

# 2 CORINTHIANS

## THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

### INTRODUCTION

#### Address and greetings. Thanksgiving

Rm 1:1 +

1 From Paul, appointed by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from Timothy, one of the brothers, to the church of God at Corinth and to all the saints in the whole of Achaia. •Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ac 16:1+  
1 Co 1:2+

Ac 9:13+

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a gentle Father and the God of all consolation, •who comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can offer others, in their sorrows, the consolation that we have received from God ourselves. •Indeed, as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so, through Christ, does our consolation overflow. •When we are made to suffer, it is for your consolation and salvation. When, instead, we are comforted, this should be a consolation to you, supporting you in patiently bearing the same sufferings as we bear. •And our hope for you is confident, since we know that, sharing our sufferings, you will also share our consolations.

Ph 1:20+  
Col 1:24+

8 For we should like you to realise, brothers, that the things we had to undergo<sup>a</sup> in Asia were more of a burden than we could carry, so that we despaired of coming through alive. •Yes, we were carrying our own death warrant with us, and it has taught us not to rely on ourselves but only on God, who raises the dead to life. •And he saved us from dying, as he will save us again; yes, that is our firm hope in him, that in the future he will save us again. •You must all join in the prayers for us: the more people there are asking for help for us, the more will be giving thanks when it is granted to us.

Ac 20:19  
1 Co 15:32

4:7  
Rm 1:4+;  
4:17; 8:  
11+

Rm 15:30+

4:15; 9:12

### I. SOME RECENT EVENTS REVIEWED

#### Why Paul changed his plans

12 There is one thing we are proud of, and our conscience tells us it is true: that we have always treated everybody, and especially you, with the reverence<sup>b</sup> and sincerity which come from God, and by the grace of God, we have done this without ulterior motives. •There are no hidden meanings in our letters besides what you can read for yourselves and understand. •And I hope that, although you do not know us very well yet, you will have come to recognise, when the day of our Lord Jesus comes, that you can be as proud of us as we are of you.

1:17  
Jm 3:15

1 Co 1:17;  
2:1f

1 Co 1:8+

Ph 1:26; 2:  
16; 4:1  
1 Th 2:19-20

15 Because I was so sure of this, I had meant to come to you first, so that you would benefit doubly;<sup>c</sup> •staying with you before going to Macedonia and coming back to you again on the way back from Macedonia, for you to see me on my way to Judaea.<sup>d</sup> •Do you think I was not sure of my own intentions when I planned

1 a. It is not known what incident this refers to.  
b. Var. 'single-mindedness'.  
c. Var. 'to give you a double pleasure'.

d. Paul must therefore have changed the plan mentioned in 1 Co 16:5-6.

this? Do you really think that when I am making my plans, my motives are ordinary human ones, and that I say Yes, yes, and No, no, at the same time? I swear by God's truth, there is no Yes and No about what we say to you. •The Son of God, the Christ Jesus that we proclaimed among you—I mean Silvanus<sup>c</sup> and Timothy and I—was never Yes and No: with him it was always Yes, •and however many the promises God made, the Yes to them all is in him. That is why it is 'through him' that we answer Amen to the praise of God. •Remember it is God himself who assures us all, and you, of our standing in Christ, and has anointed us, •marking us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts.

By my life, I call God to witness that the reason why I did not come to Corinth after all was to spare your feelings. •We are not dictators over your faith, but are fellow workers with you for your happiness; in the faith you are steady enough. 2 Well then, I made up my mind not to pay you a second distressing visit.<sup>a</sup> I may have hurt you, but if so I have hurt the only people who could give me any pleasure. •I wrote as I did<sup>b</sup> to make sure that, when I came, I should not be distressed by the very people who should have made me happy. I am sure you all know that I could never be happy unless you were. •When I wrote to you, in deep distress and anguish of mind, and in tears, it was not to make you feel hurt but to let you know how much love I have for you.

Someone has been the cause of pain; and the cause of pain not to me, but to some degree—not to overstate it—to all of you. •The punishment already imposed by the majority on the man in question<sup>c</sup> is enough; •and the best thing now is to give him your forgiveness and encouragement, or he might break down from so much misery. •So I am asking you to give some definite proof of your love for him. •What I really wrote for, after all, was to test you and see whether you are completely obedient. •Anybody that you forgive, I forgive; and as for my forgiving anything—if there has been anything to be forgiven, I have forgiven it for your sake in the presence of Christ. •And so we will not be outwitted by Satan—we know well enough what his intentions are.

### From Troas to Macedonia. The apostolate: its importance

When I went up to Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, and the door was wide open for my work there in the Lord, •I was so continually uneasy in mind at not meeting brother Titus<sup>d</sup> there, I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

Thanks be to God who, wherever he goes, makes us, in Christ, partners of his triumph,<sup>e</sup> and through us is spreading the knowledge of himself, like a sweet smell, everywhere. •We are Christ's incense to God for those who are being saved and for those who are not; •for the last, the smell of death that leads to death, for the first the sweet smell of life that leads to life. And who could be qualified for work like this? •At least we do not go round offering the word of God for sale, as many other people do. In Christ, we speak as men of sincerity, as envoys of God and in God's presence.

Does this sound like a new attempt to commend ourselves to you? Unlike other people, we need no letters of recommendation either to you or from you, •because you are yourselves our letter, written in our<sup>f</sup> hearts, that anybody can see and read, •and it is plain that you are a letter from Christ, drawn up by us, and written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on the tablets of your living hearts.

Before God, we are confident of this through Christ: •not that we are qualified in ourselves to claim anything as our own work: all our qualifications come from God. •He is the one who has given us the qualifications to be the administrators of this new covenant, which is not a covenant of written letters but of the Spirit: the written letters bring death, but the Spirit gives life. •Now if the administering of death, in the written letters engraved on stones, was accompanied by such a

brightness that the Israelites could not bear looking at the face of Moses, though  
 8 it was a brightness that faded, •then how much greater will be the brightness that  
 9 surrounds the administering of the Spirit! •For if there was any splendour in  
 administering condemnation, there must be very much greater splendour in  
 10 administering justification. •In fact, compared with this greater splendour, the  
 11 thing that used to have such splendour now seems to have none; •and if what  
 was so temporary had any splendour, there must be much more in what is going  
 to last for ever.

12 Having this hope, we can be quite confident; •not like Moses, who put a veil  
 13 over his face so that the Israelites would not notice the ending of what had to  
 fade.<sup>b</sup> •And anyway, their minds had been dulled; indeed, to this very day, that  
 14 same veil is still there when the old covenant is being read, a veil never lifted, since  
 15 Christ alone can remove it.<sup>c</sup> •Yes, even today, whenever Moses is read, the veil is  
 16 over their minds. •It will not be removed until they turn to the Lord. •Now this  
 17 Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. •And  
 18 we, with our unveiled<sup>d</sup> faces reflecting like mirrors<sup>e</sup> the brightness of the Lord,<sup>f</sup> all  
 grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image<sup>g</sup> that we reflect; this  
 is the work of the Lord who is Spirit.

1 **4** Since we have by an act of mercy been entrusted with this work of adminis-  
 2 tration, there is no weakening on our part. •On the contrary, we will have  
 none of the reticence of those who are ashamed, no deceitfulness or watering  
 3 down the word of God; but the way we commend ourselves to every human  
 being with a conscience is by stating the truth openly in the sight of God. •If our  
 4 gospel does not penetrate the veil, then the veil is on those who are not on the  
 way to salvation; •the unbelievers whose minds the god of this world<sup>a</sup> has blinded,  
 to stop them seeing the light shed by the Good News of the glory of Christ, who  
 5 is the image of God. •For it is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ  
 6 Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. •It is the same  
 God that said, 'Let there be light shining out of darkness', who has shone in our  
 minds to radiate the light of the knowledge of God's glory, the glory on the face  
 of Christ.

### The trials and hopes of the apostolate

7 We are only the earthenware jars<sup>b</sup> that hold this treasure, to make it clear  
 8 that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us. •We are in  
 difficulties on all sides, but never cornered; we see no answer to our problems,  
 9 but never despair; •we have been persecuted, but never deserted; knocked down,  
 10 but never killed; •always, wherever we may be, we carry with us in our body  
 the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may always be seen in our body.  
 11 Indeed, while we are still alive, we are consigned to our death every day, for the

e. Silvanus is the disciple called Silas in Ac.

2 a. An allusion to a painful visit which Paul must have made to Corinth before writing 2 Co. see Introduction to the Letters of St Paul.

b. An allusion to the 'severe letter' of 2:3,4,9; 7:8,12; see Introduction.

c. The man who had given offence to Paul or to Paul's representative, see Introduction.

d. A Christian of pagan birth, possibly converted by Paul, 1 Th 1:4, whom he accompanies on Paul's second journey to Jerusalem, Ga 2:1. He was commissioned by Paul to visit Corinth and to settle its problems; in this he was entirely successful, 2 Co 7:5-7. Soon afterwards Paul sent him to Corinth to organise the collection. We meet him again in Crete (63-64) controlling the communities Paul had founded there after his release from the first Roman captivity. It was from there that Paul wrote to Titus asking him to meet him again at Nicopolis in Epirus, Ti 3:12. During Paul's second Roman captivity (66-67) Titus was in Dalmatia, 2 Tm 4:10. Titus with his shrewdness and his strong, well-balanced character, seems to have made an

admirable colleague for Paul.

e. Like a victorious general making his solemn entry into Rome, God passes triumphantly through the world with his apostles in his train. Cf. Col 2:15.

3 a. Var. 'your'.

b. Free interpretation, in the rabbinic style, of Ex 34:33-35.

c. Alternative translation 'nor is it revealed to them that this covenant has been abolished by Christ'.

d. As that of Moses had been.

e. Or 'contemplating'.

f. The 'brightness of the Lord' is the glory of Jesus, being 'the glory on the face of Christ', 4:6.

g. The contemplation of God in Christ gives the Christian a likeness to God, Rm 8:29+, cf. 1 Jn 3:2.

4 a. Satan, cf. Ep 2:2. See Lk 4:6, Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.

b. Perhaps 'bodies of clay', cf. 1 Th 4:4, alluding to Gn 2:7.

sake of Jesus, so that in our mortal flesh the life of Jesus, too, may be openly shown. •So death is at work in us, but life in you.

But as we have the same spirit of faith that is mentioned in scripture—

*I believed, and therefore I spoke*—we too believe and therefore we too speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus to life will raise us with Jesus in our turn, and put us by his side and you with us. •You see, all this is for your benefit, so that the more grace is multiplied among people, the more thanksgiving there will be, to the glory of God.

That is why there is no weakening on our part, and instead, though this outer man of ours may be falling into decay, the inner man is renewed day by day.

Yes, the troubles which are soon over, though they weigh little, train us for the carrying of a weight of eternal glory which is out of all proportion to them. •And so we have no eyes for things that are visible, but only for things that are invisible; for visible things last only for a time, and the invisible things are eternal.

For we know that when the tent that we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home not made by human hands, in the heavens. •In this present state, it is true, we groan as we wait with longing to put on our heavenly home<sup>a</sup> over the other; •we should like to be found wearing clothes and not without them.<sup>b</sup> •Yes, we groan and find it a burden being still in this tent, not that we want to strip it off, but to put the second garment over it and to have what must die taken up into life. •This is the purpose for which God made us, and he has given us the pledge of the Spirit.

We are always full of confidence, then, when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord, •going as we do by faith and not by sight—we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord.<sup>c</sup> •Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing him. •For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

### The apostolate in action

And so it is with the fear of the Lord in mind that we try to win people over. God knows us for what we really are, and I hope that in your consciences you know us too. •This is not another attempt to commend ourselves to you: we are simply giving you reasons to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer ready for the people who can boast more about what they seem than what they are. If we seemed out of our senses, it was for God; but if we are being reasonable now, it is for your sake.<sup>d</sup> •And this is because the love of Christ overwhelms us when we reflect that if one man has died for all, then all men should be dead; and the reason he died for all was so that living men should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them.

From now onwards, therefore, we do not judge anyone by the standards of the flesh. Even if we did once know Christ in the flesh,<sup>e</sup> that is not how we know him now. •And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation;<sup>f</sup> the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here.<sup>g</sup> •It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. •In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. •So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. •For our sake God made the sinless one into sin,<sup>h</sup> so that in him we might become the goodness of God. 6 As his fellow workers, we beg you once again not to neglect the grace of God that you have received. •For he says: *At the favourable time, I have listened to you; on the day of salvation I came to your help.* Well, now is the favourable time; this is the day of salvation.<sup>a</sup>

3 We do nothing that people might object to, so as not to bring discredit on our  
 4 function as God's servants. •Instead, we prove we are servants of God by great  
 5 fortitude in times of suffering: in times of hardship and distress; •when we are  
 6 flogged, or sent to prison, or mobbed; labouring, sleepless, starving. •We prove  
 7 we are God's servants by our purity, knowledge, patience and kindness; by a  
 8 spirit of holiness, by a love free from affectation; •by the word of truth and by  
 9 the power of God; by being armed with the weapons of righteousness in the right  
 10 hand and in the left, •prepared for honour or disgrace, for blame or praise; taken  
 11 for impostors while we are genuine; •obscure yet famous; said to be dying and  
 12 here are we alive; rumoured to be executed before we are sentenced; •thought  
 13 most miserable and yet we are always rejoicing; taken for paupers though we make  
 14 others rich, for people having nothing though we have everything.

8:21  
 4:8-10  
 1 Co 4:9-13  
 Ga 5:22  
 10:4  
 Ep 6:11+  
 1 Co 7:29-3  
 4:11  
 Rm 8:32

#### Paul opens his heart. A warning

11 Corinthians, we have spoken to you very frankly;<sup>b</sup> our mind has been opened  
 12 in front of you. •Any constraint that you feel is not on our side; the constraint  
 13 is in your own selves. •I speak as if to children of mine: as a fair exchange, open  
 14 your minds in the same way.

7:3  
 Ga 4:19

•Do not harness yourselves in an uneven team with unbelievers. Virtue is no  
 14 companion for crime. Light and darkness have nothing in common. •Christ is  
 15 not the ally of Beliar,<sup>d</sup> nor has a believer anything to share with an unbeliever.  
 16 The temple of God has no common ground with idols, and that is what we  
 17 are—the temple of the living God. We have God's word for it: *I will make  
 18 my home among them and live with them; I will be their God and they shall be my  
 19 people.* •Then come away from them and keep aloof, says the Lord. *Touch nothing  
 20 that is unclean, and I will welcome you •and be your father, and you shall be my  
 21 sons and daughters, says the Almighty Lord.*

Dt 22:10  
 Jn 8:12+  
 Dt 13:14+  
 1 Co 3:16-17  
 Lv 26:11-12  
 Nb 5:3  
 Ezk 37:27  
 Is 52:11  
 Jr 51:45  
 2 S 7:14  
 Is 43:6  
 Jr 31:9

1 **7** With promises like these made to us, dear brothers, let us wash off all that  
 2 can soil either body or spirit, to reach perfection of holiness in the fear of  
 3 God.

2 Keep a place for us in your hearts. We have not injured anyone, or ruined  
 3 anyone, or exploited anyone. •I am not saying this to put any blame on you;  
 4 as I have already told you, you are in our hearts—together we live or together

6:11-13

5 a. That is, to be given our 'spiritual body', 1 Co 15: 44+, without having to suffer death and corruption, v. 4.

b. That is to say, on the supposition that we are still alive when Christ returns in glory. Paul wants to be of the number of those who will live to see the coming of the Lord and whose bodies will be transformed without having to die. Over the 'natural body' they will, as it were, 'put on' the 'spiritual body', 1 Co 15:44,53,54, which will be 'absorbed' by the former.

c. Here and in Ph 1:23 Paul has in mind a union of Christians with Christ on the death of each individual. This does not contradict the biblical doctrine of the final universal resurrection, Rm 2:6+; 1 Co 15:44+, but this expectation of happiness for the soul that has left the body after death betrays the influence of Greek thought, an influence already making itself felt in the Judaism of the period, cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; 1 P 3:19+. Cf. also the texts referring to ecstatic states when the soul is 'out of the body', 2 Co 12:2f; cf. Rv 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.

d. Paul is taxed with 'folly'; he retorts that this is in God's cause. But he adds that he can be 'reasonable' when he wishes, for the sake of his children in Christ.

e. Paul seems to be protesting against the restriction of the apostolic privilege to those who had known Jesus in his earthly life, cf. Rm 1:1+; 1 Co 1:12+.

f. God who created all things through Christ, cf. Jn 1:3, has restored his work, deformed by sin, by re-creating it in Christ, Col 1:15-20+. The central figure of this 'new creation', here and Ga 6:15—which extends to the whole universe, Col 1:19+; cf. 2 P 3:13; Rv 21:1

—is the 'new man' created in Christ, Ep 2:15+, to lead a new life, Rm 6:4, of virtue and holiness, Ep 2:10; 4:24+; Col 3:10+. Cf. the 'new birth' of baptism, Rm 6:4+.

g. Var. 'all is new'

h. By a kind of legal fiction God identified Jesus with sin so that he might bear the curse incurred by sin, Ga 3:13; Rm 8:3.

6 a. There is an intermediary period, Rm 13:11+, between the time of Christ's coming, Rm 3:26+, and his return, 1 Co 1:8+. This period is the 'day of salvation', a time allowed for conversion, Ac 3:20f; it is granted to the 'remnant', Rm 11:5, and to the pagans, Rm 11:25; Ep 2:12f; cf. 2 Co 8:14; Lk 21:24. Though the duration is uncertain, 1 Th 5:1+, this time of pilgrimage must be regarded as being short, 1 P 1:17; 1 Co 7:26-31; cf. Rv 10:16; 12:12; 20:3, and full of trials, Ep 5:16; 6:13, and sufferings which are a prelude to the glory to come, Rm 8:11. The end is at hand, 1 P 4:7; cf. Rv 1:3+ and 1 Co 16:22; Ph 4:5; Jm 5:8, the day approaches, Rm 13:11, and it is necessary to be on the watch, 1 Th 5:6; cf. Mk 13:33, and to use the time well that remains, Col 4:5; Ep 5:16, for one's own salvation and that of others, Ga 6:10, leaving the final vindication to God, Rm 12:19; 1 Co 4:5.

b. Lit. 'our mouth is open to (or: for) you'.

c. 6:14-7:1 is a warning against the infiltration of pagan practices which would split the church and cut it off from its founder. This section is somewhat alien to the context, cf. Introduction.

d. Var. 'Belial'.

e. Var. 'you'.



we die. •I have the very greatest confidence in you, and I am so proud of you that  
Col 1:24 in all our trouble I am filled with consolation and my joy is overflowing.

### Paul in Macedonia; he is joined by Titus

Even after we had come to Macedonia, however, there was no rest for this  
body of ours.<sup>a</sup> Far from it; we found trouble on all sides: quarrels outside, mis-  
givings inside. •But God comforts the miserable, and he comforted us, by the  
2:13 arrival of Titus, •and not only by his arrival but also by the comfort which he  
1 Th 3:6 had gained from you. He has told us all about how you want to see me, how sorry  
you were, and how concerned for me, and so I am happier now than I was before.  
Heb 12:11 But to tell the truth, even if I distressed you by my letter,<sup>b</sup> I do not regret it. I  
did regret it before, and I see that that letter did distress you, at least for a time;  
but I am happy now—not because I made you suffer, but because your suffering  
led to your repentance. Yours has been a kind of suffering that God approves,  
and so you have come to no kind of harm from us. •To suffer in God's way  
means changing for the better and leaves no regrets, but to suffer as the world  
knows suffering brings death. •Just look at what suffering in God's way has  
brought you: what keenness, what explanations, what indignation, what alarm!  
Yes, and what aching to see me, what concern for me, and what justice done!<sup>c</sup>  
In every way you have shown yourselves blameless in this affair. •So then, though  
I wrote the letter to you, it was not written for the sake either of the offender  
or of the one offended;<sup>d</sup> it was to make you realise, in the sight of God, your own  
concern for us. •That is what we have found so encouraging.

With this encouragement, too, we had the even greater happiness of finding  
Titus so happy; thanks to you all, he has no more worries; •I had rather boasted  
to him about you, and now I have not been made to look foolish; in fact, our  
boasting to Titus has proved to be as true as anything that we ever said to you.  
His own personal affection for you is all the greater when he remembers how  
1 Co 2:3+ willing you have all been, and with what deep respect you welcomed him. •I am  
2 Th 3:4 very happy knowing that I can rely on you so completely.

## II. ORGANISATION OF THE COLLECTION

### Why the Corinthians should be generous

11:8-9  
1 Co 16:5 **8** Now here, brothers, is the news of the grace of God which was given in the  
churches in Macedonia; •and of how, throughout great trials by suffering,  
their constant cheerfulness and their intense poverty have overflowed in a wealth  
of generosity. •I can swear that they gave not only as much as they could afford,  
but far more, and quite spontaneously, •begging and begging us for the favour  
1 Co 16:1+ of sharing in this service to the saints •and, what was quite unexpected, they  
offered their own selves first to God and, under God, to us.

Because of this, we have asked Titus, since he has already made a beginning,  
to bring this work of mercy to the same point of success among you. •You  
1 Co 1:5 always have the most of everything—of faith, of eloquence, of understanding, of  
keenness for any cause, and the biggest share of our affection<sup>a</sup>—so we expect  
you to put the most into this work of mercy too. •It is not an order that I am  
giving you; I am just testing the genuineness of your love against the keenness of  
others. •Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was:<sup>b</sup> he was rich, but he  
Mt 5:3+; 8:20 became poor for your<sup>c</sup> sake, to make you rich out of his poverty. •As I say, I am  
Ph 2:6-7 9:13 only making a suggestion; it is only fair to you, since you were the first, a year  
1 Co 1:5 ago, not only in taking action but even in deciding to. •So now finish the work  
Heb 12:2 and let the results be worthy, as far as you can afford it, of the decision you made  
so promptly. •As long as the readiness is there, a man is acceptable with whatever  
he can afford; never mind what is beyond his means. •This does not mean that  
to give relief to others you ought to make things difficult for yourselves: it is

- 14 a question of balancing •what happens to be your surplus now against their present need, and one day they may have something to spare that will supply  
 15 your own need. That is how we strike a balance: •as scripture says: *The man who gathered much had none too much, the man who gathered little did not go short.*

Rm 15:26-27

Ex 16:18

### The delegates recommended to the Corinthians

- 16 I thank God for putting into Titus' heart the same concern for you that I have  
 17 myself. •He did what we asked him; indeed he is more concerned than ever, and  
 18 is visiting you on his own initiative. •As his companion we are sending the  
 19 brother<sup>d</sup> who is famous in all the churches for spreading the gospel. •More than  
 that, he happens to be the same brother who has been elected by the churches  
 to be our companion on this errand of mercy that, for the glory of God, we have  
 20 undertaken to satisfy our impatience to help. •We hope that in this way there  
 21 will be no accusations made about our administering such a large fund; •for we  
 22 are trying to do right not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of men. •To  
 accompany these, we are sending a third brother,<sup>e</sup> of whose keenness we have  
 often had proof in many different ways, and who is particularly keen about this,  
 23 because he has great confidence in you. •Titus, perhaps I should add, is my own  
 colleague and fellow worker in your interests; the other two brothers, who are  
 24 delegates of the churches, are a real glory to Christ. •So then, in front of all the  
 churches, give them a proof of your love, and prove to them that we are right  
 to be proud of you.

12:18

Pr 3:4 LXX  
Rm 12:17

- 1 9 There is really no need for me to write to you<sup>a</sup> on the subject of offering  
 2 your services to the saints, •since I know how anxious you are to help; in  
 fact, I boast about you to the Macedonians, telling them, 'Achaia has been ready  
 3 since last year'. So your zeal has been a spur to many more. •I am sending the  
 brothers all the same, to make sure that our boasting about you does not prove  
 to have been empty this time, and that you really are ready as I said you would  
 4 be. •If some of the Macedonians who are coming with me found you unprepared,  
 we should be humiliated—to say nothing of yourselves—after being so confident.  
 5 That is why I have thought it necessary to ask these brothers to go on to you  
 ahead of us, and make sure in advance that the gift you promised is all ready,  
 and that it all comes as a gift out of your generosity and not by being extorted  
 from you.

### Blessings to be expected from the collection

- 6 Do not forget: thin sowing means thin reaping; the more you sow, the more  
 7 you reap. •Each one should give what he has decided in his own mind, not  
 8 grudgingly or because he is made to, for *God loves a cheerful giver.* •And there  
 is no limit to the blessings which God can send you—he will make sure that you  
 will always have all you need for yourselves in every possible circumstance, and  
 9 still have something to spare for all sorts of good works. •As scripture says: *He*  
*was free in almsgiving, and gave to the poor: his good deeds will never be forgotten.*  
 10 The one who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide you with  
 11 all the seed you want and make the harvest of your good deeds a larger one, •and,  
 made richer in every way, you will be able to do all the generous things which,  
 12 through us, are the cause of thanksgiving to God. •For doing this holy service  
 is not only supplying all the needs of the saints, but it is also increasing the

Pr 11:24-25

Tb 4:16

Pr 22:8 LXX

Ps 112:9

Is 55:10

Ho 10:12

7 a. Emphasising the 'weak' side of Paul, cf. Rm 7:5+.

b. The 'severe letter', cf. 2:3+.

c. I.e. to the guilty man. Paul is enumerating the effects his 'severe letter' had on the Corinthians, cf. 2:5-8.

d. Probably one of Paul's envoys.

8 a. Var. 'the charity towards us which unites us to you'.

b. Lit. 'the generosity (or perhaps 'grace') of the Lord Jesus'.

c. Var. 'our'.

d. Possibly Luke.

e. Identity unknown.

9 a. Since Paul has just written of this at some length, it is possible that ch. 9 was a short note to the churches of Achaia, being inserted here subsequently to follow the instructions on the same subject addressed to the church of Corinth in ch. 8, cf. Introduction.

1:11 amount of thanksgiving that God receives. •By offering this service, you show 13  
 1 Co 16:1+ them what you are, and that makes them give glory to God for the way you accept  
 Ac 2:42 and profess the gospel of Christ, and for your sympathetic generosity to them  
 and to all. •And their prayers for you, too, show how they are drawn to you on 14  
 8:9 account of all the grace that God has given you. •Thanks be to God for his inex- 15  
 pressible gift!<sup>b</sup>

### III. PAUL'S APOLOGIA

#### Paul's reply to accusations of weakness

Mt 11:29  
 1 Co 2:3  
 Ph 2:3 **10** This is a personal matter; this is Paul himself appealing to you by the 1  
 gentleness and patience of Christ—I, the man who is so humble when he  
 is facing you, but bullies you when he is at a distance.<sup>a</sup> •I only ask that I do not 2  
 1 Co 4:21 have to bully you when I come, with all the confident assurance I mean to show  
 when I come face to face with people I could name who think we go by ordinary  
 Rm 7:5+ human motives. •We live in the flesh, of course, but the muscles that we fight 3  
 6:7  
 1 Co 1:25 with are not flesh. •Our war is not fought with weapons of flesh, yet they are 4  
 Ep 6:11 strong enough, in God's cause,<sup>b</sup> to demolish fortresses. We demolish sophistries,  
 Is 2:11-18 and the arrogance that tries to resist the knowledge of God; every thought is 5  
 our prisoner, captured to be brought into obedience to Christ. •Once you have 6  
 Rm 1:5+ given your complete obedience, we are prepared to punish any disobedience.  
 1 Co 1:12 Face plain facts.<sup>c</sup> Anybody who is convinced that he belongs to Christ must 7  
 11:23 go on to reflect that we all belong to Christ no less than he does. •Maybe I do 8  
 13:10  
 Jr 1:10 boast rather too much about our authority, but the Lord gave it to me for building  
 you up and not for pulling you down, and I shall not be ashamed of it. •I do not 9  
 want you to think of me as someone who only frightens you by letter. •Someone 10  
 Si 11:2 said, 'He writes powerful and strongly-worded letters but when he is with you  
 you see only half a man and no preacher at all'. •The man who said that can 11  
 remember this: whatever we are like in the words of our letters when we are  
 absent, that is what we shall be like in our actions when we are present.

#### His reply to the accusation of ambition

3:1+ We are not being so bold as to rank ourselves, or invite comparison, with 12  
 Pr 27:2  
 Ga 6:4 certain people who write their own references. Measuring themselves against  
 themselves, and comparing themselves to themselves, they are simply foolish.  
 We, on the other hand, are not going to boast without a standard to measure 13  
 Rm 15:19f against:<sup>d</sup> taking for our measure the yardstick which God gave us to measure  
 Col 1:25 with, which is long enough to reach to you. •We are not stretching further than 14  
 we ought; otherwise we should not have reached you, as we did come all the  
 Rm 15:20-21 way to you with the gospel of Christ. •So we are not boasting without any measure, 15  
 about work that was done by other people; in fact, we trust that, as your faith  
 grows, we shall get taller and taller, when judged by our own standard.<sup>e</sup> •I mean, 16  
 we shall be carrying the gospel to places far beyond you, without encroaching on  
 Jr 9:22-23 anyone else's field, not boasting of the work already done. •If anyone wants to 17  
 Si 10:19-24  
 1 Co 1:31 boast, let him boast of the Lord. •It is not the man who commends himself that 18  
 can be accepted, but the man who is commended by the Lord.

#### Paul is driven to sound his own praises

Dt 4:24+ **11** I only wish you were able to tolerate a little foolishness from me. But of 1  
 Ep 5:27 course: you are tolerant towards me.<sup>a</sup> •You see, the jealousy that I feel 2  
 Rv 21:2-9 for you is God's own jealousy: I arranged for you to marry Christ so that I might 3  
 Gn 3:1-6 give you away as a chaste virgin to this one husband. •But the serpent, with his  
 cunning, seduced Eve, and I am afraid that in the same way your ideas may get  
 corrupted and turned away from simple<sup>b</sup> devotion to Christ. •Because any new- 4  
 comer has only to proclaim a new Jesus, different from the one that we preached,



or you have only to receive a new spirit, different from the one you have already received, or a new gospel, different from the one you have already accepted—and you welcome it with open arms. •As far as I can tell, these arch-apostles have nothing more than I have. •I may not be a polished speechmaker, but as for knowledge, that is a different matter; surely we have made this plain, speaking on every subject in front of all of you.<sup>c</sup>

Or was I wrong, lowering myself so as to lift you high, by preaching the gospel of God to you and taking no fee for it? •I was robbing other churches living on them so that I could serve you. •When I was with you and ran out of money, I was no burden to anyone; the brothers who came from Macedonia provided me with everything I wanted. I was very careful, and I always shall be, not to be a burden to you in any way, •and by Christ's truth in me, this cause of boasting will never be taken from me in the regions of Achaia. •Would I do that if I did not love you? God knows I do. •I intend to go on doing what I am doing now—leaving no opportunity for those people who are looking for an opportunity to claim<sup>d</sup> equality with us in what they boast of. •These people are counterfeit apostles, they are dishonest workmen disguised as apostles of Christ. •There is nothing unexpected about that; if Satan himself goes disguised as an angel of light, there is no need to be surprised when his servants, too, disguise themselves as the servants of righteousness. They will come to the end that they deserve.

As I said before, let no one take me for a fool; but if you must, then treat me as a fool and let me do a little boasting of my own. •What I am going to say now is not prompted by the Lord,<sup>e</sup> but said as if in a fit of folly, in the certainty that I have something to boast about. •So many others have been boasting of their worldly achievements, that I will boast myself. •You are all wise men and can cheerfully tolerate fools, •yes, even to tolerating somebody who makes slaves of you, makes you feed him, imposes on you, orders you about and slaps you in the face. •I hope you are ashamed of us for being weak<sup>f</sup> with you instead!

But if anyone wants some brazen speaking—I am still talking as a fool—then I can be as brazen as any of them, and about the same things.<sup>g</sup> •Hebrews, are they? So am I. Israelites? So am I. Descendants of Abraham? So am I. •The servants of Christ? I must be mad to say this, but so am I, and more than they: more, because I have worked harder, I have been sent to prison more often, and whipped so many times more, often almost to death. •Five times I had the thirty-nine lashes from the Jews; •three times I have been beaten with sticks; once I was stoned; three times I have been shipwrecked and once adrift in the open sea for a night and a day.<sup>h</sup> •Constantly travelling, I have been in danger from rivers and in danger from brigands, in danger from my own people and in danger from pagans; in danger in the towns, in danger in the open country, danger at sea and danger from so-called brothers. •I have worked and laboured, often without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty and often starving; I have been in the cold without clothes. •And, to leave out much more, there is my daily preoccupation: my anxiety for all the churches. •When any man has had scruples, I have had scruples with him; when any man is made to fall, I am tortured.

If I am to boast, then let me boast of my own feebleness. •The God and Father of the Lord Jesus—bless him for ever—knows that I am not lying. •When I was

b. The redemption.

10 a. Allusion to the sarcastic remarks of Paul's opponents, cf. v. 10.

b. Or 'in the sight of God'.

c. Or 'You see only what is superficial'.

d. Var. 'Oh no; by measuring ourselves against ourselves and comparing ourselves with our own selves, we will do no unmeasured boasting'.

e. An alternative translation: 'rather it is our hope that, as your faith grows, we shall more and more increase in your esteem, though always according to the standard laid down for us'.

11 a. Or possibly 'Please be tolerant with me'.

b. Add 'and pure'.

c. Or 'on every subject and in every way'.

d. Paul's selflessness is a guarantee of his apostolic mission; his opponents dare not claim the same for themselves.

e. Var. 'God'.

f. Var. 'I say it to our shame that we are weak'.

g. The needs of controversy oblige Paul on several occasions to appeal, as he does here, to his past life as a faithful Jew: Ga 1:13,14; Rm 11:1; Ph 3:4-6; cf. Ac 22:3f; 26:4-5.

h. For the most part nothing further is known of these hardships.

Ac 9:22-25 in Damascus, the ethnarch of King Aretas put guards round the city to catch  
 Jos 2:15 me, •and I had to be let down over the wall in a hamper, through a window, in  
 order to escape.

12 Must I go on boasting, though there is nothing to be gained by it?<sup>a</sup> But 1  
 I will move on to the visions and revelations I have had from the Lord. 2  
 I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up—whether still in 2  
 the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows—right into the third 3  
 Ex 33:20+ heaven.<sup>b</sup> •I do know, however, that this same person—whether in the body or 3  
 out of the body, I do not know; God knows—•was caught up into paradise and 4  
 heard things which must not and cannot be put into human language. •I will 5  
 boast about a man like that, but not about anything of my own except my weak- 6  
 nesses. •If I should decide to boast, I should not be made to look foolish, because 6  
 I should only be speaking the truth; but I am not going to, in case anyone should 7  
 begin to think I am better than he can actually see and hear me<sup>c</sup> to be.

In view of the extraordinary nature of these revelations, to stop me from 7  
 Rm 9:2 getting too proud I was given a thorn in the flesh,<sup>d</sup> an angel of Satan to beat me 8  
 Mt 26:39, and stop me from getting too proud!<sup>e</sup> •About this thing, I have pleaded with the 8  
 42,44 •Lord three times for it to leave me, •but he has said, 'My grace is enough for 9  
 Is 40:29 you: my power is at its best in weakness'. So I shall be very happy to make my 9  
 Rm 1:16; 5:3 weaknesses my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, •and 10  
 Col 1:24 that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, 10  
 Ph 4:13 persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ's sake. For it is when I am 11  
 weak that I am strong.

I have been talking like a fool, but you forced me to do it: you are the ones 11  
 who should have been commending me. Though I am a nobody, there is not 12  
 11:5 a thing these arch-apostles have that I do not have as well. •You have seen, done 12  
 1 Co 15:10 among you, all the things that mark the true apostle unfailingly produced: the 13  
 Ac 1:8 + signs, the marvels, the miracles. •Is there anything of which you have had less than 13  
 Rm 15:19 the other churches have had, except that I have not myself been a burden on 14  
 1 Co 2:4 you? For this unfairness, please forgive me.<sup>f</sup> •I am all prepared now to come to 14  
 1 Th 1:5 you for the third time, and I am not going to be a burden on you: it is you I want, 15  
 Ac 18:3+ not your possessions. Children are not expected to save up for their parents, but 15  
 13:1 parents for children. •I am perfectly willing to spend what I have, and to be 15  
 expended, in the interests of your souls. Because I love you more, must I be loved 16  
 the less?<sup>g</sup>

All very well, you say: I personally put no pressure on you, but like the cunning 16  
 fellow that I am, I took you in by a trick. •So we exploited you, did we, through 17  
 8:18-22 one of the men that I have sent to you? •Well, Titus went at my urging, and I sent 18  
 the brother that came with him. Can Titus have exploited you? You know that 19  
 he and I have always been guided by the same spirit and trodden in the same 20  
 tracks.

### Paul's fears and anxieties

All this time<sup>h</sup> you have been thinking that our defence is addressed to you, 19  
 but it is before God that we, in Christ, are speaking; and it is all, my dear 20  
 brothers, for your benefit. •What I am afraid of is that when I come I may find 20  
 you different from what I want you to be, and you may find that I am not as you 21  
 Rm 1:29+ would like me to be; and then there will be wrangling, jealousy, and tempers 21  
 roused, intrigues and backbiting and gossip, obstinacies and disorder. •I am 21  
 afraid that on my next visit, my God may make me ashamed on your account 22  
 and I shall be grieving over all those who sinned before and have still not repented 23  
 of the impurities, fornication and debauchery they committed.

13 This will be the third time<sup>a</sup> I have come to you. *The evidence of three, or at 1*  
 12:14 *least two, witnesses is necessary to sustain the charge.* •I gave warning when 2  
 Dt 19:15 I was with you the second time and I give warning now, too, before I come, to 2  
 Mt 18:16 those who sinned before and to any others, that when I come again, I shall have 2  
 1 Tm 5:19

3 no mercy. •You want proof, you say, that it is Christ speaking in me: you have  
4 known him not as a weakling, but as a power among you? •Yes, but he was  
crucified through weakness, and still he lives now through the power of God.  
So then, we are weak, as he was, but we shall live with him, through the power  
of God, for your benefit.<sup>b</sup>

Rm 1:4+  
Rm 8:11+  
1 Co 1:25

5 Examine yourselves to make sure you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do  
you acknowledge that Jesus Christ is really in you? If not, you have failed the  
6 test. •but we, as I hope you will come to see, have not failed it. •We pray to God  
7 that you will do nothing wrong; not that we want to appear as the ones who have  
8 been successful—we would rather that you did well even though we failed. •We  
9 have no power to resist the truth; only to further it. •We are only too glad to be  
weak provided you are strong.<sup>c</sup> What we ask in our prayers is for you to be made  
10 perfect. •That is why I am writing this from a distance, so that when I am with  
you I shall not need to be strict, with the authority which the Lord gave me for  
building up and not for destroying.

Ac 4:20

10:8  
Jr 1:10

## CONCLUSION

### Recommendations. Greetings. Final good wishes

11 In the meantime, brothers, we wish you happiness; try to grow perfect; help  
one another. Be united; live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with  
you.

Ph 3:1

12 Greet one another with the holy kiss.<sup>d</sup> All the saints send you greetings.

Rm 16:16

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

1 Co 16:20  
1:21  
1 Co 2:10  
Ep 2:18; 4:6  
Ph 2:1

12 a. Lit. 'Must there be boasting—there is nothing to be gained by it however'; var. 'There is nothing to be gained by boasting; however, I shall pass on...'

b. That is, to the highest heaven.

c. Or 'about me'.

d. Perhaps a disease with severe and unforeseeable attacks; perhaps the resistance of Israel, Paul's brothers 'according to the flesh', to the Christian faith.

e. Om. 'or I might get too proud'. Possibly also the beginning of v. 7 'and for fear... make me too proud' should be read as the conclusion of v. 6. The clause is awkwardly phrased and the text critically uncertain.

f. A good example of Paul's irony.

g. Var. '...souls, even if, loving you the more, I must be loved the less'.

h. Var. 'Once again'.

13 a. The first time was when the church was founded; the second was the distressing visit referred to in 2 Co 2:1; see Introduction.

b. Lit. 'towards you', omitted by some authorities.

c. When the Corinthians are living a fully Christian life they are 'strong', and Paul, not having to rebuke them, is 'weak'; he has no need to exercise his power as an apostle, he as it were 'fails' in the test.

d. The liturgical greeting which symbolises Christian brotherhood. Rm 16:16; 1 Co 16:20; 1 Th 5:26.

e. This trinitarian formula, probably derived from liturgical usage, cf. also Mt 28:19, is echoed in many passages of the epistles where the several functions of the three Persons are referred to as the various contexts suggest: Rm 1:4+; 15:16,30; 1 Co 2:10-16; 6:11,14,15, 19; 12:4-6; 2 Co 1:21f; Ga 4:6; Ph 2:1; Ep 1:3-14; 2:18, 22; 4:4-6; Tt 3:5f; Heb 9:14; 1 P 1:2; 3:18; 1 Jn 4:2; Rv 1:4f; 22:1; cf. Ac 10:38; 20:28; Jn 14:16,18,23. Note in 1 Co 6:11; Ep 4:4-6 the triple formulations emphasising the trinitarian thought. Cf. also the trio of theological virtues in 1 Co 13:13+.

# GALATIANS

## THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH IN GALATIA

### Address<sup>a</sup>

Rm 1:1+ 1 From Paul to the churches of Galatia, and from all the brothers who are here 1  
1:11f with me, an apostle who does not owe his authority to men or his appointment 2  
to any human being but who has been appointed by Jesus Christ and by God the 3  
Rm 1:4+ Father who raised Jesus from the dead. •We wish you the grace and peace of 3  
God our Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ, •who in order to rescue us from 4  
1 Tm 2:6 this present wicked world<sup>b</sup> sacrificed himself for our sins, in accordance with 4  
1 Jn 5:19 the will of God our Father, •to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 5  
Rm 16:27+

### A warning<sup>c</sup>

2 Th 2:2 I am astonished at the promptness with which you have turned away from the 6  
Mt 9:16 one who called you and have decided to follow a different version of the Good 6  
2 Co 11:4 News. •Not that there can be more than one Good News; it is merely that some 7  
5:10 troublemakers among you want to change the Good News of Christ; •and let 8  
me warn you that if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from 8  
the one we have already preached to you, whether it be ourselves or an angel 9  
Rm 9:3+ from heaven, he is to be condemned.<sup>d</sup> •I am only repeating what we told you 9  
1 Co 11:2+ before: if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from the one 10  
1 Th 2:4 you have already heard, he is to be condemned. •So now whom am I trying to 10  
please—man, or God? Would you say it is men's approval I am looking for?<sup>e</sup> If 11  
Rm 1:1 I still wanted that,<sup>f</sup> I should not be what I am—a servant of Christ.

## I. PAUL'S APOLOGIA

### God's call

1:1 The fact is,<sup>g</sup> brothers, and I want you to realise this, the Good News I 11  
preached is not a human message •that I was given by men, it is something 12  
Mt 16:17 I learnt only through a revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>h</sup> •You must have heard of 13  
Ac 8:1-3+ my career as a practising Jew, how merciless I was in persecuting the Church of 13  
2 Co 11:12+ God, how much damage I did to it, •how I stood out among other Jews of my 14  
Mk 7:3f generation, and how enthusiastic I was for the traditions of my ancestors.  
Ac 26:4-5  
Is 49:1 Then God, who had specially *chosen* me while I was *still in my mother's* 15  
Jr 1:5 *womb*, called me through his grace and chose •to reveal his Son in me,<sup>i</sup> so that 16  
Lk 1:15 I might preach the Good News about him to the pagans. I did not stop to discuss 17  
Mt 16:17 this with any human being, •nor did I go up/ to Jerusalem to see those who were 17  
Ac 9:3-19+ already apostles before me, but I went off to Arabia<sup>k</sup> at once and later went 18  
Rm 1:1 straight back from there to Damascus. •Even when after three years I went up 18  
Ac 9:23-30+ to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him for fifteen days, •I did not see 19  
2:9 any of the other apostles; I only saw James, the brother of the Lord,<sup>l</sup> •and I 20  
Ac 12:17+