

SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Approximate date: Winter 56 or 57 C.E.

Time period: season of extreme growing pains for the Corinthian congregation, in the midst of many challenging Paul's apostolic authority

Author: the Apostle Paul

Location of author: Macedonia or Ephesus

Target audience and their location: Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Corinth

The text that is often called 2 Corinthians is unanimously agreed by today's conservatives and liberals to have been written by the Apostle Paul (1:1; 10:1), even though Timothy is listed as a co-sender (1:1). Perhaps unlike any of his other letters, 2 Corinthians contains more autobiographical material, and we learn much about Paul the person in this composition. Pauline authorship of 2 Corinthians has not been substantially challenged, but it was not as well known to the Second and Third Century Christian Church, compared to some of Paul's other letters.

A huge part of the debate among interpreters regarding 2 Corinthians, concerns whether 2 Corinthians is a single letter, or is actually some kind of a composition of several letters or pieces of letters.¹ Conservatives generally argue for some kind of unity for the epistle, whereas liberals tend to think that 2 Corinthians is a composition of several letters and/or fragments of correspondence.

According to some scenarios, 2 Corinthians may be the fourth letter that Paul wrote to the Believers in Corinth. Harris validly points out, "There is probably no part of Paul's life more difficult to reconstruct accurately than the period of thirty or so months he spent in and around Ephesus (perhaps from the fall of A.D. 53 to the spring of A.D. 56)" (EXP).² For certain, the bulk of Paul's writing the Corinthians was to rebuke and admonish them for

the problems that they faced. 2 Corinthians 2:4 indicates, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you" (NASU). This does indicate that a previous piece of writing preceded his writing in 2 Corinthians, but what that piece of writing was, has been debated by expositors.

The first and most obvious candidate for the piece of writing referenced is the letter of 1 Corinthians. There are other interpreters, though, who think that it may be a lost letter of stern rebuke. Gundry summarizes, "After writing 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, Paul found it necessary to make a 'painful visit' to Corinth and back—painful because of the strained relation between him and the Corinthians at the time. Luke does not record this visit in Acts. It is to be inferred, however, from 2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1-2, where Paul describes his coming visit as the 'third.'"³ The existence of 2 Corinthians as a "fourth letter" creates some problems for exegetes trying to recreate the circumstances by which 2 Corinthians was composed.⁴ Of course, more than anything else, if 2 Corinthians were indeed a fourth letter in a series that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, it indicates once again how spiritually immature these people were, and how they indeed had some major problems.

Another proposal that some have suggested is that 2 Corinthians chs. 10-13 make up the sorrowful letter that Paul refers to earlier in the text. While many conservatives are agreed that chs. 10-13 are a part of the original text, or yet another piece of text written later, this is a useful possibility that deserves some consideration when examining the whole of 2 Corinthians. In the most extreme case, this would mean that Paul wrote a total of five letters to the Corinthians, including: Letter A—the non-extant first letter; Letter B—1 Corinthians; Letter C—a non-

¹ S.M. Gilmour, "Corinthians, Second Letter to the," in *IDB*, 1:694-695; L. Morris, "Corinthians, Second Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 1:780-781; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 437-453; Hans Dieter Betz, "Corinthians, Second Epistle to the," in *ABD*, 1:1148-1150; John T. Fitzgerald, "Corinthians, Second Letter to," in *EDB*, 283; John Barclay, "2 Corinthians," in *ECB*, pp 1353-1356; Carson and Moo, pp 429-442.

² Murray J. Harris, "2 Corinthians," in *EXP*, 10:302.

³ Gundry, "The Major Epistles of Paul," in *A Survey of the New Testament*, 369; cf. Morris, "Corinthians, Second Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 1:779.

⁴ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 451-452.

extant third letter; Letter D—the canonical 2 Corinthians or 2 Corinthians chs. 1-9; Letter E—2 Corinthians chs. 10-13. Still, in spite of all this possible writing, the epistle we have known as 2 Corinthians “was written out of Paul’s deep thankfulness for the favorable turn in his relations with the Corinthians...Paul was a realist [however]. He knew that the worst of the trouble was over, but that did not mean there was no further cause for concern” (Morris, *ISBE*).⁵

The Epistle of 2 Corinthians was composed some time after the Epistle of 1 Corinthians, probably about six months or so afterward, but no more than a year.⁶ If we can assume that Paul’s travels detailed in 1 Corinthians 16:5-8, point to a Spring 56 or 57 C.E. timeframe, then it is likely that 2 Corinthians was written sometime in the following winter. A likely place of composition is Macedonia (2:13; 7:5),⁷ although some also favor Ephesus.

Like the Epistle of 1 Corinthians, no original composition in Hebrew or Aramaic has ever been proposed by anyone in the scholastic community for the Epistle of 2 Corinthians. It is only limited to those in the Messianic community who want it to be so. It is an historical impossibility.

When coupled with the Epistle of 1 Corinthians, and compared with the background material of Acts 18 and the late First Century composition of 1 *Clement*, the Epistle of 2 Corinthians gives us a good idea about many of the internal dealings in the First Century community of faith. It specifically gives us a framework for many of the interpersonal and societal issues that faced the *ekklēsia* at large. 2 Corinthians also gives readers a wide amount of insight into the Apostle Paul as a person, and how he handled difficulty.

Why Paul composed this letter to the Corinthians is a slight challenge for some interpreters, but should not be too difficult to determine. It is often proposed that the purpose for Paul writing 2 Corinthians was that his admonitions laid out in 1 Corinthians, and likely other previous communications, were not met. Paul made a brief visit to Corinth to try to remedy the situation, which did not help, because false teachers and false apostles had entered in and were challenging his authority (11:4; 12:11). After Paul’s visit, which was mainly a disaster, he then wrote the Corinthians a severe letter (2:4). This letter may be non-extant, or as some have proposed may be 2 Corinthians chs. 10-13. Later, we see that Paul met Titus in Macedonia (7:6-7), who brought a good report from Corinth, and this improved situation necessitated the writing of 2 Corinthians.

Chs. 10-13 present the biggest challenge for the interpreter because it is a severe rebuke that

seems to be disjointed from the larger, more positive context of the letter. Those who see 2 Corinthians as a whole work, rather than two letters or multiple pieces redacted together, think that Titus did bring some negative news with him to Paul as well, and chs. 10-13 address this. Some evangelical scholars, though, think this is another letter written to the Corinthians, at a later date by Paul, and then was added to the document that became known as 2 Corinthians. Also not to be overlooked is the possibility that the Epistle of 2 Corinthians was finished in stages, making the letter a whole composition, but not written all at once. There may have been a period when the letter was left unfinished for weeks due to the ministry work conducted by Paul in Macedonia, and later the material was picked up again.⁸

Regardless of what theory or position one holds regarding the composition of 2 Corinthians, if 2 Corinthians was originally several letters or pieces of correspondence edited together—readers still have the responsibility to deal with the text in its final, canonical form.

For your average Christian today encountering 2 Corinthians, the letter serves to tell whether or not the problems seen in Corinth were at all resolved.

What do today’s Messianic Believers do with the Epistle of 2 Corinthians?⁹ Most of the discussions surrounding the composition of 2 Corinthians, and whether it is a single letter or a redacted series of letters, will be viewed as academically interesting, but not that important in terms of the larger issues of interpreting the text of 2 Corinthians. What will draw the most attention for Messianic readers of 2 Corinthians concerns the various vignettes issued on topics important to the Corinthian situation, and whether the problems encountered in 1 Corinthians were at all resolved. A section of difficulty for many Messianics regards the issue of Moses, the veil, and the Old Covenant in ch. 3.¹⁰ Is the Old Covenant to be regarded as the Torah and Tanach Scriptures passing away, or the ministry of death and condemnation nullified by Yeshua’s sacrifice, for those who are in Him?¹¹

There is definitely much need for improvement in Messianic appreciation and understanding of 2 Corinthians.¹²

⁸ Cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 457; Carson and Moo, pp 428-429.

⁹ A popularly written Messianic commentary is Joel Liberman, *Practical Messages on Congregational Life: Commentary on 1&2 Corinthians* (San Diego: Tree of Life, 2015).

¹⁰ Cf. S.J. Hafemann, “Corinthians, Letters to the,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 169-170.

¹¹ Consult the article “**What is the New Covenant?**” by J.K. McKee, appearing in the book *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

¹² A popularly written Messianic commentary is Joel Liberman, *Practical Messages on Congregational Life: Commentary on 1&2 Corinthians* (San Diego: Tree of Life, 2015).

⁵ Morris, “Corinthians, Second Epistle to the,” in *ISBE*, 1:780.

⁶ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 458-459.

⁷ Morris, “Corinthians, Second Epistle to the,” in *ISBE*, 2:780.

Consult the commentary *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee for a more detailed examination of 1 Corinthians.

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1

Salutation

¹ Paul, an apostle of Messiah Yeshua by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the assembly of God which is at Corinth, with all the holy ones who are in the whole of Achaia:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

Paul's Thanksgiving after Affliction

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort;

⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

⁵ For just as the sufferings of Messiah abound to us, so also our comfort is abundant through Messiah.

⁶ But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which works in *you* the perseverance of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

⁷ and our hope for you is firm, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also are you *sharers* of our comfort.

⁸ For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, concerning our affliction which came *to us* in Asia, that we were burdened down exceedingly, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of life;

⁹ indeed, we had had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not rely in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

¹⁰ who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver *us*; on Him we have set our hope, and He will yet deliver us,

¹¹ you also helping together on our behalf by your prayer, so that thanks may be given by many for the favor bestowed upon us through *the prayer of many*.

The Postponement of Paul's Visit

¹² For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world—and more abundantly toward you.

¹³ For we write nothing else to you than what you read and acknowledge, and I hope you will acknowledge until the end;

¹⁴ just as you also partially did acknowledge us, that we are your boasting as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Yeshua.

¹⁵ And in this confidence I wanted to come to you first, that you might have a second benefit;

¹⁶ and by you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be sent on my journey to Judea.

¹⁷ So, was I vacillating when I wanted to do this, was I? Or the things that I intend, do I intend according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*?

¹⁸ But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Yeshua the Messiah, who was proclaimed among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.

²⁰ For as many promises *there are* of God, in Him *they are yes*; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, to the glory of God through us.

²¹ Now He who establishes us with you in Messiah and anointed us is God,

²² who also sealed us, and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

²³ But I call God for a witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.

²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in faith you stand firm.

2

¹ But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow.

² For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one being made sorrowful by me?

³ And I wrote this very thing, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy* of you all.

⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have more abundantly for you.

Forgiveness for the Offender

⁵ But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in part—in order not to press too heavily—to you all.

⁶ Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was *inflicted* by the majority,

⁷ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive him and comfort *him*, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

⁸ Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him.

⁹ For to this end also I wrote, so that I might know the proof of you, whether you are obedient in all things.

¹⁰ But whom you forgive anything, I *forgive* also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, *I did it* for your sakes in the presence of Messiah,

¹¹ so that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

Paul's Anxiety and Relief

¹² Now when I came to Troas for the good news of Messiah and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,

¹³ I had no rest for my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Messiah, and manifests through us the aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Messiah to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is sufficient for these things?

¹⁷ For we are not as the many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, in the sight of God we speak in Messiah.

3

Ministers of the New Covenant

¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of commendation to you or from you?

² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all people;

³ being manifested that you are a letter of Messiah, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets *that are* hearts of flesh.

⁴ And such confidence we have through Messiah toward God.

⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷ But if the ministry of death, in letters written engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look intently upon the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, which is fading away,

⁸ how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness exceed *it* in glory.

¹⁰ For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses *it*.

¹¹ For if that which is fading away *is* with glory, much more that which remains *is* in glory.

¹² Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness in *our* speech,

¹³ and *are* not as Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face, so that the children of Israel might not look intently at the goal of that which is fading away.

¹⁴ But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant^a the same veil remains *unlifted*, because it is removed in Messiah.

¹⁵ But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;

¹⁶ but whenever one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.^b

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty.

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

4

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

¹ Therefore, having this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

² but we have renounced the hidden shameful things, not walking in craftiness or distorting the word of God, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God.

³ And even if our good news is veiled, it is veiled in those who are perishing.

⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the good news of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God.

⁵ For we do not proclaim ourselves but Messiah Yeshua as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Yeshua's sake.

^a Grk. *tēs palaios diathēkēs* (τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης); rendered by the TLV as "the ancient covenant," which is semantically possible due to the adjective *palaios* (παλαιός) meaning "of old date, ancient" (LS, 586).

Controversy ensues per the perspective issue of whether "the old covenant" is the Torah proper, or is intended "the ministry of death" (3:7) or "the ministry of condemnation" (3:9), to be regarded as the condemning attributes of the Torah upon Law-breakers, clearly to be contrasted to the New Covenant as "the ministry of the Spirit" (3:8) or "the ministry of righteousness" (3:9). The New Covenant, contrary to the Old Covenant and its tenor to condemn sinners, instead promises permanent forgiveness, atonement, and a supernatural ability to see God's people keep His commandments (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27).

^b The CJB has bolded "But...whenever someone turns to *ADONAI*, the veil is taken away" for 3:16, noting a possible allusion to Exodus 34:34: "But when he went in before *ADONAI* for him to speak, he would take the veil off until he came out; then, when he came out, he would tell the people of Isra'el what he had been ordered" (CJB).

⁶ For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah.

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;

⁸ *we are* hard pressed in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;

⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of Yeshua, that the life of Yeshua also may be manifested in our body.

¹¹ For we who live are always being delivered over to death for Yeshua's sake, that the life of Yeshua also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

¹² So death works in us, but life in you.

¹³ But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE” [Psalm 116:10]^a, we also believe, and therefore we speak;

¹⁴ knowing that He who raised the Lord Yeshua will raise us also with Yeshua and will present us with you.

¹⁵ For all things *are* for your sakes, that the grace, being increased through the many *people*, may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

Living by Faith

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer self is decaying, yet our inner self is renewed day by day.

¹⁷ For our momentary, light affliction, works for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

5

¹ For we know that if the Earthly house of our tent is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.

² For indeed in this we groan, longing to be further clothed^b with our dwelling from Heaven;

³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.

⁴ For indeed we who are in this tent do groan, being burdened, not that we want to be unclothed but that we want to be further clothed^c, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

⁵ Now He who prepared us for this very thing is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

⁶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—

⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight—

⁸ we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

⁹ Therefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

^a “I believed when I said, ‘I am greatly afflicted’” (Psalm 116:10, PME).

^b Grk. verb *ependuomai* (ἐπενδύομαι); “to put a garment on over an existing garment, put on (in addition)” (BDAG, 361), envisioning the immortal body being placed on top of a person’s existing, mortal body, with the preference being never having to go through death and a disembodied state; paraphrased by the NEB with, “we yearn to have our heavenly habitation put on over this one.”

^c Grk. verb *ependuomai* (ἐπενδύομαι); paraphrased by the NEB with, “our desire is to have the new body put on over it.”

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, that each one may be recompensed for the things *done* through the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

¹¹ Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade people, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

¹² We are not again commending ourselves to you, but *are* giving you an occasion for boasting about us, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance, and not in heart.

¹³ For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.

¹⁴ For the love of Messiah controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

¹⁵ and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sakes died and rose again.

¹⁶ Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Messiah according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer.

¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, the new have come.

¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Messiah, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

¹⁹ namely, that God was in Messiah reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Messiah, as though God were entreating through us; we beseech *you* on behalf of Messiah, be reconciled to God.

²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

6

¹ And working together *with Him*, we also entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain—

² for He says, “AT AN ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON A DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU”; Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION” [Isaiah 49:8]^a—

³ giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry may not be blamed.

⁴ but in everything commending ourselves as ministers of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

⁵ in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,

⁶ in purity, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

⁷ in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left,

⁸ by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and *yet* true;

⁹ as unknown, and *yet* well-known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and not killed;

¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.

^a “Thus says YHWH, ‘In a favorable time I have answered You, and in a day of salvation I have helped You; and I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, to restore the land, to make *them* inherit the desolate heritages’” (Isaiah 49:8, PME).

¹¹ Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.

¹² You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained by your own affections.

¹³ Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide *to* us also.

The Temple of the Living God

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

¹⁵ Or what accord has Messiah with Belial, or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

¹⁶ Or what agreement has a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE” [Leviticus 26:12^a; Jeremiah 32:38^b; Ezekiel 37:27^c].

¹⁷ “Therefore COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord, “AND TOUCH NO UNCLEAN THING; and I will welcome you [Isaiah 52:11^d; Ezekiel 20:34, 41^e].

¹⁸ “And will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty^f.

7

¹ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Paul’s Joy at the Assembly’s Repentance

² Open your hearts to us; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.

³ I do not speak to condemn *you*; for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

⁴ Great is my confidence toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I am filled with comfort. I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: fightings without, fears within.

⁶ But God, who comforts the lowly, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

⁷ and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he told us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

^a “I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Leviticus 26:12, PME).

^b “They shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Jeremiah 32:38, PME).

^c “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people” (Ezekiel 37:27, PME).

^d “Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of YHWH” (Isaiah 52:11, PME).

^e “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out...As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations” (Ezekiel 20:34, 41, PME).

^f The CJB has bolded “I will be...Father, and...will be my sons...says ADONAI-Tzva’ot” for 6:18, noting a possible allusion to 2 Samuel 7:14, 8; Isaiah 43:6:

“I will be a father for him, and he will be a son for me. If he does something wrong, I will punish him with a rod and blows, just as everyone gets punished” (2 Samuel 7:14, CJB).

“Therefore say this to my servant David that this is what ADONAI-Tzva’ot says: ‘I took you from the sheep-yards, from following the sheep, to make you chief over my people, over Isra’el’” (2 Samuel 7:8, CJB).

“I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Don’t hold them back! Bring my sons from far away, and my daughters from the ends of the earth’” (Isaiah 43:6, CJB).

⁸ For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—
for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—

⁹ I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to
the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to God, so that you might not
suffer loss in anything through us.

¹⁰ For the sorrow that is according to God works repentance without regret, *leading* to
salvation; but the sorrow of the world works death.

¹¹ For behold what earnestness this very thing, this being sorrowful according to God, has
worked in you: what defense of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what
zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be pure in the
matter.

¹² So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the
one offended, but that your earnestness for us might be made manifest to you in the sight of
God.

¹³ Therefore we have been comforted. And besides our own comfort we rejoiced even
more exceedingly for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

¹⁴ For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we
spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true.

¹⁵ And his affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of
you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.

¹⁶ I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.

8

Generous Giving

¹ Now, brothers and sisters, we make known to you the grace of God which has been
given in the assemblies of Macedonia;

² that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty
abounded to the riches of their liberality.

³ For according to their ability, I testify, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own
accord,

⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor and the fellowship in the ministering to the
holy ones,

⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by
the will of God.

⁶ So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also
complete in you this grace also.

⁷ But just as you abound in everything, *in* faith and utterance and knowledge and *in* all
earnestness and *in* your love for us, *see* that you abound in this grace also.

⁸ I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others
the sincerity of your love also.

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, that though He was rich, yet
for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

¹⁰ And in this matter I give *my* opinion, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to
begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*.

¹¹ But now finish doing it also; that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may*
be also the completion of it out of what you have.

¹² For if the readiness is there, *it is* acceptable according to what *a person* has, not according
to what he does not have.

¹³ For *this* is not for the ease of others *and* for your affliction, but by way of equality—

¹⁴ at this present time your abundance *being a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may become *a supply* for your want, that there may be equality;

¹⁵ as it is written, "He WHO *gathered* MUCH HAD NOTHING LEFT OVER, AND HE WHO *gathered* LITTLE HAD NO LACK [Exodus 16:18]^a."

¹⁶ But thanks be to God, who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.

¹⁷ For he indeed accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord.

¹⁸ And we have sent along with him the brother whose fame in *the things* of the good news *has spread* through all the assemblies;

¹⁹ and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the assemblies to travel with us in *the matter* of this grace, which is being ministered by us to the glory of the Lord, and to *show* our readiness,

²⁰ avoiding this, that anyone should blame us in *the matter* of this abundance being ministered by us;

²¹ for we have regard for honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of people.^b

²² And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have tested many times and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent, because of his great confidence in you.

²³ As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker for you; as for our brothers, *they are* messengers^c of the assemblies, a glory to Messiah.

²⁴ Therefore, before the assemblies, show them the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

9

The Offering for the Believers

¹ For indeed concerning the ministry to the holy ones, it is superfluous for me to write to you;

² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up very many of them.

³ But I have sent the brothers, that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;

⁴ lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to speak of you) should be put to shame by this confidence.

⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers that they would go on to you, and arrange in advance your previously promised blessing, that the same might be ready as a blessing, and not as an exaction.

⁶ Now this *I say*: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

⁷ *Let* each one *do* just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or out of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver^d.

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may abound to every good work;

^a "When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered as much as he should eat" (Exodus 16:18, PME).

^b The CJB has bolded "we take pains to do what is right...in the sight of God...also...other people" for 8:21, noting a possible allusion to Proverbs 3:4 (LXX): "Then you will win favor and esteem in the sight of God and of people" (CJB).

^c Grk. sing. *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος); "apostles" (HNV).

^d The CJB has bolded "God loves a cheerful giver" for 9:7, noting a possible allusion to Proverbs 22:8 (LXX): "God blesses a cheerful and generous man, but he will bring to an end the vanity of his deeds" (8a, NETS).

⁹ as it is written, “HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ABIDES FOREVER [Psalm 112:9, LXX].”^a

¹⁰ Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

¹¹ you, being enriched in everything for all liberality, which works through us thanksgiving to God.

¹² For the ministry of this service not only fully supplies the needs of the holy ones, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.

¹³ Because of the proof *given* by this ministry they *will be* glorifying God for *your* submission to your confession to the good news of Messiah, and for the liberality of *your* contribution to them and to all,

¹⁴ while they also, by supplication on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

10

Paul Defends His Ministry

¹ Now I, Paul, myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Messiah—I who am humble in your presence with you, but bold toward you when away.

² I ask that I may not be bold with the confidence with which I consider to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,

⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but powerful before God for the demolition of strongholds.

⁵ *We are* demolishing arguments and every lofty thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah,

⁶ and we are ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

⁷ You look at the things before your face. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Messiah's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Messiah's, so also are we.

⁸ For even if I boast somewhat more abundantly about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for demolishing you, I will not be put to shame,

⁹ so that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

¹⁰ For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.”

¹¹ Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when away, such *are we* also in work when present.

¹² For we do not dare to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

¹³ But we will not boast beyond *our* measure, but according to the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even to you.

¹⁴ For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach to you, for we came even as far as to you in the good news of Messiah;

¹⁵ not boasting beyond *our* measure, *that is*, in the labor of others, but having hope that, as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you,

¹⁶ so as to proclaim the good news even to the regions beyond you, *and* not to boast in what has been done in the sphere of another.

^a “He scattered; he gave to the needy; his righteousness endures forever and ever; his horn will be exalted in glory” (Psalm 112:9, NETS).

¹⁷ But HE WHO BOASTS, LET HIM BOAST IN THE LORD [Jeremiah 9:24]^a.

¹⁸ For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

11

Paul and the False Apostles

¹ I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you do bear with me.

² For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that I might present you *as a pure virgin* to Messiah.

³ But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and the purity to the Messiah.

⁴ For if one comes and proclaims another Yeshua whom we did not proclaim, or you receive a different spirit which you did not receive, or a different good news which you did not accept, you put up *with this* well enough.

⁵ For I consider myself *to being* not in the least inferior, to the super-apostles.

⁶ But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made *this* plain to you in all things.

⁷ Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I proclaimed to you the good news of God without charge?

⁸ I robbed other assemblies, taking wages *from them* that I might serve you;

⁹ and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for the brothers and sisters, when they came from Macedonia, supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and I will keep *myself doing so*.

¹⁰ As the truth of Messiah is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.

¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows *I do*.

¹² But what I do, that I will continue to do, that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in which they boast.

¹³ For such ones are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Messiah.

¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

¹⁵ So it is no great thing if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end will be according to their works.

Paul's Sufferings as an Apostle

¹⁶ Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if *you do*, receive me even as foolish, that I also may boast a little.

¹⁷ That which I am speaking, I am not speaking as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.

¹⁸ Since many glory according to the flesh, I will boast also.

¹⁹ For you gladly bear with the foolish, being wise *yourselves*.

²⁰ For you bear with anyone if he enslaves, if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself, if he strikes you in the face.

²¹ *To my shame I must say* that we have been weak. But in whatever anyone is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also.

²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.

^a "but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am YHWH who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on Earth; for I delight in these things," declares YHWH" (Jeremiah 9:24, PME).

²³ Are they ministers of Messiah? (I speak as if out of my mind) I more so; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in beatings above measure, in deaths often.

²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews forty *lashes* minus one.

²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

²⁶ on frequent journeys often, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* own race, dangers from the nations, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brothers and sisters;

²⁷ labor and hardship, in many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and nakedness.

²⁸ Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure upon me *of* concern for all the assemblies.

²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I do not *inwardly* burn?

³⁰ If I have to boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness.

³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Yeshua, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

³² In Damascus, the ethnarch of Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,

³³ and through a window, in a basket, I was let down, through the wall, and I escaped his hands.

12

Visions and Revelations

¹ It is necessary to boast, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

² I know a person in Messiah who fourteen years ago—whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third Heaven.

³ And I know such a person—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—

⁴ that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which no mortal is permitted to speak.

⁵ On behalf of such a one I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses.

⁶ For if I wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain *from it*, so that no one may think more of me than he sees *in* me or hears from me.

⁷ And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself!

⁸ Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

⁹ And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Messiah may rest upon me.

¹⁰ Therefore I am well content in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in difficulties, for Messiah's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Paul's Concern for the Corinthian Assembly

¹¹ I have become foolish; you compelled me; for I ought to have been commended by you, for I was not at all inferior to the super-apostles, even though I am nothing.

¹² The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

¹³ For what is there in which you were treated as inferior to the rest of the assemblies, except that I myself was not a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

¹⁴ Behold, this is the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for the children ought not to save up for *their* parents, but the parents for *their* children.

¹⁵ And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less?

¹⁶ But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself. But, being crafty, I caught you with guile?

¹⁷ Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you?

¹⁸ I urged Titus *to go*, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit *and* in the same steps?

¹⁹ All this time have you been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. In the sight of God we have been speaking in Messiah; and all things, for your upbuilding, beloved.

²⁰ For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not what I wish and may be found by you to not be what you wish; that perhaps *there will be* strife, jealousy, anger, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

²¹ let that not be, *so* when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn for many of those who have sinned before and not repented of the impurity and fornication and licentiousness which they committed.

13

Final Warnings and Greetings

¹ This is the third time I am coming to you. BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES WILL EVERY MATTER BE ESTABLISHED [Deuteronomy 19:15]^a.

² I have previously said when present the second time, and though absent I do say in advance, to those who sinned before and to all the rest, that if I come again, I will not spare *anyone*,

³ since you are seeking proof of *the* Messiah who speaks in me, *and* who is not weak toward you, but is mighty in you.

⁴ For He was executed on a wooden scaffold^b because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him through the power of God *directed* toward you.

^a "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed" (Deuteronomy 19:15, PME).

^b Grk. noun *stauros* (σταυρός) or verb equiv. *stauroō* (σταυρόω); "to fasten to a cross, crucify" (BDAG, 941). History fully attests that criminals in the Roman Empire were crucified upon some kind of a cross. It was an extremely brutal, humiliating, and painful way to suffer and die. It was intended to serve as a public warning to others not to infuriate the Roman state:

"Under the Roman Empire, crucifixion normally included a flogging beforehand. At times the cross was only one vertical stake. Frequently, however, there was a cross-piece attached either at the top to give the shape of a 'T' (*crux comissa*) or just below the top, as in the form most familiar in Christian symbolism (*crux immissa*). The victims carried the cross or at least a transverse beam (*patibulum*) to the place of the execution, where they were stripped and bound or nailed to the beam, raised up, and seated on a *sedile* or small wooden peg in the upright beam. Ropes bound the shoulders or torso to the cross. The feet or heels of the victims were bound or nailed to the upright stake. As crucifixion damaged no vital organs, death could come slowly, sometimes after several days of atrocious pain" (Gerald G. O'Collins, "Crucifixion," in *ABD*, 1:1208-1209).

A Messianic version the CJB often uses an alternative like "execution-stake," instead of the more traditional "cross" for *stauros*, some of which is intended to counter traditional Jewish hostility to the sign of the cross. A Messianic version like the TLV, however,

⁵ Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize as to your own selves, that Yeshua the Messiah is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?

⁶ But I hope that you will realize that we do not fail the test.

⁷ Now we pray to God that you do no evil; not that we may appear approved, but that you may do what is good, even though we may seem unapproved.

⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

⁹ For we rejoice, when we are weak, but you are strong; this we also pray for – your completion.

¹⁰ For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I may not deal harshly, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be of the same mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss.

¹³ All the holy ones greet you.

¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

will frequently use the traditional “cross” for *stauros*, although it may also use “execution-stake” as well. The PME uses the new alternative, “wooden scaffold.”