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2 Corinthians

1 Greetings from Paul, an apostle* of Christ Jesus. I am an apostle because that is what God wanted.

Greetings also from Timothy our brother in Christ.

To God's church that lives in Corinth and to all of God's people in the whole country of Achaia:

²Grace (*kindness*) and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul Gives Thanks to God

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father who is full of mercy. He is the God of all comfort. ⁴He comforts us every time we have trouble, so that we can comfort other people any time they have trouble. We can comfort them with the same comfort that God gives us. ⁵We share in the many sufferings of Christ. In the same way, much comfort comes to us through Christ. ⁶If we have troubles, those troubles are for your comfort and salvation. If we have comfort, it is for your comfort. This helps you to patiently accept the same sufferings that we have. ⁷Our hope for you is strong. We know that you share in our sufferings. So we know that you also share in our comfort.

⁸Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the trouble we suffered in the country of Asia.* We had great burdens there. The burdens were greater than our own strength. We even gave up hope for life. ⁹Truly in our own hearts we believed that we would die. But this happened so that we would not trust in ourselves. It happened so that we would trust in

God, who raises people from death. ¹⁰God saved us from these great dangers of death. And God will continue to save us. We have put our hope in him, and he will continue to save us. ¹¹And you can help us with your prayers. Then many people will give thanks for us—that God blessed us because of their many prayers.

The Change in Paul's Plans

¹²This is what we are proud of, and I can say with all my heart that it is true: In all the things we have done in the world, we have done everything with an honest and pure heart from God. And this is even more true in the things we have done with you. We did this by God's grace (*kindness*), not by the kind of wisdom the world has. ¹³The only things we write to you are things that you can read and understand. And I hope that you will fully understand, ¹⁴like you have already understood some things about us. I hope that you will understand that you can be proud of us, like we will be proud of you on the day our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

¹⁵I was very sure of all this. That is why I made plans to visit you first. Then you could be blessed twice. ¹⁶I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia. Then I planned to visit you again on my way back. I wanted to get help from you for my trip to Judea. ¹⁷Do you think that I made those plans without really thinking? Or maybe you think I make plans like the world makes plans, so that I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time.

¹⁸But if you can believe God, then you can believe that what we tell you is never both "Yes" and "No." ¹⁹The Son of God, Jesus Christ, that Silas and Timothy and I told you about was not "Yes" and "No." In Christ it has always been "Yes." ²⁰The "Yes" to all of

apostle(s) The men Jesus chose to represent him in a special way.
Asia The western part of modern Turkey.

God's promises is in Christ. And that is why we say "Amen*" through Christ to the glory of God. ²¹And God is the One who makes you and us strong in Christ. God gave us his special blessing.* ²²He put his mark on us to show that we are his. And he put his Spirit* in our hearts to be a guarantee—a proof that he will give us what he promised.

²³I tell you this, and I ask God to be my witness that this is true: The reason I did not come back to Corinth was that I did not want to punish or hurt you. ²⁴I don't mean that we are trying to control your faith. You are strong in faith. But we are workers with you for your own happiness.

2 So I decided that my next visit to you would not be another visit to make you sad. ²If I make you sad, then who will make me happy? Only you can make me happy—you that I made sad. ³I wrote you a letter for this reason: so that when I came to you I would not be made sad by those people who should make me happy. I felt sure of all of you. I felt sure that all of you would share my joy. ⁴When I wrote to you before, I was very troubled and unhappy in my heart. I wrote with many tears. I did not write to make you sad. I wrote so that you could know how much I love you.

Forgive the Person Who Did Wrong

⁵A person [in your group] has caused sadness. He caused this sadness not to me, but to all of you—I mean he caused sadness to all in some way. (I don't want to make it sound worse than it really is.) ⁶The punishment that most of your group gave him is enough for him. ⁷But now you should forgive him and encourage him. This will keep him from having too much sadness and giving up completely. ⁸So I beg you to show him that you love him. ⁹This is why I wrote to you. I wanted to test you and see if you obey in everything. ¹⁰If you forgive a person, then I also forgive that person. And what I have

forgiven—if I had anything to forgive—I forgave it for you, and Christ was with me. ¹¹I did this so that Satan (*the Devil*) would not win anything from us. We know very well what Satan's plans are.

Paul's Anxiety in Troas

¹²I went to Troas to tell people the Good News* of Christ. The Lord gave me a good opportunity there. ¹³But I had no peace because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye and went to Macedonia.

Victory Through Christ

¹⁴But thanks be to God. God always leads us in victory through Christ. God uses us to spread his knowledge everywhere like a sweet-smelling perfume. ¹⁵Our offering to God is this: We are the sweet smell of Christ among people who are being saved and among people who are being lost. ¹⁶To the people who are being lost, we are the smell of death that brings death. But to the people who are being saved, we are the smell of life that brings life. So who is good enough to do this work? ¹⁷We don't sell the word of God for a profit like many other people do. No! But in Christ we speak in truth before God. We speak like men sent from God.

Servants of God's New Agreement

3 Are we starting to boast about ourselves again? Do we need letters of introduction to you or from you, like some other people? ²You yourselves are our letter. That letter is written on our hearts. It is known and read by all people. ³You show that you are a letter from Christ that he sent through us. This letter is not written with ink but with the Spirit* of the living God. It is not written on stone tablets.* It is written on human hearts.

⁴We can say these things, because through Christ we feel sure before God. ⁵I don't mean that we are able to say that we can do anything good ourselves. It is God who makes us able

Amen To say "Amen" means to agree strongly.
gave us his special blessing Literally, "anointed us."
Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

Good News, gospel The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.
stone tablets, stone Meaning the law that God gave to Moses, which was written on stone tablets. See Ex. 24:12; 25:16.

to do all that we do. ⁶God made us able to be servants of a new agreement [from God to his people]. This new agreement is not a written law. It is of the Spirit.* The written law brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

The New Agreement Brings Greater Glory

⁷The old agreement* (*the law*) that brought death was written with words on stone.* It came with [God's] glory. The face of Moses* was so bright with glory that the people of Israel (*the Jews*) could not continue looking at his face. And that glory later disappeared. ⁸So surely the new agreement that brings the Spirit* has even more glory. ⁹This is what I mean: That old agreement judged people guilty of sin, but it had glory. So surely the new agreement that makes people right with God has much greater glory. ¹⁰That old agreement had glory. But it really loses its glory when it is compared to the much greater glory [of the new agreement]. ¹¹If the agreement that disappeared came with glory, then the agreement that continues forever has much greater glory.

¹²We have this hope, so we are very brave. ¹³We are not like Moses.* He put a covering over his face. Moses covered his face so that the people of Israel (*the Jews*) would not see it. The glory (*brightness*) was disappearing, and Moses did not want them to see it end. ¹⁴But their minds were closed—they could not understand. Even today that same covering hides the meaning when they (*the Jews*) read the writings of the old agreement.* That covering has not been removed. It is taken away only through Christ. ¹⁵But even today, when these people read the law of Moses, there is a covering over their minds. ¹⁶But

when a person changes and follows the Lord, that covering is taken away. ¹⁷The Lord is the Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And our faces are not covered. We all show the Lord's glory. We are being changed to be like him. This change in us brings more and more glory. This glory comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Spiritual Treasure in Clay Jars

4 God, with his mercy, gave us this work to do. So we don't give up. ²But we have turned away from secret and shameful ways. We don't use trickery, and we don't change the teaching of God. No! We teach the truth plainly. This is how we show people who we are. And this is how they can know in their hearts what kind of people we are before God. ³The Good News* that we tell people may be hidden. But it is hidden only to those people who are lost. ⁴The ruler* of this world (*the devil*) has blinded the minds of people who don't believe. They cannot see the light (*truth*) of the Good News—the Good News about the glory of Christ. Christ is the One who is exactly like God. ⁵We don't tell people about ourselves. But we tell people that Jesus Christ is Lord; and we tell people that we are your servants for Jesus. ⁶God once said, "The light will shine out of the darkness!" And this is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts. He gave us light by letting us know the glory of God that is in the face of Christ.

⁷We have this treasure [from God]. But we are only like clay jars that hold the treasure. This shows that this great power is from God, not from us. ⁸We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We often don't know what to do, but we don't give up. ⁹We are persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed. ¹⁰We have the death of Jesus in our own bodies. We carry this death so that the life of Jesus can also be seen in our bodies (*lives*). ¹¹We are alive, but for Jesus we are always in

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

agreement In verses 7–11 literally, "service" or "ministry."

stone tablets, stone Meaning the law that God gave to Moses, which was written on stone tablets. See Ex. 24:12; 25:16.

Moses One of the most important leaders of the Jewish people during the time of the Old Testament.

old agreement The agreement God gave to the Jews in the time of Moses. Here, it is used to mean the law of Moses on which that agreement was based.

Good News, gospel The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

The ruler Literally, "The god."

danger of death. This happens to us so that the life of Jesus can be seen in our bodies that die. ¹²So death is working in us, but life is working in you.

¹³The Scriptures* say, “I believed, so I spoke.”* Our faith is like that too. We believe, and so we speak. ¹⁴God raised the Lord Jesus from death. And we know that God will also raise us with Jesus. God will bring us together with you, and we will stand before him. ¹⁵All these things are for you. And so the grace (*kindness*) of God is being given to more and more people. This will bring more and more thanks to God for his glory.

Living by Faith

¹⁶That is why we never become weak. Our physical body is becoming older and weaker, but our spirit inside us is made new every day. ¹⁷We have small troubles for a while now, but those troubles are helping us gain an eternal glory. That eternal glory is much greater than the troubles. ¹⁸So we think about the things we cannot see, not what we see. The things we see continue only a short time. And the things we cannot see will continue forever.

5 We know that *our body*—the tent we live in here on earth—will be destroyed. But when that happens, God will have a home for us to live in. It will not be a home made by men. It will be a home in heaven that will continue forever. ²But now we are tired of this body. We want God to give us our heavenly home. ³It will clothe us and we will not be naked. ⁴While we live in this tent (*body*), we have burdens and we complain. I don’t mean that we want to remove this tent (*body*). But we want to be clothed *with* our heavenly home. Then this body that dies will be fully covered with life. ⁵This is what God made us for. And he has given us the Spirit* to be a guarantee—a proof *that* he will give us this new life.

⁶So we always have courage (*confidence*). We know that while we live in this body, we

are away from the Lord. ⁷We live by what we believe, not by what we can see. ⁸So I say that we have confidence. And we really want to be away from this body and be at home with the Lord. ⁹Our only goal is to please God. We want to please him when we are living here *in* our body or there *with* the Lord. ¹⁰We must all stand before Christ to be judged. Each person will get what he should. Each person will be paid for the things he did—good or bad—when he lived in the earthly body.

Helping People Become God’s Friends

¹¹We know what it means to fear the Lord. So we try to help people accept the truth. God knows what we really are. And I hope that in your hearts you know us too. ¹²We are not trying to prove ourselves to you again. But we are telling you about ourselves. We are giving you reasons to be proud of us. Then you will have an answer for those people who are proud about things that can be seen. Those people don’t care about what is in a person’s heart. ¹³If we are crazy, then it is for God. If we have our right mind, then it is for you. ¹⁴The love of Christ controls us. Why? Because we know that One (*Christ*) has died for all people. So all have died. ¹⁵Christ died for all people so that the people who live would not continue to live for themselves. He died for them and was raised from death so that those people would live for him.

¹⁶From this time on we don’t think of any person like the world thinks of people. It is true that in the past we thought of Christ like the world thinks. But we don’t think that way now. ¹⁷If any person is in Christ, then that person is made new. The old things have gone; everything is made new! ¹⁸All this is from God. Through Christ, God made peace between us and himself. And God gave us the work of bringing people into peace with him. ¹⁹I mean that God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did not hold people guilty for their sins. And he gave us this message of peace *to* tell people. ²⁰So we have been sent to speak for Christ. It is like God is calling to people through us. We speak for Christ when we beg

Scriptures Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

“I believed ... spoke” Quote from Ps. 116:10.

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God’s work among people in the world.

you to be at peace with God. ²¹Christ had no sin. But God made him become sin. God did this for us, so that in Christ we could become right with God.

6 We are workers together with God. So we beg you: Don't let the grace (*kindness*) that you received from God be for nothing. ²God says,

*"I heard you at the right time,
and I gave you help on the
day of salvation."* *Isaiah 49:8*

I tell you that the "right time" is now. The "day of salvation" is now.

³We don't want people to find anything wrong with our work. So we do nothing that will be a problem to other people. ⁴But in every way we show that we are servants of God: in accepting many hard things, in troubles, in difficulties, and in great problems. ⁵We are beaten and thrown into prison. People become upset and fight us. We work hard, and sometimes we get no sleep or food. ⁶[We show that we are servants of God] by our understanding, by our patience, by our kindness, and by living pure. [We show this] by the Holy Spirit,* by true love, ⁷by speaking the truth, and by God's power. We use our right living to defend ourselves against everything. ⁸Some people honor us, but other people shame us. Some people say good things about us, but other people say bad things. Some people say we are liars, but we speak the truth. ⁹To some people we are not known (*not important*), but we are well known. We seem to be dying, but look! We continue to live. We are punished, but we are not killed. ¹⁰We have much sadness, but we are always rejoicing. We are poor, but we are making many people rich [in faith]. We have nothing, but really we have everything.

¹¹We have spoken freely to you people in Corinth. We have opened our hearts to you. ¹²Our feelings of love for you have not

stopped. It is you that have stopped your feelings of love for us. ¹³I speak to you like you are my children. Do the same as we have done—open your hearts also.

Warning About Non-Christians

¹⁴You are not the same as those people who don't believe. So don't join yourselves to them. Good and bad don't belong together. Light and darkness cannot have fellowship (*sharing*). ¹⁵How can Christ and Belial (*the devil*) have any agreement? What can a believer have together with a non-believer? ¹⁶God's temple* cannot have any agreement with idols.* And we are the temple of the living God. Like God said:

*"I will live with them
and walk with them,
I will be their God,
and they will be my people."*
Leviticus 26:11–12

¹⁷ *"So come away from those people
and separate yourselves from them,
says the Lord.
Touch nothing that is not clean,
and I will accept you."* *Isaiah 52:11*

¹⁸ *"I will be your father,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord All-Powerful."*
2 Samuel 7:8,14

7 Dear friends, we have these promises [from God]. So we should make ourselves pure—free from anything that makes our body or our soul unclean. We should try to become perfect in the way we live, because we respect God.

Paul's Joy

²Open your hearts to us. We have not done wrong to any person. We have not ruined [the faith of] any person, and we have not cheated any person. ³I do not say this to blame you. I

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

God's temple The place where people worship and serve God. Here it means a Christian's body.

idols False gods made from wood or stone and worshiped by the non-Jewish people.

told you before that we love you so much that we would live or die with you. ⁴I feel very sure of you. I am very proud of you. You give me much courage. And in all of our troubles I have great joy.

⁵When we came into Macedonia, we had no rest. We found trouble all around us. We had fighting on the outside and fear on the inside. ⁶But God comforts people who are troubled. And God comforted us when Titus came. ⁷We were comforted by his coming and also by the comfort that you gave him. Titus told us about your wish to see me. He told us that you are very sorry for the things you did. And Titus told me about your great care for me. When I heard this, I was much happier.

⁸Even if the letter I wrote you made you sad, I am not sorry I wrote it. I know that letter made you sad, and I was sorry for that. But it made you sad only for a short time. ⁹Now I am happy. My happiness is not because you were made sad. I am happy because your sorrow made you change your hearts. You became sad like God wanted. So you were not hurt by us in any way. ¹⁰Being sorry like God wants makes a person change his heart and life. This leads a person to salvation, and we cannot be sorry for that. But the kind of sorrow the world has will bring death. ¹¹You had the kind of sorrow God wanted you to have. Now see what that sorrow has brought you: That sorrow has made you very serious. It made you want to prove that you were not wrong. It made you angry and afraid. It made you want [to see me]. It made you care. It made you want the right thing to be done. You proved that you were not guilty in any part of that problem. ¹²I wrote that letter, but not because of the one who did the wrong. And it was not written because of the person who was hurt. But I wrote that letter so that you could see, before God, the great care that you have for us. ¹³That is why we were comforted.

We were very comforted. And we were even happier to see that Titus was so happy. All of you made him feel good. ¹⁴I boasted to Titus about you. And you showed that I was right. Everything that we said to you was true. And you have proved that the things that we boasted about to Titus are true. ¹⁵And his love

for you is stronger when he remembers that you were all ready to obey. You welcomed him with respect and fear. ¹⁶I am very happy that I can trust you fully.

Christian Giving

8 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace (*kindness*) that God gave the churches (*groups of believers*) in Macedonia. ²Those believers have been tested by great troubles. And they are very poor people. But they gave much because of their great joy. ³I can tell you that they gave as much as they were able. Those believers gave even more than they could afford. They did this freely. No person told them to do this. ⁴But they asked us again and again—they begged us to let them share in this service for God's people. ⁵And they gave in a way that we did not expect: They gave themselves to the Lord and to us before [they gave their money]. This is what God wants. ⁶So we asked Titus to help you finish this special work of grace (*kindness*). Titus is the one who started this work. ⁷You are rich in everything—in faith, in speaking, in knowledge, in truly wanting to help, and in the love you learned from us. And so we want you to also be rich in this gift of giving.

⁸I am not commanding you to give. But I want to see if your love is true love. I do this by showing you that other people really want to help. ⁹You know the grace (*kindness*) of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know that Christ was rich [with God], but for you he became poor. Christ did this so that you could become rich by his becoming poor.

¹⁰This is what I think you should do: Last year you were the first to want to give. And you were the first that gave. ¹¹So now finish the work [you started]. Then your “doing” will be equal to your “wanting to do.” Give from what you have. ¹²If you want to give, then your gift will be accepted. Your gift will be judged by what you have, not by what you don't have. ¹³We don't want you to have troubles while other people are comforted. We want everything to be equal. ¹⁴At this time you have plenty. These things you have can help other people to have the things they need.

Then later, when they have plenty, they can help you to have the things you need. Then all will be equal. ¹⁵Like the Scriptures* say,

“The person that gathered much
did not have too much,
and the person that gathered little
did not have too little.” *Exodus 16:18*

Titus and His Companions

¹⁶I thank God because he gave Titus the same love for you that I have. ¹⁷Titus accepted the things we asked him to do. He wanted very much to go to you. This was his own idea. ¹⁸We are sending with Titus the brother who is praised by all the churches (*groups of believers*). This brother is praised because of his service in the gospel.* ¹⁹Also, this brother was chosen by the churches to go with us when we carry this gift (*the money*). We are doing this service to bring glory to the Lord and to show that we really want to help.

²⁰We are being careful so that no person will criticize us about the way we are caring for this large gift. ²¹We are trying to do what is right. We want to do what the Lord accepts as right and also what people think is right.

²²Also, we are sending with them our brother who is always ready to help. He has proved this to us in many ways. And he wants to help even more now because he has much faith in you.

²³Now about Titus—he is my partner. He is working together with me to help you. And about the other brothers—they are sent from the churches (*groups of believers*), and they bring glory to Christ. ²⁴So show these men that you really have love. Show them why we are proud of you. Then all the churches can see it.

Help for Fellow Christians

9 I really don’t need to write to you about this help for God’s people. ²I know that you want to help. I have been boasting about

this to the people in Macedonia. I have told them that you people in Achaia were ready to give since last year. And your wanting to give has made most of the people here ready to give also. ³But I am sending the brothers to you. I don’t want our boasting about you in this to be for nothing. I want you to be ready like I said you would be. ⁴If any of the people from Macedonia come with me, and they find that you are not ready, then we will be ashamed. We will be ashamed that we were so sure of you. (And you will be ashamed too!) ⁵So I thought that I should ask these brothers to go to you before we come. They will finish making ready the gift you promised. Then the gift will be ready when we come, and it will be a gift you wanted to give—not a gift that you hated to give.

⁶Remember this: The person who plants little will harvest only a little. But the person who plants much will harvest much. ⁷Each person should give what he has decided in his heart to give. A person should not give if it makes him sad. And a person should not give if he thinks he is forced to give. God loves the person who gives happily. ⁸And God can give you more blessings than you need. Then you will always have plenty of everything. You will have enough to give to every good work.

⁹Like the Scriptures* say,

“He gives generously to the poor;
his kindness will continue forever.”

Psalms 112:9

¹⁰God is the One who gives seed to the person who plants. And he gives bread for food. And God will give you [spiritual] seed and make your seed grow. He will make a great harvest from your goodness (*giving*). ¹¹God will make you rich in every way so that you can always give freely. And your giving through us will make people give thanks to God. ¹²This service that you do helps the needs of God’s people. But that is not all your service does. It is also bringing more and more thanks to God. ¹³This service you do is a proof [of your faith]. People will praise God because of this. They will praise God because you follow the gospel* of Christ—the gospel you say you believe. People will praise God because you

Scriptures Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

Good News, gospel The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

freely share with them and with all people. ¹⁴And when those people pray, they will wish they could be with you. They will feel this because of the great grace (*kindness*) that God gave you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his gift that is too wonderful to explain.

Paul Defends His Ministry

10 I am Paul, and I am begging you. I beg you with the gentleness and the kindness of Christ. [Some people say that] I am humble when I am with you, and brave when I am away. ²Some people think that we live in a worldly way. I plan to be very bold against those people when I come. I beg you that when I come I will not need to use that same boldness [with you]. ³We do live in the world. But we don't fight in the same way that the world fights. ⁴We fight with weapons that are different from the weapons the world uses. Our weapons have power from God. These weapons can destroy [the enemy's] strong places. We destroy [people's] arguments. ⁵And we destroy every proud thing that raises itself against the knowledge of God. And we capture (*catch*) every thought and make it give up and obey Christ. ⁶We are ready to punish any person there who does not obey. But first we want you to obey fully.

⁷You must look at the facts before you. If a person feels sure that he belongs to Christ, then he must remember that we belong to Christ the same as that person. ⁸It is true that we boast freely about the authority (*power*) the Lord gave us. But he gave us this power to strengthen you, not to hurt you. So I will not be ashamed of that boasting we do. ⁹I don't want you to think that I am trying to scare you with my letters. ¹⁰Some people say, "Paul's letters are powerful and sound important. But when he is with us, he is weak. And his speaking is nothing." ¹¹Those people should know this: We are not there with you now, so we say these things in letters. But when we are there with you, we will show the same power that we show in our letters.

¹²We don't dare to put ourselves in the same group with those people who think that they are very important. We don't compare ourselves to them. They use themselves to

measure themselves, and they judge themselves by what they themselves are. This shows that they know nothing. ¹³But we will not boast about things outside the work that was given us to do. We will limit our boasting to the work that God gave us. But this work includes our work with you. ¹⁴We are not boasting too much. We would be boasting too much if we had not already come to you. But we have come to you. We came to you with the Good News* of Christ. ¹⁵We limit our boasting to the work that is ours. We don't boast in the work other people have done. We hope that your faith will continue to grow. We hope that you will help our work to grow much larger. ¹⁶We want to tell the Good News in the areas beyond your city. We don't want to boast about work that has already been done in another man's area. ¹⁷But, "The person who boasts should boast in the Lord."* ¹⁸It is not the person who says that he is good who is accepted. It is the person that the Lord thinks is good who is accepted.

Paul and the False Apostles

11 I wish you would be patient with me even when I am a little foolish. But you are already patient with me. ²I feel jealousy for you. And this jealousy is a jealousy that comes from God. I promised to give you to Christ. Christ must be your only husband. I want to give you to Christ to be his pure bride.* ³But I am afraid that your minds will be led away from your true and pure following of Christ. This might happen the same as Eve was tricked (*fooled*) by the snake (*the devil*) with his evil ways. ⁴You are very patient with any person who comes to you and tells you things about Jesus that are different from the things we told you. You are very willing to accept a spirit or a gospel that is different from the Spirit* and

Good News, gospel The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

"The person ... Lord" Quote from Jer. 9:24.

bride Literally, "virgin."

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

gospel* that you received from us. [So you should be patient with me.]

⁵I don't think that those "great apostles*" are any better than I am. ⁶It is true that I am not a trained speaker. But I do have knowledge. We have shown this to you clearly in every way.

⁷I did the work of telling God's Good News* to you without pay. I humbled myself to make you important. Do you think that was wrong? ⁸I accepted pay from other churches. I took their money so that I could serve you. ⁹If I needed something when I was with you, I did not trouble any of you. The brothers who came from Macedonia gave me all that I needed. I did not allow myself to be a burden to you in any way. And I will never be a burden to you. ¹⁰No person in Achaia* will stop me from boasting about that. I say this with the truth of Christ in me. ¹¹And why [do I not burden you]? Do you think it is because I don't love you? No. God knows that I love you.

¹²And I will continue doing what I am doing now. I will continue this because I want to stop those people from having a reason to boast. They would like to say that the work they boast about is the same as ours. ¹³These people are not true apostles.* They are workers who lie. And they change themselves to [make people think they are] apostles of Christ. ¹⁴That does not surprise us. Why? Even Satan (*the devil*) changes himself to [make people think he is] an angel of light.* ¹⁵So it does not surprise us if Satan's servants make themselves look like servants who work for what is right. But in the end those people will be paid (*punished*) for the things they do.

Paul Tells About His Sufferings

¹⁶I tell you again: No person should think that I am a fool. But if you think that I am a fool, then accept me like you accept a fool. Then I can boast a little too. ¹⁷I boast because I feel sure of myself. But I am not talking like

the Lord would talk. I am boasting like a fool. ¹⁸Many people are boasting about their lives in the world. So I will boast too. ¹⁹You are wise, so you will gladly be patient with fools! ²⁰[I know you will be patient,] because you are even patient with a person who forces you to do things and uses you! You are patient with people that trick you, or think they are better than you, or hit you in the face! ²¹It is shameful to me to say this, but we were too "weak" [to do those things to you]!

But if any person is brave enough [to boast, then I also will be brave and boast. (I am talking like a fool.) ²²Are those people Hebrews*? I am too. Are they Israelites*? I am too. Are they from Abraham's* family? I am too. ²³Are those people serving Christ? I am serving him more. (I am crazy to talk like this.) I have worked much harder than those people. I have been in prison more often. I have been hurt more in beatings. I have been near death many times. ²⁴Five times the Jews have given me their punishment of 39 hits with a whip. ²⁵Three different times I was beaten with rods. One time I was almost killed with rocks. Three times I was in ships that were wrecked, and one of those times I spent the night and the next day in the sea. ²⁶I have traveled many, many times. And I have been in danger from rivers, from thieves, from my own people (*the Jews*), and from people who are not Jews. I have been in danger in cities, in places where no people live, and on the sea. And I have been in danger with people who say they are brothers, but are really not brothers. ²⁷I have done hard and tiring work, and many times I did not sleep. I have been hungry and thirsty. Many times I have been without food. I have been cold and without clothes. ²⁸And there are many other problems. One of these is the care I have for all the churches. I worry about them every day. ²⁹I feel weak every time another person is weak. I feel upset inside myself every time another person is led into sin.

³⁰If I must boast, then I will boast about the things that show that I am weak. ³¹God

Good News, gospel The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

apostle(s) The men Jesus chose to represent him in a special way.

Achaia The southern part of Greece where Corinth was.

angel of light Messenger from God. The devil fools people so that they think he is from God.

Hebrews, Israelites Other names for the Jewish people.

Abraham Most respected ancestor of the Jews.

knows that I am not lying. He is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is to be praised forever. ³²When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas wanted to arrest me. So he put guards around the city. ³³But [some friends] put me in a basket. Then they put the basket through a hole in the wall and lowered me down. So I escaped from the governor.

A Special Blessing in Paul's Life

12 I must continue to boast. It won't help, but I will talk now about visions* and revelations* from the Lord. ²I know a man* in Christ who was taken up to the third heaven. This happened 14 years ago. I don't know if the man was in his body or out of his body. But God knows. ^{3–4}And I know that this man was taken up to paradise.* I don't know if he was in his body or away from his body. But he heard things which he is not able to explain. He heard things that no man is allowed to tell. ⁵I will boast about a man like that. But I will not boast about myself. I will boast only about my weaknesses. ⁶But if I wanted to boast about myself, I would not be a fool. I would not be a fool, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't boast about myself. Why? Because I don't want people to think more of me than what they see me do or hear me say.

⁷But I must not become too proud of the wonderful things that were shown to me. So a painful problem* was given to me. That problem is an angel from Satan (*the devil*). It is sent to beat me and keep me from being too proud. ⁸I begged the Lord three times to take this problem away from me. ⁹But the Lord said to me, "My grace (*kindness*) is enough for you. When you are weak, then my power is made perfect in you." So I am very happy to boast about my weaknesses. Then Christ's power can live in me. ¹⁰So I am happy when I

have weaknesses. I am happy when people say bad things to me. I am happy when I have hard times. I am happy when people treat me badly. And I am happy when I have problems. All these things are for Christ. And I am happy with these things, because when I am weak, then I am truly strong.

Paul's Love for the Christians in Corinth

¹¹I have been [talking like] a fool. But you made me do it. You people are the ones who should say good things about me. I am worth nothing, but those "great apostles*" are not worth any more than I am! ¹²When I was with you, I did the things that prove that I am an apostle—I did signs, wonders, and miracles.* I did these things with much patience. ¹³So you received everything that the other churches have received. Only one thing was different: I was not a burden to you. Forgive me for this!

¹⁴I am now ready to visit you the third time. And I will not be a burden to you. I don't want any of the things you own. I only want you. Children should not have to save things to give to their parents. Parents should save to give to their children. ¹⁵So I am happy to give everything I have for you. I will even give myself for you. If I love you more, will you love me less?

¹⁶It is clear that I was not a burden to you. But [you think that] I was tricky and used lies to catch you. ¹⁷Did I cheat you by using any of the men I sent to you? No! You know I didn't. ¹⁸I asked Titus to go to you. And I sent our brother with him. Titus did not cheat you, did he? No! You know that Titus and I did the same things and with the same spirit.

¹⁹Do you think that we have been defending ourselves to you all this time? No. We say these things in Christ. And we say these things before God. You are our dear friends. And everything that we do is to make you stronger. ²⁰I do this because I am afraid that when I come you will not be what I want you to be.

vision(s) A vision is something like a dream that God used to speak to people.

revelation(s) A revelation is an opening up (making known) of truth that was hidden.

a man In 12:2–5 Paul is probably talking about himself in the third person.

paradise A place where good people go when they die.

painful problem Literally, "thorn in the flesh."

apostle(s) The men Jesus chose to represent him in a special way.

signs, wonders, miracles Powerful works from God that people cannot do without God's help.

And I am afraid that I will not be what you want me to be. I am afraid that [in your group] there may be arguing, jealousy, anger, selfish fighting, evil talk, gossip, pride, and confusion. ²¹I am afraid that when I come to you again, my God will make me humble before you. I may be saddened by many of you who have sinned. I may be saddened because those people have not changed their hearts to be sorry for their evil lives, for their sexual sins, and for the shameful things they have done.

Final Warnings and Greetings

13 I will come to you again. This will be the third time. And remember, “For every complaint there must be two or three people to say that they know it is true.”* ²When I was with you the second time, I gave a warning to those people who had sinned. Now I am away from you, and I give a warning to all the other people [who have sinned]: When I come to you again, I will punish you [for your sin]. ³You want proof that Christ is speaking through me. [My proof is that] Christ is not weak in [punishing] you. But Christ is powerful among you. ⁴It is true that Christ was weak when he was killed on the cross. But he lives now by God’s power. And it is true that we are weak in Christ. But for you we will be alive in Christ by God’s power.

⁵Look closely at yourselves. Test yourselves to see if you are [living] in the faith. You know that Christ Jesus is in you. But if you fail the test (*are not living in the faith*), then Christ is not living in you. ⁶But I hope you will see that we have not failed the test. ⁷We pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. It is not important that people see that we have passed the test. But it is important that you do what is right, even if [people think] that we have failed the test. ⁸We cannot do things that are against the truth. We can only do things that are for the truth. ⁹We are happy to be weak, if you are strong. And we pray that you will grow stronger and stronger. ¹⁰I’m writing these things while I’m not with you. I’m writing so that when I come I will not have to use my power to punish you. The Lord gave me that power to make you stronger, not to destroy you.

¹¹Now, brothers and sisters, I say good-bye. Try to be perfect. Do the things I have asked you to do. Agree in your minds with each other, and live in peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹²Give each other a holy kiss when you greet each other. ¹³All God’s holy people* say hello to you.

¹⁴The grace (*kindness*) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship (*sharing*) of the Holy Spirit* be with you all.

holy people Literally, “saints” or “holy ones.” God’s people are called holy because they are made pure through Christ and belong only to God.

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God’s work among people in the world.

“For every complaint ... true” Quote from Deut. 19:15.