

A Walk through 2 Corinthians

Introduction

Paul wanted to go back to Corinth to follow up after his first and second letters. The second letter is the one we know of and call 1 Corinthians. So he made plans to go back. But then news came in to him. There were false apostles who were teaching lies, causing division, and allowing ongoing sin.

Paul instead went to Macedonia as the Lord led him. But he was upset. He wrote a third letter to Corinthian believers, confronting their permissive lifestyle and allowing ongoing sin. We don't have this letter, but Paul mentions it in 2 Corinthians 2:3. He didn't wish a scathing rebuke. SO he went to Macedonia and sent the letter.

Apparently the letter worked! There was a change of heart, a renunciation of sin, and a desire for growth among the believers. And Paul took delight in the news, which then led him to write this fourth letter to the Corinthian believers. We call this one, 2 Corinthians.

Paul takes time to detail the costs of his own apostleship, the struggles and persecutions. He also details what makes him an apostle, establishing once for all his authority and leadership as given by God. Paul speaks of forgiveness and welcoming back the repentant brother.

He moves on to encourage the Corinthian believers to become givers, caring for others. And he beckons them to draw closer to the Lord and be led by the Holy Spirit. There are great lessons in here for us as well, so let's take that walk into 2 Corinthians.

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Chapter 1

'This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy. I am writing to God's church in Corinth and to all of his holy people throughout Greece. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. '

2 Corinthians 1:1-2

Paul writes again to the believers in Corinth. This letter is for all who believe in Greece, which means Athens, Philippi, Berea and Macedonia as well. His message is from Timothy too.

They begin with a blessing, from God our Father, and from our Lord, Jesus Christ. As Lord, in charge, we get a very specific blessing: Grace, and Peace. Our Lord extends grace, giving us such rich blessings we didn't earn. But He confers His blessing on us anyway. And there's proof that He has done so, His peace. We have His peace, knowing the issues of our sin and rebellion have once for all been settled by Jesus. The Lord himself took care of our failings on the cross, that is the grace. And it's complete, so we have peace!

To you also, grace and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ!

'All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you.

Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us. '

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

We praise our God because He gives us comfort. His mercy provides comfort in all our troubles.

Yes we have troubles, and then He sends comfort. He also causes us to comfort one another, with the comfort we have experienced.

Even when the troubles are overwhelming, God gives us comfort. So comfort one another, even as you share in the sufferings.

'We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we

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thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead.

And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us. And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety. '

2 Corinthians 1:8-11

In danger in Asia, Paul and company feared for their lives. They were persecuted, beaten, chased toward arrest and death. At the end of their abilities, they turned to Jesus for rescue. And He did. Paul declares that He will rescue them again. Their entire trust is in the Lord. And they are helped as you pray for their safety as well. God hears the prayers of His people. And as the Lord rescues, His people return praise to Him for all He does! This is the life cast upon the Lord, lived out in faith and trust in Him.

'We can say with confidence and a clear conscience that we have lived with a God-given holiness and sincerity in all our dealings. We have depended on God's grace, not on our own human wisdom. That is how we have conducted ourselves before the world, and especially toward you.

Our letters have been straightforward, and there is nothing written between the lines and nothing you can't understand. I hope someday you will fully understand us, even if you don't understand us now. Then on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, you will be proud of us in the same way we are proud of you.

Since I was so sure of your understanding and trust, I wanted to give you a double blessing by visiting you twice— first on my way to Macedonia and again when I returned from Macedonia. Then you could send me on my way to Judea. '

2 Corinthians 1:12-16

There's been a change of plans, and the people who were banking on the visit are now upset. They thought Paul was coming before going to Macedonia, but he didn't. He had mentioned it in his 3rd letter, and was sincere. So he is writing now, letting them know he had no ulterior purpose, he simply needed to change plans. There is no hidden message here. He goes on to explain what his prior plan was, a visit to Corinth, then Macedonia, then back to Corinth, and to be sent on to Judea. But it didn't happen this way.

So how do I do when my plans are interrupted. I was counting on a specific itinerary, and this blew up. Now what do I do? Well, we might make our plans, but we are not in charge. We call Jesus "Lord" because He is the ruler. He moves us, sends us, directs us, and provides for us. He is in charge. So hold your plans loosely, and give grace to others when Jesus changes their plans too. The church in Corinth is learning this.

'You may be asking why I changed my plan. Do you think I make my plans carelessly? Do you think I am like people of the world who say "Yes" when they really mean "No"? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you does not waver between "Yes" and "No." For Jesus Christ, the

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Son of God, does not waver between “Yes” and “No.” He is the one whom Silas, Timothy, and I preached to you, and as God’s ultimate “Yes,” he always does what he says. For all of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding “Yes!” And through Christ, our “Amen” (which means “Yes”) ascends to God for his glory.

It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us. Now I call upon God as my witness that I am telling the truth. The reason I didn’t return to Corinth was to spare you from a severe rebuke. But that does not mean we want to dominate you by telling you how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy, for it is by your own faith that you stand firm.'

2 Corinthians 1:17-24

The reason Paul changed his plans? Somewhere in his thinking, he realized he was headed to Corinth with a strong rebuke. And apparently the Lord got through to him, and had him go to Macedonia instead. Paul had a YES to go to Corinth, but then the Lord moved him instead to Macedonia.

Very likely, Holy Spirit was already working in the Corinthian church, convicting of sin, and causing repentance over the immorality which Paul had written about in his prior letter. With God, we make YES plans and NO plans. We are certain. Yet the Lord moves us and changes up, because He is Lord. We are not. We hear His voice. He knows us. And we follow Him. (John 10:27)

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Chapter 2

'So I decided that I would not bring you grief with another painful visit. For if I cause you grief, who will make me glad? Certainly not someone I have grieved. That is why I wrote to you as I did, so that when I do come, I won't be grieved by the very ones who ought to give me the greatest joy. Surely you all know that my joy comes from your being joyful.

I wrote that letter in great anguish, with a troubled heart and many tears. I didn't want to grieve you, but I wanted to let you know how much love I have for you. I am not overstating it when I say that the man who caused all the trouble hurt all of you more than he hurt me. Most of you opposed him, and that was punishment enough.

Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement. So I urge you now to reaffirm your love for him. '

2 Corinthians 2:1-8

Church discipline is hard. We don't want to directly confront sin. Yet we must. If possible we must rescue our brothers so they can walk with the Lord with a pure heart and clean conscience. So Paul skipped his promised visit, and instead wrote a very strong letter so the believers would get it right. They did put the man out of the church. And he then came around, repentant. So Paul now says the punishment was enough, it's time to welcome the brother back in.

What a joy when we can rescue our brothers, and we all can walk together before the Lord!

'I wrote to you as I did to test you and see if you would fully comply with my instructions. When you forgive this man, I forgive him, too. And when I forgive whatever needs to be forgiven, I do so with Christ's authority for your benefit, so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes. '

2 Corinthians 2:9-11

Corinth is maturing as believers. They are less divisive, and are more responsive to teaching. Paul wrote about sin, and they obeyed the Lord to remove the sin.

So now Paul is teaching them about forgiveness, and welcoming back a repentant believer. When we forgive, we are declaring the truth from the Lord, that He has forgiven the sinner. Declaration of God's truth and authority prevents Satan from taking hold. His schemes are thwarted and God is glorified. We know he is evil. We know the Lord is in charge. And we have been brought into Jesus' family and we stand on His authority!

'When I came to the city of Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, the Lord opened a door of opportunity for me. But I had no peace of mind because my dear brother Titus hadn't yet arrived with a report from you. So I said good-bye and went on to Macedonia to find him. '

2 Corinthians 2:12-13

There is lots of opportunity to preach, and we are glad. But we must first be led by Holy Spirit, and His peace. If He is not in it, I am not in it. This is a simple concept. He leads, we follow. And we wait on Him for confirmation, or for denial. Paul shows us how!

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'But thank God! He has made us his captives and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this? '

2 Corinthians 2:14-16

Everything we do is part of Jesus' triumphal parade. He is the Lord, we are His body. He is walking through this world, rescuing lost sheep. And He is using us to spread that message, to care for the rescued, and to do His work. To the rescued, we are a sweet encouragement. But to the lost, we are disparaged. For Corinth, this means Paul's plans were adjusted, so that God's plans would perfectly happen. Jesus holds the calendar and the agenda!

'You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.'

2 Corinthians 2:17

Being a vessel of God means His Spirit is in us, leading us, teaching us and using us. Our role is to follow, and to share what He gives. We don't do this to make money, or to steal from others. We simply follow. God provides. Not only this, but we preach with His authority. "Thus says the Lord!" We are thrilled to be His mouthpiece. This is how we do it!

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Chapter 3

'Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not! The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you. Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts. We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ.

It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life. '

2 Corinthians 3:1-6

We are ministers of a new covenant. And this calling is from the Holy Spirit who makes it so. The wonderful confirmation of this calling is a long trail of changed lives as we have cared for many. The believers are my calling card. Their growth, new life of faith, and love for others is the proof that Holy Spirit has actually done the work in establishing our ministry!

'The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away. Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way.

So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever! Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. '

2 Corinthians 3:7-13

Think about Moses, many days on the mountain with God, and he came down just beaming. His countenance showed that he had been with God. So what about us? Holy Spirit doesn't leave, He is right here, right now. His power is pulsing. His wisdom is pouring into us. His direction is leading. We have all of Him. He is in the business of glorifying Jesus and leading Jesus people like you and me.

We can expect Him to change everything, and His work will be visible, more than He was in Moses! Holy Spirit sent by Jesus will do far more, in a new way, than the rules and law could ever evoke. We are called to live with Him and follow where He leads. Our lives are much more than simple rules, must-do's and shall-not's. We are His people, we hear His voice. He knows us, and we follow Him.

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'We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away.

But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.

But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.'

2 Corinthians 3:13-18

Turn to Jesus, Messiah, and the veil will be lifted. They cannot understand today, because the Spirit has left a veil over their minds. They hear the Torah, but cannot process the meaning. It's dead to them. But when we turn to Jesus, Holy Spirit removes the veil, and suddenly there is freedom, life, understanding. And the Lord makes us more and more into His image! Oh, come to Jesus!

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Chapter 4

'Therefore, since God in his mercy has given us this new way, we never give up. We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this.'

If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. '

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

We are learning to walk in freedom by the Spirit. He leads and we follow. And there is a charge given us, to preach the good news of Jesus. We do so for everyone, and we trust God to lift the veil. This is how we do it!

'We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.'

Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you. '

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

We live through hard times, and the power of God is made evident. We have trials, suffering, even being pursued for death, but we press on. We don't live by our strength and power, but by trust. Our weakness is made strong because of Jesus' power. We stare down the oppression, so the life of Jesus can flow to you and others. Our suffering means you can walk in life with our Lord!

'But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, "I believed in God, so I spoke." We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. All of this is for your benefit.'

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And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory. '

2 Corinthians 4:13-15

Because I believe in the Lord, I tell others. I am eager to share the joy I have, so others can have the joy as well. We are blessed as more and more join us, and thankful. And, the Lord receives all the more glory as more and more people love and praise Him!

'That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.'

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

We continue. We persist. We struggle, and fight, straining for every opportunity to bring Christ glory, and bring to you, Jesus. He is worth it. Holy Spirit helps us continue, tenacious, focused on the blessing for you, and the praise for heaven!

Fix your eyes on Jesus, and go through the suffering. It's a short season, and glory will be brought forever to our Lord. And we get to be a part, forever. The path is laid out before us. So let's go where He goes, despite the troubles. Let's say what He says, despite the threats. Let's bring an offering to Him, people from every tribe, language, nation and family!

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Chapter 5

'For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing.

For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. '

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

The Gospel is such a wonderful message. But the confrontations, attacks, fights, beatings and persecution is a high price to pay. Paul has been going through all these, and he's very weary. All who live for the Gospel run the risk of persecution. Paul says that he longs for the new bodies we get in heaven, that they come with new life. And he longs for the life.

So what is this new life like? It's a life filled with God's power, His word, His spiritual leading. The hardships we receive in preaching Jesus are offset by Holy Spirit leading us, speaking to us, working in power. We have God living in us, today. He is the guarantee that Heaven is real, that we will receive new bodies, and that every hardship in this life is more than worth it. Take time with Holy Spirit today. Sit in His presence. Offer Him praise, listen to His counsel. Be encouraged by His love for you.

'So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. For we live by believing and not by seeing. Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. '

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

We are aliens here. Our home is in heaven, and new heavenly bodies await us. But for now, even under persecution, we live in these bodies, and we strive to please Him. Our calling is to follow Holy Spirit, proclaiming Christ, and bringing glory to our Father.

We are glad to be here, because He is doing a work. And we will work in that role as long as He leads. We said earlier that God receives glory, and men receive blessing. We are God's channels for this.

Let every person be diligent to share the message of Christ. Let's bring glory to the Father, even as He blesses people across the world. And this is a test, where we will be judged for how we did. So we press on! You do so too!

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'Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart.

If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. '

2 Corinthians 5:11-15

Gladly we work to persuade others to follow Jesus. Yet it's also our obligation, and so we get after it. This is the love of God, working out in us. He gets more glory, and we continually see His transformation in others, even in you.

Friends, the old life is dead and gone. The new life in Jesus is thriving We aren't crazy, we are complete, and we are excited. This is for you too!

'So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! '

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

We've stopped judging people. Life is not a performance. Life is a relationship with Jesus Christ. With Him, everything is new. He is building from the ground up. He's doing this in me. He's doing this in you. Anyone who belongs to Christ is brand new. He is certainly not a person for me to judge. Holy Spirit knows the build, has the plans, and loves the person. The old life is gone. No more judgment! God is creating a new life. What a wonder this will be!

'And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.'

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

Brand new. Clean. Redeemed. It's a fresh start! And we had nothing to do with it. I was unable. And then God stepped in, placed me in Christ, and I am new. Father and I are reconciled, and He has adopted me. Jesus did the work, and Holy Spirit is now leading. And I have a new job! I have been given the task of sharing this message - and so I beg you, be reconciled with God! His love for you is immense, and His Spirit will make all the things new! This is how we do it!

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Chapter 6

'For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. '

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

After this life is an even better life. New bodies, and even more thriving and exulting as we are with the Lord and with each other. We won't be ethereal spirits, but people thriving, and it will be richer than what we know now. And there's a proof! God has given us Holy Spirit today. The life we experience following Him, listening to Him, seeing His power, watching Him work - all this is a promise that Heaven will be even more. Take time with Holy Spirit today. Ask of Him, then quietly await His response. He is the proof. The life we have with Him now is the guarantee of eternity!

'We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything. '

2 Corinthians 6:6-10

My proof is my character. God has been at work in me, making me more like Himself. So I know that I am His, and everyone can see it. But He hasn't stopped there, He works through us. And so we work, preaching and teaching, and using His word to defend when needed as well. These are the two facets of walking with Jesus. First He rebuilds us. But alongside that, we get active in our faith. We preach. We pray. We admonish. We bless others. We make disciples, and lead them to be disciple makers too. This is how we do it!

'Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly with you, and our hearts are open to you. There is no lack of love on our part, but you have withheld your love from us. I am asking you to respond as if you were my own children. Open your hearts to us! '

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

Seeking restoration is hard. The believers in Corinth have been divided, argumentative and not sincere in their following Jesus. But Paul says it's been too long, and they need to come back together. So he goes to them in the letter and asks to be reconciled. Do we have broken relationships that need rebuilding? This is how we do it.

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'Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

As God said:

"I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

No, don't compromise. In a complex world, serve the Lord only. Don't bind your future apart from the Lord. Don't put your trust, your hope, or your investment in other places. God Himself has redeemed us, and He alone deserves our hope, our trust, our partnership. As in John 10, His sheep hear His voice. He knows them, and they follow Him. Is it true with me? Where is my hope? Yes, we work in this world. Paul worked as a tent maker. And we do too. But where is our trust? Where do we get our direction? How do we go forward day by day? Let us make certain our hope and our full dependence is with our Father. Jesus set it up. And Holy Spirit keeps us in Him.

Do you hear the call of the Lord? He wants you. He wants to live in you and with you. He wants relationship. He wants commitment and devotion. Do you hear the promise of the Lord? He will live with us. He will walk with us. He will be our God. We will be His people. And the choice is ours to make. This is not a "Come, Sit, Listen" relationship. This isn't playing church. This is personal, and He will prove Himself. Will we respond and prove ourselves?

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Chapter 7

'Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

Please open your hearts to us. We have not done wrong to anyone, nor led anyone astray, nor taken advantage of anyone. I'm not saying this to condemn you. I said before that you are in our hearts, and we live or die together with you. I have the highest confidence in you, and I take great pride in you. You have greatly encouraged me and made me happy despite all our troubles.'

2 Corinthians 7:1-4

The promise of personal relationship with God motivates us to press on through difficult times, and minister to others. We pursue The Lord because He has already restored us to Himself. And the promise of heaven beckons us to work toward holiness even more.

Paul also reaches to the believers in Corinth and asks for restored relationships there. When we are right with the Lord, we desire to be right with people too.

'When we arrived in Macedonia, there was no rest for us. We faced conflict from every direction, with battles on the outside and fear on the inside. But God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus. His presence was a joy, but so was the news he brought of the encouragement he received from you. When he told us how much you long to see me, and how sorry you are for what happened, and how loyal you are to me, I was filled with joy! '

2 Corinthians 7:5-7

But God sent Titus! Sometimes He sends someone to come alongside, and there is joy. In this case, there was exhilaration, because the believers in Corinth had repented. They changed their ways. Specifically, they renounced their sin, and turned back to the Lord. And they embraced Paul. He had been there at the beginning, teaching them to follow Jesus. But false prophets had come and divided the group. The bad teachers had caused division and sin. It was a terrible mess.

Paul walked through the whole mess with them. He did it from afar, using letters, and the power of prayer. And the Lord answered. Now Corinthian believers were back to following the Lord. This is what making disciples looks like!

'I am not sorry that I sent that severe letter to you, though I was sorry at first, for I know it was painful to you for a little while. Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow.

But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation,

A Walk through 2 Corinthians

such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right. '

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

Now about that letter! Paul took the hard road, to bring a harsh charge against his brothers and sisters in Corinth. They were tolerating sin, and trusting false leaders. We don't have this 3rd letter, but Paul does explain it. He wrote to exhort the Corinthians to separate from sin, and remove the sinner from among them. He challenged the believers to be reconciled with God, and with himself.

And the letter worked! There was great sorrow over their own sin, and they repented. They turned from their sin, obeyed the Lord, and were restored also with Paul. The sorrow they felt is godly sorrow, leading to repentance and salvation. This was hard to write, hard to read, but crucial in obedience. And the Lord brought very fruitful results.

Friends, take the hard road. Confront sin, demand righteous living, and draw people back to the Lord. This is the work that God does, and the fruit He brings. And you are worth it. Jesus wants you to live in rich relationship with Him. Holy Spirit is ever ready to pour Himself through you!

'My purpose, then, was not to write about who did the wrong or who was wronged. I wrote to you so that in the sight of God you could see for yourselves how loyal you are to us. We have been greatly encouraged by this. In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was about the way all of you welcomed him and set his mind at ease. I had told him how proud I was of you—and you didn't disappoint me. I have always told you the truth, and now my boasting to Titus has also proved true! Now he cares for you more than ever when he remembers the way all of you obeyed him and welcomed him with such fear and deep respect. I am very happy now because I have complete confidence in you.'

2 Corinthians 7:12-16

Look at what God has done. He has brought new life into you. And now this life is pouring out to others too. Titus is a great example. You welcomed him, and earnestly followed his teaching too.

As believers we love the Lord and the people He sends. We start with His teaching, and we then put the words into action, pouring out for others.

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Chapter 8

'Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do. '

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Poor, yet rich in giving, the believers in Macedonia are teaching us. This is New Testament Giving in action. We are not talking a percentage, we are speaking of generosity in every way. These believers gave of their money, they gave of their time. They gave of their skills. They gave by participating. They would do anything in any way to help. This is not a percentage. This is joy pouring out into service and support. This is how we do it!

'So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches. You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. '

2 Corinthians 8:6-9

As you grow in Christ, add Giving to your regular practice. Make generosity one of your markers. Look to Jesus as the example. And consider Titus who recommended you do so too!

'Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal. As the Scriptures say, "Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough." '

2 Corinthians 8:10-15

Jesus taught His disciples about giving. And Paul shows this isn't just for disciples. Do you have two coats and your brother needs one? Give. Give as you can, and give generously!

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'But thank God! He has given Titus the same enthusiasm for you that I have. Titus welcomed our request that he visit you again. In fact, he himself was very eager to go and see you. We are also sending another brother with Titus. All the churches praise him as a preacher of the Good News. He was appointed by the churches to accompany us as we take the offering to Jerusalem—a service that glorifies the Lord and shows our eagerness to help.'

2 Corinthians 8:16-19

God provides gifted leaders to help us grow. For the believers in Corinth, God provided Titus and another brother, eager to come, to encourage, to instruct and to exhort. He is Jesus with skin on, eager to help, and excited to see the Lord build up the Corinthians.

We must celebrate when the Lord sends us gifted leaders! And if we are the ones sent, we must be eager and encouraging, longing to see Holy Spirit work to build His body!

'We are traveling together to guard against any criticism for the way we are handling this generous gift. We are careful to be honorable before the Lord, but we also want everyone else to see that we are honorable.'

2 Corinthians 8:20-21

Paul is wise to have two people together bring the financial gift. Nobody is skimming, and as believers they are honorable in this task. They demonstrate to everyone watching that they can be trusted.

We must do the same. Multiple people together in the finances, so that the Lord gets the glory and honor, and the servants are seen with favor. This is how we do it!

'We are also sending with them another of our brothers who has proven himself many times and has shown on many occasions how eager he is. He is now even more enthusiastic because of his great confidence in you. If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you. And the brothers with him have been sent by the churches, and they bring honor to Christ. So show them your love, and prove to all the churches that our boasting about you is justified.'

2 Corinthians 8:22-24

Paul is sending Titus, another brother who is eager to be among the believers at Corinth. He is excited to see them grow. Titus is a pastor and teacher, and a perfect help for the believers in Corinth. They have responded and are following Christ, and he will help them grow even stronger. One of God's gifts is the teachers He sends to help. Receive them!

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Chapter 9

'I really don't need to write to you about this ministry of giving for the believers in Jerusalem. For I know how eager you are to help, and I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving. But I am sending these brothers to be sure you really are ready, as I have been telling them, and that your money is all collected. I don't want to be wrong in my boasting about you.

We would be embarrassed—not to mention your own embarrassment—if some Macedonian believers came with me and found that you weren't ready after all I had told them! So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready. But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly. '

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

Paul sends a gentle reminder to the Corinthians. They wanted to give a year ago, and soon he will be coming to collect their gift for the starving believers in Jerusalem. But remind them he does. He wants them to give willingly. But he isn't silent about the giving.

How is your giving? Are you giving generously? Are you giving willingly? I can say for certain that we do both. Our supply comes from the Lord, and we know that. He is a God of bounty, not of scarcity. So give generously!

'So I thought I should send these brothers ahead of me to make sure the gift you promised is ready. But I want it to be a willing gift, not one given grudgingly. Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." '

2 Corinthians 9:5-7

This is how we give, generously, willingly, without pressure. We ask the Lord and He directs. That is what we give. Paul encourages big giving, and you will experience God's big supply for your needs. But decide in your heart. Be willing, not unwilling. Be cheerful - then give that amount! This is how we do it.

'And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say,

"They share freely and give generously to the poor.
Their good deeds will be remembered forever."

For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous.'

2 Corinthians 9:8-11a

<https://www.bible.com/bible/116/2CO.9.8-11>

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God is the one who generously provides. Yet He is proportional. He wants us to be givers like Him. And in the same way, He provides generously to us, through harvest, through others' gifts, through growing resources.

God's people give God's way, and await God's supply. This is how we do it!

'You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right. My purpose, then, was not to write about who did the wrong or who was wronged. I wrote to you so that in the sight of God you could see for yourselves how loyal you are to us. We have been greatly encouraged by this.

In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was about the way all of you welcomed him and set his mind at ease. I had told him how proud I was of you—and you didn't disappoint me. I have always told you the truth, and now my boasting to Titus has also proved true! Now he cares for you more than ever when he remembers the way all of you obeyed him and welcomed him with such fear and deep respect. I am very happy now because I have complete confidence in you.'

2 Corinthians 7:11b-16

Paul encourages them, as they have returned wholeheartedly to the Lord in obeying Him, in giving, in caring for one another. And so commendations are given. Paul shares how delighted he is to see their hearts are true. He is excited that Titus is so welcomed in Corinth as well. This is what the fruits of exhortation look like. Let us encourage one another in the very same way!

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Chapter 10

'Now I, Paul, appeal to you with the gentleness and kindness of Christ—though I realize you think I am timid in person and bold only when I write from far away. Well, I am begging you now so that when I come I won't have to be bold with those who think we act from human motives.

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ. And after you have become fully obedient, we will punish everyone who remains disobedient. '

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

Here's humble leadership. Paul, an apostle by Jesus, is gentle toward the Corinthians. But he is not weak. He will take the gentle course to lead, guide and correct. But later, if necessary, he will confront the proud. Pride comes from self-promotion, not from humble submission to the Lord. Note, PRIDE today, it's the same.

Once you've met Jesus, and submitted to Him, every stance and every action has service and humility in it. But the goal is to render each believer strong in Christ. Paul won't back down in person, if called to do so. We have the Lord and we obey. Paul wishes the same for these Corinthian believers.

'Look at the obvious facts. Those who say they belong to Christ must recognize that we belong to Christ as much as they do. I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But our authority builds you up; it doesn't tear you down. So I will not be ashamed of using my authority.

I'm not trying to frighten you by my letters. For some say, "Paul's letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!" Those people should realize that our actions when we arrive in person will be as forceful as what we say in our letters from far away. Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant!

We will not boast about things done outside our area of authority. We will boast only about what has happened within the boundaries of the work God has given us, which includes our working with you. We are not reaching beyond these boundaries when we claim authority over you, as if we had never visited you. For we were the first to travel all the way to Corinth with the Good News of Christ.

Nor do we boast and claim credit for the work someone else has done. Instead, we hope that your faith will grow so that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended. Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places far beyond you, where no one else is working. Then there will be no question of our boasting about work done in someone else's territory.

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As the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord ." When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them.'

2 Corinthians 10:7-18

Boast only in the Lord. The only measure of our work is the fruit that the Lord has given. The only authority taken is that which the Lord has rightly given. Paul was the first to bring the good news of Jesus to Corinth, and his credentials are the demonstrated fruit of the Lord. We don't compare to men, but instead we stand on the works the Lord has done through us. Our teaching and instruction is to build the believers' faith, and extend the Kingdom to include others too. We seek their growth. This is how we do it.

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Chapter 11

'I hope you will put up with a little more of my foolishness. Please bear with me. For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.'

2 Corinthians 11:1-4

Paul had been accused of foolish concerns by these other leaders in Corinth. But he does not back down. His real concern is that the believers have compromised their faith. Paul wants them wholly for Jesus, no compromise. And this is what we want for you too. Eve was challenged by the serpent, with the words, “Did God really say...” And Satan will use the same challenge against God’s word. Don’t fall for it! Study His word, learn it, live it. Meet with Him over it!

'But I don’t consider myself inferior in any way to these “super apostles” who teach such things. I may be unskilled as a speaker, but I’m not lacking in knowledge. We have made this clear to you in every possible way.

Was I wrong when I humbled myself and honored you by preaching God’s Good News to you without expecting anything in return? I “robbed” other churches by accepting their contributions so I could serve you at no cost.

And when I was with you and didn’t have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be. Why? Because I don’t love you? God knows that I do. As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one in all of Greece will ever stop me from boasting about this.'

2 Corinthians 11:5-11

Paul didn't come with beautiful speech or clever preaching. He simply presented Christ in the power of the Spirit. And he did so humbly.

He didn't become a burden, because he wanted the gospel to come free of charge. He certainly had a right to care from the Corinth believers, but instead he waited for his friends from Macedonia to provide for him, so the gospel would be completely free.

His love for the Corinth believers was deep, and his intent was they grow up into Christ as mature effective believers. We want the same for you!

'But I will continue doing what I have always done. This will undercut those who are looking for an opportunity to boast that their work is just like ours. These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no wonder that his servants also

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disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve. '

2 Corinthians 11:12-15

Continue in your work. False teachers will prove themselves by their actions, by their errant teaching, by their lack of fruit. Paul points out that they will look like true teachers. In Corinth, they divide, they ridicule others, and they make up rules. Even Satan's demons appear as angels of light. They look really good. But Paul takes time to point them out. He isn't denigrating people, he is helping the believers to know what is true and right. It's OK for us to point out false teachers in the same way. Our goal is to build up believers into Christ, that they will mature and thrive in relationship with Him.

'Again I say, don't think that I am a fool to talk like this. But even if you do, listen to me, as you would to a foolish person, while I also boast a little. Such boasting is not from the Lord, but I am acting like a fool. And since others boast about their human achievements, I will, too. After all, you think you are so wise, but you enjoy putting up with fools!

You put up with it when someone enslaves you, takes everything you have, takes advantage of you, takes control of everything, and slaps you in the face. I'm ashamed to say that we've been too "weak" to do that! But whatever they dare to boast about—I'm talking like a fool again—I dare to boast about it, too.

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea.

I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger? '

2 Corinthians 11:16-29

Comparing to others is foolish, and we shouldn't. In this case, Paul is contending for the Gospel. False teachers have been plying their trade in Corinth, and deceiving the believers. They each have their resume, and take time to belittle Paul. Why? So they can gain loyalty, and ultimately divide the body of Christ.

So Paul goes for it. He takes on their challenge, and brings his own resume. Part of Paul's makeup is his heritage as a Jewish leader and rabbi. But the majority is the testimony of what the Lord has led him through. So Paul brings it all out.

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Note the reason for his declaration. He wants to bring the church back to purity before the Lord. He doesn't want them to be led away from Jesus. And if it takes worldly argument to gain a hearing, he will do it.

We must be willing to have the hard conversations if we are to rescue the dying, and restore the lost brothers and sisters. If Jesus will bring you to the place of hardship, He will take you through it for His glory. Go there.

'If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, who is worthy of eternal praise, knows I am not lying. When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me. I had to be lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall to escape from him.'

2 Corinthians 11:30-33

When I talk about credentials, I will share the hard parts, my weakness, hardships and trials. Jesus came and rescued me. He led me into those, and brought me through them. It's His foresight, His power, His personal relationship, and His victory that keep dragging me through. Celebrate everything He does, even the hard ones...

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Chapter 12

'This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell. That experience is worth boasting about, but I'm not going to do it. I will boast only about my weaknesses.

If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.'

2 Corinthians 12:1-7

I have no right in boasting. Anything in my life is because of Christ. But I will exult. I will take joy and thrill at all the Lord has done. He has done great things. And He has let me be a part. But it's not because of me. He leaves weaknesses in me too, so I am reminded it's all His work and not mine. So I boast of Him. If I have credibility, again, it's because of Him!

... So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."

So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. '

2 Corinthians 12:7b-10

God gave a weakness and hardship. These came to build humility and a draw to close reliance on the Lord. Paul wanted out. But God's answer wasn't relief. Instead God's answer was infusion by His Spirit, and close relationship. He calls it grace. It's where God cares for us in the hardship, rather than simply removing obstacles. Oh how He desires the same relationship with each of us. He's here. Lean into Him.

'You have made me act like a fool. You ought to be writing commendations for me, for I am not at all inferior to these "super apostles," even though I am nothing at all. When I was with you, I certainly gave you proof that I am an apostle. For I patiently did many signs and wonders and miracles among you. The only thing I failed to do, which I do in the other churches, was to become a financial burden to you. Please forgive me for this wrong!

Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have—I want you. After all, children don't provide for their parents. Rather, parents

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provide for their children. I will gladly spend myself and all I have for you, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me. '

2 Corinthians 12:11-15

Corinthian believers have been denigrating Paul, causing division, and minimizing the work which the Lord did through him. Paul wants these believers to get beyond division, and work toward fellowship together and with the Lord, seeking all that Holy Spirit wants to do among them.

Immature believers cause problems. But growing believers repent of sin, and work toward unity in the body, and the fruit that comes from the Lord. That's what Jesus wants. That's what Holy Spirit wants. That's what glorifies the Father. Paul seeks this among them.

And Paul notes that the one whom God sends among them is worthy of their financial support. God has the church provide for the teachers and workers. And Paul has shown he is among those leaders that God has sent.

'Some of you admit I was not a burden to you. But others still think I was sneaky and took advantage of you by trickery. But how? Did any of the men I sent to you take advantage of you? When I urged Titus to visit you and sent our other brother with him, did Titus take advantage of you? No! For we have the same spirit and walk in each other's steps, doing things the same way. Perhaps you think we're saying these things just to defend ourselves. No, we tell you this as Christ's servants, and with God as our witness. Everything we do, dear friends, is to strengthen you.'

2 Corinthians 12:16-19

Being careful not to take any advantage. We walk carefully, so nobody can charge us with deceit. And even them, some will. Satan wants to destroy the church, and he is always seeking an angle.

Paul tells us why we are so careful. Everything we do is to strengthen the believers. This is our target, strong believers in strong fellowship.

'For I am afraid that when I come I won't like what I find, and you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorderly behavior. Yes, I am afraid that when I come again, God will humble me in your presence. And I will be grieved because many of you have not given up your old sins. You have not repented of your impurity, sexual immorality, and eagerness for lustful pleasure.'

2 Corinthians 12:20-21

To return and find the believers have not drawn close to the Lord is frightening. We bring the gospel, and we invite people to turn to the Lord. His invitation is that people act, they turn away from their sins. He infuses them with His Spirit, and relationship begins.

There's the work that He does to cause the turning, but there's the work we do in response. The believers in Corinth disregarded their part, and remain walking in their sin.

How about you? Have you turned to Jesus, quietly worshiped, prayed, listened, and allowed Him to begin His work in you? Come back the next day - same thing! Keep seeking Him and He will be found by you.

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He promises blessing, and He pours it out. He invites us to draw near to Him and raise our hands in worship, glorifying Him! And He plants His Kingdom here on earth as an invitation, as a declaration against sin, and as a sword to defeat satan.

Unlike Corinth, we want you "IN" - so take the invitation!

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Chapter 13

'This is the third time I am coming to visit you (and as the Scriptures say, "The facts of every case must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses"). I have already warned those who had been sinning when I was there on my second visit. Now I again warn them and all others, just as I did before, that next time I will not spare them. I will give you all the proof you want that Christ speaks through me.

Christ is not weak when he deals with you; he is powerful among you. Although he was crucified in weakness, he now lives by the power of God. We, too, are weak, just as Christ was, but when we deal with you we will be alive with him and will have God's power. Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you ; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith. As you test yourselves, I hope you will recognize that we have not failed the test of apostolic authority.'

2 Corinthians 13:1-6

Paul is strong in his challenge to the believers in Corinth. And they need the challenge. Are they walking with the Lord or not? Christ doesn't accept second place. He wants disciples to love Him and walk with Him.

Paul is coming to Corinth, and will work by Holy Spirit. Yes there will be healings. Words of knowledge, and exhortation are coming too. Those who are compromised in their faith will be revealed.

This is true for us as well. Holy Spirit will reveal, and we will be known. Anyone who is dancing on the edge of sin, this is a warning to you. Come back to the Lord. Repent. Follow Him. Love Him.

'We pray to God that you will not do what is wrong by refusing our correction. I hope we won't need to demonstrate our authority when we arrive. Do the right thing before we come—even if that makes it look like we have failed to demonstrate our authority. For we cannot oppose the truth, but must always stand for the truth. We are glad to seem weak if it helps show that you are actually strong. We pray that you will become mature. I am writing this to you before I come, hoping that I won't need to deal severely with you when I do come. For I want to use the authority the Lord has given me to strengthen you, not to tear you down.

Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet each other with a sacred kiss. All of God's people here send you their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.'

2 Corinthians 13:7-14

Hear the correction given. Don't resist it, but apply it as you walk with the Lord. Finally, be joyful, grow up, encourage and live in peace and harmony. This is how we do it!