

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

v92

Second Corinthians

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2 Corinthians

1 *I,* Paul, *write this letter to you,* and Timothy, our fellow
believer, *is with me*. God chose to send me to represent the
Messiah Jesus, because that is what God wanted. *I send this
letter* to *you who are part of* the group of believers belonging
to God, which is in the city of Corinth. *I* also *send this letter* to
all the believers who live throughout the region of Achaia.
2 *May* God, *who is* our Father, and the Lord Jesus the Messiah
continue to be kind to you and *make you* peaceful.

3 May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus the Messiah—he is our merciful Father and our God
who always comforts us. 4 God comforts us whenever we
suffer. He does that so that we can comfort others who are
suffering in any way. God enables us to comfort them in
the very same way as he comforts us. 5 You see, the Messiah
suffered a lot for us, and now we continue to suffer as
the Messiah did because we belong to him. But now the
Messiah also comforts us in the same abundant amount.
6 So whenever people cause us to suffer, it is so that God
may comfort you and protect you spiritually. Whenever God
comforts us, it is so that he may also comfort you. God does
this as you patiently endure when people cause you to suffer
just as people cause us to suffer. 7 We know that God will
also comfort you as you suffer like we suffer. Therefore, we
are very confident that you will continue *trusting in Jesus*.

8 For example, fellow believers, we want you to know
about the bad things that happened to us in the province
of Asia. They were so difficult that we felt that we could
not endure them. We felt certain that we were going to die.
9 We felt like a person feels when he has heard a judge say,
"I condemn you to die." But God allowed us to feel that
way so that we would learn to not rely on ourselves but,
instead, to rely on God. He causes people who have died to
live again. 10 Even though it seemed to us that we would
certainly die, God rescued us from the people who wanted to
kill us, and he will continue to rescue us *from similar people*.
We confidently expect that he will rescue us again 11 as you
help us by praying for us. Please do pray for us so that many
people will thank God for what he will graciously do for us
because many people prayed for us.

12 We are proud that we can honestly say that we have
behaved toward all people in a holy and sincere way, as
God has enabled us to do. We do not behave in the way that
unbelievers think is wise. Instead, God graciously guides us,
especially *as we interact* with you. 13 To see this, look at my
letters. In all of my letters to you I have written only what
you can *easily* read and understand. I hope that *soon* you will
understand *us* completely 14 just as you partially understand
us *already*. Then when our Lord Jesus returns, you will be
just as proud of us as we will be proud of you.

15–16 Because I was confident that you were proud of me,
I planned to visit you once on my way to the province of
Macedonia, and then to visit you again as I returned from
there. In that way, you would benefit twice from having me
with you. Also, you could help supply what I would need to
go from your city to the province of Judea. 17 I intended to
visit you those two times*, but then I did not come the second
time*. That does not mean that I changed my plan lightly. I
do not make or change my plans according to what I might
desire at the time. I do not say, "Yes, I will do that" and
then quickly say, "No, I will not do it." 18 Just as God is
faithful, we are completely sincere in everything that we say
to you. We would never say, "Yes" when we really think,
"No." 19 I and Silvanus and Timothy taught you about the
Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. *You know that* he would never
say, "Yes" if what he meant was, "No." Because of who he
is, our message about him has also remained consistent and
dependable. 20 Because of Jesus, we can rely on all of the
promises of God. Jesus fulfills them all. Therefore, Jesus is
also the one who enables us to say, "Yes, it is true" when
we praise God. 21 It is God who causes us, along with you,
to keep on believing strongly in the Messiah. God is also the
one who has given us his Spirit so that we can serve him.
22 God gave us the Holy Spirit to live within us. That shows
both that we belong to him and that he will also do for us
everything else that he has promised to do for us.

23 So now I will tell you why I changed my mind and did
not visit you again as I intended to do. May God strike me
dead if I am lying, but he knows that what I am telling you is
true. The reason that I did not return to Corinth was so that
I might not grieve you by having to speak to you severely
about the wrong things that you have done. 24 When I say
that, I do not mean that we are your masters who give you
orders about what to believe and do. Instead, everything that
we tell you *about living for God* is so that you will be joyful.
We do not need to command you, because God himself tells
you what to believe and do.

2 *I have not visited you* because I have chosen to avoid
visiting you if it hurts you and me like it did last time
I visited you. 2 *I chose not to visit you again* because, when
I hurt you, I have hurt the only people who can make me
glad. 3 I already wrote *in my previous letter* what I am now
saying *to you*. *I wrote those things* so that, when I next visited
you, you would not hurt me, and I would be glad about you
as I should. *I wrote those things because* I was sure about all
of you that you would be glad when I was glad. 4 I suffered
greatly and hurt inside when I wrote *that previous letter* to
you. In fact, I wept *while I wrote it*. *I sent it to you* so that you
would realize how much I care for you. I did not intend to
hurt you.

5 However, the person who has hurt others did not really
hurt me. Rather, that person hurt some *of you*. *I use the word
"some"* so that I do not include all of you *as those whom
that person hurt*. 6 Most of you together have disciplined that
person. *You do not need to do* anything more. 7 So then,
instead *of disciplining that person*, you should now forgive and
encourage that person. Otherwise, the person will become
very sad and give up.

8 Therefore, I encourage you to show publicly that you
care for that person. 9 Another reason for which I wrote *that
previous letter* was in order that I could find out for sure if
you would do everything that I asked *you to do*. 10 In the
end, when you forgive any person for anything, I too forgive
that person. In fact, I have forgiven *that person* for what *that
person did*, even though it was basically nothing. *I did that* to
help you, as the Messiah desires. 11 *We should forgive others*
so that Satan will not control us. Indeed, we know all about
his plans *to control us*.

12 *To return to how I traveled,* when I arrived in the city of
Troas, the Lord Jesus made it possible for me to proclaim

the good news about the Messiah effectively. 13 However, since my fellow believer Titus was not *in the city of Troas*, I continued to be anxious about *what happened when he visited you*. Therefore, I said goodbye to the believers there and left to travel to the region of Macedonia.

14 Now we praise God! *He is the one* who, because he has united us to the Messiah, continually includes us as he conquers *his enemies*. Further, he uses us to reveal to people in many places what God is like. 15 In fact, we are like a pleasant smell that comes from Christ and that pleases God. *We are like this smell* when we are with people whom God is rescuing and when we are with people who are passing away. 16 Those *who are passing away think that we are like* a smell that comes from a dead body and that causes people to die. On the other hand, those *whom God is rescuing think that we are like* a smell that comes from a living thing and that causes people to live. No one can perfectly *proclaim the good news in that way*! 17 *You can tell that we do not do so perfectly* because we do not sell the message that God has given us for money, like many other people do. Rather, we only want to serve God, not to gain something. Indeed, *we proclaim the good news* because that is what God sent us *to do*. So, as those whom God has united to the Messiah, we proclaim *the good news* to please God*, not people*.

3 We are not going to prove to you a second time that we are trustworthy. As you know, you do not need to write or receive a note that proves that we are trustworthy, even though *you might need to do those things* for other people. 2 It is you all who function like a note *that proves that we are trustworthy*. When we care for each other, all people realize that we are trustworthy, just as if they read *a note from you*. 3 Everyone knows that you are like a note that the Messiah wrote and that we delivered. *The Messiah* did not write *this note* on stone slabs using dye. Rather, *it is as if he wrote it* inside you by working through the Holy Spirit, *who is* the only real God.

4 I say those things because we are sure about *what* God *thinks of us*. *We are sure* because the Messiah makes *us sure*. 5 Of course, we cannot *proclaim the good news* well on our own, and we do not think that anything we do well is because of us. Rather, God enables us *to proclaim the good news* well. 6 He has also enabled us to act on behalf of the new agreement. The Holy Spirit gives *this new agreement*, so it is not just words that someone wrote down. *This is important* because *people who rely on* the Holy Spirit will live, but *people who rely on* words that someone wrote down will die.

7 Further, when Moses acted on behalf of *the old agreement that condemned people* to die, God carved the words *of the agreement* onto stone slabs. What Moses did was glorious enough that the Israelites could not gaze at his face afterwards because it *reflected how* glorious *God is*, although that would eventually go away. 8 So then, when people act on behalf of *the new agreement that gives* the Holy Spirit, that is even more glorious. 9 Indeed, when Moses acted on behalf of *the old agreement that led to God* condemning people, it was glorious. So then, when people act on behalf of *the new agreement that leads to people becoming* righteous, it is even more glorious! 10 In fact, the glorious *old agreement* does not look glorious at all because of how glorious *the new agreement* is. 11 Indeed, *the old agreement* that is going away was glorious. So then, *the new agreement* that will last forever is even more glorious!

12 So then, since we confidently expect *to receive* these *glorious* things, we behave very boldly. 13 *We are* not like Moses, who wore a cloth that hid his face. That way, the Israelites could not gaze at how his face stopped reflecting how glorious God is. 14 In fact, the Israelites did not understand *what God revealed*. Indeed, even now, when someone reads *the Scriptures that contain* the old agreement, *it is as if* the cloth that Moses wore keeps people from understanding *it*. That is because no one can understand *these Scriptures* until God unites them to the Messiah. 15 Indeed, even now, when someone reads the Law of Moses, it is as if that cloth keeps people from understanding it. 16 However, when people begin to trust the Lord *God*, God enables them to understand *the Law of Moses*, just as if he removed that cloth. 17 When I speak of the Lord *God*, I mean the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enables *people to understand the Scriptures*. 18 So, all of us *who believe* show how glorious the Lord *God* is, and *we do so* without a cloth covering our faces. God is changing us so that we are like *the Messiah*. In this way, the glorious Lord, who is the Holy Spirit, makes us glorious.

4 Because of those things, and because God mercifully enabled us to act on behalf of *the new agreement*, we do not give up. 2 Rather, we refuse to do anything that we would hide because it is disgraceful. We do not try to deceive others, and we do not change the message from God. Instead, we proclaim the true *message*, and we prove to everyone that God considers us trustworthy. 3 In fact, the only people who do not understood the good news that we proclaim are people who are passing away. 4 Satan, who rules the world right now, has kept these people who do not believe from understanding. That way, the good news about the glorious Messiah, who shows what God is like, does not change them. 5 *I say that the good news is about the Messiah* because we do not tell other people about ourselves. Rather, *we tell them* about Jesus the Messiah, the Lord, and about how we serve you because of him. 6 *We do that* because it is God who spoke these words: “What is dark will become bright.” He has enabled us to understand what is true about how glorious he is, just as if he had shined a light on us. *God has revealed this* in Jesus the Messiah.

7 We experience and proclaim these wonderful things, but we ourselves are weak and worthless. That way, *it is clear that* God causes these things to be so powerful, not we. 8 *We experience* many *difficult things*. People persecute us, but they do not overcome us. We are not sure what to do, but we do not give up. 9 People try to hurt us, but God does not abandon us. People act against us, but they do not defeat us. 10 We continually suffer physically, like Jesus did. That way, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. 11 Indeed, while we are living, God allows us to suffer continually because of Jesus. That way, even though we will die, God will make us live again, just like he made Jesus live again. 12 As you can see, God allows us to suffer, but he will make you live.

13 Now we are those who trust *God*, just like the person who wrote *in the psalm*, “I trusted *God*, so I spoke.” We too trust *God*, so we too speak. 14 *We do that because* we realize that God made Jesus alive again, so he will also make us alive again. Then we will be with Jesus and with you before God. 15 We do each of those things to help you. That way, God will act graciously to more people. Then, people will thank God more, which honors God.

16 Therefore, we do not give up. Instead, even though the
part of us that people can see is perishing, every day God
is strengthening the part of us that people cannot see. 17 *We*
do not give up, because when we suffer in temporary and
unimportant ways, that will cause us to become glorious
forever and in important ways, ways that we cannot even
imagine. 18 So, we pay attention to what we do not see rather
than to what we see. *That is* because what we do not see will
last forever, but what we see will pass away.

5 Indeed, we realize that the bodies we have on this
earth will die. They are like tents that people destroy.
However, God will give us new bodies that will live forever.
They will be like buildings that God creates in the heavenly
places. 2 In fact, we mourn how we live in these bodies. We
want God to give us new bodies, just as if he was putting
new clothes on us. *These new bodies will be like* buildings *that*
God gives us from heaven. 3 Whenever we receive our new
bodies, they will be like clothes that keep us from being
naked.

4 Even further, while we have these bodies that are like
tents, we mourn, and these bodies make living difficult.
Because of that, it is not that we want to be without bodies,
which would be like having no clothes. Rather, *we want*
to receive new bodies, which will be like putting on new
clothes. That way, we will live forever instead of expecting
to die. 5 God is the one who makes us ready for these new
bodies. He gave the Holy Spirit to us, which shows that he
will also give us everything else that he has promised.

6 So then, we are confident at all times *about what God*
will give us. Also, we realize that while we have these bodies,
we are not with the Lord *Jesus*. 7 Indeed, we act as we do
because we trust *the Lord Jesus*, not because we see *him*. 8 As
I said, we are confident *about what God will give us*. Also,
we would choose instead to be without our bodies and with
the Lord *Jesus*. 9 So then, we strive to please the Lord Jesus
whether we are with him or not. 10 *We do that* because all of
us will have to appear before the Messiah and he will decide
whether each one of us has done what is right or what is
wrong. Then, he will give us what we deserve in proportion
to what we did while we had these bodies.

11 So then, because we experience what it means to fear
the Lord *Jesus*, we convince others *to fear him also*. God
knows *that we are trustworthy*, and I want you also to know
that we are trustworthy. 12 We are not proving to you a second
time that we are trustworthy. Rather, we are enabling you
to say great things about us. That way, you can respond to
anybody who says great things about how people appear
on the outside and not about who those people really are
on the inside. 13 So, when we seem crazy, we are serving
God. When we seem to think normally, we are serving you.
14 *Those things are true* because the Messiah loves us, and
that directs us *to act in certain ways*. Here is how we think
about it: one person*, the Messiah,* died to rescue all people.
Because of that, *it is as if* all people died. 15 Further, *this is*
why he died to rescue all people: that way, those who live
spiritually will not do whatever they want anymore. Instead,
they will do what the Messiah wants, since he died to rescue
them and God made him alive again.

16 Because of all that, we do not think about anyone in
merely human ways any longer. Indeed, although at one
time we thought about the Messiah in merely human ways,
we do not think about him in those ways any longer. 17 So
then, whenever God unites people to the Messiah, he makes
them new people. What they used to be has disappeared.
Look, what they are now is something new! 18 God is the
one who gives us every one of these things. By working
through the Messiah, he has enabled us to be with him.
Further, God empowers us to act so that others can also be
with him. 19 Here is how that works: God works through
Christ to enable every person to be with him. In doing so, he
forgives people for what they have done wrong. Further, he
commissions us to tell others about how they can be with
God.

20 Because *God has commissioned us*, we represent the
Messiah. So, God encourages others through us. We speak
for the Messiah when we ask you *to believe the good news so*
that you can be with God. 21 Jesus did not sin. *Despite that,*
for our sake God treated him as if he had sinned. As a result,
God makes us righteous by uniting us to Jesus.

6 As those who serve with God, we encourage you to
accept fully what God has graciously done *for you*, so
that it changes *how you live*. 2 *You should do that* because God
says *in the scripture*:

> "When I considered it to be the right time, I
> heard you *and acted*.
> Indeed, when I was rescuing *people*, I assisted you."

Right now is when God considers it to be the best time!
Indeed, right now is when God is rescuing *people*!

3 We avoid doing anything that might offend others. That
way, no one can criticize how we serve *God*. 4 Rather, we
prove that we are trustworthy in every way while we serve
God. We always persevere when people hurt and persecute
us. 5 *We persevere* when people strike us, put us in jail, and
stir up crowds against us. *We persevere* when we work hard,
do not sleep much, and go hungry. 6 We are free from evil
things, we know *what is true*, and we do not easily become
angry. We care *for others*, we have the Holy Spirit, and we
love *people* sincerely. 7 We proclaim what is true, and God
enables us to act powerfully. We are righteous, which is like
having a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. 8 Some
people honor us, and others shame us. Some people say bad
things about us, and others say good things about us. Some
people think that we tell lies, but really we speak what is
true. 9 Some people think that nobody acknowledges us, but
really, God acknowledges us. Some people think that we
are dying, but really, we are alive! Some people think that
God is punishing us, but really, he has not decided that we
should die. 10 Some people think that we mourn, but really,
we continually rejoice. Some people think that we are needy,
but really, we help many people gain what is truly valuable.
Some people think that we do not have anything, but really,
we have everything.

11 Fellow believers in the city of Corinth, we have told
you what is true, and we care for you greatly. 12 We are not
the ones who have stopped *caring for you*. Rather, it is you
who have stopped caring *for us*. 13 Now I will speak to you
as if you thought in simple ways like children *do*: since we care
for you, it would only be right if you cared for us in return.

14 Do not join in with people who do not trust *the Messiah*. *I*
say that because what is right and what is wrong have nothing
in common. Further, what is good shares nothing with what
is evil. 15 The Messiah does not agree *about anything* with the
devil Beliar. Further, people who trust *the Messiah* do not
belong with people who do not trust *the Messiah*. 16 God's

temple does not go together with other gods. In fact, it is as if we *who believe* were the only real God's temple. *You can tell that we are God's temple* because God spoke *these words in the Scriptures*:

> "I will be with my people.
> Indeed, I will not leave them.
> They will consider me to be their God
> and I will consider them to be my people."

17 So then, *we should do what* the Lord *God* says *in the Scriptures*:

> "Get away from people *who do not serve me*.
> Make sure that you are different *than them*.
> Stay away from anything that defiles you."
> *He says,* "Then, I will gladly receive you."

18 Further, the Lord *God*, who rules all things, says,

> "I will be your father.
> You will be my sons and daughters."

7 So then, *fellow believers* whom I love, because God has promised these things to us, we should get rid of everything that defiles us on the outside and on the inside. We should become completely holy as we fear God.

2 *We ask you to* care for us! We have not hurt, cheated, or destroyed anyone. 3 I am not saying these things to blame you. In fact, as I have already written *in this letter*, we care for you greatly, no matter what happens. 4 I am very confident *that* you *will do what is right*. *In fact,* I often say great things about you. You encourage me greatly, and I rejoice very much *about you* even while we are suffering.

5 Now to return *to how I traveled*, when we arrived in Macedonia, things did not get easier for us. Instead, we suffered in many ways. Other people quarreled with us, and we ourselves were often afraid. 6 However, God encourages people who feel discouraged. He encouraged us by having Titus join *us*. 7 *God encouraged us* partly by having Titus join *us*, but even more by how what you did encourages Titus. He has told us that you want *to see me*, that you are sorry *for what you did*, and that you strive to honor me. Because of those things, I rejoiced more *than I did before*.

8 I am not sorry *that I wrote the previous letter*, even though I hurt you with what I wrote. In fact, the only reason I would be sorry *that I wrote it* is that I know that the letter hurt you, although only for a little while. 9 However, now *that Titus has told us about you,* I am very happy. *I am happy* not because I hurt you. Rather, *I am happy* because when I hurt you, you became sorry *for what you did* and stopped *doing it*. In fact, you felt hurt in a way that honors God. So, we have not deprived you of anything good. 10 *That is* because, when people feel hurt in a way that honors God, it causes them to be sorry *for what they did* and stop *doing it*. They are not sorry *that they felt hurt*, because *God uses how they feel* to rescue them. However, when people feel hurt in the way that most people do, *how they feel* eventually causes them to die. 11 As for you, when you felt hurt in this way that honors God, it certainly caused you to be very eager *to do what is right*. You argued that you were not guilty. You were upset *about what had happened*. You feared *what might happen*. You wanted *to see us*. You strove to honor *us*. You punished *the person who had done what was wrong*. By doing all *those things*, you have shown that you have done what is right in response to what happened. 12 So then, when I sent *the previous letter* to you, I was not primarily dealing with the person who did what was wrong. Also, I was not primarily dealing with the person whom he hurt. Rather, I intended to show you how eager you are *to act rightly* toward us and that God approves *of this*. 13 Since you responded in these ways, you have encouraged us.

In fact, although you did encourage us, we are even more happy about how you made Titus happy. *You did that* when you all comforted and strengthened him. 14 *We were this happy* because you did not disgrace me after I had said great things about you to Titus. Instead, Titus found out that the great things we said about you were actually true. *This is* just like how everything we told you was also true. 15 Titus recalls how you all obeyed us, particularly how you feared him when he arrived. *Because of that,* he cares about you even more now. 16 I am happy that I am completely sure that you *are doing what is right*.

8 My fellow believers, we want to tell you about what God has graciously enabled the groups of believers *here* in Macedonia province to do. 2 Even though they suffered very much, which tested *how they would respond*, they were extremely generous. They were very joyful *as they did this*, even though they had very little. 3 In fact, I can tell you that *they offered* as much as they could afford, and even more than they could afford. They were the ones who chose to do this. 4 They were very insistent when they urged us to accept *what they were giving*. They wanted to share in serving God's people. 5 Further, they did even more than what we had expected. They dedicated themselves primarily to *serving* the Lord *Jesus* and then also to *serving* us. *That is* just what God wants. 6 Because of that, we encouraged Titus to finish accepting what you are giving, especially since he had already started *doing so*. 7 As for you, you are already doing well in so many ways. *This includes* how you trust *God*, what you say, how much you know, how you are always eager *to do what is right*, and how much we love you. So, you should also do well in giving *money for fellow believers*.

8 I am not ordering you *to give money*. Rather, I want to show that you really care *for fellow believers* by comparing *what you do* with how other people are always eager *to give money*. 9 *You should be eager to give money* because you realize that our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, kindly gave up everything he had to help you. *He did that even though* he had very many things. He wanted to give you many things by himself giving up what he had.

10 I am telling you what I think about giving money, because hearing what I think helps you. Last year, you both wanted to and did start *giving money*. 11 Right now, you should finish what you started. That way, what you finish doing matches what you eagerly wanted *to do*, *which is to give some* of what you have. 12 Now God approves of *what people give* based on what they have, not based on what they do not have. *This is true* as long as they are eager *to give*.

13 So, it is not that I want you to suffer while other believers do well. Rather, I want *believers to share what they have* equally. 14 Right now, how much you have can help people who do not have much. Then, when those people have much and you have little, they can help you. That way, believers share *what they have* equally. 15 *We want it to be* like what someone wrote *when God powerfully gave food to the Israelites*:

"The people who had much did not have more
than they needed.
The people who had little did not have less
than they needed."

16 We thank God for causing Titus to be eager *to care* for you, just like we are. 17 Indeed, he is visiting you partly because he listened to us urging him *to do so*. Mostly, however, *he is visiting you* because he is so eager *to care for you* that he himself chose *to visit you*. 18 We have chosen a fellow believer to go with Titus. Many groups of believers commend him *because of what he does* for the sake of the good news. 19 More than that, the groups of believers selected him to travel with me. He is helping us as we work to accept *money for the believers in Jerusalem*. *Accepting this money* honors the Lord *God* and demonstrates how eager we are *to care for fellow believers*.

20 So, we are doing what we can to keep others from criticizing us for what we do *with this money* that people have generously given. 21 As you can see, before *we started to collect this money*, we planned how to do it well. *We considered* what the Lord *God* thinks, but we also *considered* what other people think.

22 We have chosen another fellow believer to go with Titus and the other man *I have been speaking about*. We have tested him and know for sure that he is eager *to serve God*. In fact, because he is very confident that you *will do what is right*, right now he is particularly eager *to serve with you*. 23 *I recommend these men.* Titus joins me *in what I do* and works with me to help you. The groups of believers send the other two fellow believers, and they honor the Messiah. 24 So then, show these three men and also the groups of believers that you really do care *for fellow believers* and that the great things we say about you really are true.

9 Really, though, I do not need to say anything to you about how we are serving God's people *in Jerusalem*. 2 *That is* because I recognize how eager you are *to give*. In fact, I say great things about you to the believers in Macedonia province. *I tell them* that you believers in Achaia province were already preparing *to give* last year. How eager you were *to give* has encouraged most of them *to give also*. 3 However, *although we know that you are eager*, we have chosen these *three* fellow believers to visit you to make sure that the great things we say about how you are eager *to give* prove true. *They are visiting you* so that you can finish preparing *to give* and in this way match what I have told *the Macedonians about you*. 4 On the other hand, *think about what would happen* were some believers from Macedonia province to visit you with me and discover that you had not finished preparing *to give*. How you had acted would shame even us, and *it would* most definitely *shame* you. 5 Because of that, I decided that I needed to ask these *three* fellow believers to visit you before *I do* and help you with what you said you would give. That way, you will have already prepared what you are giving, and *you will offer it* because you want to and not because we are making you do it.

6 Here is an example *that illustrates how you should give*. When farmers plant only a few seeds, they harvest only a little food. When farmers plant many seeds, they harvest much food. Much like that, when you help other people, someone will help you in return. 7 Each of you should choose for yourself *how much to give*. Do not *choose how much to give* because you feel hurt or because you have to. *I say that* because God cares for people who give gladly. 8 God can graciously give you more than you need. That way, because you always have everything you need in every situation, you can always do everything that is right. 9 *You can tell that is true* because someone wrote *about this kind of person* in the Scriptures,

"They give to many people.
Yes, they help those who have very little.
They will do what is right forever."

10 God provides the seeds for the one who plants them, and *he provides* food for people to eat. So, he will also provide what you need and give you more of it. Further, when you do what is right, he will use that to accomplish good things. 11 God consistently gives you more than you need so that you can always generously *give to others*. When you give generously and we send your gifts *to fellow believers*, they thank God.

12 In fact, when you serve God's people *in Jerusalem* by giving *to them*, it provides what they need. Even more, though, it causes them to thank God very much. 13 You prove yourselves by serving God's people *in Jerusalem*. So then, they will honor God because you actually do what the good news about the Messiah requires, *which is the same good news* that you say you believe. *They will honor God* also because you generously share *what you have* with them and with all *believers*. 14 Further, they will want *to see* you as they pray for you, since you give very graciously as God enables you to. 15 We thank God for giving us these things that are more wonderful than we can say!

10 Now I *will speak about* myself, Paul. I am humbly and reasonably urging you *to do what is right*, just like the Messiah *was humble and reasonable*. *Some people say that* when I was with you in person, I was gentle with you, but now, when I am away, I am forceful with you. 2 I do intend to be forceful when I boldly act against these people who think that I and those *who serve* with me act in merely human ways. So, I ask you *to do what is right* so that I will not need to be forceful with you too when I visit you. 3 In fact, although we act as humans, we do not defend ourselves in merely human ways. 4 In fact, what we use to defend ourselves is not what humans normally use. Rather, God empowers *what we use to defend ourselves* so that we can defeat what other people powerfully argue. 5 *We* also *defeat* anything that people claim is greater than knowing God. Further, we work to influence everything that people think so that they obey the Messiah. 6 At the time when you fully obey *the Messiah*, we will be ready to punish anyone who disobeys *him*.

7 Think about what is obvious. Suppose that people are sure that they represent the Messiah. Those people need to remember that we too represent the Messiah, just like they do. 8 Indeed, I do not disgrace myself when I say many great things about how the Lord *Jesus* has empowered us to represent him. *He did that* so that we could encourage and help you *to trust God more*, not so that we could discourage you *from trusting God*. 9 So, *you can tell that* I am not trying to scare you when I send *forceful* letters to you. 10 *I write that* because some people say *about me*, "He sends severe and powerful letters to us, but he is feeble and speaks very poorly when he is with us." 11 People who say those things need to realize that what we write in our letters *to you* when

we are not with you is also how we act when we are with you.

12 We are too humble to say that we are as good as people *you know* who say that they are trustworthy. Those people are foolish. *When they say that they are great,* they are looking only at themselves. 13 In contrast, we do not say great things about ourselves beyond what we actually do. Rather, *we say great things about ourselves* that match with what God has given us to do. That includes what we do whenever we are with you. 14 In fact, only if we had not actually visited you would *what God has given us to do* not include you. Of course, we really have already visited you *and told you* the good news about the Messiah.

15 We do not say great things about ourselves because of what others do but because of what we actually do. In fact, we confidently expect that God will give us even more to do with you. *That will happen* when you trust *God* more. 16 That way, we can tell the good news to people who live even further away from us than you do. *That is what we plan to do* instead of saying great things about ourselves because of how other people have done what God has given them to do. 17 *Everyone should do what the prophet Jeremiah wrote,*

> "Anyone who says great things should say
> them about the Lord *God*."

18 *Everyone should do that* because the Lord *Jesus* recommends those whom he says are trustworthy, not those who say that about themselves.

11 *Next,* I hope that you will be patient with me as I say a few things *that I consider* foolish. I know that you are patient with me! 2 *I will say foolish things* because I am protective of you as God is protective of you. In fact, when I told you the good news, I was like a father who promised to give you to a man as his wife. Just like this father wants his daughter to be with only this one man, so I want you to trust only in the Messiah. 3 However, I fear that someone *will trick you*, just as Satan cleverly tricked Eve*, the first woman*. *I fear that such a person* will ruin how you think in ways that are completely loyal to the Messiah. 4 *I fear for you* because *I know that* people visit you and tell you about Jesus, but it is not the same Jesus we told you about. Others offer you a spirit, but it is not the Holy Spirit that we offered to you. Others proclaim good news to you, but it is not the same good news that you first believed. Despite that, you are very patient *when people tell you about these things*.

5 *I want you to believe what we first told you* because I think that the Messiah acts through me as much as through those who say that they represent him the best. 6 Although I have not learned how to speak very well, despite that, *I have learned* to know *what is true*. I show you that this is true whenever I say or do anything.

7 You know that I did not sin against you when I did not ask you to pay me for proclaiming to you the good news from God. *By doing that,* I made myself less important to make you more important. 8 *In fact,* I received money from other groups of believers. I accepted their money so that I could serve you. 9 Further, when I was with you, I did not have everything that I needed. However, I did not bother any of you *by asking for money*. *I could do that* because our fellow believers who traveled *with me* from Macedonia province gave me everything that I needed. Indeed, in every situation, I did not and never will bother you *by asking for money for myself*. 10 No one who lives in any part of Achaia province will be able to keep me from saying great things *about how I did not bother you*. What I am saying is as true as if the Messiah were saying it. 11 My reason for *not bothering you* is not that I do not care for you. God can testify *that I do care for you*.

12 Rather, *here is my reason for why* I will continue not to bother you. That way, I can prevent anyone from being able to say such great things about themselves as we *say about ourselves*. *I know that* some people want to do this. 13 Those people are not really those whom the Messiah sent to represent him. They deceive people with what they do, and they can only pretend to represent the Messiah. 14 That should not surprise us. The devil also pretends to be a glorious spiritual being. 15 So then, we should expect those who serve him also to pretend to help people become righteous. God will eventually give them what they deserve in proportion to what they have done.

16 I repeat what I said earlier: I do not want anyone to think that I am foolish. However, if you do *think that I am foolish*, you should at least allow me to act in foolish ways. That way, I too can say a few great things about myself. 17 What I am about to say is not how I speak when I am representing the Lord *Jesus*. Rather, I am about to speak foolishly as I prove that I can say great things about myself. 18 Many other people say great things about themselves in merely human ways. So, I too will say great things about myself. 19 *I know that you will listen to me,* because you consider yourselves to be wise people, so you are happy to be patient with other people who act foolishly. 20 In fact, you are patient *when people treat you badly*. They may force you to obey them. They may use up what you have. They may cheat you. They may say they are better than you. They may insult you. *However, you are still patient with them.* 21 *If that is the right way for powerful people to treat you, then* I admit *that how we acted when we were with you* shames us and proves that we are weak. On the other hand, whatever other people dare to do, I too can dare to do. Of course, I say these things only because I am acting foolishly. 22 Those people say they are Jews who speak Hebrew, but I also *am a Jew and speak Hebrew*. They say they are Israelites, but I also *am an Israelite*. They say they are descendants of Abraham, but I also *am a descendant of Abraham*. 23 They say they serve the Messiah, but I *serve the Messiah* even more. *Of course,* I am talking like a crazy person. *However,* I have worked harder *than they have*. People have put me in jail more *than them*. People have struck me very many times. I have almost died many times. 24 Five different times Jewish leaders had someone strike me *the maximum number of times:* 39. 25 Three different times leaders had someone repeatedly hit me with a stick. One time people threw stones at me *to kill me*. Three different times the ship *I was sailing in* sank. I have survived for 24 hours in the middle of the ocean. 26 I travel frequently. I go through dangerous places, including rivers, towns, deserts, and oceans. There are always people who could hurt me, including thieves, Jewish people, non-Jewish people, and people who pretend to be fellow believers. 27 I work very hard. I frequently do not sleep much. I do not have enough to eat or drink. I frequently go hungry. I sometimes freeze and do not have enough clothing. 28 Besides everything else *that I could mention*, I anxiously think daily about all the groups of believers. 29 When a fellow believer is feeble, I am feeble. When someone causes a fellow believer to sin, I become very angry.

30 Since I need to say great things about myself, I intend
to say great things about how feeble I am. 31 We all will
forever honor the God and Father of the Lord Jesus. He can
testify that what I am saying is true.
32 When I was in Damascus city, the local ruler who served
King Aretas had soldiers looking for me in the city to capture
me. 33 However, fellow believers helped me get away from
the local ruler. *They put me* in a large basket, *attached it to a
rope, and* let it down through an opening in the city wall.

12 I need to say great things about myself. *So,* although
it is not helpful, I am moving on to *speak about*
how the Lord *Jesus* specially shows things *to specific people*.
2 Fourteen years ago, God took a certain Christian to the
third *level of* heaven. I am not sure whether *God took him
there* physically or in a dream or spiritually. Only God can
be sure *how it happened*. 3 Now *I will tell you more about* that
specific Christian. *Again,* I am not sure whether *God took
him to the third level of heaven* physically or in a dream or
spiritually. Only God can be sure *how it happened*. 4 God took
that person into Paradise*, the place in heaven where dead
believers are*. There, he heard amazing things that he cannot
repeat to anyone. 5 I could say great things about that*, since
the person I have been talking about is me*. However, I will only
say great things about how feeble I am. 6 In fact, suppose
that I did want to say great things about myself. Since I
am speaking truthfully, I would still not be acting foolishly.
However, I decide not to *say great things about myself*. *That
way,* people can only characterize me by what they observe
me saying and doing. 7 So then, in order that I might not
become proud because God revealed such great things to
me, he allowed me to suffer. Specifically, a spiritual being
whom Satan sent made me suffer. That way, I might not
become proud. 8 I asked the Lord *Jesus* three different times
to make me stop suffering in that way. 9 He responded by
saying to me, “When I act kindly to you, that is all you need.
In fact, I make people fully powerful when they are feeble.”
Therefore, I will most happily say more great things about
how feeble I am. That way, the Messiah will always enable
me to act powerfully. 10 So then, I am happy *when bad things
happen to me* because *I serve* the Messiah. This includes when
I am feeble, when people say bad things about me, when
people hurt me, when people persecute me, and when I
struggle. *I am happy* because *God* empowers me when I am
feeble.
11 I have been speaking foolishly, which is what you
forced me to do. *You forced me* because you should be saying
that I am trustworthy, *but you are not saying that*. *You should
be saying that* because I am just as great as any people who
say that they represent the Messiah the best. *That is true*
even though I am not great at all. 12 I persevered in acting
in the ways that prove to you that I really am one whom the
Messiah sent to represent him. I did powerful and amazing
things. 13 Further, I did not treat you like you were less
important than any other group of believers. The only way
I acted differently with you was that I did not bother you
by asking you for money. If that was actually wrong, please
forgive me for doing it!
14 Pay attention! I am about to visit you for the third time.
Yet again, I will not bother you *by asking for money*. *That is*
because I want you *to trust me and the Messiah*. *I do not want*
the things that you have. In fact, since I am like your parent,
I should be saving money for you. Further, since you are like
my children, you should not be saving money for me. 15 I
will most happily do and experience anything to help you.
When I love you more *than I did before*, you should not love
me less *than you did before*.
16 You can agree, then, that I personally did not bother
you *by asking for money*. However, perhaps I am a clever
person. *Maybe* I somehow tricked you into giving me *money*.
17 *However,* I have not had anyone visit you who has acted
for me by cheating you. 18 *For example,* I asked Titus *to visit
you*, and I had a fellow believer go with him. *You know that*
Titus did not cheat you. He and I live the same way and do
the same things.
19 You should know that the reason why we have said
these things is not to explain to you that I and those who
serve with me are trustworthy. Rather, as those whom God
has united to the Messiah, we have been saying what pleases
God. Of course, *fellow believers* whom we love, we intend
everything we say and do to help you grow. 20 *I have said
these things* because I am concerned about *what will happen*
when I visit. *I am concerned that* I will discover that you are
not acting as I want *you to act* and that you will discover
that I am not acting as you want *me to act*. *I am concerned*
that you may be fighting *with each other*, being jealous *of
each other*, being angry *with each other*, trying to control *each
other*, saying bad things *about each other*, telling false stories
about others, saying great things about yourselves, or stirring
up crowds *against each other*. 21 *I am concerned* about *what
will happen* when I visit you this third time. God may make
me ashamed about you. Further, I may feel very sad about
many people who have previously done what is wrong and
have not stopped having improper sex.

13 *The scripture says:* “At least two or three witnesses
must say the same thing *about someone* before we
can believe that it is true.” *Be aware that* the next time that I
visit you will be the third time *that I will be a witness to what
you are doing*. 2 When I visited you the second time, I warned
all of you that I was going to punish everyone among you
who had been sinning. And now I am warning you again
while I am still away from you. When I visit you this third
time, I will punish everyone who has been sinning. 3 I tell
you this because you have demanded that I prove to you
that the Messiah is speaking to you when I speak to you. *You
will know this when he disciplines you.* He will not be weak
with you; instead, he will work powerfully among you. 4 You
see, *as a man,* the Messiah allowed himself to be weak when
people nailed him to a cross. But God is powerful, and he
has made him alive again. We, too, are weak human beings,
as he was. But God also works powerfully in us to make us
live as the Messiah does, so we will work powerfully among
you.
5 Each of you should ask yourself: “Do I trust the Messiah
and live as he directs me?” Each of you should test yourself
in this way. Then you will know that you truly live as one
with Jesus the Messiah. That is true unless, of course, you
fail this test. 6 As for us, I am certain that you will understand
that we have passed the test. 7 We pray to God that you may
not be doing any bad things. We pray for this, not because
we want people to consider that we have been successful
in disciplining you, but so that you would be doing good
things. We want this for you even if it means that people
consider that we have failed *because you did not need us*. 8 We
want you to do good things *even if then we cannot discipline
you and appear to be powerful* because we must obey God’s
true message. We cannot do anything that contradicts God’s

true message. [9] We are happy when *people think that* we are weak, because you are strong *in obeying God without needing discipline from us*. This is the very thing that we pray for, that you may decide to trust and obey God completely. [10] It is because I want you to trust and obey God completely that I am writing to you about these things while I am apart from you. Then when I come to you, I will not have to discipline you severely. The Lord has empowered me to represent him, but he did that so that I could encourage and help you *to trust God more*, not so that I could discourage you *from trusting God*.

[11] Here are the last things that I want to say to you, my fellow believers. Be joyful! Live in the way that God wants you to live. Let the things that I have said to you encourage you *to trust God more*. Agree with each other *about the important things*. Live peacefully with each other. *If you do these things,* God will be with you. He is the one who enables you to love and to be peaceful with others. [12] Greet each other affectionately in a way that is appropriate for those who are members of God's family. All of God's people *here* send greetings to you. [13] May the Lord Jesus the Messiah act kindly toward you, may God love you, and may the Holy Spirit be with you and join you all together.