel of peace in order to be ready to proclaim it.

Ephesians 6:16

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith

The believer must use the faith that God gives for protection when the devil attacks just as a soldier uses a shield to protect him from enemy attacks.

the flaming arrows of the evil one

The attacks of the devil against a believer are like flaming arrows shot at a soldier by an enemy.

Ephesians 6:17

take the helmet of salvation

Salvation given by God protects the believer's mind just as a helmet protects the head of a soldier.

the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

The writer speaks of God's instructions to his people as if they were a sword that his people could use to fight an enemy,

Ephesians 6:18

With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit

"Pray at all times in the Spirit as you pray and make specific requests"

To this end

"For this reason" or "Keeping this in mind." This refers to the attitude of taking God's armor.

be watching with all perseverance as you offer prayers for all God's holy people

"be watching, and even when it is difficult, keep praying for all the believers"

Ephesians 6:19

Connecting Statement:

In his closing, Paul asks them to pray for his boldness in telling the gospel while he is in prison and says he is sending Tychicus to comfort the Corinthians (6:21).

that a message might be given to me

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "that God might give me the word" or "God might give me the message"

when I open my mouth. Pray that I might make known with boldness

"when I speak. Pray that I boldly explain"

open my mouth

This is a metonym for speaking. Alternate translation: "speak"

Ephesians 6:20

It is for the gospel that I am an ambassador who is kept in chains

The words "in chains" are a metonym for being in prison. Alternate translation: "I am now in prison because I am a representative of the gospel"

so that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak

The word "pray" is understood from verse 19. Alternate translation: "so pray that whenever I teach the gospel, I will speak it as boldly as I should" or "pray that I may speak the gospel as boldly as I should"

Ephesians 6:21

Tychicus

Tychicus was one of several men who served with Paul.

the beloved brother

"my beloved brother"

make everything known

"will tell you everything about me"

Ephesians 6:22

so that he may encourage your hearts

Here "hearts" is a metonym for people's inner beings. Alternate translation: "so that he may encourage you"

Ephesians 6:23

Connecting Statement:

Paul closes his letter to the Ephesian believers with a blessing of peace and grace on all believers who love Christ.

Ephesians 6:24

General Information:

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