

II CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER ONE

1) [This letter is from] **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy, our brother.** [It is being sent] **to the church of God at Corinth, with all the saints** [i.e., God's holy people] **who are in the entire province of Achaia** [Note: This was the southern province of Greece]. 2) **May [God's] unearned favor be yours, [along with] peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

3) **May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Father of compassionate feelings and the God of all comfort, be praised.** 4) **He comforts us in all our troubles so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any [kind of] trouble, through the comfort we ourselves have received from Him.** 5) **For just as we experience an overflow of Christ's sufferings, even so we also experience an overflow of comfort through Christ.** 6) **But if we experience trouble, it is in order [to provide] for your comfort and salvation. Or, if we are comforted, it is in order [to provide] for your comfort [also], which enables you to endure patiently the same sufferings we experience.** 7) **And our hope for you is firm, for we know that just as you share our sufferings, so you will also [share] our comfort.**

8) **For we want you to know, brothers, about the trouble that we experienced in Asia.** [See I Cor. 16:19]. **We were under a heavy burden [which was] more than we could stand, even to the point of despairing of life.** 9) **Actually, we felt within us that we had [already] received a death sentence, so that we could [learn] not to trust in ourselves but in God, who raises the dead.** 10) **He has rescued us from a serious threat of death and He will do it again. We have placed our hope in Him, that He will also continue to rescue us, 11) as you cooperate by praying for us. Then, many people will give thanks [to God] on our behalf for the gift He has given to us through [your] many [prayers].**

12) **For this is what we boast of: Our conscience**

testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, in holiness and godly sincerity, not with human wisdom, but with the favor of God. 13) For we are not writing anything to you than what you can read and understand. And I hope that, on the day of our Lord Jesus [i.e., the judgment day], you will understand us fully, 14) as you have understood us partially [or “only a part of you have understood us”], that we are [the occasion of] your boasting, even as you are [the occasion of] our boasting.

15) And because of this confidence [i.e., that you people have such a favorable opinion of me], I had determined to visit you first [i.e., before going to Macedonia. See I Cor. 16:5-7], so that you could have an additional blessing. [Note: The “blessing” here would be Paul getting to minister to them both before and after visiting Macedonia]. 16) [I had planned] to visit you on my way to Macedonia and then again on my way back from there, and to have you help me on my journey to Judea. [See I Cor. 16:6]. 17) So, when I made this decision, was I just vacillating [in uncertainty]? Or, do I make plans in a worldly way [i.e., just to suit my own fancy], so that my “yes” and “no” [do not really mean anything]? 18) But just as certainly as God is dependable, our message to you is not [both] “yes” and “no” [at the same time]. 19) For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed among you by me, [and] Silvanus [i.e., the same as Silas] and Timothy, was not “yes” and “no” [i.e., both our message and Jesus Himself were not contradictory], but with Him, it was “yes” [i.e., Jesus consistently spoke the truth]. 20) For [no matter] how many promises God has made, in Christ [the answer] is “yes” [i.e., Christ has fulfilled all of God’s promises to mankind]. Also, through Christ, the “amen” [Note: This word is always translated elsewhere as “May it be so”] can be said by us in order to honor God. 21) Now God is the One who makes us stand firm with you in [fellowship with] Christ. He has anointed us [Note: “Anointed” here probably refers to selecting, appointing and commissioning people for some form of Christian service. See Luke 4:18]; 22) He has placed His seal of ownership upon us by giving us the down payment of the Holy Spirit [to live] in our hearts.

23) But I appeal to God as my witness [i.e., to verify that I am telling the truth]; it was in order to spare you [i.e., from a disciplinary action] that I decided not to return to Corinth.

24) For we do not have [the right to] rule over your faith [i.e., to dictate concerning your personal relationship with God], but we want to work with you for your happiness. For you are [already] standing firm in your faith. [Note: This whole narrative alludes to some unresolved problems still existing there in Corinth].

CHAPTER TWO

1) So, I decided for myself not to make another painful visit to you. 2) For if I caused you sorrow, who can make me glad except the one I have grieved? [See verse 6]. 3) And I wrote you this very thing so that when I did come I might not be grieved by those who should make me happy. I had confidence in all of you, that whatever makes me happy [also] makes you happy. 4) For I wrote to you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not in order to grieve you, but that you people might know how very much I love you.

5) But if anyone has caused grief, he has not done it to me [only], but to nearly all of you [or, “only partially to all of you”] for I do not want to overstate the case. 6) The punishment inflicted [on him] by the majority of you was sufficient. [Note: If this is a reference to the incestuous man of I Cor. 5:4ff, then the punishment was removing him from their fellowship]. **7) So instead, you people should [now] forgive and comfort him, in order that such a person does not become overwhelmed with extreme grief. 8) So, I urge you to reassure him of your love for him. 9) For this also was my purpose in writing you, that I might test your willingness to obey everything [I required of you]. 10) Now whomever you forgive [for doing] anything [wrong], I will forgive also. For indeed, whatever I have forgiven, if I have [actually] forgiven anything, has been for your sakes in the sight of Christ.** [Note: Paul seems to be saying “Since my forgiveness depends on your forgiveness of the man, I am not sure of my forgiveness because I am not sure of yours”]. **11) [I do this] so that Satan cannot take advantage of us, for we are not unaware of his schemes.**

12) Now when I came to Troas [See Acts 16:8], in order to preach the good news about Christ, and when a door [of opportunity] was opened to me in [the service of] the Lord

[there], 13) **I had no peace of mind because I did not find my brother Titus [there]. So, I said “good-bye” to them and went on to Macedonia.**

14) But I offer thanks to God, who always leads us [preachers] to victory in [the service of] Christ, and through us makes known the “fragrant odor” of His knowledge everywhere. 15) For we [i.e., through our preaching] are like a fragrant incense which goes up to God, [and spreads the knowledge] of Christ among both saved and lost people. 16) To lost people [we become] a smell of death [i.e., we bring condemnation to people who reject our message]; to saved people [we become] a fragrance of life [i.e., we bring salvation to people who accept our message]. And who is adequate to [accomplish] such tasks? 17) For we [apostles] are not like so many people, who “peddle” God’s message merely for profit [or, “who corrupt God’s message”], but in Christ’s [service] we proclaim the message from God with sincerity, [realizing we are] in the presence of God.

CHAPTER THREE

1) Are we beginning to commend ourselves again [i.e., by saying that we are not like other people]? Or, do we need letters of recommendation to you or from you, as others do? 2) You people are our letters [of recommendation], written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. 3) You people show [i.e., by your conversions] that you are a letter from Christ, delivered by us [i.e., the result of our ministry], not written with ink but with the Holy Spirit of the living God; not on stone tablets [i.e., as in the case with Moses’ ministry], but on tablets of the human heart. [See Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10]. 4) [We say this] because we have such confidence in God through [our relationship with] Christ. 5) It is not that we are [so] competent as to consider anything [we do] as coming from ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6) He has also made us competent as ministers of a New Agreement [i.e., between Himself and mankind]. It is not [an agreement] based [merely] on a written document [i.e., such as the Law of Moses], but on the Holy Spirit, for the written document brings [spiritual] death [See Rom. 8:2], but the Holy Spirit brings [never ending] life.

7) But if the ministry [of the law] that brings [spiritual]

death, being carved in letters on stones, came with [such] splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its radiance [See Ex. 34:29-35], (even though such radiance [eventually] faded away), **8) will not the ministry of the Holy Spirit [i.e., the New Agreement] have [greater] splendor? 9) For if the ministry [of the law] that brings condemnation came with splendor, will not the ministry that brings righteousness [i.e., the New Agreement] have greater splendor? 10) For truly, what once came with splendor [i.e., the Old Agreement] has now lost it in comparison to that which has surpassing splendor [i.e., the New Agreement]. 11) For if that which was fading away [i.e., the Old Agreement, represented by the Law of Moses] had splendor, how much greater is the splendor of that which remains [i.e., the New Agreement represented by the Gospel]? [Note: In this section Paul uses the analogy of the fading splendor on Moses' face to the fading splendor of the Old Agreement].**

12) Therefore, since we have such a hope [i.e., that the Gospel is much superior to the law], we speak with great boldness, 13) and are not like Moses, who had to put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from staring at it as [its] radiance was completely fading away. [Note: The analogy continues by suggesting that the Old Agreement was fading away like the splendor on Moses' face did]. 14) But the minds of the Israelites became dull for, to this very day, the same veil remains on them [i.e., figuratively] when the Old Agreement [Scriptures] are read. It is not being revealed to them that the Old Agreement is being abolished by Christ [i.e., by His death on the cross. See Col. 2:14]. 15) But to this day, a veil remains on their minds whenever [the writings of] Moses are read. 16) But whenever a person [i.e., the Jews] turn to the Lord, the veil is removed [i.e., so they can understand the meaning of God's promises to them through Christ]. 17) Now the Lord [i.e., Christ] is the Holy Spirit, and there is freedom [from the bondage of sin and fear] wherever the Spirit of the Lord is. 18) But all of us [Christians], with unveiled faces, see the Lord's splendor reflected, as [though we were] looking in a mirror, and [so] are being transformed into His likeness in ever-increasing splendor. This is [the work] of the Lord, [who is] the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR

1) So, having obtained this ministry through [God's] mercy, we do not become discouraged. 2) Instead, we have renounced [the practice of] secret, disgraceful behavior. We do not practice deception, nor resort to distorting God's message. But, by making known the truth [i.e., the true message], we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the presence of God. 3) For even if our Gospel message is veiled, it is veiled [only] from those who are lost. 4) For the god of this world [i.e., Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they would not see the light of the Gospel of the splendor of Christ, who is the image of God. 5) For we do not preach ourselves, but [we preach] Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. 6) For God, who said [Gen. 1:3], "Light will shine out of darkness," has [also] shone in our hearts to provide [us with] the light of the knowledge of God's splendor [as it shines] on the face of Christ. [Note: This allusion to "splendor shining on Christ's face" may be a continuation of the analogy used in 3:13].

7) But we have this treasure [i.e., the Gospel message] in clay pots [i.e., the mortal bodies of the apostles] to show that the [i.e., its] extraordinary power comes from God and not from us. 8) We are afflicted in every way, but are not crushed; [we are] perplexed, but not to the point of despair; 9) [we are] persecuted, but are not deserted [by God]; [we are] struck down, but are not destroyed. 10) We always carry around in our [physical] bodies the [threat of] dying, as Jesus did [i.e., the apostles were constantly exposed to impending danger and death], so that the life of Jesus [i.e., His virtue, courage, faithfulness, etc.] may be demonstrated in our bodies [i.e., in the way we live] also. 11) For while we live, we are always exposed to death for Jesus' sake [See Rom. 8:36], so that the life of Jesus may be demonstrated in our mortal bodies [i.e., in our weak and frail human nature]. 12) So then, [the possibility of physical] death is at work in us, while [spiritual] life is at work in you.

13) But, we have the same spirit [i.e., type] of faith as that written about [Psa. 116:10], "I believed [God's message], so I spoke." We also believe [it], and so we also speak [about

it]. **14) We know that God, who raised up the Lord Jesus** [from the dead], **will also raise us** [apostles] **up with Jesus and present us with you people** [i.e., in the presence of the Father in heaven]. **15) For everything** [i.e., that we have experienced. See verses 8-12] **is for your sakes so that** [God's] **unearned favor, being extended to so many,** [in bringing them salvation through Paul's ministry] **may result in much thanksgiving in praise to God.**

16) Therefore, we do not get discouraged, for though our physical body is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed daily. **17) For our insignificant troubles** [here on earth], **which last only a short time, are producing for us an immeasurable, never ending** [counter-] **weight of splendor** [i.e., in heaven. See Rom. 8:18]. **18) So, we do not look at the things which can be seen, but at what cannot be seen, for the things which can be seen are** [only] **temporary, but the things which cannot be seen are never ending.**

CHAPTER FIVE

1) For we know that if our earthly “house” [i.e., our physical body] **which is like a tent, is torn down, we have** [the promise of] **a building from God, a never ending “house” in heaven that is not made by human hands.** **2) For indeed, we groan while in this “house,” longing to be covered over by our heavenly dwelling place,** **3) because when we are covered by it, we will not be found naked** [i.e., without a suitable dwelling for our body]. **4) For indeed, we who are in this “tent” groan under its burden, not** [wanting] **to be uncovered, but to be covered over. Then our mortal body will be swallowed up** [i.e., replaced] **by** [never ending] **life.** **5) Now God is the One who has prepared us for this very thing** [i.e., the receiving of a new body to live in]. **He has** [also] **given us the Holy Spirit as a down payment.** [Note: This refers to the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit as being a guarantee that we will receive the balance of our inheritance in the form of a new body].

6) So, we are always encouraged and know that, while we are at home in our [physical] **body, we are away from the Lord,** **7) for we live by faith, not by what we see.** **8) We are encouraged, I say, and would rather be away from our body and at home with the Lord.** **9) So, we are also eager to please God very much, whether we are at home** [in our body] **or away**

from it. 10) For we must all appear in front of the judgment bar of Christ, so that each one of us may receive what is due him for what he had done while in his [physical] body [i.e., on earth], whether it be good or bad.

11) Since we [apostles] know [what it means] to revere the Lord, we try to persuade people [i.e., to accept the Gospel, or to acknowledge our integrity]. But we are [already] known to God, and I hope that you also know us in your hearts [i.e., to have integrity]. 12) We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but we speak [in such a way as] to give you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you can have an answer for those who take pride in [outward] appearances instead of what is in the heart. 13) For if we [seem to] be crazy, it is for the sake [of the work] of God, or if we [seem to] be sensible, it is for your benefit. 14) For Christ's love for us motivates us, because we have concluded that, [since] one person [i.e., Christ] died for all people, so then all people have died. [Note: This may mean simply that Christ died for all people, who were dead in their sins]. 15) And Christ died for all people, so that those who are alive should not live for themselves anymore, but for Him who died and rose again for their sakes.

16) So, from now on we will not regard any person by worldly standards, even though we [once] regarded Christ that way. But we will not regard Him [that way] anymore. [Note: Paul seems to be saying that before his conversion he viewed Christ on the basis of His family, His education, His position, etc., but since his conversion he does not view Him that way anymore]. 17) Therefore, if any person is in [fellowship with] Christ, he is a new person. His old ways have passed away; now his ways have become new. 18) All [these] things are from God, who restored us to fellowship with Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of restoring [other] people to [such] fellowship. 19) That is, God was in Christ restoring the world to fellowship with Himself, not counting people's sins against them. And He entrusted to us the message of restoring people to fellowship [with Him].

20) So, we [apostles] are ambassadors, [speaking] on behalf of Christ. [It is] as though God were appealing [to people] through us: "We urge you people, on behalf of Christ, to be restored to fellowship with God." 21) God considered Christ to be sinful on our behalf, even though He never sinned,

so that we could be considered right with God through Him.

CHAPTER SIX

1) As workers together with God we urge you also, who have received God's unearned favor, do not allow it to be for nothing, 2) for God said [Isa. 49:8], "I listened to you at the right time [i.e., when you needed my favor], and I helped you on the day of your salvation." Look, now is the right time [to accept God's favor]; now is the day of salvation.

3) [We try] not to place an obstacle in anyone's way [i.e., to keep them from accepting the Gospel message], so that our ministry would not be blamed. 4) But, as ministers of God, we [try to] commend ourselves [to others] in every way. [We do this] by [our] great steadfastness in troubles, hardships and difficulties. 5) [We have been] beaten, jailed, and mobbed. [We have] worked hard, missed sleep and gone without food. 6) [We have ministered] with purity, knowledge, patience and kindness. [We have done this] by [the power of] the Holy Spirit; out of genuine love; 7) by preaching the truth; through the power of God [i.e., possibly including miracles]; and by [using] weapons of righteousness in [our] right and left hands. [Note: This could allude to offensive and defensive weapons and means that Paul was fully equipped to do whatever was right]. 8) [We have experienced] honor and dishonor; a bad reputation and a good one. [We have been viewed] as deceivers and yet are genuine; 9) as [both] unknown [to people] and yet well-known; [we have almost] died, and yet as you see, we are still alive; [we have been] punished and yet not killed; 10) sad and yet always joyous; poor and yet making many people [spiritually] rich; destitute and yet possessing everything.

11) We have spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, and our hearts have been wide open to you. 12) We are not holding back [our affections] from you, but you are holding back your affections [from us]. 13) I am speaking to you as my [spiritual] children; open up [your hearts] to me in return.

14) Do not team up with unbelievers [i.e., in close relationships, such as marriage, etc.]. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or, what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15) And what harmony can Christ have with Belial? [Note: "Belial" means "worthlessness" and was

used for referring to the devil]. **Or, what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16) And what agreement is there between a temple of God and idols? For we are a temple of the living God, just as God said [Lev. 26:12], “I will live in them and walk among them [i.e., among His people]; and I will be their God and they will be my people.” 17) Therefore, the Lord says [Isa. 52:11], “You people should leave their company [i.e., unbelievers, verse 14] and separate yourselves from them, and do not touch anything unclean [i.e., their evil practices], and I will welcome you.” 18) The Lord Almighty [also] said [Hos. 1:10], “I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me.”**

CHAPTER SEVEN

1) [So], since we have these promises [See 6:16-18], dear ones, we should purify ourselves from everything that pollutes [our] body and spirit while living lives completely separated [from sin], out of reverence for God.

2) [Note: The following section seems to pick up where 6:13 left off]. **Make room for us in your hearts. We have not wronged or injured anyone, nor have we taken advantage of anyone. 3) I am not saying this to condemn you, for [as] I said before, you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. 4) I have great confidence in talking to you; I have great pride in you and I am full of encouragement [over you]. In all of our troubles I am overflowing with joy.**

5) **For even when we came to Macedonia we had no rest for our bodies. But we met with trouble on every hand. [There were] conflicts on the outside and fears within us. 6) But God, who comforts downhearted people, comforted us [also] by the arrival of Titus. 7) [We were comforted] not only by his presence, but also [by learning] that you comforted him. He [also] told us of your longing and grieving and concern for me, so that made me all the happier. 8) For even though I caused you sorrow by my letter [Note: Paul’s writing of I Corinthians to correct abuses at Corinth apparently produced sorrow for their wrongdoing], I do not regret it, though I did regret it. [For] I see that my letter hurt you, though only for a short time. 9) Now I am glad, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repent. For you were made sorry from**

a godly motive, so were not harmed by us in any way. 10) For the sorrow that God desires produces repentance [i.e., a change of heart and life] that leads to salvation, and which brings no regrets. But the sorrow of the world [i.e., sorrow for wrongdoing for reasons unrelated to God or moral principles] produces [spiritual] death. 11) See how the very fact that you were made sorry from a godly motive has produced earnestness in you! [It produced] a desire to vindicate yourselves [i.e., by making amends for your wrongdoing]; an attitude of just anger [i.e., toward the wrongdoers]; a sense of fear [i.e., a fear of God for doing wrong]; an eager desire [i.e., to do the right thing]; a zeal [i.e., to correct problems]; and an attitude of avenging [i.e., that punished the wrongdoer]. You demonstrated in everything [you did] that you were pure [i.e., innocent] in this matter. [Note: This whole description of their conduct appears to be a reference to the incident mentioned in 2:1-11]. 12) So, although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the person who did the wrong, nor for the one who was wronged, but so that you could realize before God how devoted to us you are.

13) So, we have been encouraged, and in addition to [our] encouragement, we were very glad that Titus was so happy [also], because you had refreshed his spirit. 14) For if there is anything I have boasted to him about you, you did not cause me to be ashamed of it. But as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus [about you] proved to be true also. 15) And he has great affection for you when he remembers how obedient all of you were [i.e., obedient to his or Paul's instructions to the church], and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling [i.e., with a respectful, submissive spirit]. 16) I am glad I can have so much confidence in you about everything.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1) Now, brothers, we want you to know about the favor God has given to the churches in Macedonia. 2) [It is] how, in spite of their suffering severe trials, their overflowing joy and extreme poverty produced an overwhelming expression of generosity. 3) For I testify that they gave [financial help] to the full limit of their ability, yes and even beyond it. [And they did

this] **entirely on their own**, 4) [even] **pleading with us and requesting the privilege of taking part in this service to the saints** [i.e., God's holy people] **in Jerusalem**. [See also 9:1-15; I Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:25-28]. 5) **And they did not** [just] **do as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and** [then] **to us through the will of God**. 6) **So**, [i.e., because of your enthusiastic response to this need. See verse 10], **we urged Titus, who had previously begun** [taking up this collection], **to help you also complete this favorable work** [i.e., by finalizing it]. 7) **But just as you excel in everything** [else]; **in your faith, in your speaking; in your knowledge** [Note: Possibly these refer to spiritual gifts. See I Cor. 12:8-10], **in your eagerness** [to serve], **and in your love for us, now you people should also excel in this favorable work** [i.e., of giving financial help to needy people]. 8) **I am not saying this** [to you] **as a command, but by telling you how eager others are** [to help], **to find out how genuine your love is also**. 9) **For you know the unearned favor of our Lord Jesus Christ, [how] that even though He was rich, He became poor for your sakes, so that through His poverty your people could become** [spiritually] **rich**.

10) **Now here is my advice on what is best to do in this matter: Since you were the first ones to begin** [taking up a collection] **a year ago, [now you should] not only be doing something** [about it], **but** [you should continue] **wanting to do something** [as well]. 11) **So, now finish doing it also, so that just as you were eager to want to, you will also** [be eager to] **finish it, according to your ability**. 12) **For if the eagerness is there, [then] whatever a person has** [to give] **is acceptable, and not what he does not have**. 13) **I am not saying this to make it easy for others** [to give] **and difficult for you people, 14) but that there will be equality** [i.e., in everyone's giving]. **Your abundance can now supply their need, so that their abundance can** [later] **supply your need**. [That way] **there can be equality, 15) as it is written** [Ex. 16:18], **"The person who gathered much** [i.e., manna] **did not have any left over, and the one who gathered** [only] **a little** [still] **had plenty."**

16) **But I thank God for putting the same concern** [that I have] **for you in the heart of Titus**. 17) **For he not only accepted our urging, but being very diligent himself, he went to you of his own accord** [i.e. Titus had wanted to go to Corinth even before being urged to]. 18) **And we have sent** [i.e., are

sending] **with him the brother who is praised throughout all the churches for [his work in] preaching the Gospel** [Note: This “brother” cannot be identified with any certainty]. **19) And not only this, but he was also appointed by the churches to travel with us in [taking] this gift [to Jerusalem] as we minister in order to honor the Lord Himself, and to demonstrate our eagerness [to help poor people]. 20) [We made this arrangement] to avoid anyone blaming us for the way we handled this generous gift. 21) For we take measures to do what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of people.**

22) And we have sent [i.e., are sending] with them our brother [Note: This is a different person from the one mentioned in verse 18], **who has often proven his diligence to us in many ways, and is now proving to be even more diligent because of the great confidence he has in you [i.e., confidence in the Corinthians completing their collection for the poor]. 23) As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow-worker on your behalf. As for our brothers [i.e., those who will accompany him], they are the messengers of the churches and an honor to Christ. 24) [So], demonstrate in front of the churches evidence of your love [for them] and our reason for boasting about you.**

CHAPTER NINE

1) Now it is unnecessary for me to write you about this service to God’s holy people [in Jerusalem, who were in need]. 2) For I know how eager you [already] are, and I have boasted about you to the Macedonians, that Achaia [Note: This was the southernmost province of Greece, where Corinth was located] **has been prepared [to give] since last year. And your enthusiasm has stirred up most of them [to give also]. 3) But I have sent the brothers [See 8:18, 22], so that our boasting about you being prepared will not prove to be empty words. 4) For if any Macedonians come with me and learn that you are not prepared, we, not to mention you, will be ashamed for having been so over confident. 5) So, I thought it necessary to urge the brothers [See verse 3] to visit you ahead of time and arrange beforehand for your previously promised generous gift. Then it will be ready [when I arrive] as a generously given gift and not as something given grudgingly.**

6) But [remember] this: The person who plants only a few seeds will harvest a meager crop. And the one who plants many seeds [Note: The Greek says, “plants with blessings”] will harvest a bumper crop. 7) Each person should give what he has decided to in his heart, not grudgingly, nor out of a feeling that he has to, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8) And God is able to provide you with abundant gifts, so that you will always have plenty of everything, and that you will also have plenty for doing every good deed. 9) As it is written [Psa. 112:9], “He has distributed [gifts] widely; he has given to poor people; his generosity will last forever.” 10) Now God, who provides seeds to the planter and bread for food, will [also] supply and [even] multiply your seeds for planting, and will increase the harvest of your generosity. 11) You will be made rich in everything so you can be generous in every way. This will result in people thanking God [for what you have done] through us.

12) For the rendering of this service not only [fully] meets the needs of the saints [i.e., God’s holy people], but also produces overflowing expressions of thanksgiving to God from many people. 13) Because you people have proven [yourselves] by this service, the poor Christians in Jerusalem will praise God for your obedient [spirit] in professing [commitment to] the Gospel of Christ, and for your generous contribution to them and to everyone else. 14) And when they see the outstanding [evidence of] God’s favor in you, they will pray for you with deep affection [or, “will long to see you”]. 15) I thank God for His indescribable gift [i.e., Christ. See Rom. 8:32].

CHAPTER TEN

1) Now I Paul, who am humble [when speaking] face to face with you, but bold when I am away from you, urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ [Note: This means either Paul was imitating Christ’s behavior or that the Corinthians were to do so]: 2) I make this request so that I do not have to be bold when I am present [with you], and feel compelled to speak in an authoritative tone to some people [there] who think we are living by worldly standards. 3) For although we live in the world [i.e., in a human body], we do not wage war [i.e., for God and against evil] on a worldly level [i.e., by using the tactics of unsaved people]. 4) For

the weapons of our warfare are not like the world's [i.e., which rely on human ingenuity and unspiritual principles], **but they are empowered by God to overthrow** [Satanic] **fortifications. 5) We overthrow** [vain] **reasonings and every lofty idea raised against the knowledge of God** [i.e., as revealed through the Gospel], **and take captive** [our] **every thought to** [make it] **obey Christ. 6) [And we are] prepared to punish all disobedience when your obedience is complete.** [Note: This probably refers to the Corinthian church dealing with its unrepentant member. See I Cor. 5:3-5].

7) You people are looking [merely] **at the appearance of things** [or, "You should look at what is obvious!" In either case, it suggests they were misjudging Paul's ministry]. **If any person is confident within himself that he belongs to Christ, he should reflect on this again: We are just as much Christ's** [servants] **as he is. 8) For even if I should boast too much about the authority the Lord gave us for building you people up** [spiritually], **and not tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. 9) [Now] I do not want to appear to be trying to scare you by my letters. 10) For some people are saying, "Paul's letters are heavy and severe, but in person he is weak** [physically?] **and his speaking ability is unimpressive." 11) Such people should consider this: What we say in our letters when we are away is what we will do when we are there.**

12) For we do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with certain people who commend themselves. People who measure their [spiritual] **stature by what** [they think] **they are, and compare their** [spiritual] **status with their own set of standards, are foolish. 13) But we will not boast beyond our proper boundaries** [Note: This may mean that Paul was not attempting to exercise apostolic authority outside the parameters assigned to him by God], **but will restrict our boasting to the area assigned to us by God as a field of service, which includes you people** [there in Corinth]. **14) Now we are not going too far in claiming you as part of our outreach, since we were the first ones to come to you with the Gospel of Christ. 15) So, we will not go beyond our proper limits by boasting of work** [already] **done by others, but we hope that, as your faith increases, our field of service among you will** [also] **greatly expand. 16) [This is] so we can proclaim the good news** [about Christ] **even to areas beyond you** [Note: Perhaps Paul here alludes to such places

as Italy and Spain], **and [thereby] not boast over what has [already] been done in someone else's field of service.** 17) [Jer. 9:24 says], **"But the person who boasts should boast about the Lord."** 18) **For it is not the person who commends himself that is approved [by God], but the one whom the Lord commends.**

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1) **I wish that you could put up with a little "foolishness" from me, but you really are doing that already.** 2) **For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, because I promised you in marriage to one husband, that I might present you to Christ as a pure virgin.** 3) **But I am afraid that somehow, just as the snake tricked Eve by his cunning, your minds might [also] be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** 4) **For if someone comes [to you] proclaiming another "Jesus," whom we [apostles] had not preached, or if you people receive a different "spirit" from the one you have [already] received, or a different "gospel" from the one you have [already] accepted, you put up with him quite well.** 5) **For I consider myself not to be one bit inferior to those "super apostles."** [Note: Paul is referring to his opponents there in Corinth who claimed apostolic authority]. 6) **But even though I am an unpolished speaker, I am not lacking in knowledge. We have made this clear to you in every way.**

7) **Or, did I sin by putting myself down in order to build you people up, because I preached the Gospel of God to you without taking [financial] support?** 8) **I [virtually] robbed other churches by accepting [financial] support from them in order to serve you.** 9) **And when I was there with you and in need, I was not a [financial] burden to anyone, for when the brothers came from Macedonia they provided me with what I lacked, so I kept myself from being a burden to you in every way and will continue to do so.** 10) **As sure as the truth of Christ is in my heart, no one will stop me from boasting about this [arrangement] throughout the regions of Achaia.** [Note: This was the province where Corinth was located]. 11) **Why [am I doing this]? Is it because I do not love you? God knows [I do].** 12) **But what I am doing, I will continue to do, so that I can cut off the opportunity from those who want an occasion [to receive financial support for themselves because of my example of**

receiving it]. **They want to boast** [that they are preaching] **on the same terms as I do.** [Note: Paul's argument seems to be that one reason for his foregoing financial support was so those "super apostles" in Corinth (see verse 5) would not be able to use his example to wrongfully exact financial support from the church].

13) For such men are false apostles; they are deceitful workers, who disguise themselves as [true] apostles of Christ.

14) And it is no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light [i.e., someone pure and righteous]. **15) Therefore, it should not be surprising for Satan's ministers to disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their [final] end will be what they deserve for such actions.**

16) Again I say, no one should think I am foolish, but if you do, [then] accept me that way, so that I too can boast a little bit. **17) What I am saying in this boastful [show of] confidence is not what the Lord would [say], but is [just plain] "foolishness."** **18) Since many [other] people boast about worldly matters, I will boast about such things also.** **19) For, since you people are so smart, you gladly put up with fools.** **20) For you put up with someone, [even] if he enslaves you** [i.e., exercises control over your life]; **[even] if he takes [unfair] advantage of you; [even] if he acts superior toward you; and [even] if he slaps you in the face.** **21) I am ashamed to say that we were [too] weak to do such things.** [Note: Paul is probably saying, sarcastically, "We are too 'weak' to take financial advantage of people and mistreat them the way those 'super apostles' there in Corinth were doing"]. **Yet, in whatever [matters] anyone [there] dares to boast about, (now I am really speaking foolishly), I will dare to boast also.** **22) Are they [i.e., Paul's opponents there in Corinth] 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 am really talking like a crazy person now). I am more [of a servant, than they are]. I have worked much harder. I have been in prison more often. I have been flogged more severely. I have been in danger of death more frequently. 24) I received thirty-nine lashes from the Jews five times. 25) I was beaten with rods three times. I was stoned once. I suffered shipwreck three times and spent a night and a day in the open water. 26) I have been on frequent journeys; in danger from rivers; in danger from thieves; in danger from my own people; in danger from the Gentiles; in**

danger in the city; in danger in the desert; in danger in the ocean; in danger among false brothers. 27) I have worked and suffered. I have often gone without sleep, been hungry and thirsty, often gone without food [i.e., for spiritual reasons], been cold and had inadequate clothing. 28) Besides these [kinds of] things [or, “besides these outward things”], there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29) Who is weak, and I do not feel their weakness? Who is led astray [from God], and I do not burn [i.e., with righteous anger over the one who caused it]? 30) If I must boast, I will boast about the things that show my weakness. 31) The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who should be praised forever, know that I am not lying. 32) [When I was] in Damascus [Note: Paul here refers to his conversion. See Acts 9:1ff], the governor [who served] under King Aretas, was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to capture me, 33) but I escaped from his hands by being lowered in a basket through a window in the [city] wall.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1) Although I must boast about myself [See 11:21-27], it [really] is not profitable. So, I will go on to [tell about] visions and [inspired] revelations given [to me] from the Lord. 2) I know a man in [fellowship with] Christ who, fourteen years ago, was taken [literally, “snatched”] up to the third heaven. [Note: The first heaven would be where birds fly; the second where the stars are; and the third where God is]. (I do not know whether he was in his physical body or whether it was an “out-of-the-body” experience, but God knows). [Note: Paul is obviously telling about a personal experience. See verse 7]. 3) I know that this man --- whether in his body or out of it, I do not know, but God does --- 4) was [actually] taken up into Paradise. [Note: This is the same as the “third heaven” of the previous verse, and was a place in the presence of God. See Luke 23:43; Rev. 2:7]. There he heard inexpressible words which are not permitted for people to repeat. 5) I will boast on behalf of this person, but I will not boast about myself [anymore], except about my weaknesses. 6) However, if I wanted to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be telling the truth. But I will hold back, so that no one will think more of me than what he sees or hears from me. 7) But, so that I would not become

too conceited over the tremendous revelations [I received], a “thorn in the flesh” was given to me as a messenger from Satan to torment me. [Note: This “thorn” was probably some physical handicap, possibly defective eyesight. See Gal. 4:14-15; 6:11]. 8) I pled with the Lord about this matter three times, that He would remove this problem from me. 9) But God said to me, “My unearned favor is enough for you, for my power is made complete in [your] weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast, so that the power of Christ can rest on me. 10) So, I am pleased to [endure] weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties, [all] for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak [physically], then I am strong [spiritually].

11) I have become foolish [i.e., by my boasting], but you made me do it [i.e., in order to vindicate myself]. For I should have been commended by you [i.e., for my effective ministry there in Corinth], because I was not inferior in any way to those “super apostles” [See 11:5], even though I am nothing. 12) Truly, I endured [opposition] patiently, while showing evidence of being an apostle among you. I performed [supernatural] signs, and wonders and powerful miracles. 13) For in what way were you people inferior to the rest of the churches, unless it was that I was not a [financial] burden to you? Forgive me for this wrong.

14) Now, this is the third time I have been ready to come to you, and I will not be a [financial] burden to you. For I do not want your possessions but you yourselves, because children should not [have to] save up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15) So, I will most gladly spend [all I have], and [even] spend myself for the sake of your souls. If I love you so much, should you love me less [than that]? 16) So, let it be [said] that I did not become a burden to you. But being a clever person, [some are saying] that I took you in by trickery. [Note: Paul is saying that even though he took no financial support from the church, they are accusing him of taking financial advantage of them through other people]. 17) Did I take [financial] advantage of you by any of those men I sent to you? 18) I urged Titus [i.e., to go to you to arrange for the special offering. See 8:6], and I sent the brother with him. [See 8:18]. Did Titus take any [financial] advantage of you? Do we not [both] have the same attitude [in this matter]? Do we not [both] follow the same procedures?

19) You have been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves [have you not]? We are [simply] speaking [the truth] before God in [fellowship with] Christ. But everything [we are doing], dear friends, is to build you up [spiritually]. 20) For I am afraid that somehow, when I come [to you], I might not find you the way I want you to be, and you might not find me the way you want me to be. I am afraid there might be quarrelling, jealousy, angry outbursts, factious spirits, slander, gossip, arrogance and [other] disturbances [there]. 21) I am afraid that, when I come, my God will humiliate me in front of you, and I will be grieved over many [of those] who have sinned in the past without repenting of the [moral] impurity, sexual immorality and unrestrained indecency they have practiced.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1) This will be my third visit to you. [Deut. 19:15 says], “Every matter should be settled by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” 2) I told you the last time I was there, and now before returning, I [again] warn those who have sinned in the past as well as the rest, that if I come again I will not spare you [i.e., I will rebuke and discipline you], 3) since you are looking for proof that Christ is speaking through me. Christ is not weak in His dealing with you, but is powerful among you. [Note: Paul probably refers to the positive effects of his ministry there in Corinth]. 4) For He was weak when He was crucified [i.e., by assuming a human body capable of suffering and death], but [now] He lives by God’s power. For we too are weak, [along] with Him [i.e., each of us experiences the frailties of a human body], but by [this same] power from God, we will live with Him to serve you. [Note: The various translations differ widely on how to properly translate this difficult verse].

5) Put yourselves to a test; see if you are [really] in the faith [i.e., see if you are genuine Christians]; examine yourselves! Or, do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in your hearts, unless [of course] you fail the test [i.e., unless you are counterfeit Christians]. 6) But I hope that you people will realize that we [apostles] are not counterfeit. 7) Now we pray to God that you people will not do anything wrong. That is not so that we will appear approved [by God], but so that you will do what

is right, even though we may appear to be counterfeits. 8) For we [apostles] have no power [to act] against the truth, but [only] for the truth. [Note: Paul here alludes to his gifts and ministry being intended only to promote what was right according to God's truth]. **9) For we are glad when we are weak and you are powerful. And we are also praying for your complete restoration [i.e., to spiritual maturity]. 10) This is the reason I am writing these things while away from you, so that I will not have to deal severely with you when I am there. For the Lord gave me authority to build people up [spiritually] and not to tear them down.**

11) Finally, brothers, good-bye [or, "be glad"]. Be fully restored [spiritually]. Be comforted [or, "exhort one another"]. Think alike on things. Be at peace among yourselves. And the God of love and peace will be with you. 12) Greet one another with a holy kiss [i.e., to signify affection, yet without sensuality]. 13) All the saints [i.e., God's holy people] send you their greetings.

14) May the favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.