

Paul's Fourth Letter to the Corinthians – Part 2 (Fall 54)

2 Corinthians 2:14–7:16

The Fragrance of Paul's Ministry

2:14 But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and who makes known through us the fragrance that consists of the knowledge of him in every place.

15 For we are a sweet aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing—

16 to the latter an odor from death to death, but to the former a fragrance from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

17 For we are not like so many others, hucksters who peddle the word of God for profit, but we are speaking in Christ before God as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God.

The Corinthians are Paul's Letter

3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? We don't need letters of recommendation to you or from you as some other people do, do we?

2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone,

3 revealing that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not *on stone tablets* but on tablets of human hearts. [cf. [Exod 24:12](#)]

Paul as Minister of the New Covenant

4 Now we have such confidence in God through Christ.

5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as if it were coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who made us adequate to be servants of a new covenant not based on the letter but on the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 But if the ministry that produced death—carved in letters on stone tablets—came with glory, so that the Israelites could not keep their eyes fixed on the face of Moses because of the glory of his face (a glory which was made ineffective),

8 how much more glorious will the ministry of the Spirit be?

9 For if there was glory in the ministry that produced condemnation, how much more does the ministry that produces righteousness excel in glory!

10 For indeed, what had been glorious now has no glory because of the tremendously greater glory of what replaced it.

11 For if what was made ineffective came with glory, how much more has what remains come in glory!

12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we behave with great boldness,

13 and not like Moses who used to put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from staring at the result of the glory that was made ineffective. [cf. [Exod 34:29–30](#)]

14 But their minds were closed. For to this very day, the same veil remains when they hear the old covenant read. It has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away.

15 But until this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds,

16 but when one turns to the Lord, *the veil is removed*. [cf. [Exod 34:34](#)]

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom.

18 And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Paul's Ministry of Proclaiming Christ Not Himself

4:1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, just as God has shown us mercy, we do not become discouraged.

2 But we have rejected shameful hidden deeds, not behaving with deceptiveness or distorting the word of God, but by open proclamation of the truth we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience before God.

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing,

4 among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.

5 For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who said "*Let light shine out of darkness*," [[Gen 1:3](#)] is the one who shined in our hearts to give us the light of the glorious knowledge of God in the face of Christ.

List of Afflictions—Paul's Suffering Brings Glory to God

7 But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that the extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

8 We are experiencing trouble on every side, but are not crushed; we are perplexed, but not driven to despair;

9 we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are knocked down, but not destroyed,

10 always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our body.

11 For we who are alive are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal body.

12 As a result, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

13 But since we have the same spirit of faith as that shown in what has been written, *“I believed; therefore I spoke,”* [Ps 116:10] we also believe, therefore we also speak.

14 We do so because we know that the one who raised up Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus and will bring us with you into his presence.

15 For all these things are for your sake, so that the grace that is including more and more people may cause thanksgiving to increase to the glory of God.

The Hope of the Resurrection

16 Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away, our inner person is being renewed day by day.

17 For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison

18 because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, the tent we live in, is dismantled, we have a building from God, a house not built by human hands, that is eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this earthly house we groan, because we desire to put on our heavenly dwelling,

3 if indeed, after we have put on our heavenly house, we will not be found naked.

4 For we groan while we are in this tent, since we are weighed down, because we do not want to be unclothed, but clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

5 Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment.

6 Therefore we are always full of courage, and we know that as long as we are alive here on earth we are absent from the Lord—

7 for we live by faith, not by sight.

8 Thus we are full of courage and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

9 So then whether we are alive or away, we make it our ambition to please him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be paid back according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil.

Ambassadors for Christ

11 Therefore, because we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade people, but we are well known to God, and I hope we are well known to your consciences too.

12 We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may be able to answer those who take pride in outward appearance and not in what is in the heart.

13 For if we are out of our minds, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.

14 For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died.

15 And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised.

16 So then from now on we acknowledge no one from an outward human point of view. Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view, now we do not know him in that way any longer.

17 So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away—look, what is new has come!

18 And all these things are from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and who has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

19 In other words, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people’s trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation.

20 Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His plea through us. We plead with you on Christ’s behalf, *“Be reconciled to God!”*

21 God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.

Paul’s Commendable Ministry

6:1 Now because we are fellow workers, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 For he says, *“I heard you at the acceptable time, and in the day of salvation I helped you.”* Look, now is *the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation!* [Isa 49:8]

3 We do not give anyone an occasion for taking an offense in anything, so that no fault may be found with our ministry.

4 But as God’s servants, we have commended ourselves in every way, with great endurance, in persecutions, in difficulties, in distresses,

5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in troubles, in sleepless nights, in hunger,

6 by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by benevolence, by the Holy Spirit, by genuine love,

7 by truthful teaching, by the power of God, with weapons of righteousness both for the right hand and for the left,

8 through glory and dishonor, through slander and praise; regarded as impostors, and yet true;

9 as unknown, and yet well-known; as dying and yet—see!—we continue to live; as those who are scourged and yet not executed;

10 as sorrowful, but always rejoicing, as poor, but making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Paul's Appeal for an Open Heart

11 We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart has been opened wide to you.

12 Our affection for you is not restricted, but you are restricted in your affections for us.

13 Now as a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts to us also.

14 Do not become partners with those who do not believe, for what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?

15 And what agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share in common with an unbeliever?

16 And what mutual agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said, *“I will live in them and will walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”* [[Lev 26:11–12](#)]

17 Therefore *“come out from their midst, and be separate,”* says the Lord, *“and touch no unclean thing,”* [[Isa 52:11](#)] and I will welcome you, [[Ezek 20:41](#)]

18 and I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the All-Powerful Lord. [[2 Sam 7:14](#); [Isa 43:6](#)]

7:1 Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that could defile the body and the spirit, and thus accomplish holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Make room for us in your hearts; we have wronged no one, we have ruined no one, we have exploited no one.

Titus' Good Report—Godly Sorrow Brings Repentance

3 I do not say this to condemn you, for I told you before that you are in our hearts so that we die together and live together with you.

4 I have great confidence in you; I take great pride on your behalf. I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy in the midst of all our suffering.

5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our body had no rest at all, but we were troubled in every way—struggles from the outside, fears from within.

6 But God, who encourages the downhearted, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus.

7 We were encouraged not only by his arrival, but also by the encouragement you gave him, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your deep concern for me, so that I rejoiced more than ever.

8 For even if I made you sad by my letter, I do not regret having written it (even though I did regret it, for I see that my letter made you sad, though only for a short time).

9 Now I rejoice, not because you were made sad, but because you were made sad to the point of repentance. For you were made sad as God intended, so that you were not harmed in any way by us.

10 For sadness as intended by God produces a repentance that leads to salvation, leaving no regret, but worldly sadness brings about death.

11 For see what this very thing, this sadness as God intended, has produced in you: what eagerness, what defense of yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what deep concern, what punishment! In everything you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

12 So then, even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did wrong, or on account of the one who was wronged, but to reveal to you your eagerness on our behalf before God.

13 Therefore we have been encouraged. And in addition to our own encouragement, we rejoiced even more at the joy of Titus, because all of you have refreshed his spirit.

14 For if I have boasted to him about anything concerning you, I have not been embarrassed by you, but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus about you has proved true as well.

15 And his affection for you is much greater when he remembers the obedience of you all, how you welcomed him with fear and trembling.

16 I rejoice because in everything I am fully confident in you.

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