

Second Corinthians

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¹This letter comes from Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the will of God, and from Timothy, our brother. It is sent to the church of God in Corinth, together with all of God's people throughout Achaia. ² May you have grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Praise be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the compassionate Father and the God of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those who are also in trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ The more we share in Christ's sufferings, the more we receive the abundant comfort of Christ. ⁶ If we are in distress, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are being comforted, it is for your comfort, which results in you patiently bearing the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ We have great confidence in you ¹, knowing that as you share in our sufferings you also share in our comfort.

⁸Brothers and sisters, we won't keep you in the dark about the trouble we had in Asia. We were so overwhelmed that we were afraid we wouldn't have the strength to continue—so much so we doubted we would live through it. ⁹ In fact it was like a death sentence inside us. This was to stop us relying on ourselves and to trust in God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He saved us from a terrible death, and he will do so again. We have total confidence in God that he will continue to save us. ¹¹ You help us by praying for us. In this way many will thank God for us because of the blessing that God will give us in response to the prayers of many.

¹²We take pride in the fact—and our conscience confirms it—that we have acted properly towards people, and especially to you. We have followed God's principles of holiness and sincerity, not according to worldly wisdom but through the grace of God. ¹³ For we are not writing anything complicated that you can't read and understand. I hope you'll understand in the end, ¹⁴ even if you only understand part of it now, so that when the Lord comes you will be proud of us, just as we are of you.

¹⁵Because I was so sure of your confidence in me I planned to come and visit you first. That way you could have benefited twice, ¹⁶ as I would go on from you to Macedonia, and then return from Macedonia to you. Then I would have had you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ Why did I change my original plan? Do you think I make my decisions lightly? Do you think that when I plan I'm like some worldly person who says Yes and No at the same time? ¹⁸ Just as God can be trusted, when we give you our word it's not

¹ + 1:7. Literally, "our hope in you is firm."

both Yes and No. ¹⁹ The truth of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was announced to you by us—me, Silvanus, and Timothy—and it wasn't both Yes and No. In Christ the answer is absolutely Yes! ²⁰ However many promises God has made, in Christ the answer is always Yes. Through him we respond, saying Yes ² to the glory of God. ²¹ God has given both us and you the inner strength to stand firm in Christ. God has appointed us, ²² placed his stamp of approval on us, and given us the guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts. ²³ I call God as my witness that it was to avoid causing you pain that I chose not to come to Corinth. ²⁴ This isn't because we want to dictate how you relate to God, but because we want to help you have a joyful experience—for it's by trusting God that you stand firm.

²That's why I decided that I would avoid another sad visit with you. ² For if I make you sad, who will be there to make me happy? It won't be those I've made sad! ³ That's why I wrote what I did, so that I wouldn't be sad over those who should make me happy. I was so sure that all of you would share in my happiness. ⁴ I was crying many tears when I wrote to you, in great anguish and with a heavy heart—not to make you sad, but so you would know how much love I have for you.

⁵Not to put it too strongly, but the person caused more pain to all of you than to me. ⁶ This person suffered enough punishment from the majority of you, ⁷ so now you should forgive him and be kind to him. Otherwise he may sink into despair. ⁸ So I urge you to publicly affirm your love towards him. ⁹ That's why I wrote: so I could discoverer your true character and whether you're doing everything you were told to do. ¹⁰ Anyone you forgive, I forgive too. What I have forgiven, whatever it may be, I have forgiven before Christ for your benefit. ¹¹ In this way Satan will not be able to take us in, because we know the tricks he thinks up.

¹²Now when I arrived in Troas to spread the good news of Christ, the Lord opened a door of opportunity for me. ¹³ But my mind wasn't at peace because I couldn't find my brother Titus. So I said goodbye and went over to Macedonia ³.

¹⁴But praise be to God, who always leads us in a triumphal procession in Christ, and reveals through us the sweet scent of his knowledge wherever we go! ¹⁵ We are like a fragrance of Christ to God, rising up from among those who are being saved as well as those who are dying. ¹⁶ To those who are dying it is the smell of decay, while to those who are being saved it is the scent of life! But who is up to such an assignment? ¹⁷ We are not like the

²+ 1:20. Literally, "Amen," which means "Yes," or "I agree."

³+ 2:13. From Troas to Macedonia would involve a sea-crossing.

majority who trade in the word of God for profit. Quite the opposite: we are sincere in sharing the word of God in Christ, knowing God is watching us.

3Are we starting to speak well of ourselves again? Or do we need to have some letter of recommendation for you, or from you, as some people do? ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, that everybody reads and knows about. ³ You demonstrate that you are a letter from Christ, delivered by us; not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not written on stone slabs but on human hearts. ⁴ We have total confidence before God through Christ. ⁵ Not that we would consider ourselves able to do this on our own—it's God who gives us this capacity! ⁶ He also gave us the ability to be ministers of a new agreement ⁴, based not on the letter of the law, but on the spirit. The letter of the law kills, but the spirit gives life. ⁷ However, the old way of relating to God, written in letters carved in stone, ended in death, even though it came with God's glory—so much so that the Israelites couldn't even bear to look at Moses' face because it shone so brightly, even though the glory was fading. ⁸ If that was so, shouldn't the new way of relating to God in the Spirit come with even greater glory? ⁹ If the old way that condemns us has glory, the new way that makes us right with God has so much more glory! ¹⁰ For the old that was once glorious has no glory at all in comparison with the incredible glory of the new. ¹¹ If the old that is fading away had glory, the new that continues has so much more glory.

12Since we have such a confident hope, we are truly bold! ¹³ We don't have to be like Moses, who had to put on a veil to cover his face so the Israelites wouldn't be dazzled by the glory, even though it was fading away. ¹⁴ In spite of that, their hearts became hard. For right up until today when the old agreement is read, the same "veil" ⁵ remains. Only through Christ can it be removed. ¹⁵ Even today, whenever the books of Moses are read, a veil covers their minds. ¹⁶ But when they turn and accept the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there's freedom. ¹⁸ So all of us, with our faces unveiled, see and reflect the glory of the Lord as in a mirror. We are being transformed into the same mirror image, whose glory grows brighter and brighter. This is what the Lord the Spirit does.

4So then, since God in his mercy has given us this new way of relating to him, we don't give up. ² But we have given up secret, shameful acts. We don't behave in deceitful ways and we don't distort the word of God. We demonstrate who we are by revealing the truth before God so everybody can decide in their own minds. ³ Even if the good news we share is veiled, it is veiled to those who are dying. ⁴ The god of this world has blinded the

⁴+ 3:6. Or "covenant."

⁵+ 3:14. In other words, they are not able to see clearly.

minds of those who don't trust in God. They can't see the light of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

5We are not promoting ⁶ ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord. In fact we are your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God who said, "Let light shine out of the darkness," shone in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in clay jars, to show that this supreme power comes from God and not from ourselves.

8We are attacked from every direction, but we are not crushed. We are at a loss as to what to do, but never in despair. ⁹ We are persecuted, but never abandoned by God. We are knocked down, but not dead yet! ¹⁰ In our bodies we always share in the death of Jesus, so that we can also demonstrate the life of Jesus in our bodies. ¹¹ While we live we are always under the threat of death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal bodies. ¹² As a result, we are facing death so that you may have life!

13Since we have the same spirit of trust in God that Scripture refers to when it says, "I trusted in God, and so I spoke out," we also trust in God and speak out for him. ¹⁴ We know that God who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus, and will bring us into his presence with you. ¹⁵ It's all for you! As God's grace reaches many more, thankfulness to God will be even greater, to his glory. ¹⁶ So we don't give up. Even though our physical bodies are falling apart, our inner selves are being renewed daily. ¹⁷ These trivial troubles we have only last for a little while, but they produce for us an ever-increasing degree of glory. ¹⁸ We don't concern ourselves with what can be seen, for we look forward to what can't be seen. What we see is temporary, but what we can't see is eternal.

5We know that when this earthly "tent" ⁷ we live in is taken down, we have a house prepared by God, not made by human hands. It is eternal and is in heaven. ² We sigh with longing for this, wanting so badly to be clothed with this new heavenly home. ³ When we put on this clothing we won't be seen naked. ⁴ While we are in this "tent" we sigh, being weighed down by this life. It's not so much that we want to take off the clothing of this life but that we look forward to what we shall be clothed with, so that what is mortal may be overwhelmed by life. ⁵ It's God himself who prepared us for all this, and who provided the Spirit as a guarantee to us. ⁶ So we remain confident, knowing that while we are at home here in our physical bodies, we are away from the Lord. ⁷ (For we live by trusting in God, not by seeing him). ⁸ As I say, we are confident, wanting to be away from the body so we can be at

⁶+ 4:5. Literally, "preaching."

⁷+ 5:1. The symbolism here is of the earthly body as a tent, and the heavenly body is a house—both of which "clothe" the person.