

I Paul

The Apostle to the Gentiles

Arranged by:

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This book is the third in a quintet of books inspired by the Bible. They have been written in a novel way, pun intended, to encourage us all to read through the Bible as one would read a novel, to develop the full context from which the quotations and short passages we are familiar with are drawn, and add to their richness.

The quintet is:

I Adam: The Old Testament told through the eyes of its major players, those who could stay faithful to God as Adam could not but whom Adam in Limbo wished he could be. “So the first man, as Scripture says, became a living soul,” (Corinthians 15:45)

I Mary: The New Testament told through the eyes of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

I Paul: The Acts of the Apostles dealing with the life of Paul, interspersed with his Letters in their chronological order.

I Peter: A biography of the life of Peter - his early life, his life as a follower of Jesus, his life and death as the first head of the Christian Church, his letters.

I Joseph: A biography of Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus.

Acknowledgements: A Personal Note on “I Paul”

Personally, I had found the letters of St. Paul difficult to read, my perusal of them had been limited to reading a passage, a few verses, and meditating on the meaning. Often this has been within the context of two other readings, one from the Old Testament and the other from the Gospels, with the presiding priest basing his homily on the theme binding the three readings together. Common prayers within the Mass also alluded to this theme.

But this is not how the recipients of these letters read them. They read the entire letter in one sitting and with a much better background than I had. They were aware of the current circumstances of Paul’s life at the time and the state of their own church which he had founded. They knew his pain, his sufferings and his unbounded love for them; they knew they themselves were surrounded by wolves in sheep’s clothing, false preachers interested in their own glory, and by jealous, violent men who wanted to destroy them and their beliefs. These letters were stained with blood, real blood, Paul’s and their own, and more, with the cloud of deception – were they really from Paul?

The recipients were also well-grounded in the Bible. They knew, or could find, the verses Paul quoted from the books of the Bible and were able to understand his explanations of how very many prophetic verses were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the New Adam. Given Paul’s direction and the gift of faith, they could understand and believe for themselves that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God.

So, I summarized for myself the whole story in a biblical trilogy of five books as listed on the previous page. :

The sources for these five perspectives were:

I Adam: The Old Testament

I Mary: The Gospels

I Paul: The Acts of the Apostles interspersed with the letters of St. Paul.

I Peter: The New Testament: Gospels, Acts and Letters

I Joseph: The Gospels

For me in writing I Paul, when the epistles were interspersed in their correct position within Acts, the Apostle to the Gentiles started to come alive, his letters to be much more meaningful when read within the context of his life.

I praise the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit in giving us these sacred texts. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The Transition from the Old to the New Testament

In the Old Testament, God, as Yahweh, entered into a covenant with the Jewish people. On His part He would give them the land of Canaan, the promised land of milk and honey. On their part their males would be circumcised and they were to obey Yahweh by keeping not only the ten commandments but also the Law of Moses, a detailed list of prescriptions on how to achieve holiness in Yahweh's sight through sacrifices of animals, birds and produce on the sacred altar of the Temple and by adherence to the Law.

There is no mention of heaven and personal redemption for sin in the Law of Moses, specifically in the first five books of the Bible. Only the authors of the later books, particularly psalms and the prophets, talk of heaven. Accordingly, the Sadducees, believing in only the first five Bible books, did not believe in life after death, a major doctrinal difference between them and the Pharisees, for whom the Bible was many more books and many more laws, this disagreement dividing the Jewish people into two religious factions.

In the New Testament, gradually, certainly not fully done by the time of Jesus' death and a major bone of contention in the early Church, the prescriptions of the Law, circumcision and sacrifices of animals, birds and produce were abandoned. To be a Christian you did not need to also be a Jew, to be circumcised, and obedient to and constrained by, the Law.

Circumcision was replaced by baptism with water and the Holy Spirit, the combination of baptism with water at birth or conversion and the conferring of the Holy Spirit at baptism and confirmation. The sacrifices were replaced with the redemptive passion and death of the Son of God, repeated in the regular "breaking of the bread" which has become today's Mass where we reenact the passion and death of our Savior Jesus and consume the body and blood of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. By this divine sacrifice, if we believe and are contrite, we are redeemed from our sins.

We are to carry our faith or belief in these mysteries into our everyday actions, living, not by the Law and the 10 commandments, but by their fulfilment in the two greatest commandments: You shall love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength; You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

God is not apart from us as in olden times, a cloud above an Ark, a voice from a burning bush, since our lives are intermingled with the life of Jesus who said, "I am the vine, you are

the branches. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. He who lives and believes in me will have eternal life.” Our reward is not the land of Canaan but of heaven, eternal life in the presence of God.

In this book “I Paul” we follow the transition from the Old to the New Testament in the life of a man, the most travelled Apostle, the most prolific author of books in the Bible, the Apostle to the Gentiles. His central message is that the Law of Moses tells us what is sinful but it does not give forgiveness from these sins; it is a dead Law. On the other hand, the Law of the Spirit gives us life in Christ Jesus by redeeming us from our sinful natures.

By downplaying the Mosaic Law in this manner, Paul makes himself the sworn enemy of the Pharisees and the ruling classes, whether converts to Christianity or not. In what may be viewed, not as a final act of defiance, but as a final revelation, Paul wrote a pastoral letter to all the Hebrews in which the central message is that the Chief High Priest, the supreme religious leader of the Jews, has been replaced by Jesus the Christ.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Mathew 5:17)

The following letter is fictitious but some communication of this nature must have been made between the two adult males who influenced Saul's mind the most.

Letter to Gamaliel

(Circa 19 AD)

My dear Rabbi,

I am a Jew, a Pharisee, living in the Greek city of Tarsus. I was born in Gischala in Galilee but left there ahead of the invading Roman army, fleeing as did many of my fellow countrymen to a safer place. We fled even though I am a Roman citizen, born to a Roman family. My father had been a Roman soldier, part of the occupying force in Crete. He had married a Jewess and I was brought up as an orthodox Jew. We had followed along with the Roman legions invading the countries to the east, to Judea when I was just a boy.

My father died during a Jewish rebellion, my mother decided to remain in Judea, comforted by its religion. I married a Jewess. Then came another rebellion and we knew it would be put down ferociously. It would take time to explain we were a Roman family but avengers have little time for details and we knew to them we were just Jews, fuel for their swords. We fled north ahead of the avenging forces. After several weeks my wife and I and our family came to Tarsus. Seeing a strong Jewish presence centered on a magnificent synagogue, we decided to settle here. I took up the trade of a tentmaker and settled into family life, my wife bearing me several children.

I wish to introduce my son Saul, his Jewish name, or Paul, his Greek name. He belongs to the tribe of Benjamin, as did King Saul, his namesake. He was born in Tarsus and circumcised as required on the eighth day. He has been brought up in the orthodox Jewish tradition, educated by a rabbi who is a Pharisee. While he is somewhat small of stature, Saul has a towering intellect and a dogged persistence in pursuing knowledge, specifically the understanding of the Bible, its stories, its history, its prophecies, its divine origin. Like me he has been trained as a tentmaker and is humble and sincere, unlike me he is surely a leader and will be special in this world.

I humbly ask that you accept him as a student into your rabbinical school. You will find my Saul to be argumentative to the extreme, perfect grist for the mill of your well reputed grinding. At the age of 15 he is not yet fully a man but I leave it to you to complete that task in both his mind and body, but above all, his soul.

I am yours in the service of our one true God.

Jacobus of Tarsus.

Little did either adult know the torment into which they would cast Saul as he had to choose between the Law they, to whom he owed everything, taught him, and the gospel Jesus the Savior taught him.

Chapter I: The Beginning

My first sermon was given to a Jewish audience in the synagogue of Damascus. I was new to this. Only a few days before I was the terror of the followers of The Way. I stood guard as that outspoken young man, Stephen, harangued the members of the Sanhedrin, our supreme council of 71 Sadducees, Pharisees, scribes, lawyers and wealthy men; harangued them about the story of the Bible, ignoring their fuming countenances, ignoring they knew more about the Bible than he could possibly know. I continued to stand guard as a mob laid their cloaks at my feet and stoned this blasphemer to death.

Surely many of those listening to me now knew I then became the chief persecutor of the members of The Way, the people who believed that a few years ago a man called Jesus was crucified and died but, three days later, rose from the dead. That I could live with, but they believed this Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Christ, indeed the Son of God, who would redeem his followers from their sinful natures and grant them access to heaven. This was blasphemy.

One thing I knew was the scriptures. I could read both Greek and Hebrew, I had studied under the great Rabbi Gamaliel, a Pharisee like me, I knew a fraud when I met one. With the blessing of the Sanhedrin I captured hundreds of the followers of The Way and threw them into prisons in Jerusalem and nearby towns. Many others fled the city. I hated and detested this sect and its members.

Then I traveled to this town, Damascus, to root out this growing pestilence, to throw any followers of The Way into jail and bring them all back to Jerusalem for trial. I was thrown from my horse by a bolt of lightning, for three days I was blind. For three days I thought about the apparition that started by asking me why I persecuted him. For three days I thought about what else he had said. Ananias, a follower of The Way, gave me back my physical sight but I looked with fresh spiritual eyes at all I had learned. It was all there, I had never suspected what I came to realize.

I stood a little shakily before the Jewish crowd in this Damascus synagogue. I heard one say to another, "Surely this is the man who did such damage in Jerusalem to the people who invoke this name, and who came here for the sole purpose of arresting them to have them

tried by the chief priests?” I summoned up courage, the courage of the Spirit, I had to convince my listeners that I was for real.

I spoke about what I knew best but had never realized had come to pass. The coming of the Messiah had been foretold by more than 20 verses of scripture. The life, actions, words, suffering and death of Jesus Christ clearly fulfilled these ancient words: Daniel 9: 24-27; Deuteronomy 18:15, Ezekiel 37: 26-27; Haggai 2:6-9; Hosea 11:1; Isaiah 7:14, 8:23, 9:1-2; 11:12, 53:5; Jeremiah 31:15, Micah 5:2; Psalms 2, 16, 22, 34, 69, 110, II Samuel 7:14, Wisdom 2:12-20, Zechariah 9:9, 12:10.

Many of my listeners came to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. But many others adopted my previous role and sought to destroy, to kill me, guarding the city gates and searching for my whereabouts. My close friends, my disciples, lowered me over the city wall at night in a basket, others brought me my horse. I travelled with great care back to my home in Jerusalem.

I guess I was a little naïve. I tried to join the disciples of The Way but they were terrified this was some sort of trick, they refused to have anything to do with me. But Barnabas, who had come with me from Damascus, told them how the Lord appeared to me and spoke to me and changed me into a fearless disciple, throwing the whole Jewish community of Damascus into confusion. They let me preach about Jesus, watched as I argued with the very people I had studied with, both orthodox Jews and the Hellenists, the Jews with an overlay of Greek culture. These Hellenists plotted to kill me, again my disciples saved me, took me to a ship in the port of Caesarea and waved goodbye, maybe with a lot of relief, as I sailed off northwards to Tarsus, the city of my birth.

Barnabas came to see me 14 years later. I was a tentmaker by trade and I earned my livelihood making tents. The Law required the members of the Sanhedrin to be married, so I married. But my marriage did not last more than 10 years, my beloved wife died in childbirth as did the baby boy. I never remarried, it became clear to me that my savior Jesus wanted me to become an itinerant preacher, the apostle to the Gentiles. Many times Jesus appeared to me, my knowledge of his teachings grew and grew. Later I would talk with men who had known Jesus personally and others who wrote about his words as recalled by his disciples.

I heard from many travelers that the followers of Jesus who fled Judea when I started to persecute and jail them, had preached the Word to Jewish communities in several cities in Asia

Minor (now Turkey). But none had preached to the Gentiles in most of those cities. But they did in Antioch and with great success, so much so that the Jerusalem disciples sent Barnabas to Antioch to bring back his assessment. He was amazed at how many had been won over to the Lord. Time to profit by this success, he came to Tarsus to find me, we both went back to Antioch, my time had come.

For a full year I preached in Antioch and the surrounding towns. We had a huge number of followers. So much so we were able to collect many donations of money for the Church in Jerusalem, in poverty due to a devastating famine in Judea. Now called Paul, my Greek name, I travelled with Barnabas to Jerusalem to deliver our aid. We didn't stay for long, back we went to Antioch, taking the young disciple John Mark with us, he had already started to record the life and words of Jesus, as others recalled them for him. My own knowledge of, and faith in, the Christ deepened even more as I read his words.

First Missionary Journey

There were too many of us preachers in Antioch, too few elsewhere. The Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and myself off on a missionary journey, our mission to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. We sailed from Seleucia to Cyprus and proclaimed the Word in the synagogues all up and down that island. John Mark came with us as our assistant. Then we took ship again and travelled across the ocean to Asia Minor, walking from Paphos to Perga to Pamphilia, preaching in all their synagogues. The timid John Mark left us then, returning to Jerusalem. I would not forgive his abandoning us, we obviously needed all the help we could get.

We travelled on to the other Antioch in Pisidia. My own understanding of the message of Jesus was growing and would continue to grow, helped by several more apparitions of the Lord and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. In the synagogues I took the listeners through the prophecies, convincing many that Jesus fulfilled them all and was indeed the Messiah. But the Messiah for what? Certainly not the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, the overthrowing of the Roman conquerors, a restoration for the whole people. No, the restoration was to be personal for every believer. I added these words.

“What the people of Jerusalem and their rulers did, though they did not realize it, was in fact to fulfil the prophecies read on every Sabbath. Though they found nothing to justify his execution, they condemned him and asked Pilate to have him put to death. When they had

carried out everything that scripture foretells about him they took him down from the tree and buried him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem: and it is these same companions of his who are now his witnesses before our people.

We have come here to tell you the good news that the promise made to our ancestors has come about. God has fulfilled it to their children by raising Jesus from the dead. As scripture says in the psalms: 'You are my son: today I have fathered you.' The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to return to corruption, is no more than what he had declared: 'To you I shall give the holy things promised to David which can be relied upon.' This is also why it says in another text: 'You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption.'

Now when David in his own time had served God's purposes, he died; he was buried with his ancestors and has certainly seen corruption. The one whom God has raised up, however, has not seen corruption. My brothers, I want you to realize that it is through him that forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you. Through him justification from all sins from which the Law of Moses was unable to justify is being offered to every believer. So be careful, or what the prophets say will happen to you: "Cast your eyes around you, mockers; be amazed, and perish! For I am doing something in your own days that you would never believe if you were told of it."

As we left we were urged to continue this preaching the following Sabbath. When the meeting broke up many Jews and devout converts followed us, and in our talks with them we urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them. The next Sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Pharisee Jews, filled with jealousy, used blasphemies to contradict everything I said.

I was inspired to widen our mission, saying to them that if they as Jews refused to listen to our preaching then we would turn to the Gentiles. Of course, the Gentiles were delighted to hear this, the religion of the Jews was far too demanding for them to take up. But again we were forced to flee the city. The Pharisee Jews stirred up the women and men of the upper Jewish classes and expelled us. We went to Iconium, same story. Many were converted, both Jews and Gentiles, but the upper class became jealous, their authority diminishing every day. This time they planned to stone us to death, we left during the night.

We went to the province of Lycaonia, preaching in its towns, Lystra and Derbe and the others. Here I worked a miracle through the power of Jesus, restoring mobility to a man who had never walked. Bad move maybe, these people were pagans a day ago, they began to worship us as gods. It took a lot of persuasion to convince them we were just ordinary men, there was no need to sacrifice a sheep on the altar to glorify us!

The Jews from Antioch and Iconium had followed us. This time they grabbed me and threw me into a pit, then stoned me, they thought to death. They left, I walked away, Jesus by my side. Up through Galatia we went, preaching without fear. Then back through Derbe and Lystra and Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, ignoring our Jewish enemies who could not believe it was still me draining away their followers. We left much stronger churches behind, saying “We must all experience many hardships before we enter the kingdom of God.”

Back we went through Pisidia, then Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia and finally home to Antioch, back to the biggest controversy our infant Church would confront. The enemy without is much easier to deal with than the enemy within. Again it was Jews who assaulted us, but this time they were Christians, as we were now called, as well as Jews. They observed the Law as well as joining in with the breaking of bread and listening to the words of Jesus as the disciples told them.

The controversy was this. They taught the new, previously Gentile, Christians that, “Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses (meaning also adherence to the Law), you cannot be saved.”

Barnabas and I went on the attack, we were furious, telling these stupid fools to back off, telling the Gentile converts to ignore what they said. But they were many in number, indeed it seemed that a majority of the Jewish converts agreed with them, after all Jesus was circumcised and obeyed the Law, well the important parts anyway. Our Gentile converts were dismayed, they didn’t want a host of laws running and ruining every aspect of their lives, they just wanted to follow Jesus, “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole mind and with your whole self, and your neighbor as yourself,” recreating his death and our redemption in the breaking of the bread.

The Synod of Jerusalem

Off we all went to Jerusalem, every apostle and every disciple converged on our meeting place. The Pharisee Jews converted to Christianity started the ball rolling. They insisted the Gentile converts should be circumcised and instructed to keep the Law of Moses. I was ready to explode but Barnabas restrained me. “Wait,” he said. I simmered down, sat silent as Peter rose to his feet. I didn’t know him very well and wondered how he would handle his first crisis as the head of our church.

“My brothers,” he said, “You know perfectly well that in the early days God made his choice among you; the Gentiles were to learn the good news from me and so become believers. And God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us. God made no distinction between them and us, since he purified their hearts by faith. Why do you put God to the test now by imposing on the disciples the very burden that neither our ancestors nor we ourselves were strong enough to support? But we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are - through the grace of the Lord Jesus.”

The entire assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and me describing all the signs and wonders God had worked through us among the Gentiles. When we had finished it was James, the head of the Jerusalem church, who spoke.

“My brothers,” he said, “Listen to me. Peter has described how God first arranged to enlist a people for his name out of the Gentiles. This is entirely in harmony with the words of the prophets, since the scriptures say: ‘After that I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of David; I shall make good the gaps in it and restore it. Then the rest of humanity, and of all the nations once called mine, will look for the Lord, says the Lord who made this known so long ago.’ My verdict then is this, that instead of making things more difficult for Gentiles who turn to God, we should send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from illicit marriages, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.”

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose delegates from among themselves to send to Antioch with us. They chose Judas, known as Barsabbas, and Silas, both leading men in the brotherhood, and gave them this letter to take with them:

“The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of Gentile birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We hear that some people coming from here, but acting without any authority from ourselves, have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your

minds, and so we have decided unanimously to elect delegates and to send them to you with our well-beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have committed their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly, we are sending you Judas and Silas, who will confirm by word of mouth what we have written. It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to impose on you any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages. Avoid these, and you will do what is right. Farewell.”

Our party left and went down to Antioch, where we summoned the whole community and delivered the letter. The community read it and were delighted with the encouragement it gave them. Judas and Silas, being themselves prophets, spoke for a long time, encouraging and strengthening the brothers. These two spent some time there, and then the brothers wished them peace and they went back to those who had sent them. Barnabas and I, however, stayed on in Antioch, and there with many others we taught and proclaimed the good news, the word of the Lord.

Chapter 2: My Letter to the Galatians

But I was fearful of the impact of these events on the very young and very new churches we had established in our missionary journey. And I was told by some of our number who had visited there that the faith of many was still very weak. Many of the churches were in the province of Galatia in Asia Minor so I addressed my first letter to the Galatians collectively.

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I opened with what I hoped was a clear and direct salutation. They had first heard the good news from me and I received the Word from Jesus.

From Paul, an apostle appointed not by human beings nor through any human being but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead, and all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia. Grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to liberate us from this present wicked world, in accordance with the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I went directly to the major issue, concealing nothing about the sins of my past. The trouble makers insisting Gentile converts to Christianity must also be Jewish needed to be confronted about their different gospel and overcome.

I am astonished that you are so promptly turning away from the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are going over to a different gospel, not that it is another gospel; except that there are trouble-makers among you who are seeking to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we ourselves or an angel from heaven preaches to you a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let God's curse be on him. I repeat again what we declared before: anyone who preaches to you a gospel other than the one you were first given is to be under God's curse. Whom am I trying to convince now, human beings or God? Am I trying to please human beings? If I were still doing that, I should not be a servant of Christ.

I further wanted the new converts to know that the gospel I preached to them came directly from Jesus and not from the Apostles. I barely knew Peter or James and not at all the other 10 apostles. I was not just relaying what they told me, my message was from Jesus directly. And his command to me was to preach the good news to the Gentiles, leaving the conversion of the Jews to the Apostles and other disciples, unworthy as I am since I once

persecuted Christians relentlessly. When I received the gospel from Jesus, I was in no hurry to pass it on to others, I spent three years meditating on it, then I went to meet the Apostles.

Now I want to make it quite clear to you, brothers, about the gospel that was preached by me, that it was no human message. It was not from any human being that I received it, and I was not taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ. You have surely heard how I lived in the past, within Judaism, and how there was simply no limit to the way I persecuted the Church of God in my attempts to destroy it; and how, in Judaism, I outstripped most of my Jewish contemporaries in my limitless enthusiasm for the traditions of my ancestors.

But when God, who had set me apart from the time when I was in my mother's womb, called me through his grace and chose to reveal his Son in me, so that I should preach him to the Gentiles, I was in no hurry to confer with any human being, or to go up to Jerusalem to see those who were already apostles before me. Instead, I went off to Arabia, and later I came back to Damascus. Only after three years did I go up to Jerusalem to meet Peter. I stayed fifteen days with him but did not set eyes on any of the rest of the apostles, only James, the Lord's brother. I swear before God that what I have written is the truth.

After that I went to places in Syria and Cilicia; and was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judaea which are in Christ, they simply kept hearing it said, 'The man once so eager to persecute us is now preaching the faith that he used to try to destroy,' and they gave glory to God for me.

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At first the message I preached was not formally approved by the Apostles, I did not need such approval. I preached for 14 years in Asia and then I was commanded by Jesus to travel to Jerusalem and have my message authenticated by the leaders of our church, the apostles Peter, James and John, the three who were closest to Jesus when he was on earth. That Gentile converts should not be required to be Jews, subject to circumcision and the Law, was the central issue through all this.

It was not until fourteen years had gone by that I travelled up to Jerusalem again, with Barnabas, and I took Titus with me too. My journey was inspired by a revelation and there, in a private session with the recognized leaders, I expounded the whole gospel that I preach to

the Gentiles, to make quite sure that the efforts I was making and had already made should not be fruitless.

Even then, although Titus, a Greek, was with me, there was no demand that he should be circumcised. The question only came up because of some false brothers who had secretly insinuated themselves to spy on the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, intending to reduce us to slavery, people we did not defer to for one moment, or the truth of the gospel preached to you might have been compromised, but those who were recognized as important people whether they actually were important or not:

There is no favoritism with God; those recognized leaders, I am saying, had nothing to add to my message. On the contrary, once they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been entrusted to me, just as to Peter the gospel for the circumcised (for he who empowered Peter's apostolate to the circumcised also empowered mine to the Gentiles), and when they acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, then James and Peter and John, who were the ones recognized as pillars, offered their right hands to Barnabas and to me as a sign of partnership. We were to go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked nothing more than that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do in any case.

I came to realize it would not be that easy. When Peter, aka Cephas, aka Simeon, came to visit us in Antioch his actions had clearly illustrated that he made a difference between Jewish and Gentile converts. I confronted him.

However, when Peter came to Antioch, then I did oppose him to his face since he was manifestly in the wrong. Before certain people from James came, he used to eat with Gentiles; but as soon as these came, he backed out and kept apart from them, out of fear of the circumcised. And the rest of the Jews put on the same act as he did, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. When I saw, though, that their behavior was not true to the gospel, I said to Peter in front of all of them, 'Since you, though you are a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like the Jews?' Peter did not answer me.

I continued my letter explaining the difference between the Law of Moses and faith in Jesus Christ. The key issue is that no human being can be found upright by keeping the Law, no one got to heaven by keeping the Law, the Law does not save us, only Christ can save us and bring us to heaven.

We who were born Jews and not Gentile sinners have nevertheless learnt that someone is reckoned as upright not by practicing the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ; and we too came to believe in Christ Jesus so as to be reckoned as upright by faith in Christ and not by practicing the Law: since no human being can be found upright by keeping the Law.

I had learned the skill of argument in the school of Gamaliel. Those who put Moses' Law first argue we are sinners. Well, if by putting our faith in Christ we are sinners then Christ was a sinner, ridiculous!

Now if we too are found to be sinners on the grounds that we seek our justification in Christ, it would surely follow that Christ was at the service of sin. Out of the question! If I now rebuild everything I once demolished, I prove that I was wrong before.

Much as it hurts my Jewish heritage to say it, the Law of Moses is now dead. It was always dead in the sense that it could not bring life, eternal life specifically. But if Christ is living in me, I have eternal life through him, subject as I may briefly be to the constraints of a human mind and body.

In fact, through the Law I am dead to the Law so that I can be alive to God. I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

I repeated my main argument:

I am not setting aside God's grace as of no value; it is merely that if saving justice comes through the Law, Christ died needlessly.

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Then I got angry, angry for the gospel's sake. How could my converts let the Law begin to dominate them?

You stupid people in Galatia! After you have had a clear picture of Jesus Christ crucified, right in front of your eyes, who has put a spell on you? There is only one thing I should like you to tell me: How was it that you received the Spirit? Was it by the practice of the Law, or by believing in the message you heard? Having begun in the Spirit, can you be so stupid as to end in the flesh? Can all the favors you have received have had no effect at all, if there really has been no effect? Would you say, then, that he who so lavishly sends the Spirit to

you, and causes the miracles among you, is doing this through your practice of the Law or because you believed the message you heard?

The Law cannot be the way to eternal life. It was given to Moses hundreds of years after Abraham's lifetime. Abraham and his descendants were saved if they lived by faith, not by any "Law."

Abraham, you remember, put his faith in God, and this was reckoned to him as uprightness. Be sure, then, that it is people of faith who are the children of Abraham. And it was because scripture foresaw that God would give saving justice to the Gentiles through faith, that it announced the future gospel to Abraham in the words: All nations will be blessed in you. So it is people of faith who receive the same blessing as Abraham, the man of faith. On the other hand, all those who depend on the works of the Law are under a curse, since scripture says: Accursed be he who does not make what is written in the book of the Law effective, by putting it into practice.

Now it is obvious that nobody is reckoned as upright in God's sight by the Law, since the upright will live through faith; and the Law is based not on faith but on the principle, whoever complies with it will find life in it. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being cursed for our sake since scripture says: Anyone hanged is accursed, so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, and so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The Law cannot override the promises made to Abraham and to his progeny, Christ.

To put it in human terms, my brothers, even when a will is only a human one, once it has been ratified nobody can cancel it or add more provisions to it. Now the promises were addressed to Abraham and to his progeny. The words were not 'and to his progenies in the plural', but in the singular; 'and to your progeny', which means Christ. What I am saying is this: once a will had been long ago ratified by God, the Law, coming four hundred and thirty years later, could not abolish it and so nullify its promise. You see, if the inheritance comes by the Law, it no longer comes through a promise; but it was by a promise that God made his gift to Abraham.

I am not belittling the Law. What is the purpose of the Law?

Then what is the purpose of the Law? It was added to deal with crimes until the progeny to whom the promise had been made should come; and it was promulgated through angels, by the agency of an intermediary.

Before Christ came we were locked up, bound by the Law, waiting for the faith that would eventually release us, the faith in Christ.

Now there can be an intermediary only between two parties, yet God is one. Is the Law contrary, then, to God's promises? Out of the question! If the Law that was given had been capable of giving life, then certainly saving justice would have come from the Law. As it is, scripture makes no exception when it says that sin is master everywhere; so the promise can be given only by faith in Jesus Christ to those who have this faith. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, locked up to wait for the faith which would eventually be revealed to us. So, the Law was serving as a slave to look after us, to lead us to Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

Now that we have Christ, we no longer need the Law.

But now that faith has come we are no longer under a slave looking after us; for all of you are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus, since every one of you that has been baptized has been clothed in Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And simply by being Christ's, you are that progeny of Abraham, the heirs named in the promise.

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What I am saying is this. An heir, during the time while he is still under age, is no different from a slave, even though he is the owner of all the property, he is under the control of guardians and administrators until the time fixed by his father. So too with us, as long as we were still under age, we were enslaved to the elemental principles of this world; but when the completion of the time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law, so that we could receive adoption as sons. As you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son crying, 'Abba, Father'; and so you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir, by God's own act.

I pleaded with my converts - Do not go backwards, back to the deadness of the Law by observing its feast days. Go forwards by faith into the freedom of the sons of God.

But formerly when you did not know God, you were kept in slavery to things which are not really gods at all, whereas now that you have come to recognize God, or rather, be recognized by God, how can you now turn back again to those powerless and bankrupt elements whose slaves you now want to be all over again? You are keeping special days, and months, and seasons and years. I am beginning to be afraid that I may, after all, have wasted my efforts on you.

I urge you, brothers, be like me, as I have become like you. You have never been unfair to me; indeed you remember that it was an illness that first gave me the opportunity to preach the gospel to you, but though my illness was a trial to you, you did not show any distaste or revulsion; instead, you welcomed me as a messenger of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. What has happened to the utter contentment you had then? For I can testify to you that you would have plucked your eyes out, were that possible, and given them to me. Then have I turned into your enemy simply by being truthful with you?

The proclaimers of the false gospel simply want to have your devotion. I am very frustrated that I am not there to deter them.

Their devotion to you has no praiseworthy motive; they simply want to cut you off from me, so that you may center your devotion on them. Devotion to a praiseworthy cause is praiseworthy at any time, not only when I am there with you. My children, I am going through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you; and how I wish I could be there with you at this moment and find the right way of talking to you; I am quite at a loss with you.

I switch to another argument against the continuance of the Law and for faith in Jesus, an allegory. Ishmael was born to Abraham in the normal way, albeit his mother, Hagar, was a slave. Isaac was born to Abraham and his very old wife, Sarah, through a divine promise.

Tell me then, you are so eager to be subject to the Law, have you listened to what the Law says? Scripture says that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave girl and one by the freewoman. The son of the slave girl came to be born in the way of human nature; but the son of the freewoman came to be born through a promise.

There is an allegory here; these women stand for the two covenants. The one given on Mount Sinai is Hagar, whose children are born into slavery. Now Sinai is a mountain in Arabia and represents Jerusalem in its present state, for she is in slavery together with her children. But

the Jerusalem above is free, and that is the one that is our mother; as scripture says: 'Shout for joy, you barren woman who has borne no children! Break into shouts of joy, you who were never in labor. For the sons of the forsaken one are more in number than the sons of the wedded wife.'

Now you, brothers, are like Isaac, children of the promise; just as at that time, the child born in the way of human nature persecuted the child born through the Spirit, so now. But what is it that scripture says? 'Drive away that slave girl and her son; the slave girl's son is not to share the inheritance with the son of the freewoman.' So, brothers, we are the children not of the slave girl but of the freewoman.

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I counsel my converts not to be circumcised, not to be enslaved to the Law.

Christ set us free, so that we should remain free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be fastened again to the yoke of slavery. I, Paul, give you my word that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all. I give my assurance once again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law; once you seek to be reckoned as upright through the Law, then you have separated yourself from Christ, you have fallen away from grace.

We are led by the Spirit to wait in the confident hope of saving justice through faith, since in Christ Jesus it is not being circumcised or being uncircumcised that can effect anything, only faith working through love. You began your race well; who came to obstruct you and stop you obeying the truth? It was certainly not any prompting from him who called you! A pinch of yeast ferments the whole batch. But I feel sure that, united in the Lord, you will not be led astray, and that anyone who makes trouble with you will be condemned, no matter who he is.

I urge my flock to live united in the freedom given them by the Holy Spirit and not to be divided into those for and against the false preachers.

And I, brothers, if I were still preaching circumcision, why should I still be persecuted? For then the obstacle which is the cross would have no point any more. I could wish that those who are unsettling you would go further and mutilate themselves. After all, brothers, you were called to be free; do not use your freedom as an opening for self-indulgence, but be servants to

one another in love, since the whole of the Law is summarized in the one commandment: You must love your neighbor as yourself. If you go snapping at one another and tearing one another to pieces, take care; you will be eaten up by one another.

I reminded my followers of the need to lead a moral life, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Instead, I tell you, be guided by the Spirit, and you will no longer yield to self-indulgence. The desires of self-indulgence are always in opposition to the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are in opposition to self-indulgence; they are opposites, one against the other; that is how you are prevented from doing the things that you want to. But when you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery, antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. And about these, I tell you now as I have told you in the past, that people who behave in these ways will not inherit the kingdom of God.

On the other hand the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control; no law can touch such things as these. All who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified self with all its passions and its desires. Since we are living by the Spirit, let our behavior be guided by the Spirit and let us not be conceited or provocative and envious of one another.

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My final message is for compassion and unity.

Brothers, even if one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way. Carry each other's burdens; that is how to keep the law of Christ. Someone who thinks himself important, when he is not, only deceives himself; but everyone is to examine his own achievements, and then he will confine his boasting to his own achievements, not comparing them with anybody else's. Each one has his own load to carry. When someone is under instruction in doctrine, he should give his teacher a share in all his possessions.

God sees all that we do, we reap what we sow.

Don't delude yourself: God is not to be fooled; whatever someone sows, that is what he will reap. If his sowing is in the field of self-indulgence, then his harvest from it will be corruption; if his sowing is in the Spirit, then his harvest from the Spirit will be eternal life. And let us never slacken in doing good; for if we do not give up, we shall have our harvest in due time. So then, as long as we have the opportunity, let all our actions be for the good of everybody, and especially of those who belong to the household of the faith. Notice what large letters I have used in writing to you with my own hand.

The false preachers are simply protecting themselves from persecution by the Jews. But they don't keep the Law. It's all a lie.

It is those who want to cut a figure by human standards who force circumcision on you, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even though they are circumcised they still do not keep the Law themselves; they want you to be circumcised only so that they can boast of your outward appearance. But as for me, it is out of the question that I should boast at all, except of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

My final thought.

It is not being circumcised or uncircumcised that matters; but what matters is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this as their rule and to the Israel of God. After this, let no one trouble me; I carry branded on my body the marks of Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen.

Chapter 3: Second Missionary Journey

A few months later I said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord, so that we can see how they are doing.' Barnabas suggested taking John Mark, who was his cousin, but I was absolutely not in favor of taking along the man who had deserted us in Pamphylia and had refused to share in our work. There was sharp disagreement between us so we parted company, and Barnabas sailed off with Mark to Cyprus. I chose Silas to accompany me and was commended by the brothers to the grace of God. Off we went through Syria and Cilicia, consolidating the churches.

First we went to Derbe, and then on to Lystra, where I met a disciple called Timothy, whose mother was Jewish and had become a believer, but his father was a Greek. I was very impressed with him, and the brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. I wanted to have him as a travelling companion and, this may seem strange given what we had just been through, had him circumcised. But this was on account of the Jews in the locality where everyone knew his father was a Greek, he would not be acceptable to them unless circumcised.

As we visited one town after another, we passed on the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with instructions to observe them. So the churches grew strong in the faith, as well as growing daily in numbers. We travelled through Phrygia and the Galatian country, because we had been told by the Holy Spirit not to preach the word in Asia. When we reached the frontier of Mysia we tried to go into Bithynia, but as the Spirit of Jesus would not allow us, we went through Mysia and came down to Troas.

One night I had a vision. A Macedonian appeared and kept urging me in these words, "Come across to Macedonia and help us." We had been joined by the disciple Luke, a physician. He would record our mission for me.

Once I had seen this vision we lost no time in arranging a passage to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to bring them the good news. Sailing from Troas we made a straight run for Samothrace; the next day for Neapolis, and from there for Philippi, a Roman colony and the principal city of that district of Macedonia. After a few days in this city we went outside the gates beside a river as it was the Sabbath and this was a customary place for prayer. We sat down and preached to the women who had come to the meeting.

One of these women was called Lydia, a woman from the town of Thyatira who was in the purple-dye trade, and who revered God. She listened to us, and the Lord opened her heart to accept what I was saying. After she and her household had been baptized she kept urging us, "If you judge me a true believer in the Lord," she said, "Come and stay with us." And she would take no refusal.

It happened one day that as we were going to prayer, we were met by a slave-girl who was a soothsayer and made a lot of money for her masters by foretelling the future. This girl started following me and the rest of us and shouting, "Here are the servants of the Most High God; they have come to tell you how to be saved!" She did this day after day until I was exasperated and turned round and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to leave that woman." The spirit went out of her then and there. Maybe a bad move, since when her masters saw that there was no hope of making any more money out of her, they seized me and Silas and dragged us into the market place before the authorities. They said to the magistrates, "These people are causing a disturbance in our city. They are Jews and are advocating practices which it is unlawful for us as Romans to accept or follow." The crowd joined in and showed its hostility to us, so the magistrates had us stripped and ordered us to be flogged.

We were given many lashes and then thrown into prison, and the gaoler was told to keep a close watch on us. So, following such instructions, he threw us into the inner prison and fastened our feet in the stocks. In the middle of the night we were praying and singing God's praises, while the other prisoners listened. Suddenly there was an earthquake that shook the prison to its foundations. All the doors flew open and the chains fell from all the prisoners. When the gaoler woke and saw the doors wide open he drew his sword and was about to commit suicide, presuming that the prisoners had escaped.

But I shouted at the top of my voice, "Do yourself no harm; we are all here. " He called for lights, then rushed in, threw himself trembling at our feet and escorted us out, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" I told him, "Become a believer in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and your household too." Then I preached the word of the Lord to him and to all his household. Late as it was, he took us to wash our wounds, and was baptized then and there with all his house-hold. Afterwards he took us into his house and gave us a meal, and the whole household celebrated their conversion to belief in God.

When it was daylight the magistrates sent the lictors with the order: "Release those men." The gaoler reported the message to me, "The magistrates have sent an order for your release; you can go now and be on your way." "What!" I replied, "Without trial they gave us a public flogging, though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison, and now they want to send us away on the quiet! Oh no! They must come and escort us out themselves." The lictors reported this to the magistrates, who were terrified when they heard we were Roman citizens. They came and urged us to leave the town. From the prison we went to Lydia's house where we saw all the brothers and gave them some encouragement, then we left.

Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, we eventually reached Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As usual I went in and for three consecutive Sabbaths developed the arguments from scripture for them, explaining and proving how it was ordained that the Christ should suffer and rise from the dead. "And the Christ", I said, "is this Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you." Some of them were convinced and joined us, and so did a great many god-fearing people and Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women.

The Pharisee Jews, full of resentment, enlisted the help of a gang from the market place, stirred up a crowd, and soon had the whole city in an uproar. They made for Jason's house, hoping to bring us before the People's Assembly, however, they found only Jason and some of the brothers, and these they dragged before the city council, shouting, "The people who have been turning the whole world upside down have come here now; they have been staying at Jason's. They have broken Caesar's edicts by claiming that there is another king, Jesus." Hearing this, the citizens and the city councilors were alarmed, and they made Jason and the rest give a security before setting them free.

When it was dark the brothers immediately sent us away to Beroea, where we went to the Jewish synagogue as soon as we arrived. Here we found the Jews were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they welcomed the word very readily; every day they studied the scriptures to check whether it was true. Many of them became believers, and so did many Greek women of high standing and a number of the men.

When the Jews of Thessalonica came to learn that the word of God was being preached by me in Beroea as well, they went there to make trouble and stir up the people. So the brothers arranged for me to go immediately as far as the coast, leaving Silas and Timothy behind. My

escort took me as far as Athens, and went back with instructions for Silas and Timothy to rejoin me as soon as they could.

I waited for them in Athens and there my whole soul was revolted at the sight of a city given over to idolatry. In the synagogue I debated with the Pharisee Jews and the god-fearing, and in the market place I debated every day with anyone whom I met. Even a few Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with me. Some said, “What can this parrot mean?” And, because I was preaching about Jesus and Resurrection, others said, “He seems to be a propagandist for some outlandish gods.”

They got me to accompany them to the Areopagus, where they said to me, “Can we know what this new doctrine is that you are teaching? Some of the things you say seemed startling to us and we would like to find out what they mean.” The one amusement the Athenians and the foreigners living there seem to have is to discuss and listen to the latest ideas.

So, I stood before the whole council of the Areopagus and made this speech: “Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters, because, as I strolled round looking at your sacred monuments, I noticed among other things an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. In fact, the unknown God you revere is the one I proclaim to you. Since the God who made the world and everything in it is himself Lord of heaven and earth, he does not make his home in shrines made by human hands. Nor is he in need of anything, that he should be served by human hands; on the contrary, it is he who gives everything, including life and breath, to everyone. From one single principle he not only created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth, but he decreed the times and limits of their habitation. And he did this so that they might seek the deity and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him; and indeed he is not far from any of us, since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist, as indeed some of your own writers have said, ‘We are all his children.’

Since we are the children of God, we have no excuse for thinking that the deity looks like anything in gold, silver or stone that has been carved and designed by a man. But now, overlooking the times of ignorance, God is telling everyone everywhere that they must repent, because he has fixed a day when the whole world will be judged in uprightness by a man he has appointed. And God has publicly proved this by raising him from the dead.”

At this mention of rising from the dead, some of them burst out laughing; others said, “We would like to hear you talk about this another time.” After that I left them, but there were some who attached themselves to me and became believers, among them Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman called Damaris, and others besides.

After this I left Athens and went to Corinth, where I met a Jew whose family came from Pontus. He and his wife had recently left Italy because an edict of Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. I went to visit them, and when I found they were tentmakers, of the same trade as myself, I lodged with them, and we worked together.

Every Sabbath I used to hold debates in the synagogues, trying to convert Jews as well as Greeks. After Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, I devoted all my time to preaching, declaring to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. When they turned against me and started to insult me, I took my cloak and shook it out in front of them, saying, “Your blood be on your own heads; from now on I will go to the Gentiles with a clear conscience.” Then I left the synagogue and moved to the house next door that belonged to a worshipper of God called Justus. Crispus, president of the synagogue, and his whole household, all became believers in the Lord. Many Corinthians when they heard this became believers and were baptized.

One night the Lord spoke to me in a vision, “Be fearless; speak out and do not keep silence; I am with you. I have so many people that belong to me in this city that no one will attempt to hurt you.” So, I stayed there preaching the word of God among them for eighteen months. But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Pharisee Jews made a concerted attack on me and brought me before the tribunal, saying, “We accuse this man of persuading people to worship God in a way that breaks the Law.”

Before I could open my mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “Listen, you Jews. If this were a misdemeanor or a crime, it would be in order for me to listen to your plea; but if it is only quibbles about words and names, and about your own Law, then you must deal with it yourselves; I have no intention of making legal decisions about these things.” Then he began to hustle them out of the court, and at once they all turned on Sosthenes, the synagogue president, and beat him in front of the tribunal. Gallio refused to take any notice at all.

After staying on for some time, I took leave of the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae I had my hair cut off, because of the Nazarite vow I had made. When we reached Ephesus, I left them, but first I went alone to

the synagogue to debate with the Jews. They asked me to stay longer, but I declined, though when I took my leave I said, “I will come back another time, God willing.”

Then I sailed from Ephesus. I landed at Caesarea and went up to greet the church in Jerusalem before returning to Antioch. While there I wrote a letter to the churches in Thessalonica.

Chapter 4: My First Letter to the Thessalonians

I was concerned for the new church in Thessalonica as I was for all the new churches. Thessalonica had, however, seemed special in some sense, certainly in its receptivity to the gospel message. I sent Timothy to assess its progress. I was delighted with his report. I hurried to praise these new Christians. I had written to the Galatians with much anger in my heart over their fickleness. I wrote this letter to the Thessalonians with an abundance of joy in my heart over their fidelity to the Word.

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Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonica which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace. We always thank God for you all, mentioning you in our prayers continually. We remember before our God and Father how active is the faith, how unsparing the love, how persevering the hope which you have from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I must first tell them how proud I am of their response to our message, to the Word.

We know, brothers loved by God, that you have been chosen, because our gospel came to you not only in words, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with great effect. And you observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your sake. You took us and the Lord as your model, welcoming the word with the joy of the Holy Spirit in spite of great hardship. And so you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia since it was from you that the word of the Lord rang out, and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for your faith in God has spread everywhere.

We do not need to tell other people about it; other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke from the worship of false gods when you were converted to God and became servants of the living and true God; and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven. It is he who saves us from the Retribution which is coming.

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I remind them our time with them was not without its hardships.

You know yourselves, my brothers, that our visit to you has not been pointless. Although, as you know, we received rough treatment and insults at Philippi, God gave us the courage to speak his gospel to you fearlessly, in spite of great opposition. Our encouragement to you does not come from any delusion or impure motives or trickery. No, God has approved us to be entrusted with the gospel, and this is how we preach, seeking to please not human beings but God who tests our hearts.

I preach a message of humility, exemplified by how we lived among them. I practiced my trade as a tent-maker and paid my own way always.

Indeed, we have never acted with the thought of flattering anyone, as you know, nor as an excuse for greed, God is our witness; nor have we ever looked for honor from human beings, either from you or anybody else, when we could have imposed ourselves on you with full weight, as apostles of Christ. Instead, we lived unassumingly among you. Like a mother feeding and looking after her children, we felt so devoted to you, that we would have been happy to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, so dear had you become.

And we are proud of our hard work and our treatment of each one of them.

You remember, brothers, with what unsparing energy we used to work, slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you while we were proclaiming the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, that our treatment of you, since you believed, has been impeccably fair and upright. As you know, we treated every one of you as a father treats his children, urging you, encouraging you and appealing to you to live a life worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and his glory.

I praise them for their fidelity to the gospel in spite of persecution and insults.

Another reason why we continually thank God for you is that as soon as you heard the word that we brought you as God's message, you welcomed it for what it really is, not the word of any human being, but God's word, a power that is working among you believers. For you, my brothers, have modelled yourselves on the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea, in that you have suffered the same treatment from your own countrymen as they have had from the Jews, who put the Lord Jesus to death, and the prophets too, and persecuted us also.

Their conduct does not please God, and makes them the enemies of the whole human race, because they are hindering us from preaching to Gentiles to save them. Thus all

the time they are reaching the full extent of their iniquity, but retribution has finally overtaken them.

I am sincere in saying how much I miss them, this community excels among all my other churches in the purity of its faith.

Although we had been deprived of you for only a short time in body but never in affection, brothers, we had an especially strong desire and longing to see you face to face again, and we tried hard to come and visit you; I, Paul, tried more than once, but Satan prevented us. What do you think is our hope and our joy, and what our crown of honor in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? You are, for you are our pride and joy.

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I could not come to them but I sent Timothy. His account of their faith has been a huge encouragement to me.

When I could not bear it any longer, I decided it would be best to be left without a companion at Athens, and sent our brother Timothy, who is God's helper in spreading the gospel of Christ, to keep you firm and encourage you about your faith and prevent any of you from being unsettled by the present hardships. As you know, these are bound to come our way; indeed, when we were with you, we warned you that we are certain to have hardships to bear, and that is what has happened now, as you have found out.

That is why, when I could not bear it any longer, I sent to assure myself of your faith; I was afraid the Tester might have put you to the test, and all our work might have been pointless. However, Timothy has returned and has given us the good news of your faith and your love, telling us that you always remember us with pleasure and want to see us quite as much as we want to see you.

And so, brothers, your faith has been a great encouragement to us in the middle of our own distress and hardship; now we can breathe again, as you are holding firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you, for all the joy we feel before our God on your account? We are earnestly praying night and day to be able to see you face to face again and make up any shortcomings in your faith. May God our Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, ease our path to you. May the Lord increase and enrich your love for each other and for all, so that it matches

ours for you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

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I remind them to stay faithful, to shed immorality,

Finally, brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus; we instructed you how to live in the way that pleases God, and you are so living; but make more progress still. You are well aware of the instructions we gave you on the authority of the Lord Jesus. God wills you all to be holy. He wants you to keep away from sexual immorality, and each one of you to know how to control his body in a way that is holy and honorable, not giving way to selfish lust like the nations who do not acknowledge God. He wants nobody at all to take advantage of a brother in these matters; the Lord always pays back sins of that sort, as we told you before emphatically. God called us to be holy, not to be immoral; in other words, anyone who rejects this is rejecting not human authority, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

And I want you to love one another

As for brotherly love, there is no need to write to you about that, since you have yourselves learnt from God to love one another, and in fact this is how you treat all the brothers throughout the whole of Macedonia. However, we do urge you, brothers, to go on making even greater progress and to make a point of living quietly, attending to your own business and earning your living, just as we told you to, so that you may earn the respect of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone.

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I believe the second coming of Christ will soon occur and that those already dead and those still alive will be treated equally.

We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, to make sure that you do not grieve for them, as others do who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that in the same way God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that we who are still alive for the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have fallen asleep. At the signal given by the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God, the Lord himself will come down

from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and only after that shall we who remain alive be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. This is the way we shall be with the Lord forever. With such thoughts as these, then, you should encourage one another.

Yes the Lord will soon come and unexpectedly, so be alert and be prepared.

About times and dates, brothers, there is no need to write to you for you are well aware in any case that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, "How quiet and peaceful it is," that sudden destruction falls on them, as suddenly as pains come on a pregnant woman; and there is no escape.

But you, brothers, do not live in the dark, that the Day should take you unawares like a thief. No, you are all children of light and children of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober. Night is the time for sleepers to sleep and night the time for drunkards to be drunk, but we belong to the day and we should be sober; let us put on faith and love for a breastplate, and the hope of salvation for a helmet. God destined us not for his retribution, but to win salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, awake or asleep, we should still live united to him.

I want them to look after their leaders and one another.

So give encouragement to each other, and keep strengthening one another, as you do already. We appeal to you, my brothers, to be considerate to those who work so hard among you as your leaders in the Lord and those who admonish you. Have the greatest respect and affection for them because of their work.

Be at peace among yourselves. We urge you, brothers, to admonish those who are undisciplined, encourage the apprehensive, support the weak and be patient with everyone. Make sure that people do not try to repay evil for evil; always aim at what is best for each other and for everyone. Always be joyful; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks; this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the Spirit and despise the gift of prophecy with contempt; test everything and hold on to what is good and shun every form of evil.

And I give them a final blessing, would all my churches be as uplifting as this one.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may your spirit, life and body be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who has called you is trustworthy and will carry it out. Pray for us, my brothers. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. My orders, in the Lord's name, are that this letter is to be read to all the brothers.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Chapter 5: Third Missionary Journey

I returned from Jerusalem travelling back to Antioch where I spent a short time before continuing my journey through the Galatian countryside and then through Phrygia, encouraging all the followers.

Priscilla and Aquila, my friends in Ephesus, wrote to me about an Alexandrian Jew named Apollo who had come to Ephesus. They wrote he was an eloquent man, with a sound knowledge of the scriptures, and yet, though he had been given instruction in the Way of the Lord and preached with great spiritual fervor and was accurate in all the details he taught about Jesus, he had experienced only the baptism of John. They wrote he began to teach fearlessly in the synagogue and, when they heard him, they attached themselves to him and gave him more detailed instruction about the Way.

So we had another preacher. For when Apollo thought of crossing over to Achaia, the brothers in Ephesus encouraged him and wrote asking the disciples to welcome him. I heard when he arrived there he was able by God's grace to help the believers considerably by the energetic way he refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

I received many replies to my letter to the church at Thessalonica, so much so I was urged to send them a follow up letter. I did so just a few months later.

Chapter 6: My Second Letter to the Thessalonians

The church at Thessalonica was special to me, yet it was threatened by false teaching. I would have preferred to be there personally, but for now this letter would have to do. I was convinced the Second Coming would be very soon, its shadow governed much of my message.

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I emphasize that the coming of Jesus is to be soon, some false teachers preached it had already come. I need to challenge these errors.

Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonica which is in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We must always thank God for you, brothers; quite rightly, because your faith is growing so wonderfully and the mutual love that each one of you has for all never stops increasing.

I grieve for my flock that false preaching is confusing them.

Among the churches of God we take special pride in you for your perseverance and faith under all the persecutions and hardships you have to bear. It all shows that God's judgement is just, so that you may be found worthy of the kingdom of God; it is for the sake of this that you are suffering now. For God's justice will surely mean hardship being inflicted on those who are now inflicting hardship on you, and for you who are now suffering hardship, relief with us, when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with the angels of his power.

I tell them that at Christ's second coming, there will be just retribution.

He will come amid flaming fire; he will impose a penalty on those who do not acknowledge God and refuse to accept the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Their punishment is to be lost eternally, excluded from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength on that day when he comes to be glorified among his holy ones and marveled at by all who believe in him; and you are among those who believed our witness.

In view of this we also pray continually that our God will make you worthy of his call, and by his power fulfil all your desires for goodness, and complete all that you have been doing through faith; so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in him, by the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

But He has not come yet. I know the early signs, they have not yet occurred.

About the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, brothers, and our being gathered to him; please do not be too easily thrown into confusion or alarmed by any manifestation of the Spirit or any statement or any letter claiming to come from us, suggesting that the Day of the Lord has already arrived.

Never let anyone deceive you in any way. It cannot happen until the Great Revolt has taken place and there has appeared the wicked One, the lost One, the Enemy, who raises himself above every so-called God or object of worship to enthrone himself in God's sanctuary and flaunts the claim that he is God.

Surely you remember my telling you about this when I was with you? And you know, too, what is still holding him back from appearing before his appointed time. The mystery of wickedness is already at work, but let him who is restraining it once be removed, and the wicked One will appear openly. The Lord will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and will annihilate him with his glorious appearance at his coming.

These are the signs of the wicked one's coming.

But the coming of the wicked One will be marked by Satan being at work in all kinds of counterfeit miracles and signs and wonders, and every wicked deception aimed at those who are on the way to destruction because they would not accept the love of the truth and so be saved. And therefore God sends on them a power that deludes people so that they believe what is false, and so that those who do not believe the truth and take their pleasure in wickedness may all be condemned.

But we must always thank God for you, brothers whom the Lord loves, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved by the Spirit who makes us holy and by faith in the truth. Through our gospel he called you to this so that you should claim as your own the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Stand firm, then, brothers, and keep the traditions that we taught you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who has given us his love and, through his grace, such ceaseless encouragement and such sure hope, encourage you and strengthen you in every good word and deed.

I urge them to continue the work of salvation, and stay resolute.

Finally, brothers, pray for us that the Lord's message may spread quickly, and be received with honor as it was among you; and pray that we may be preserved from bigoted and evil people, for not everyone has faith. You can rely on the Lord, who will give you strength and guard you from the evil One, and we, in the Lord, have every confidence in you, that you are doing and will go on doing all that we tell you.

May the Lord turn your hearts towards the love of God and the perseverance of Christ in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we urge you, brothers, to keep away from any of the brothers who lives an undisciplined life, not in accordance with the tradition you received from us.

Because they believed the second coming was near or had even come, some of the converts were using this as an excuse not to work, expecting to be fed through the largesse of others. I was appalled by this.

You know how you should take us as your model; we were not undisciplined when we were with you, nor did we ever accept food from anyone without paying for it; no, we worked with unsparing energy, night and day, so as not to be a burden on any of you. This was not because we had no right to be, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to imitate.

We urged you when we were with you not to let anyone eat who refused to work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living lives without any discipline, doing no work themselves but interfering with other people's. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we urge and call on people of this kind to go on quietly working and earning the food that they eat.

My brothers, never slacken in doing what is right. If anyone refuses to obey what I have written in this letter, take note of him and have nothing to do with him, so that he will be ashamed of himself, though you are not to treat him as an enemy, but to correct him as a brother.

Who could I trust? Even this letter could be thought to come from another, not me. I finished with my personal seal.

May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all. This greeting is in my own hand-PAUL. It is the mark of genuineness in every letter; this is my own writing.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Chapter 7: Much Ado in Ephesus

I was pleased to have Apollo to help us but I needed to clean up his early work. I knew he was in Corinth so I made my way overland as far as Ephesus, where I found a number of Apollo's converts. When I asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" they answered, "No, we were never even told there was such a thing as a Holy Spirit." I knew the answer but asked anyway, "Then how were you baptized?" They replied, "With John's baptism." I said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance; but he insisted that the people should believe in the one who was to come after him, namely Jesus."

When they heard this, they asked to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and the moment I had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came down on them, and they began to speak with tongues and to prophesy. There were about twelve of these men in all.

I began by going to the synagogue, where I spoke out fearlessly and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. I did this for three months, converting many, but some of the congregation went the other way, becoming even more unbelieving. As soon as they began attacking the Way in public, I broke with them, left their synagogue and took my disciples apart to hold daily discussions in the lecture room of Tyrannus.

This went on for two years, with the result that all the inhabitants of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, were able to hear the word of the Lord. Through the power of Jesus I began to work miracles. My disciples took handkerchiefs or aprons which had touched me to the sick, and they were cured of their illnesses, and the evil spirits came out of them.

Satan is ever present and very powerful. I heard this episode with relish. Some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried pronouncing the name of the Lord Jesus over people who were possessed by evil spirits; they used to say, "I adjure you by the Jesus whose spokesman is Paul." Among those who did this were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest. The evil spirit replied, "Jesus I recognize, and Paul I know, but who are you?" and the man with the evil spirit hurled himself at them and overpowered first one and then another, and handled them so violently that they fled from that house, naked and stripped of clothing and badly mauled. Everybody in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, heard about this episode; everyone was filled with awe, and the name of the Lord Jesus came to be held in great honor.

I was to hear more gratifying news. Some believers, too, came forward to admit in detail how they had used spells and a number of them who had practiced magic collected their books and made a bonfire of them in public. The value of these was calculated to be fifty thousand silver pieces. In this powerful way the word of the Lord spread more and more widely and successfully. When all this was over I made up my mind to go back to Jerusalem through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," I told Timothy, "I must go on to see Rome as well." So I sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of me to Macedonia, while I remained for a time in Asia.

It was not all good news. It was during this time that a serious disturbance broke out in connection with the Way. A silversmith called Demetrius, who provided work for a large number of craftsmen making silver shrines of Diana, called a general meeting of the others in the same trade. "As you know," he said, "It is on this industry that we depend for our prosperity. Now you must have seen and heard how, not just in Ephesus but nearly everywhere in Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and converted a great number of people with his argument that gods made by hand are not gods at all. This threatens not only to discredit our trade, but also to reduce the sanctuary of the great goddess Diana to unimportance. It could end up by taking away the prestige of a goddess venerated all over Asia, and indeed all over the world."

This speech roused them to fury, and they started to shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" The whole town was filled with the uproar and the mob made a concerted rush to the theatre, dragging along two of my Macedonian travelling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus. I wanted to make an appeal to the people, but the disciples refused to let me; in fact, some of my friends sent messages urging me not to take the risk of going into the theatre.

By now everybody was shouting different things, till the assembly itself had no idea what was going on; most of them did not even know why they had gathered together. Some of the crowd prevailed upon Alexander, whom the Jews pushed forward; he raised his hand for silence with the intention of explaining things to the people. As soon as they realized he was a Jew, they all started shouting in unison, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" and they kept this up for two hours.

When the town clerk eventually succeeded in calming the crowd, he said, "Citizens of Ephesus! Is there anybody who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of great Diana and of her statue that fell from heaven? Nobody can contradict this

and there is no need for you to get excited or do anything rash. These men you have brought here are not guilty of any sacrilege or blasphemy against our goddess. If Demetrius and the craftsmen he has with him want to complain about anyone, there are the assizes and the proconsuls; let them take the case to court. And if you want to ask any more questions you must raise them in the regular assembly. We could easily be charged with rioting for today's happenings: there is no ground for it all, and we can give no justification for this gathering.” When he had finished this speech, he dismissed the assembly.

Chapter 8: My First Letter to the Corinthians

Alone and not wanting to make too much of this silver smith disturbance with my closest disciples away, I settled down to write a letter to the church of Corinth. Apollo was a help but he proved to be also a hindrance, causing divisions within the Corinthian church. I mouthed the proverb, “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” particularly in the mind of an egotist.

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I will tell the Corinthians that I do not shrink from the truth. This is no time to be modest, I am the true apostle, so ordained by Jesus.

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and Sosthenes, our brother, to the church of God in Corinth, to those who have been consecrated by Christ Jesus and called to be God's holy people, with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord as well as ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank God for their faith. Christ Jesus will protect them.

I am continually thanking God about you, for the grace of God which you have been given in Christ Jesus; in him you have been richly endowed in every kind of utterance and knowledge; so firmly has witness to Christ taken root in you. And so you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; he will continue to give you strength till the very end, so that you will be irreproachable on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can rely on God, who has called you to be partners with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

But I must tell them they are divided. Three preachers have taught you, Apollo, Peter and myself. Their message is the same, not different.

Brothers, I urge you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to have factions among yourselves but all to be in agreement in what you profess; so that you are perfectly united in your beliefs and judgements. From what Chloe's people have been telling me about you, brothers, it is clear that there are serious differences among you.

What I mean is this: every one of you is declaring, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollo,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.' Has Christ been split up? Was it Paul that was crucified for you, or was it in Paul's name that you were baptized?

I am thankful I did not baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. Yes, I did baptize the family of Stephanas, too; but besides these I do not think I baptized anyone.

I tell them, here is the cure for your divisions. Only the message of the gospel matters, all else is folly.

After all, Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; and not by means of wisdom of language, wise words which would make the cross of Christ pointless. The message of the cross is folly for those who are on the way to ruin, but for those of us who are on the road to salvation it is the power of God. As scripture says: I am going to destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of any who understand. Where are the philosophers? Where are the experts? And where are the debaters of this age? Do you not see how God has shown up human wisdom as folly?

Since in the wisdom of God the world was unable to recognize God through wisdom, it was God's own pleasure to save believers through the folly of the gospel. While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, we are preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. God's folly is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Consider, brothers, how you were called; not many of you are wise by human standards, not many influential, not many from noble families. No, God chose those who by human standards are fools to shame the wise; he chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong, those who by human standards are common and contemptible, indeed those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing all those that do count for something, so that no human being might feel boastful before God. It is by him that you exist in Christ Jesus, who for us was made wisdom from God, and saving justice and holiness and redemption. As scripture says: If anyone wants to boast, let him boast of the Lord.

I know I am not a brilliant orator, my gift is more in the written word. My role is to introduce people to the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Now when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God. I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ. I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit, so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

But still, to those who have reached maturity, we do talk of a wisdom, not, it is true, a philosophy of this age or of the rulers of this age, who will not last long now. It is of the mysterious wisdom of God that we talk, the wisdom that was hidden, which God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began. None of the rulers of the age recognized it; for if they had recognized it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but it is as scripture says: 'What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualize; all that God has prepared for those who love him.' To us, though, God has given revelation through the Spirit, for the Spirit explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God.

After all, is there anyone who knows the qualities of anyone except his own spirit, within him; and in the same way, nobody knows the qualities of God except the Spirit of God. Now, the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of the world but God's own Spirit, so that we may understand the lavish gifts God has given us. And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learnt from human philosophy, but in terms learnt from the Spirit, fitting spiritual language to spiritual things.

The natural person has no room for the gifts of God's Spirit; to him they are folly; he cannot recognize them, because their value can be assessed only in the Spirit. The spiritual person, on the other hand, can assess the value of everything, and that person's value cannot be assessed by anybody else. For who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been his adviser? But we are those who have the mind of Christ.

I go back to my message. Apollo, Peter, me, we are all saying the same message. Let it unite you, not divide you.

And so, brothers, I was not able to talk to you as spiritual people; I had to talk to you as people still living by your natural inclinations, still infants in Christ; I fed you with milk and not solid food, for you were not yet able to take it, and even now, you are still not able to, for you are still living by your natural inclinations. As long as there are jealousy and rivalry among you, that surely means that you are still living by your natural inclinations and by merely human principles.

While there is one that says, 'I belong to Paul' and another that says, 'I belong to Apollo' are you not being only too human? For who is Apollo and who is Paul? The servants through whom you came to believe, and each has only what the Lord has given him. I did the planting, Apollo did the watering, but God gave growth. In this, neither the planter nor the waterer counts for anything; only God, who gives growth. It is all one who does the planting and who does the watering, and each will have the proper pay for the work that he has done.

After all, we do share in God's work; you are God's farm, God's building. By the grace of God which was given to me, I laid the foundations like a trained master-builder, and someone else is building on them. Now each one must be careful how he does the building.

For nobody can lay down any other foundation than the one which is there already, namely Jesus Christ. On this foundation, different people may build in gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay or straw but each person's handiwork will be shown for what it is. The Day which dawns in fire will make it clear and the fire itself will test the quality of each person's work. The one whose work stands up to it will be given his wages; the one whose work is burnt down will suffer the loss of it, though he himself will be saved; he will be saved as someone might expect to be saved from a fire.

I tell them that they are the temple of God and that the wisdom of this world is folly to God.

Do you not realize that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy that person, because God's temple is holy; and you are that temple. There is no room for self-delusion. Any one of

you who thinks he is wise by worldly standards must learn to be a fool in order to be really wise.

For the wisdom of the world is folly to God. As scripture says: 'He traps the crafty in the snare of their own cunning' and again: 'The Lord knows the plans of the wise and how insipid they are.' So there is to be no boasting about human beings; everything belongs to you, whether it is Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, the world, life or death, the present or the future, all belong to you; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

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We apostles are God's servants. In ourselves we are not important. We are fools for Christ's sake.

People should think of us as Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. In such a matter, what is expected of stewards is that each one should be found trustworthy. It is of no importance to me how you or any other human court may judge me; I will not even be the judge of my own self. It is true that my conscience does not reproach me, but that is not enough to justify me; it is the Lord who is my judge.

For that reason, do not judge anything before the due time, until the Lord comes; he will bring to light everything that is hidden in darkness and reveal the designs of all hearts. Then everyone will receive from God the appropriate commendation.

I have applied all this to myself and Apollo for your sakes, so that you can learn how the saying, 'Nothing beyond what is written' is true of us. No individual among you must become filled with his own importance and make comparisons, to another's detriment. Who made you so important? What have you got that was not given to you? And if it was given to you, why are you boasting as though it were your own? You already have everything; you are rich already; you have come into your kingdom, without any help from us! Well, I wish you were kings and we could be kings with you!

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on show right at the end, like men condemned to death; we have been exhibited as a spectacle to the whole universe, both angelic and human. Here we are, fools for Christ's sake, while you are the clever ones in Christ; we are weak, while you are strong; you are honored, while we are disgraced. To this day, we go short of food and drink and clothes; we are beaten up and we have no homes; we earn our living by

laboring with our own hands; when we are cursed, we answer with a blessing; when we are hounded, we endure it passively; when we are insulted, we give a courteous answer. We are treated even now as the dregs of the world, the very lowest scum.

I tell them to think of me as a father.

I am writing all this not to make you ashamed but simply to remind you, as my dear children; for even though you might have ten thousand slaves to look after you in Christ, you still have no more than one father, and it was I who fathered you in Christ Jesus, by the gospel. That is why I urge you to take me as your pattern and why I have sent you Timothy, a dear and faithful son to me in the Lord, who will remind you of my principles of conduct in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

On the assumption that I was not coming to you, some of you have become filled with your own self-importance; but I shall be coming to you soon, the Lord willing, and then I shall find out not what these self-important people say, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God consists not in spoken words but in power. What do you want then? Am I to come to you with a stick in my hand, or in love and with a spirit of gentleness?

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My second reason for writing this letter was the reports of grave scandalous behavior. I must tell them there is one among you who you must get rid of.

It is widely reported that there is sexual immorality among you, immorality of a kind that is not found even among Gentiles: that one of you is living with his stepmother. And you so filled with your own self-importance! It would have been better if you had been grieving bitterly, so that the man who has done this thing were turned out of the community.

For my part, however distant I am physically, I am present in spirit and have already condemned the man who behaved in this way, just as though I were present in person. When you have gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus, with the presence of my spirit, and in the power of our Lord Jesus, hand such a man over to Satan, to be destroyed as far as natural life is concerned, so that on the Day of the Lord his spirit may be saved.

Your self-satisfaction is ill founded. Do you not realize that only a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Throw out the old yeast so that you can be the fresh dough, unleavened as you are. For our Passover has been sacrificed, that is, Christ; let us keep the feast,

then, with none of the old yeast and no leavening of evil and wickedness, but only the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

In my first letter, I wrote to you that you should have nothing to do with people living immoral lives. I was not including everybody in this present world who is sexually immoral, or everybody who is greedy, or dishonest, or worships false gods, since that would mean you would have to cut yourselves off completely from the world. In fact, what I meant was that you were not to have anything to do with anyone going by the name of brother who is sexually immoral, or is greedy, or worships false gods, or is a slanderer, or a drunkard, or dishonest; never even have a meal with anybody of that kind. It is no concern of mine to judge outsiders. It is for you to judge those who are inside, is it not? But outsiders are for God to judge. You must banish this evil-doer from among you.

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Do not go to outsiders for justice; find a judge among yourselves.

Is one of you with a complaint against another so brazen as to seek judgement from sinners and not from God's holy people? Do you not realize that the holy people of God are to be the judges of the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent for petty cases? Do you not realize that we shall be the judges of angels, then quite certainly over matters of this life? But when you have matters of this life to be judged, you bring them before those who are of no account in the Church!

I say this to make you ashamed of yourselves. Can it really be that it is impossible to find in the community one sensible person capable of deciding questions between brothers, and that this is why brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? No, it is a fault in you, by itself, that one of you should go to law against another at all; why do you not prefer to suffer injustice, why not prefer to be defrauded? And here you are, doing the injustice and the defrauding, and to your own brothers.

I tell them to use their bodies for the glory of God. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Do you not realize that people who do evil will never inherit the kingdom of God? Make no mistake, the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the self-indulgent, sodomites, thieves, misers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. Some of you used to be of that kind, but you have been washed clean, you have been

sanctified, and you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God.

For me everything is permissible; maybe, but not everything does good. True, for me everything is permissible, but I am determined not to be dominated by anything. Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods; and God will destroy them both. But the body is not for sexual immorality; it is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. God raised up the Lord and he will raise us up too by his power.

Do you not realize that your bodies are members of Christ's body; do you think one can take parts of Christ's body and join them to the body of a prostitute? Out of the question! Or do you not realize that anyone who attaches himself to a prostitute is one body with her, since the two, as it is said, become one flesh. But anyone who attaches himself to the Lord is one spirit with him.

Keep away from sexual immorality. All other sins that people may commit are done outside the body; but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you and whom you received from God? You are not your own property, then; you have been bought at a price. So use your body for the glory of God.

7777

I received several letters from the elders of this church. I am moved to address the questions raised in them. The first question concerned marriage. I believe the second coming is soon to come and that we should all just stay as we are until then. But human nature is human nature, the sexual drive is strong. In brief, I tell them that everyone should stay in the same state as they are now, awaiting the Coming of Christ.

Now for the questions about which you wrote. Yes, it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman; yet to avoid immorality every man should have his own wife and every woman her own husband. The husband must give to his wife what she has a right to expect, and so too the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and in the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

You (married people) must not deprive each other, except by mutual consent for a limited time, to leave yourselves free for prayer, and to come together again afterwards; otherwise Satan may take advantage of any lack of self-control to put you to the test. I am telling you this as a concession, not an order.

I should still like everyone to be as I am myself; but everyone has his own gift from God, one this kind and the next something different. To the unmarried and to widows I say it is good for them to stay as they are, like me. But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry, since it is better to be married than to be burnt up.

To the married I give this ruling, and this is not mine but the Lord's. A wife must not be separated from her husband, or if she has already left him, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband; and a husband must not divorce his wife.

For other cases these instructions are my own, not the Lord's. If one of the brothers has a wife who is not a believer, and she is willing to stay with him, he should not divorce her; and if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to stay with her, she should not divorce her husband.

You see, the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through the brother. If this were not so, your children would be unclean, whereas in fact they are holy. But if the unbeliever chooses to leave, then let the separation take place; in these circumstances, the brother or sister is no longer tied. But God has called you to live in peace. As a wife, how can you tell whether you are to be the salvation of your husband; as a husband, how can you tell whether you are to be the salvation of your wife? Anyway let everyone continue in the part which the Lord has allotted to him, as he was when God called him. This is the rule that I give to all the churches.

If a man who is called has already been circumcised, then he must stay circumcised; when an uncircumcised man is called, he may not be circumcised. To be circumcised is of no importance, and to be uncircumcised is of no importance; what is important is the keeping of God's commandments. Everyone should stay in whatever state he was in when he was called. So, if when you were called, you were a slave, do not think it matters. Even if you have a chance of freedom, you should prefer to make full use of your condition as a slave. You see, anyone who was called in the Lord while a slave, is a freeman of the Lord; and in the same way, anyone who was free when called, is a slave of Christ. You have been bought at a price; do not

be slaves now to any human being. Each one of you, brothers, is to stay before God in the state in which you were called.

About people remaining virgins, I have no directions from the Lord, but I give my own opinion as a person who has been granted the Lord's mercy to be faithful. Well then, because of the stress which is weighing upon us, the right thing seems to be this, it is good for people to stay as they are. If you are joined to a wife, do not seek to be released; if you are freed of a wife, do not look for a wife.

However, if you do get married, that is not a sin, and it is not sinful for a virgin to enter upon marriage. But such people will have the hardships consequent on human nature, and I would like you to be without that. What I mean, brothers, is that the time has become limited, and from now on, those who have spouses should live as though they had none; and those who mourn as though they were not mourning; those who enjoy life as though they did not enjoy it; those who have been buying property as though they had no possessions; and those who are involved with the world as though they were people not engrossed in it. Because this world as we know it is passing away.

I should like you to have your minds free from all worry. The unmarried man gives his mind to the Lord's affairs and to how he can please the Lord; but the man who is married gives his mind to the affairs of this world and to how he can please his wife, and he is divided in mind. So, too, the unmarried woman, and the virgin, gives her mind to the Lord's affairs and to being holy in body and spirit; but the married woman gives her mind to the affairs of this world and to how she can please her husband.

I am saying this only to help you, not to put a bridle on you, but so that everything is as it should be, and you are able to give your undivided attention to the Lord. If someone with strong passions thinks that he is behaving badly towards his fiancée and that things should take their due course, he should follow his desires. There is no sin in it; they should marry. But if he stands firm in his resolution, without any compulsion but with full control of his own will, and decides to let her remain as his fiancée, then he is acting well. In other words, he who marries his fiancée is doing well, and he who does not, better still.

A wife is tied as long as her husband is alive. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anybody she likes, only it must be in the Lord. She would be happier if she stayed as she is, to my way of thinking; and I believe that I too have the Spirit of God.

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The second question they asked related to eating the food sacrificed to false gods. I think it is neither right nor wrong in itself but it may give a very bad example to others.

Now about food which has been dedicated to false gods. We are well aware that all of us have knowledge, but while knowledge puffs up, love is what builds up. Someone may think that he has full knowledge of something and yet not know it as well as he should; but someone who loves God is known by God.

On the subject of eating foods dedicated to false gods, we are well aware that none of the false gods exists in reality and that there is no God other than the One. Though there are so-called gods, in the heavens or on earth, and there are plenty of gods and plenty of lords, yet for us there is only one God, the Father from whom all things come and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist.

However, not everybody has this knowledge. There are some in whose consciences false gods still play such a part that they take the food as though it had been dedicated to a god; then their conscience, being vulnerable, is defiled. But of course, food cannot make us acceptable to God; we lose nothing by not eating it, we gain nothing by eating it.

Only be careful that this freedom of yours does not in any way turn into an obstacle to trip those who are vulnerable. Suppose someone sees you, who has the knowledge, sitting eating in the temple of some false god, do you not think that his conscience, vulnerable as it is, may be encouraged to eat foods dedicated to false gods? And then it would be through your knowledge that this brother for whom Christ died, vulnerable as he is, has been lost. So, sinning against your brothers and wounding their vulnerable consciences, you would be sinning against Christ. That is why, if food can be the cause of a brother's downfall, I will never eat meat any more, rather than cause my brother's downfall.

9999

I shift gears to talk about myself and the other apostles and our relationship with the believers. We deserve the fruits of our labors, to eat and drink like them, even to have a wife like them.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? Even if to others I am not an apostle, to you at any rate I am, for you are

the seal of my apostolate in the Lord. To those who want to interrogate me, this is my answer. Have we not every right to eat and drink? And every right to be accompanied by a Christian wife, like the other apostles, like the brothers of the Lord, and like Cephas? Are Barnabas and I the only ones who have no right to stop working? What soldier would ever serve in the army at his own expense? And who is there who would plant a vineyard and never eat the fruit from it; or would keep a flock and not feed on the milk from his flock. Do not think that this is merely worldly wisdom. Does not the Law say exactly the same?

It is written in the Law of Moses: You must not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn. Is it about oxen that God is concerned here, or is it not said entirely for our sake? Clearly it was written for our sake, because it is right that whoever ploughs should plough with the expectation of having his share, and whoever threshes should thresh with the expectation of having his share. If we have sown the seed of spiritual things in you, is it too much to ask that we should receive from you a crop of material things? Others have been given such rights over you and do we not deserve more? In fact, we have never exercised this right; on the contrary, we have put up with anything rather than obstruct the gospel of Christ in any way.

But I insist I have never availed myself of this kind of reward. I have led an independent life, not being a burden on anyone. Indeed, I have made myself one with all the churches I served, not being singled out as in any way special.

Do you not realize that the ministers in the Temple get their food from the Temple, and those who serve at the altar can claim their share from the altar? In the same way, the Lord gave the instruction that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel. However, I have never availed myself of any rights of this kind; and I have not written this to secure such treatment for myself; I would rather die than that. No one shall take from me this ground of boasting.

In fact, preaching the gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it. If I did it on my own initiative, I would deserve a reward; but if I do it under compulsion, I am simply accepting a task entrusted to me. What reward do I have, then? That in my preaching I offer the gospel free of charge to avoid using the rights which the gospel allows me.

So, though I was not a slave to any human being, I put myself in slavery to all people, to win as many as I could. To the Jews I made myself as a Jew, to win the Jews; to those under

the Law as one under the Law (though I am not), in order to win those under the Law; to those outside the Law as one outside the Law, though I am not outside the Law but under Christ's law, to win those outside the Law. To the weak, I made myself weak, to win the weak. I accommodated myself to people in all kinds of different situations, so that by all possible means I might bring some to salvation. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its benefits with others.

Do you not realize that, though all the runners in the stadium take part in the race, only one of them gets the prize? Run like that, to win. Every athlete concentrates completely on training, and this is to win a wreath that will wither, whereas ours will never wither. So that is how I run, not without a clear goal; and how I box, not wasting blows on air. I punish my body and bring it under control, to avoid any risk that, having acted as herald for others, I myself may be disqualified.

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Maybe I confused some listeners in what I said about eating the sacrifices to false gods. Let me be crystal clear. You cannot eat at the Lord's table at the same time as you eat at Satan's.

I want you to be quite certain, brothers, that our ancestors all had the cloud over them and all passed through the sea. In the cloud and in the sea they were all baptized into Moses; all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, since they drank from the spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ. In spite of this, God was not pleased with most of them, and their corpses were scattered over the desert.

Now these happenings were examples, for our benefit, so that we should never set our hearts, as they did, on evil things; nor are you to worship false gods, as some of them did, as it says in scripture: The people sat down to eat and drink, and afterwards got up to amuse themselves. Nor, again, are we to fall into sexual immorality; some of them did this, and twenty-three thousand met their downfall in one day. And we are not to put the Lord to the test; some of them put him to the test, and they were killed by snakes. Never complain; some of them complained, and they were killed by the Destroyer.

Now all these things happened to them by way of example, and they were described in writing to be a lesson for us, to whom it has fallen to live in the last days of the ages. Everyone,

no matter how firmly he thinks he is standing, must be careful he does not fall. None of the trials which have come upon you is more than a human being can stand. You can trust that God will not let you be put to the test beyond your strength, but with any trial will also provide a way out by enabling you to put up with it.

I urge my Gentile converts to have nothing to do with false gods.

For that reason, my dear friends, have nothing to do with the worship of false gods. I am talking to you as sensible people; weigh up for yourselves what I have to say. The blessing-cup, which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ; and the loaf of bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? And as there is one loaf, so we, although there are many of us, are one single body, for we all share in the one loaf. Now compare the natural people of Israel, is it not true that those who eat the sacrifices share the altar?

What does this mean? That the dedication of food to false gods amounts to anything? Or that false gods themselves amount to anything? No, it does not; simply that when pagans sacrifice, what is sacrificed by them is sacrificed to demons who are not God. I do not want you to share with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons as well; you cannot have a share at the Lord's table and the demons' table as well. Do we really want to arouse the Lord's jealousy; are we stronger than he is?

Do not give a bad example to others if they take offence at you eating food that has been sacrificed to false gods.

'Everything is permissible'; maybe so, but not everything does good. True, everything is permissible, but not everything builds people up. Nobody should be looking for selfish advantage, but everybody for someone else's. Eat anything that is sold in butchers' shops; there is no need to ask questions for conscience's sake, since to the Lord belong the earth and all it contains.

If an unbeliever invites you to a meal, go if you want to, and eat whatever is put before you; you need not ask questions of conscience first. But if someone says to you, "This food has been offered in sacrifice," do not eat it, out of consideration for the person that told you, for conscience's sake. Not your own conscience, I mean, but the other person's. Why should my freedom be governed by somebody else's conscience? Provided that I accept it with gratitude, why should I be blamed for eating food for which I give thanks?

Whatever you eat, then, or drink, and whatever else you do, do it all for the glory of God. Never be a cause of offence, either to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God, just as I try to accommodate everybody in everything, not looking for my own advantage, but for the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved.

11111111

Let me address the roles and behaviors of men and women.

Take me as your pattern, just as I take Christ for mine. I congratulate you for remembering me so consistently and for maintaining the traditions exactly as I passed them on to you. But I should like you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

For any man to pray or to prophesy with his head covered shows disrespect for his head. And for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered shows disrespect for her head; it is exactly the same as if she had her hair shaved off. Indeed, if a woman does go without a veil, she should have her hair cut off too; but if it is a shameful thing for a woman to have her hair cut off or shaved off, then she should wear a veil.

But for a man it is not right to have his head covered, since he is the image of God and reflects God's glory; but woman is the reflection of man's glory. For man did not come from woman; no, woman came from man; nor was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man: and this is why it is right for a woman to wear on her head a sign of the authority over her, because of the angels. However, in the Lord, though woman is nothing without man, man is nothing without woman; and though woman came from man, so does every man come from a woman, and everything comes from God.

Decide for yourselves: does it seem fitting that a woman should pray to God without a veil? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but when a woman has long hair, it is her glory? After all, her hair was given to her to be a covering. If anyone wants to be contentious, I say that we have no such custom, nor do any of the churches of God.

I need the followers of The Way to distinguish between ordinary eating and drinking and the breaking of bread and sanctifying of wine instructed by Jesus on the night before his supreme sacrifice.

Now that I am on the subject of instructions, I cannot congratulate you on the church meetings you hold; they do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you all come together in your assembly, there are separate factions among you, and to some extent I believe it. It is no bad thing, either, that there should be differing groups among you so that those who are to be trusted among you can be clearly recognized.

So, when you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat; for when the eating begins, each one of you has his own supper first, and there is one going hungry while another is getting drunk. Surely you have homes for doing your eating and drinking in? Or have you such disregard for God's assembly that you can put to shame those who have nothing?

What am I to say to you? Congratulate you? On this I cannot congratulate you. For the tradition I received from the Lord and also handed on to you is that on the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' And in the same way, with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' Whenever you eat this bread, then, and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.

Everyone is to examine himself and only then eat of the bread or drink from the cup; because a person who eats and drinks without recognizing the body is eating and drinking his own condemnation. That is why many of you are weak and ill and a good number have died.

If we were critical of ourselves we would not be condemned, but when we are judged by the Lord, we are corrected by the Lord to save us from being condemned along with the world. So then, my brothers, when you meet for the Meal, wait for each other; anyone who is hungry should eat at home. Then your meeting will not bring your condemnation. The other matters I shall arrange when I come.

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My message is that the Holy Spirit has poured his gifts upon the believers. There are many gifts but each is to be for the service of others.

About the gifts of the Spirit, brothers, I want you to be quite certain. You remember that, when you were pagans, you were irresistibly drawn to inarticulate heathen gods. Because

of that, I want to make it quite clear to you that no one who says 'A curse on Jesus' can be speaking in the Spirit of God, and nobody is able to say, 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit.

There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord. There are many different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all. The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good. To one is given from the Spirit the gift of utterance expressing wisdom; to another the gift of utterance expressing knowledge, in accordance with the same Spirit; to another, faith, from the same Spirit; and to another, the gifts of healing, through this one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the power of distinguishing spirits; to one, the gift of different tongues and to another, the interpretation of tongues. But at work in all these is one and the same Spirit, distributing them at will to each individual.

My next allegory is of the parts of the human body and Christ's body which is us.

For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts - all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body - so it is with Christ. We were baptized into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink.

And indeed, the body consists not of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body,' it does not belong to the body any the less for that. Or if the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body,' that would not stop its belonging to the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how would there be any hearing? If the whole body were hearing, how would there be any smelling?

As it is, God has put all the separate parts into the body as he chose. If they were all the same part, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' and nor can the head say to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' What is more, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones. It is the parts of the body which we consider least dignified that we surround with the greatest dignity; and our less presentable parts are given greater presentability which our presentable parts do not need. God has composed the body so that greater dignity is given to the parts which were without it, and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body but each part may be equally concerned for all the others.

If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole. And those whom God has appointed in the Church are, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers; after them, miraculous powers, then gifts of healing, helpful acts, guidance, various kinds of tongues. Are all of them apostles? Or all prophets? Or all teachers? Or all miracle-workers? Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all of them speak in tongues and all interpret them? Set your mind on the higher gifts. And now I am going to put before you the best way of all.

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I am inspired to write this. None of these gifts of the Spirit compares with love. Jesus said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole mind and with your whole strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But what is love?

Though I command languages both human and angelic, if I speak without love, I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all the faith necessary to move mountains, if I am without love, I am nothing. Though I should give away to the poor all that I possess, and even give up my body to be burned, if I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Love never comes to an end. But if there are prophecies, they will be done away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know only imperfectly, and we prophesy imperfectly; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will be done away with.

When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, and think like a child; but now that I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways. Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now

I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known. As it is, these remain: faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love.

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I tell them to truly believe that after love, prophesying is the next gift to be sought. Specifically, to prophesy, to instruct others, is far superior to talking in tongues. In fact, while the Apostles spoke in tongues at Pentecost that was not the goal, the goal was to bring the same good news to people from many different countries speaking many different languages.

Make love your aim; but be eager, too, for spiritual gifts, and especially for prophesying. Those who speak in a tongue speak to God, but not to other people, because nobody understands them; they are speaking in the Spirit and the meaning is hidden. On the other hand, someone who prophesies speaks to other people, building them up and giving them encouragement and reassurance. Those who speak in a tongue may build themselves up, but those who prophesy build up the community.

While I should like you all to speak in tongues, I would much rather you could prophesy; since those who prophesy are of greater importance than those who speak in tongues, unless they can interpret what they say so that the church is built up by it. Now suppose, brothers, I come to you and speak in tongues, what good shall I do you if my speaking provides no revelation or knowledge or prophecy or instruction?

It is the same with an inanimate musical instrument. If it does not make any distinction between notes, how can one recognize what is being played on flute or lyre? If the trumpet sounds a call which is unrecognizable, who is going to get ready for the attack? It is the same with you; if you do not use your tongue to produce speech that can be readily understood, how can anyone know what you are saying? You will be talking to the air. However many the languages used in the world, all of them use sound; but if I do not understand the meaning of the sound, I am a barbarian to the person who is speaking, and the speaker is a barbarian to me.

Aim to be rich in the gifts that build up the community.

So with you, as you are eager to have spiritual powers, aim to be rich in those which build up the community. That is why anybody who speaks in a tongue must pray that he may be given the interpretation. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit may be praying but my mind derives no fruit from it. What then? I shall pray with the spirit, but I shall pray with

the mind as well: I shall sing praises with the spirit and I shall sing praises with the mind as well. Otherwise, if you say your blessing only with the spirit, how is the uninitiated person going to answer 'Amen' to your thanksgiving, without understanding what you are saying?

You may be making your thanksgiving well, but the other person is not built up at all. I thank God that I speak with tongues more than any of you; all the same, when I am in the assembly I would rather say five words with my mind, to instruct others as well, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Brothers, do not remain children in your thinking; infants in wickedness-agreed, but in your thinking grown-ups. It says in the written Law, "In strange tongues and in a foreign language I will talk to this nation, and even so they will refuse to listen," says the Lord. So then, strange languages are significant not for believers, but for unbelievers; whereas on the other hand, prophesying is not for unbelievers, but for believers.

Suppose that, if the whole congregation were meeting and all of them speaking in tongues, and some uninitiated people or unbelievers were to come in, don't you think they would say that you were all raving? But if you were all prophesying when an unbeliever or someone uninitiated came in, he would find himself put to the test by all and judged by all and the secrets of his heart revealed; and so he would fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is indeed among you. Then what should it be like, brothers? When you come together each of you brings a psalm or some instruction or a revelation, or speaks in a tongue or gives an interpretation. Let all these things be done in a way that will build up the community.

If there are to be any people speaking in a tongue, then let there be only two, or at the most three, and those one at a time, and let one of these interpret. If there is no interpreter, then let each of them be quiet in the assembly, and speak only to himself and God. Let two prophets, or three, speak while the rest weigh their words; and if a revelation comes to someone else who is sitting by, the speaker should stop speaking. You can all prophesy, but one at a time, then all will learn something and all receive encouragement.

The prophetic spirit is to be under the prophets' control, for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. As in all the churches of God's holy people, women are to remain quiet in the assemblies, since they have no permission to speak; theirs is a subordinate part, as the Law itself

says. If there is anything they want to know, they should ask their husbands at home; it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.

Do you really think that you are the source of the word of God? Or that you are the only people to whom it has come? Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have any spiritual powers must recognize that what I am writing to you is a commandment from the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, it is because that person is not recognized himself. So, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not suppress the gift of speaking in tongues. But make sure that everything is done in a proper and orderly fashion.

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I, a prophet of Jesus, remind the people about the message I preached

I want to make quite clear to you, brothers, what the message of the gospel that I preached to you is; you accepted it and took your stand on it, and you are saved by it, if you keep to the message I preached to you; otherwise your coming to believe was in vain. The tradition I handed on to you in the first place, a tradition which I had myself received, was that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried; and that on the third day, he was raised to life, in accordance with the scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas; and later to the Twelve; and next he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still with us, though some have fallen asleep; then he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles.

Last of all he appeared to me too, as though I was a child born abnormally. For I am the least of the apostles and am not really fit to be called an apostle, because I had been persecuting the Church of God; but what I am now, I am through the grace of God, and the grace which was given to me has not been wasted. Indeed, I have worked harder than all the others; not I, but the grace of God which is with me.

I am appalled and terrified. There are false preachers among you, Christ was raised from the dead, this is the cornerstone of our belief.

Anyway, whether it was they or I, this is what we preach and what you believed. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ cannot have been

raised either, and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without substance, and so is your faith.

What is more, we have proved to be false witnesses to God, for testifying against God that he raised Christ to life when he did not raise him, if it is true that the dead are not raised. For, if the dead are not raised, neither is Christ; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is pointless and you have not, after all, been released from your sins. In addition, those who have fallen asleep in Christ are utterly lost.

If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are of all people the most pitiable. In fact, however, Christ has been raised from the dead, as the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. As it was by one man that death came, so through one man has come the resurrection of the dead. Just as all die in Adam, so in Christ all will be brought to life; but all of them in their proper order, Christ the first-fruits, and next, at his coming, those who belong to him.

After that will come the end, when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, having abolished every principality, every ruling force and power. For he is to be king until he has made his enemies his footstool, and the last of the enemies to be done away with is death, for he has put all things under his feet.

God is all in all.

But when it is said everything is subjected, this obviously cannot include the One who subjected everything to him. When everything has been subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subjected to the One who has subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all. Otherwise, what are people up to who have themselves baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, what is the point of being baptized on their behalf?

And what about us? Why should we endanger ourselves every hour of our lives? I swear by the pride that I take in you, in Christ Jesus our Lord, that I face death every day. If I fought wild animals at Ephesus in a purely human perspective, what had I to gain by it? If the dead are not going to be raised, then let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall be dead. So do not let anyone lead you astray, 'Bad company corrupts good ways.' Wake up from your stupor as you should and leave sin alone; some of you have no understanding of God.

When we die we shall bear the likeness of God.

I tell you this to instill some shame in you. Someone may ask: How are dead people raised, and what sort of body do they have when they come? How foolish! What you sow must

die before it is given new life; and what you sow is not the body that is to be, but only a bare grain, of wheat I dare say, or some other kind; it is God who gives it the sort of body that he has chosen for it, and for each kind of seed its own kind of body.

Not all flesh is the same flesh: there is human flesh; animals have another kind of flesh, birds another and fish yet another. Then there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies; the heavenly have a splendor of their own, and the earthly a different splendor. The sun has its own splendor, the moon another splendor, and the stars yet another splendor; and the stars differ among themselves in splendor.

It is the same too with the resurrection of the dead, what is sown is perishable, but what is raised is imperishable; what is sown is contemptible but what is raised is glorious; what is sown is weak, but what is raised is powerful; what is sown is a natural body, and what is raised is a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is a spiritual body too. So the first man, Adam, as scripture says, became a living soul; and the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit.

But first came the natural body, not the spiritual one; that came only afterwards. The first man, being made of earth, is earthly by nature; the second man is from heaven. The earthly man is the pattern for earthly people, the heavenly man for heavenly ones. And as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so we shall bear the likeness of the heavenly one. What I am saying, brothers, is that mere human nature cannot inherit the kingdom of God: what is perishable cannot inherit what is imperishable.

Now I am going to tell you a mystery: we are not all going to fall asleep, but we are all going to be changed, instantly, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds. The trumpet is going to sound, and then the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed, because this perishable nature of ours must put on imperishability, this mortal nature must put on immortality.

And after this perishable nature has put on imperishability and this mortal nature has put on immortality, then will the words of scripture come true: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin comes from the Law. Thank God, then, for giving us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So, my dear brothers, keep firm and immovable, always abounding in energy for the Lord's work, being sure that in the Lord none of your labors is wasted.

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Back to more mundane matters. There has been a severe famine in Israel for some years. We need to help our brothers there with financial aid. I hope to see you all soon.

Now about the collection for God's holy people; you are to do the same as I prescribed for the churches in Galatia. On the first day of the week, each of you should put aside and reserve as much as each can spare; do not delay the collection till I arrive. When I come, I will send to Jerusalem with letters of introduction those people you approve to deliver your gift; if it is worth my going too, they can travel with me. In any case, I shall be coming to you after I have passed through Macedonia, as I have to go through Macedonia; and I may be staying some time with you, perhaps wintering, so that you can start me on my next journey, wherever I may be going.

I do not want to make only a passing visit to you, and I am hoping to spend quite a time with you, the Lord permitting. But I shall remain at Ephesus until Pentecost, for a very promising door is standing wide open to me and there are many against us.

If Timothy comes, make sure that he has nothing to fear from you; he is doing the Lord's work, just as I am, and nobody is to underrate him. Start him off in peace on his journey to come on to me; the brothers and I are waiting for him.

As for our brother Apollo, I urged him earnestly to come to you with the brothers, but he was quite firm that he did not want to go yet, and he will come when he finds an opportunity.

Be vigilant, stay firm in the faith, be brave and strong. Let everything you do be done in love. There is something else I must urge you to do, brothers. You know how Stephanas' family have been the first-fruits of Achaia and have devoted themselves to the service of God's holy people; I ask you in turn to put yourselves at the service of people like this and all that work with them in this arduous task. I am delighted that Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus have arrived; they have made up for your not being here. They have set my mind at rest, just as they did yours; you should appreciate people like them.

The churches of Asia send their greetings. Aquila and Prisca send their best wishes in the Lord, together with the church that meets in their house. All the brothers send their

greetings. Greet one another with the holy kiss. This greeting is in my own hand-PAUL. If there is anyone who does not love the Lord, a curse on such a one. Maranatha, the Lord is coming. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love is with you all in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 9: Journey to Jerusalem and Imprisonment I

When the disturbance caused by the silver-smith Demetrius was over, I said my goodbyes to the converts in Ephesus and spent three months travelling through Greece and Macedonia. I was leaving by ship for Syria when a plot organized against me by the Jews made me decide to go back into Macedonia and on to Troas where we waited for Luke and some other disciples. I was accompanied by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus, who came from Beroea, Aristarchus and Secundus who came from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, and Timothy, as well as Tychicus and Trophimus who were from Asia.

Luke and the others had left Philippi by ship after the days of Unleavened Bread and they joined us at Troas, where we all stayed for a week. On the first day of the week we met for the breaking of bread. I was due to leave the next day, and I preached a sermon that went on till the middle of the night. A number of lamps were lit in the upstairs room where we were assembled, and as I went on and on, maybe a little too much, a young man called Eutychus who was sitting on the window-sill grew drowsy and was overcome by sleep and fell to the ground three floors below. He was picked up dead. I was appalled and went down and stooped to clasp the boy to me, saying, "There is no need to worry, there is still life in him." Then I went back upstairs where I broke the bread and ate and carried on talking till daybreak. His family took the boy away alive, and were greatly encouraged.

I and a few others went overland from Troas to Assos while Luke and his party went ahead by sea. At Assos we also went aboard and went on to Mitylene. The next day we sailed from there and arrived opposite Chios. The second day we touched at Samos and, after stopping at Trogyllium, made Miletus the next day. I decided to pass wide of Ephesus so as to avoid spending time in Asia, since I was anxious to be in Jerusalem, if possible, for the day of Pentecost. From Miletus I sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus.

When they arrived I addressed these words to them: You know what my way of life has been ever since the first day I set foot among you in Asia, how I have served the Lord in all humility, with all the sorrows and trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. I have not hesitated to do anything that would be helpful to you; I have preached to you and instructed you both in public and in your homes, urging both Jews and Greeks to turn to God and to believe in our Lord Jesus.

And now you see me on my way to Jerusalem in captivity to the Spirit; I have no idea what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit, in town after town, has made it clear to me that imprisonment and persecution await me. But I do not place any value on my own life, provided that I complete the mission the Lord Jesus gave me, to bear witness to the good news of God's grace.

I now feel sure that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will ever see my face again. And so on this very day I swear that my conscience is clear as far as all of you are concerned, for I have without faltering put before you the whole of God's purpose. Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you the guardians, to feed the Church of God which he bought with the blood of his own Son. I know quite well that when I have gone fierce wolves will invade you and will have no mercy on the flock. Even from your own ranks there will be men coming forward with a travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them.

So be on your guard, remembering how night and day for three years I never slackened in counselling each one of you with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace that has power to build you up and to give you your inheritance among all the sanctified.

I have never asked anyone for money or clothes; you know for yourselves that these hands of mine earned enough to meet my needs and those of my companions. By every means I have shown you that we must exert ourselves in this way to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, who himself said: 'There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.'

When I had finished speaking, I knelt down with them all and prayed. By now they were all in tears, they put their arms round my neck and kissed me; what saddened them most was my saying they would never see my face again. Then they escorted me to the ship. I used the journey to write again to my followers in Corinth.

Chapter 10: My Second Letter to the Corinthians

I needed to respond to the attacks being made on me by some of the believers in Corinth.

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I will greet the Corinthians warmly but hasten to remind them of the hardships I have endured, my life has been no bed of roses! I share their hardships and sufferings.

Paul, by the will of God an apostle of Christ Jesus, and Timothy, our brother, to the church of God in Corinth and to all God's holy people in the whole of Achaia. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, the merciful Father and the God who gives every possible encouragement; he supports us in every hardship, so that we are able to come to the support of others in every hardship of theirs, because of the encouragement that we ourselves receive from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives; so too does the encouragement we receive through Christ. So if we have hardships to undergo, this will contribute to your encouragement and your salvation; if we receive encouragement, this is to gain for you the encouragement which enables you to bear with perseverance the same sufferings as we do.

So our hope for you is secure in the knowledge that you share the encouragement we receive, no less than the sufferings we bear. So in the hardships we underwent in Asia, we want you to be quite certain, brothers, that we were under extraordinary pressure, beyond our powers of endurance, so that we gave up all hope even of surviving. In fact we were carrying the sentence of death within our own selves, so that we should be forced to trust not in ourselves but in God, who raises the dead. He did save us from such a death and will save us, we are relying on him to do so.

I remind them that I have always been honest with them, I have delayed in visiting them because I feared the ramifications that might follow.

Your prayer for us will contribute to this, so that, for God's favor shown to us as the result of the prayers of so many, thanks too may be given by many on our behalf. There is one thing that we are proud of, namely our conscientious conviction that we have always behaved

towards everyone, and especially towards you, with that unalloyed holiness that comes from God, relying not on human reasoning but on the grace of God.

In our writing, there is nothing that you cannot read clearly and understand; and it is my hope that, just as you have already understood us partially, so you will understand fully that you can be as proud of us as we shall be of you when the Day of our Lord Jesus comes.

It was with this assurance that I had been meaning to come to you first, so that you would benefit doubly; both to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and then to return to you again from Macedonia, so that you could set me on my way to Judaea. Since that was my purpose, do you think I lightly changed my mind? Or that my plans are based on ordinary human promptings and I have in my mind Yes, yes at the same time as No, no?

As surely as God is trustworthy, what we say to you is not both Yes and No. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you by us, that is, by me and by Silvanus and Timothy, was never Yes-and-No; his nature is all Yes. For in him is found the Yes to all God's promises and therefore it is 'through him' that we answer 'Amen' to give praise to God. It is God who gives us, with you, a sure place in Christ and has both anointed us and marked us with his seal, giving us as pledge the Spirit in our hearts.

By my life I call on God to be my witness that it was only to spare you that I did not come to Corinth again. We have no wish to lord it over your faith, but to work with you for your joy, for your stand in the faith is firm.

2222

I am delighted with the results of my first letter; there has been some reconciliation among the factions in the church at Corinth. I intended to visit them earlier but I could not find Titus's whereabouts and his safety was my first concern. I sailed to Philippi in search of him. Now I will come to them, in the meantime I urge them to continue the process of reconciliation.

I made up my mind, then, that my next visit to you would not be a painful one, for if I cause you distress I am causing distress to my only possible source of joy. Indeed, I wrote as I did precisely to spare myself distress when I visited you, from the very people who should have given me joy, in the conviction that for all of you my joy was yours too. I wrote to you in agony of mind, not meaning to cause you distress but to show you how very much love I have for you.

If anyone did cause distress, he caused it not to me, but, not to exaggerate, in some degree to all of you. The punishment already imposed by the majority was quite enough for such a person; and now by contrast you should forgive and encourage him all the more, or he may be overwhelmed by the extent of his distress.

That is why I urge you to give your love towards him definite expression. This was in fact my reason for writing, to test your quality and whether you are completely obedient. But if you forgive anybody, then I too forgive that person; and whatever I have forgiven, if there is anything I have forgiven, I have done it for your sake in Christ's presence, to avoid being outwitted by Satan, whose scheming we know only too well.

When I came to Troas for the sake of the gospel of Christ and a door was opened for me there in the Lord, I had no relief from anxiety, not finding my brother Titus there, and I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. But, thanks be to God who always gives us in Christ a part in his triumphal procession, and through us is spreading everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of himself.

To God we are the fragrance of Christ, both among those who are being saved and among those who are on the way to destruction; for these last, the smell of death leading to death, but for the first, the smell of life leading to life. Who is equal to such a task? At least we do not adulterate the word of God, as so many do, but it is in all purity, as envoys of God and in God's presence, that we speak in Christ.

3333

I compare the new spiritual covenant given us by the Holy Spirit with the old covenant written on stone tablets. The old Law is a dead law. It showed us sin but no way to rise above it, but the Law of the Spirit gives life, the life of Christ.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves to you afresh, as though we needed, like some others, to have letters of commendation either to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written in our hearts, that everyone can read and understand; and it is plain that you are a letter from Christ, entrusted to our care, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tablets but on the tablets of human hearts.

Such is the confidence we have through Christ in facing God; it is not that we are so competent that we can claim any credit for ourselves; all our competence comes from God. He

has given us the competence to be ministers of a new covenant, a covenant which is not of written letters, but of the Spirit; for the written letters kill, but the Spirit gives life.

Now if the administering of death, engraved in letters on stone, occurred in such glory that the Israelites could not look Moses steadily in the face, because of its glory, transitory though this glory was, how much more will the ministry of the Spirit occur in glory! For if it is glorious to administer condemnation, to administer saving justice is far richer in glory. Indeed, what was once considered glorious has lost all claim to glory, by contrast with the glory which transcends it. For if what was transitory had any glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts forever.

With a hope like this, we can speak with complete fearlessness; not like Moses who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites should not watch the end of what was transitory. But their minds were closed; indeed, until this very day, the same veil remains over the reading of the Old Testament; it is not lifted, for only in Christ is it done away with. As it is, to this day, whenever Moses is read, their hearts are covered with a veil, and this veil will not be taken away till they turn to the Lord.

Now this Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.

4444

My mind races ahead of my pen. Many have been kept in the dark by the gods of this world, the good news of Jesus brings light into our lives.

Such by God's mercy is our ministry, and therefore we do not waver but have renounced all shameful secrecy. It is not our way to be devious, or to falsify the word of God; instead, in God's sight we commend ourselves to every human being with a conscience by showing the truth openly. If our gospel seems to be veiled at all, it is so to those who are on the way to destruction, the unbelievers whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world, so that they cannot see shining the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. It is not ourselves that we are proclaiming, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your

servants for Jesus' sake. It is God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' that has shone into our hearts to enlighten them with the knowledge of God's glory, the glory on the face of Christ.

But I know our hold on this light is fragile, like an earthenware pot. I will urge them to focus on eternal life, not this present one. We apostles are suffering and subject to constant threats of death so that you may have life, the life of Christ.

But we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own. We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but never distressed; we see no way out but we never despair; we are pursued but never cut off; knocked down, but still have some life in us; always we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our body. Indeed, while we are still alive, we are continually being handed over to death, for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our mortal flesh. In us, then, death is at work; in you, life. But as we have the same spirit of faith as is described in scripture, 'I believed and therefore I spoke', we, too, believe and therefore we, too, speak, realizing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus will raise us up with Jesus in our turn, and bring us to himself, and you as well.

You see, everything is for your benefit, so that as grace spreads, so, to the glory of God, thanksgiving may also overflow among more and more people. That is why we do not waver; indeed, though this outer human nature of ours may be falling into decay, at the same time our inner human nature is renewed day by day. The temporary, light burden of our hardships is earning us forever an utterly incomparable, eternal weight of glory, since what we aim for is not visible but invisible. Visible things are transitory, but invisible things eternal.

5555

In my writing I try to speak of what I know, to keep it simple. Earthly tents I know all about! God will give us an eternal home with him.

For we are well aware that when the tent that houses us on earth is folded up, there is a house for us from God, not made by human hands but everlasting, in the heavens. And in this earthly state we do indeed groan, longing to put on our heavenly home over the present one; if indeed we are to be found clothed rather than stripped bare. Yes, indeed, in this present tent, we groan under the burden, not that we want to be stripped of our covering, but because we want

to be covered with a second garment on top, so that what is mortal in us may be swallowed up by life.

It is God who designed us for this very purpose, and he has given us the Spirit as a pledge. We are always full of confidence, then, realizing that as long as we are at home in the body we are exiled from the Lord, guided by faith and not yet by sight; we are full of confidence, then, and long instead to be exiled from the body and to be at home with the Lord. And so whether at home or exiled, we make it our ambition to please him. For at the judgement seat of Christ we are all to be seen for what we are, so that each of us may receive what he has deserved in the body, matched to whatever he has done, good or bad.

I tell them I know we seem to you to be unreasonable at times. I cannot help my conviction that all are to be judged from the standard set by Christ. We are merely his ambassadors, his messengers.

And so it is with the fear of the Lord always in mind that we try to win people over. But God sees us for what we are, and I hope your consciences do too. Again we are saying this not to commend ourselves to you, but simply to give you the opportunity to take pride in us, so that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearances and not inner reality. If we have been unreasonable, it was for God; if reasonable, for you. For the love of Christ overwhelms us when we consider that if one man died for all, then all have died; his purpose in dying for all humanity was that those who live should live not any more for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life.

From now onwards, then, we will not consider anyone by human standards; even if we were once familiar with Christ according to human standards, we do not know him in that way any longer. So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation, the old order is gone and a new being is there to see.

It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone's faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were urging you through us, and in the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God. For our sake he made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in him we might become the uprightness of God.

I reminisce, my life has seen its share of hardships, as will theirs. I will urge them to stay away from unbelievers, to dare to be different whatever the cost. Christ can never have an agreement with Satan.

As his fellow-workers, we urge you not to let your acceptance of his grace come to nothing. As he said, 'At the time of my favor I have answered you; on the day of salvation I have helped you'; well, now is the real time of favor, now the day of salvation is here. We avoid putting obstacles in anyone's way, so that no blame may attach to our work of service; but in everything we prove ourselves authentic servants of God; by resolute perseverance in times of hardships, difficulties and distress; when we are flogged or sent to prison or mobbed; laboring, sleepless, starving; in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness; in the Holy Spirit, in a love free of affectation; in the word of truth and in the power of God; by using the weapons of uprightness for attack and for defense; in times of honor or disgrace, blame or praise; taken for impostors and yet we are genuine; unknown and yet we are acknowledged; dying, and yet here we are, alive; scourged but not executed; in pain yet always full of joy; poor and yet making many people rich; having nothing, and yet owning everything.

People of Corinth, we have spoken frankly and opened our heart to you. Any distress you feel is not on our side; the distress is in your own selves. In fair exchange, I speak as though to children of mine, you must open your hearts too. Do not harness yourselves in an uneven team with unbelievers; how can uprightness and law-breaking be partners, or what can light and darkness have in common?

How can Christ come to an agreement with Satan and what sharing can there be between a believer and an unbeliever? The temple of God cannot compromise with false gods, and that is what we are, the temple of the living God. We have God's word for it: I shall fix my home among them and live among them; I will be their God and they will be my people. Get away from them, purify yourselves, says the Lord. Do not touch anything unclean, and then I shall welcome you. I shall be father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the almighty Lord.

I continue to urge the people to be faithful to God. If my previous letter caused them distress, I am glad, because it led to repentance. I will remind them again of the hardships and pain I have endured to that end. But I am also overjoyed to know Titus is safe and thrilled by the report he has brought on the church in Corinth.

Since these promises have been made to us, my dear friends, we should wash ourselves clean of everything that pollutes either body or spirit, bringing our sanctification to completion in the fear of God. Keep a place for us in your hearts. We have not injured anyone, or ruined anyone, or taken advantage of anyone.

I am not saying this to condemn anybody; as I have already told you, you are in our hearts, so that together we live and together we die. I can speak with the greatest frankness to you; and I can speak with the greatest pride about you; in all our hardship, I am filled with encouragement and overflowing with joy. Even after we had come to Macedonia, there was no rest for this body of ours. Far from it; we were beset by hardship on all sides, there were quarrels all around us and misgivings within us. But God, who encourages all those who are distressed, encouraged us through the arrival of Titus; and not simply by his arrival only, but also by means of the encouragement that you had given him, as he told us of your desire to see us, how sorry you were and how concerned for us; so that I was all the more joyful.

So now, though I did distress you with my letter, I do not regret it. Even if I did regret it, and I realize that the letter distressed you, even though not for long, I am glad now, not because you were made to feel distress, but because the distress that you were caused led to repentance; your distress was the kind that God approves and so you have come to no kind of harm through us. For to be distressed in a way that God approves leads to repentance and then to salvation with no regrets; it is the world's kind of distress that ends in death.

Just look at this present case, at what the result has been of your being made to feel distress in the way that God approves; what concern, what defense, what indignation and what alarm; what yearning, and what enthusiasm, and what justice done. In every way you have cleared yourselves of blame in this matter. So although I wrote a letter to you, it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the one offended, but only so that you yourselves should fully realize in the sight of God what concern you have for us.

That is what I have found encouraging. In addition to all this to encourage us, we were made all the more joyful by Titus' joy, now that his spirit has been refreshed by you all. And if I boasted about you to him in any way, then I have not been made to look foolish; indeed, our boast to Titus has been proved to be as true as anything we said to you. His personal affection for you is all the stronger when he remembers how obedient you have all been, and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. I am glad that I have every confidence in you.

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I need to remind them of the needs of the believers in Jerusalem as the famine drags on. Brotherly love must extend to the whole earth.

Next, brothers, we will tell you of the grace of God which has been granted to the churches of Macedonia, and how, throughout continual ordeals of hardship, their unfailing joy and their intense poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. I can testify that it was of their own accord that they made their gift, which was not merely as far as their resources would allow, but well beyond their resources; and they had kept imploring us most insistently for the privilege of a share in the fellowship of service to God's holy people; it was not something that we expected of them, but it began by their offering themselves to the Lord and to us at the prompting of the will of God.

In the end we urged Titus, since he had already made a beginning, also to bring this work of generosity to completion among you. More, as you are rich in everything in faith, eloquence, understanding, concern for everything, and love for us too, then make sure that you excel in this work of generosity too. I am not saying this as an order, but testing the genuineness of your love against the concern of others.

You are well aware of the generosity which our Lord Jesus Christ had, that, although he was rich, he became poor for your sake, so that you should become rich through his poverty. I will give you my considered opinion in the matter; this will be the right course for you as you were the first, a year ago, not only to take any action but also even to conceive the project. Now, then, complete the action as well, so that the fulfilment may, so far as your resources permit, be proportionate to your enthusiasm for the project. As long as the enthusiasm is there, the basis on which it is acceptable is what someone has, not what someone does not have. It is not that you ought to relieve other people's needs and leave yourselves in hardship; but there should be

a fair balance; your surplus at present may fill their deficit, and another time their surplus may fill your deficit.

So there may be a fair balance; as scripture says: No one who had collected more had too much, no one who collected less had too little. Thank God for putting into Titus' heart the same sincere concern for you. He certainly took our urging to heart; but greater still was his own enthusiasm, and he went off to you of his own accord. We have sent with him the brother who is praised as an evangelist in all the churches and who, what is more, was elected by the churches to be our travelling companion in this work of generosity, a work to be administered by us for the glory of the Lord and our complete satisfaction.

We arranged it this way so that no one should be able to make any accusation against us about this large sum we are administering. And so we have been careful to do right not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of people. Along with these, we have sent a brother of ours whose eagerness we have tested over and over again in many ways and who is now all the more eager because he has so much faith in you. If Titus is in question, he is my own partner and fellow-worker in your interests; and if our brothers are in question, they are the emissaries of the churches and the glory of Christ. So then, in full view of all the churches, give proof that you love them, and that we were right to boast of you to them.

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About the help to God's holy people, there is really no need for me to write to you; for I am well aware of your enthusiasm, and I have been boasting of it to the Macedonians that 'Achaia has been ready for a year'; your enthusiasm has been a spur to many others. All the same, I have sent the brothers, to make sure that our boast about you may not prove hollow in this respect and that you may be ready, as I said you would be; so that if by chance some of the Macedonians came with me and found you unprepared we, to say nothing of yourselves, would not be put to shame by our confidence in you.

So I have thought it necessary to encourage the brothers to go to you ahead of us and make sure in advance of the gift that you have already promised, so that it is all at hand as a real gift and not an imposition. But remember, anyone who sows sparsely will reap sparsely as well, and anyone who sows generously will reap generously as well. Each one should give as much as he has decided on his own initiative, not reluctantly or under compulsion,

for God loves a cheerful giver. God is perfectly able to enrich you with every grace, so that you always have enough for every conceivable need, and your resources overflow in all kinds of good work.

As scripture says: 'To the needy he gave without stint, his uprightness stands firm forever.' The one who so freely provides seed for the sower and food to eat will provide you with ample store of seed for sowing and make the harvest of your uprightness a bigger one; you will be rich enough in every way for every kind of generosity that makes people thank God for what we have done. For the help provided by this contribution not only satisfies the needs of God's holy people, but also overflows into widespread thanksgiving to God; because when you have proved your quality by this help, they will give glory to God for the obedience which you show in professing the gospel of Christ, as well as for the generosity of your fellowship towards them and towards all. At the same time, their prayer for you will express the affection they feel for you because of the unbounded grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his gift that is beyond all telling!

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I will finish by returning to the beginning. I need to defend myself against my detractors upsetting the faithful, do not judge me by my words but by my deeds.

I urge you by the gentleness and forbearance of Christ, this is Paul now speaking personally, I, the one who is so humble when he is facing you but full of boldness at a distance. Yes, my appeal to you is that I should not have to be bold when I am actually with you, or show the same self-assurance as I reckon to use when I am challenging those who reckon that we are guided by human motives. For although we are human, it is not by human methods that we do battle.

The weapons with which we do battle are not those of human nature, but they have the power, in God's cause, to demolish fortresses. It is ideas that we demolish, every presumptuous notion that is set up against the knowledge of God, and we bring every thought into captivity and obedience to Christ; once you have given your complete obedience, we are prepared to punish any disobedience.

Look at the evidence of your eyes. Anybody who is convinced that he belongs to Christ should go on to reflect that we belong to Christ no less than he does. Maybe I have

taken rather too much pride in our authority, but the Lord gave us that for building you up, not for knocking you down, and I am not going to be shamed into letting you think that I can put fear into you only by letter. Someone said, "His letters are weighty enough, and full of strength, but when you see him in person, he makes no impression and his powers of speaking are negligible." I should like that sort of person to take note that our deeds when we are present will show the same qualities as our letters when we were at a distance.

We are not venturing to rank ourselves, or even to compare ourselves with certain people who provide their own commendations. By measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves to themselves, they only show their folly. By contrast we do not intend to boast beyond measure, but will measure ourselves by the standard which God laid down for us, namely that of having come all the way to you.

We are not overreaching ourselves as we would be if we had not come all the way to you; in fact we were the first to come as far as you with the good news of Christ. So we are not boasting beyond measure, about other men's work; in fact, we hope, as your faith increases, to grow greater and greater by this standard of ours, by preaching the gospel to regions beyond you, rather than boasting about work already done in someone else's province. Let anyone who wants to boast, boast of the Lord. For it is not through self-commendation that recognition is won, but through commendation.

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I will not be modest, I am the true Apostle. I urge them to listen to my words even if there is something lacking in my public speaking.

I wish you would put up with a little foolishness from me, not that you don't do this already. The jealousy that I feel for you is, you see, God's own jealousy. I gave you all in marriage to a single husband, a virgin pure for presentation to Christ. But I am afraid that, just as the snake with his cunning seduced Eve, your minds may be led astray from single-minded devotion to Christ. Because any chance comer has only to preach a Jesus other than the one we preached, or you have only to receive a spirit different from the one you received, or a gospel different from the one you accepted, and you put up with that only too willingly.

Now, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to the super-apostles. Even if there is something lacking in my public speaking, this is not the case with my knowledge, as we have

openly shown to you at all times and before everyone. Have I done wrong, then, humbling myself so that you might be raised up, by preaching the gospel of God to you for nothing? I was robbing other churches, taking wages from them in order to work for you. When I was with you and needed money, I was no burden to anybody, for the brothers from Macedonia brought me as much as I needed when they came; I have always been careful not to let myself be a burden to you in any way, and I shall continue to be so.

I am determined to cut the ground from under the feet of those looking to be proved my equal in grounds for boasting.

And as Christ's truth is in me, this boast of mine is not going to be silenced in the regions of Achaia. Why should it be? Because I do not love you? God knows that I do. I will go on acting as I do at present, to cut the ground from under the feet of those who are looking for a chance to be proved my equals in grounds for boasting. These people are counterfeit apostles, dishonest workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

There is nothing astonishing in this; even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. It is nothing extraordinary, then, when his servants disguise themselves as the servants of uprightness. They will come to the end appropriate to what they have done. To repeat, let no one take me for a fool, but if you do, then treat me as a fool, so that I, too, can do a little boasting.

I shall not be following the Lord's way in what I say now, but will be speaking out of foolishness in the conviction that I have something to boast about. So many people boast on merely human grounds that I shall too. I know how happy you are to put up with fools, being so wise yourselves; and how you will still go on putting up with a man who enslaves you, eats up all you possess, keeps you under his orders and sets himself above you, or even slaps you in the face. I say it to your shame; perhaps we have been too weak.

In my mind I know no one can possibly boast as much as me. I have it all, through Christ.

Whatever bold claims anyone makes, now I am talking as a fool, I can make them 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 speak in utter folly, I am too, and more than they are. I have done more work, I have been in prison more, I have been flogged more severely, many times exposed to death. Five times I have been given the thirty-nine lashes by the Jews; three times I have been beaten with sticks; once I was stoned; three times I have been

shipwrecked, and once I have been in the open sea for a night and a day; continually travelling, I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from brigands, in danger from my own people and in danger from the Gentiles, in danger in the towns and in danger in the open country, in danger at sea and in danger from people masquerading as brothers; I have worked with unsparing energy, for many nights without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty, and often altogether without food or drink; I have been cold and lacked clothing.

And, besides all the external things, there is, day in day out, the pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. If anyone weakens, I am weakened as well; and when anyone is made to fall, I burn in agony myself. If I have to boast, I will boast of all the ways in which I am weak. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is forever to be blessed, knows that I am not lying. When I was in Damascus, the governor who was under King Aretas put guards round Damascus city to catch me, and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and that was how I escaped from his hands.

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I realize I am getting a little carried away but my boasting is not of myself but of a man whom Jesus chose to work through him. But I have a cross to bear too. I can write beautifully and clearly and inspirationally but I cannot preach so well, I have a bad stutter and a high-pitched voice and I tend to go on and on in a monotone. I pray to Jesus to take these afflictions away but he does not, these weaknesses I will boast about, I am a fool for Christ. But I will remind them I have never taken advantage of them, for this or any reason.

I am boasting because I have to. Not that it does any good, but I will move on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago, still in the body? I do not know; or out of the body? I do not know, God knows, who was caught up right into the third heaven. And I know that this man, still in the body? or outside the body? I do not know, God knows, was caught up into Paradise and heard words said that cannot and may not be spoken by any human being. On behalf of someone like that I am willing to boast, but I am not going to boast on my own behalf except of my weaknesses; and then, if I do choose to boast I shall not be talking like a fool because I shall be speaking the truth. But I will not go on in case anybody should rate me higher than he sees and hears me to be, because of the exceptional greatness of the revelations.

Wherefore, so that I should not get above myself, I was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to batter me and prevent me from getting above myself. About this, I have three times pleaded with the Lord that it might leave me; but he has answered me, “My grace is enough for you: for power is at full stretch in weakness.” It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong. I have turned into a fool, but you forced me to it. It is you that should have been commending me; those super-apostles had no advantage over me, even if I am nothing at all.

I tell them I have all the signs of a true apostle but also, I have never been a burden to them.

All the marks characteristic of a true apostle have been at work among you: complete perseverance, signs, marvels, demonstrations of power. Is there any way in which you have been given less than the rest of the churches, except that I did not make myself a burden to you? Forgive me for this unfairness! Here I am, ready to come to you for the third time and I am not going to be a burden on you; it is not your possessions that I want, but yourselves. Children are not expected to save up for their parents, but parents for their children, and I am more than glad to spend what I have and to be spent for the sake of your souls. Is it because I love you so much more, that I am loved the less?

All right, then; I did not make myself a burden to you, but, trickster that I am, I caught you by trickery. Have I taken advantage of you through any of the people I have sent to you? Titus came at my urging, and I sent his companion with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Can you deny that he and I were following the guidance of the same Spirit and were on the same tracks? All this time you have been thinking that we have been pleading our own cause before you; no, we have been speaking in Christ and in the presence of God, and all, dear friends, to build you up.

I am afraid that in one way or another, when I come, I may find you different from what I should like you to be, and you may find me what you would not like me to be; so that in one way or the other there will be rivalry, jealousy, bad temper, quarrels, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorders; and when I come again, my God may humiliate me in front of you and I shall be grieved by all those who sinned in the past and have still not repented of the impurities and sexual immorality and debauchery that they have committed.

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Let me count, one, two, three. This is the third time I will visit Corinth, this time I will be much harder on you because I love you so much. I will give you a tough message now so that when I come in the flesh, I do not have to be harsh.

This will be the third time I have confronted you. Whatever the misdemeanor, the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain a charge. I gave you notice once, and now, though I am not with you, I give notice again, just as when I was with you for a second time, to those who sinned before, and to all others; and it is to this effect, that when I do come next time, I shall have no mercy. Since you are asking for a proof that it is Christ who speaks in me; he is not weak with you but his power is at work among you; for, though it was out of weakness that he was crucified, he is alive now with the power of God. We, too, are weak in him, but with regard to you we shall live with him by the power of God.

Put yourselves to the test to make sure you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Do you not recognize yourselves as people in whom Jesus Christ is present? Unless, that is, you fail the test. But we, as I hope you will come to recognize, do not fail the test. It is our prayer to God that you may do nothing wrong, not so that we have the credit of passing a test, but because you will be doing what is right, even if we do not pass the test. We have no power to resist the truth; only to further the truth; and we are delighted to be weak if only you are strong. What we ask in our prayers is that you should be made perfect.

That is why I am writing this while still far away, so that when I am with you I shall not have to be harsh, with the authority that the Lord has given me, an authority that is for building up and not for breaking down. To end then, brothers, we wish you joy; try to grow perfect; encourage one another; have a common mind and live in peace, and the God of love and

peace will be with you. Greet one another with the holy kiss. All God's holy people send you their greetings.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Chapter 11: Journey to Jerusalem and Imprisonment II

I was determined to go to Jerusalem. When we had at last torn ourselves away from the elders of the Ephesian church and put to sea, we set a straight course and arrived at Cos; the next day we reached Rhodes, and from there went on to Patara. Here we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, so we went on board and sailed in her. After sighting Cyprus and leaving it to port, we sailed to Syria and put in at Tyre, since the ship was to unload her cargo there. We sought out the disciples and stayed there a week.

Speaking in the Spirit, they kept telling me not to go on to Jerusalem, but when our time was up we set off. Together with the women and children they all escorted us on our way till we were out of the town. When we reached the beach, we knelt down and prayed; then, after saying goodbye to each of them, we went aboard and they returned home. The end of our voyage from Tyre came when we landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed one day with them.

The next day we left and came to Caesarea. Here we called on Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters who were prophets. When we had been there several days a prophet called Agabus arrived from Judaea. He came up to us, took my belt and tied up my feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says, 'The man to whom this girdle belongs will be tied up like this by the Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles.'"

My disciples and all the local people urged me not to go on to Jerusalem. I replied, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For my part, I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And so, as I would not be persuaded, they gave up the attempt, saying, "The Lord's will be done." For my part I knew Jerusalem was not the end point of my life, I knew I was going to Rome. I decided to introduce myself to the Roman church in a letter, not a short letter but a complete exposé of my theological thinking.

Chapter 12: My Letter to the Romans

I Paul have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the good news of his salvation to the Gentile nations, including Rome.

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In my greeting I emphasize again that Jesus is both God and man.

From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the service of the gospel that God promised long ago through his prophets in the holy scriptures. This is the gospel concerning his Son who, in terms of human nature was born a descendant of David and who, in terms of the Spirit and of holiness, was designated Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and our apostolic mission of winning the obedience of faith among all the nations for the honor of his name. You are among these, and by his call you belong to Jesus Christ. To you all, God's beloved in Rome, called to be his holy people, grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I congratulate the Roman Christians on their faith. I tell them I have longed to visit them to share this faith.

First I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is talked of all over the world. God, whom I serve with my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness that I continually mention you in my prayers, asking always that by some means I may at long last be enabled to visit you, if it is God's will. For I am longing to see you so that I can convey to you some spiritual gift that will be a lasting strength, or rather that we may be strengthened together through our mutual faith, yours and mine.

I want you to be quite certain too, brothers, that I have often planned to visit you,- though up to the present I have always been prevented, in the hope that I might work as fruitfully among you as I have among the Gentiles elsewhere. I have an obligation to Greeks as well as barbarians, to the educated as well as the ignorant, and hence the eagerness on my part to preach the gospel to you in Rome too.

For I see no reason to be ashamed of the gospel; it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who has faith, Jews first, but Greeks as well, for in it is revealed the saving justice of

God, a justice based on faith and addressed to faith. As it says in scripture: 'Anyone who is upright through faith will live.'

I warn them that those who should have heard the good news and believed, yet have not, they have been abandoned by God and have fallen into total wickedness.

The retribution of God from heaven is being revealed against the ungodliness and injustice of human beings who in their injustice hold back the truth. For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them, since God has made it plain to them, ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind's understanding of created things.

And so these people have no excuse; they knew God and yet they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but their arguments became futile and their uncomprehending minds were darkened. While they claimed to be wise, in fact they were growing so stupid that they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an imitation, for the image of a mortal human being, or of birds, or animals, or crawling things.

That is why God abandoned them in their inmost cravings to filthy practices of dishonoring their own bodies; because they exchanged God's truth for a lie and have worshipped and served the creature instead of the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. That is why God abandoned them to degrading passions; why their women have exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural practices; and the men, in a similar fashion, too, giving up normal relations with women, are consumed with passion for each other, men doing shameful things with men and receiving in themselves due reward for their perversion.

In other words, since they would not consent to acknowledge God, God abandoned them to their unacceptable thoughts and indecent behavior. And so now they are steeped in all sorts of injustice, rottenness, greed and malice; full of envy, murder, wrangling, treachery and spite, libelers, slanderers, enemies of God, rude, arrogant and boastful, enterprising in evil, rebellious to parents, without brains, honor, love or pity. They are well aware of God's ordinance, that those who behave like this deserve to die, yet they not only do it, but even applaud others who do the same.

None of us can be “holier than thou,” we should not judge others. God will judge all people, believers and unbelievers, pouring out his anger on the sinners and rewarding the faithful with eternal life. It does not matter whether a person lives by the Law of Moses or not, all will be judged equally.

So no matter who you are, if you pass judgement you have no excuse. It is yourself that you condemn when you judge others, since you behave in the same way as those you are condemning. We are well aware that people who behave like that are justly condemned by God. But you, when you judge those who behave like this while you are doing the same yourself, do you think you will escape God's condemnation? Or are you not disregarding his abundant goodness, tolerance and patience, failing to realize that this generosity of God is meant to bring you to repentance? Your stubborn refusal to repent is only storing up retribution for yourself on that Day of retribution when God's just verdicts will be made known. He will repay everyone as their deeds deserve.

For those who aimed for glory and honor and immortality by persevering in doing good, there will be eternal life; but for those who out of jealousy have taken for their guide not truth but injustice, there will be the fury of retribution. Trouble and distress will come to every human being who does evil, Jews first, but Greeks as well; glory and honor and peace will come to everyone who does good, Jews first, but Greeks as well.

There is no favoritism with God. All those who have sinned without the Law will perish without the Law; and those under the Law who have sinned will be judged by the Law. For the ones that God will justify are not those who have heard the Law but those who have kept the Law.

So, when Gentiles, not having the Law, still through their own innate sense behave as the Law commands, then, even though they have no Law, they are a law for themselves. They can demonstrate the effect of the Law engraved on their hearts, to which their own conscience bears witness; since they are aware of various considerations, some of which accuse them, while others provide them with a defense on the day when, according to the gospel that I preach, God, through Jesus Christ, judges all human secrets.

I will remind them that physical circumcision is no guarantee. The real circumcision, the real commitment to God, is in the heart.

If you can call yourself a Jew, and you really trust in the Law, and are proud of your God, and know his will, and tell right from wrong because you have been taught by the Law; if you are confident that you are a guide to the blind and a beacon to those in the dark, that you can teach the ignorant and instruct the unlearned because the Law embodies all knowledge and all truth - so then, in teaching others, do you teach yourself as well? You preach that there is to be no stealing, but do you steal? You say that adultery is forbidden, but do you commit adultery? You detest the worship of objects, but do you desecrate holy things yourself? If, while you are boasting of the Law, you disobey it, then you are bringing God into contempt. As scripture says: 'It is your fault that the name of God is held in contempt among the nations.'

Circumcision has its value if you keep the Law; but if you go on breaking the Law, you are no more circumcised than the uncircumcised. And if an uncircumcised man keeps the commands of the Law, will not his uncircumcised state count as circumcision? More, the man who, in his native uncircumcised state, keeps the Law, is a condemnation of you, who, by your concentration on the letter and on circumcision, actually break the Law.

Being a Jew is not only having the outward appearance of a Jew, and circumcision is not only a visible physical operation. The real Jew is the one who is inwardly a Jew, and real circumcision is in the heart, a thing not of the letter but of the spirit. He may not be praised by any human being, but he will be praised by God.

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Let us put the Law on its true footing. I confront the dilemma of my own being. I am a Jew, I was a Pharisee, I lived by the Law, but the Law cannot save me, only faith in Jesus Christ can do that.

Is there any benefit, then, in being a Jew? Is there any advantage in being circumcised? A great deal, in every way. First of all, it was to the Jews that the message of God was entrusted. What if some of them were unfaithful? Do you think their lack of faith could cancel God's faithfulness? Out of the question! God will always be true even if no human being can be relied on. As scripture says: 'That you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence and your victory may appear when you give judgement.' But if our injustice serves to bring God's saving justice into view, can we say

that God is unjust when, to use human terms, he brings his retribution down on us? Out of the question! It would mean that God could not be the judge of the world.

You might as well say that if my untruthfulness makes God demonstrate his truthfulness, to his greater glory, then I should not be judged to be a sinner at all. In this case, the slanderous report some people are spreading would be true, that we teach that one should do evil that good may come of it. In fact, such people are justly condemned. Well, are we any better off? Not at all; we have already indicted Jews and Greeks as being all alike under the dominion of sin.

As scripture says, 'Not one of them is upright, not a single one, not a single one is wise, not a single one seeks God. All have turned away, all alike turned sour, not one of them does right, not a single one. Their throats are wide open graves, their tongues seductive. Viper's venom behind their lips; their speech is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet quick to shed innocent blood, wherever they go there is havoc and ruin. They do not know the way of peace, there is no fear of God before their eyes.'

My message is that all the Law does is to tell us what is sinful. Faith is what counts, since a person is justified by faith and not by doing what the Law tells him to do.

Now we are well aware that whatever the Law says is said for those who are subject to the Law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world brought under the judgement of God. So then, no human being can be found upright at the tribunal of God by keeping the Law; all that the Law does is to tell us what is sinful. God's saving justice was witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, but now it has been revealed altogether apart from law: God's saving justice given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. No distinction is made; all have sinned and lack God's glory, and all are justified by the free gift of his grace through being set free in Christ Jesus.

God appointed him as a sacrifice for reconciliation, through faith, by the shedding of his blood, and so showed his justness; first for the past, when sins went unpunished because he held his hand; and now again for the present age, to show how he is just and justifies everyone who has faith in Jesus. So what becomes of our boasts? There is no room for them. On what principle, that only actions count? No; that faith is what counts, since, as we see it, a person is justified by faith and not by doing what the Law tells him to do. Do you think God is the God only of the Jews, and not of Gentiles too? Most certainly of Gentiles too, since there is

only one God; he will justify the circumcised by their faith, and he will justify the uncircumcised through their faith.

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I have made this argument many times in many places. The Law is the law of Moses. But Abraham lived hundreds of years before Moses and with Abraham God made the covenant, the land of milk and honey on his part, faith on Abraham's part. There was no Law until later. Abraham lived by faith and that faith would save him. It is those who live by faith who will gain the inheritance of heaven.

Are we saying that the Law has been made pointless by faith? Out of the question; we are placing the Law on its true footing. Then what do we say about Abraham, the ancestor from whom we are descended physically? If Abraham had been justified because of what he had done, then he would have had something to boast about. But not before God. Does not scripture say: 'Abraham put his faith in God and this was reckoned to him as uprightness?'

Now, when someone works, the wages for this are not considered as a favor but as due; however, when someone, without working, puts faith in the one who justifies the godless, it is this faith that is reckoned as uprightness. David, too, says the same, he calls someone blessed if God attributes uprightness to that person, apart from any action undertaken: 'How blessed are those whose offence is forgiven, whose sin is blotted out. How blessed are those to whom the Lord imputes no guilt.'

Is this blessing only for the circumcised, or is it said of the uncircumcised as well? Well, we said of Abraham that his faith was reckoned to him as uprightness. Now how did this come about? When he was already circumcised, or before he had been circumcised? Not when he had been circumcised, but while he was still uncircumcised; and circumcision was given to him later, as a sign and a guarantee that the faith which he had while still uncircumcised was reckoned to him as uprightness. In this way, Abraham was to be the ancestor of all believers who are uncircumcised, so that they might be reckoned as upright; as well as the ancestor of those of the circumcision who not only have their circumcision but who also follow our ancestor Abraham along the path of faith that he trod before he was circumcised.

For the promise to Abraham and his descendants that he should inherit the world was not through the Law, but through the uprightness of faith. For if it is those who live by the

Law who will gain the inheritance, faith is worthless and the promise is without force; for the Law produces nothing but God's retribution, and it is only where there is no Law that it is possible to live without breaking the Law. That is why the promise is to faith, so that it comes as a free gift and is secure for all the descendants, not only those who rely on the Law but all those others who rely on the faith of Abraham, the ancestor of us all, as scripture says: I have made you the father of many nations.'

Abraham is our father in the eyes of God, in whom he put his faith, and who brings the dead to life and calls into existence what does not yet exist. Though there seemed no hope, he hoped and believed that he was to become father of many nations in fulfilment of the promise: Just so will your descendants be. Even the thought that his body was as good as dead - he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was dead too, did not shake his faith. Counting on the promise of God, he did not doubt or disbelieve, but drew strength from faith and gave glory to God, fully convinced that whatever God promised he has the power to perform. This is the faith that was reckoned to him as uprightness. And the word 'reckoned' in scripture applies not only to him; it is there for our sake too. Our faith, too, will be 'reckoned' because we believe in him who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus who was handed over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification.

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Adam's sin brought condemnation to all humanity. His sin spread to the sinfulness of all. Christ's sacrifice has brought justification and faith to all humanity. This I believe: It is only by faith in Jesus Christ that we will be saved. The importance of the life, suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus is fundamental, it is everything.

So then, now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; it is through him, by faith, that we have been admitted into God's favor in which we are living, and look forward exultantly to God's glory. Not only that; let us exult, too, in our hardships, understanding that hardship develops perseverance, and perseverance develops a tested character, something that gives us hope, and a hope which will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

When we were still helpless, at the appointed time, Christ died for the godless. You could hardly find anyone ready to die even for someone upright; though it is just possible that, for a really good person, someone might undertake to die. So it is proof of God's own love for us, that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. How much more can we be sure, therefore, that, now that we have been justified by his death, we shall be saved through him from the retribution of God.

For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more can we be sure that, being now reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. What is more, we are filled with exultant trust in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation. Well then; it was through one man that sin came into the world, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned. Sin already existed in the world before there was any law, even though sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Nonetheless death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sin was not the breaking of a commandment, as Adam's was. He prefigured the One who was to come.

There is no comparison between the free gift and the offence. If death came to many through the offence of one man, how much greater an effect the grace of God has had, coming to so many and so plentifully as a free gift through the one man Jesus Christ! Again, there is no comparison between the gift and the offence of one man. One single offence brought condemnation, but now, after many offences, have come the free gift and so acquittal! It was by one man's offence that death came to reign over all, but how much greater the reign in life of those who receive the fullness of grace and the gift of saving justice, through the one man, Jesus Christ.

One man's offence brought condemnation on all humanity; and one man's good act has brought justification and life to all humanity. Just as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience are many to be made upright.

When law came on the scene, it was to multiply the offences. But however much sin increased, grace was always greater; so that as sin's reign brought death, so grace was to rule through saving justice that leads to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As Christ was raised from the dead by his Father so we who have died with him in baptism can begin living a new life. As once we surrendered ourselves to immorality and lawlessness, so now we must surrender ourselves to the service of God.

What should we say then? Should we remain in sin so that grace may be given the more fully? Out of the question! We have died to sin; how could we go on living in it? You cannot have forgotten that all of us, when we were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death.

So by our baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we too should begin living a new life. If we have been joined to him by dying a death like his, so we shall be by a resurrection like his; realizing that our former self was crucified with him, so that the self which belonged to sin should be destroyed and we should be freed from the slavery of sin.

Someone who has died, of course, no longer has to answer for sin. But we believe that, if we died with Christ, then we shall live with him too. We know that Christ has been raised from the dead and will never die again. Death has no power over him anymore. For by dying, he is dead to sin once and for all, and now the life that he lives is life with God. In the same way, you must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

That is why you must not allow sin to reign over your mortal bodies and make you obey their desires; or give any parts of your bodies over to sin to be used as instruments of evil. Instead, give yourselves to God, as people brought to life from the dead, and give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of uprightness; and then sin will no longer have any power over you, you are living not under law, but under grace.

What is the implication? That we are free to sin, now that we are not under law but under grace? Out of the question! You know well that if you undertake to be somebody's slave and obey him, you are the slave of him you obey, so you can be the slave either of sin which leads to death, or of obedience which leads to saving justice. Once you were slaves of sin, but thank God you have given whole-hearted obedience to the pattern of teaching to which you were introduced; and so, being freed from serving sin, you took uprightness as your master.

I am putting it in human terms because you are still weak human beings; as once you surrendered yourselves as servants to immorality and to a lawlessness which results in more

lawlessness, now you have to surrender yourselves to uprightness which is to result in sanctification. When you were the servants of sin, you felt no obligation to uprightness, and what did you gain from living like that? Experiences of which you are now ashamed, for that sort of behavior ends in death. But, now you are set free from sin and bound to the service of God, your gain will be sanctification and the end will be eternal life. For the wage paid by sin is death; the gift freely given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7777

Let us discuss the Law of Moses. It can only control us in our human lifetime. But we have died in Christ so we are released from the Law. By Christ's death and resurrection and our immersion in these mysteries, we Jews have been released from the Law, released into the freedom of Christ.

As people who are familiar with the Law, brothers, you cannot have forgotten that the Law can control a person only during that person's lifetime. A married woman, for instance, is bound to her husband by law, as long as he lives, but when her husband dies all her legal obligation to him as husband is ended. So if she were to have relations with another man while her husband was still alive, she would be termed an adulteress; but if her husband dies, her legal obligation comes to an end and if she then has relations with another man, that does not make her an adulteress.

In the same way you, my brothers, through the body of Christ have become dead to the Law and so you are able to belong to someone else, that is, to him who was raised from the dead to make us live fruitfully for God. While we were still living by our natural inclinations, the sinful passions aroused by the Law were working in all parts of our bodies to make us live lives which were fruitful only for death. But now we are released from the Law, having died to what was binding us, and so we are in a new service, that of the spirit, and not in the old service of a written code.

What should we say, then? That the Law itself is sin? Out of the question! All the same, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have known what sin was; for instance, I should not have known what it meant to covet if the Law had not said: 'You are not to covet.' But, once it found the opportunity through that commandment, sin produced in me all kinds of covetousness. As long as there is no Law, sin is dead.

The Law cannot save me, it is only showed me what sin is. There is a battle within me and I am losing it, evil is triumphing, only God through Jesus Christ can save me.

Once, when there was no Law, I used to be alive; but when the commandment came, sin came to life and I died. The commandment was meant to bring life but I found it brought death, because sin, finding its opportunity by means of the commandment, beguiled me and, by means of it, killed me. So then, the Law is holy, and what it commands is holy and upright and good. Does that mean that something good resulted in my dying? Out of the question! But sin, in order to be identified as sin, caused my death through that good thing, and so it is by means of the commandment that sin shows its unbounded sinful power.

We are well aware that the Law is spiritual, but I am a creature of flesh and blood sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand my own behavior; I do not act as I mean to, but I do things that I hate. While I am acting as I do not want to, I still acknowledge the Law as good, so it is not myself acting, but the sin which lives in me. And really, I know of nothing good living in me, in my natural self that is, for though the will to do what is good is in me, the power to do it is not: the good thing I want to do, I never do, the evil thing which I do not want, that is what I do. But every time I do what I do not want to, then it is not myself acting, but the sin that lives in me. So I find this rule, that for me, where I want to do nothing but good, evil is close at my side.

In my inmost self I dearly love God's law, but I see that acting on my body there is a different law which battles against the law in my mind. So I am brought to be a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death? God, thanks be to him, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So it is that I myself with my mind obey the law of God, but in my disordered nature I obey the law of sin.

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The law of the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death. We must live by the Spirit and not be dominated by our human nature.

Thus, condemnation will never come to those who are in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit which gives life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. What the Law could not do because of the weakness of human nature, God did, sending

his own Son in the same human nature as any sinner to be a sacrifice for sin, and condemning sin in that human nature.

This was so that the Law's requirements might be fully satisfied in us as we direct our lives not by our natural inclinations but by the Spirit. Those who are living by their natural inclinations have their minds on the things human nature desires; those who live in the Spirit have their minds on spiritual things. And human nature has nothing to look forward to but death, while the Spirit looks forward to life and peace, because the outlook of disordered human nature is opposed to God, since it does not submit to God's Law, and indeed it cannot, and those who live by their natural inclinations can never be pleasing to God.

You, however, live not by your natural inclinations, but by the Spirit, since the Spirit of God has made a home in you. Indeed, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But when Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin but the spirit is alive because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

So then, my brothers, we have no obligation to human nature to be dominated by it. If you do live in that way, you are doomed to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the habits originating in the body, you will have life. All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God; for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory.

My vision and hope for you all is to be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us, for the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. It was not for its own purposes that creation had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it, with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and

brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God. We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labor pains.

Let us live in hope.

And not only that. We too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping; nobody goes on hoping for something which is already visible. But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence.

And as well as this, the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words; and he who can see into all hearts knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God.

We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good. He decided beforehand who were the ones destined to be molded to the pattern of his Son, so that he should be the eldest of many brothers; it was those so destined that he called; those that he called, he justified, and those that he has justified he has brought into glory.

My hope is in the Lord. If God is with us, who can stand against us. Nothing can cut us off from the love of God, revealed to us by Christ Jesus.

After saying this, what can we add? If God is for us, who can be against us? Since he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for the sake of all of us, then can we not expect that with him he will freely give us all his gifts? Who can bring any accusation against those that God has chosen? When God grants saving justice who can condemn? Are we not sure that it is Christ Jesus, who died, yes and more, who was raised from the dead and is at God's right hand and who is adding his plea for us?

Can anything cut us off from the love of Christ, can hardships or distress, or persecution, or lack of food and clothing, or threats or violence; as scripture says: 'For your sake we are being massacred all day long, treated as sheep to be slaughtered?' No, we come through all these things triumphantly victorious, by the power of him who loved us. For I am certain of this, neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and

nothing still to come, nor any power, nor the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Given my heritage, I am in agony over the blindness of so many of the Jewish people. To them was given the Law and the promises – to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Moses. Yet they refute its fulfillment in Christ.

This is the truth and I am speaking in Christ, without pretense, as my conscience testifies for me in the Holy Spirit; there is great sorrow and unremitting agony in my heart; I could pray that I myself might be accursed and cut off from Christ, if this could benefit the brothers who are my own flesh and blood.

They are Israelites; it was they who were adopted as children, the glory was theirs and the covenants; to them were given the Law and the worship of God and the promises. To them belong the fathers and out of them, so far as physical descent is concerned, came Christ who is above all, God, blessed forever. Amen. It is not that God's promise has failed. Not all born Israelites belong to Israel, and not all the descendants of Abraham count as his children, for Isaac is the one through whom your Name will be carried on. That is, it is not by being children through physical descent that people become children of God; it is the children of the promise that are counted as the heirs.

The actual words of the promise were: 'I shall come back to you at this season, and Sarah will have a son.' Even more to the point is what was said to Rebecca when she was pregnant by our ancestor, Isaac, before her children were born, so that neither had yet done anything either good or bad, but in order that it should be God's choice which prevailed, not human merit, but his call, she was told that the elder one will serve the younger. Or as scripture says elsewhere: 'I loved Jacob but hated Esau.' What should we say, then? That God is unjust? Out of the question!

For speaking to Moses, he said, 'I am gracious to those to whom I am gracious and I take pity on those on whom I take pity.' So it is not a matter of what any person wants or what any person does, but only of God having mercy. Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'I raised you up for this reason, to display my power in you and to have my name talked of throughout the world.'

In other words, if God wants to show mercy on someone, he does so, and if he wants to harden someone's heart, he does so. Then you will ask me, "How then can he ever blame anyone, since no one can oppose his will?"

I cajole them: God is the God not only of the Jews but of the Gentiles as well. You Jews need to get over it. Do not question God. Read Hosea, Isaiah, Moses. Why do you disagree with them?

But you, who do you think you, a human being, are, to answer back to God? Something that was made, can it say to its maker, "Why did you make me this shape?" A potter surely has the right over his clay to make out of the same lump either a pot for special use or one for ordinary use. But suppose that God, although all the time he wanted to reveal his retribution and demonstrate his power, has with great patience gone on putting up with those who are the instruments of his retribution and designed to be destroyed, so that he may make known the glorious riches ready for the people who are the instruments of his faithful love and were long ago prepared for that glory.

We are that people, called by him not only out of the Jews but out of the Gentiles too. Just as he says in the book of Hosea: 'I shall tell those who were not my people,' "You are my people," and I shall take pity on those on whom I had no pity.' And in the very place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' they will be told that they are 'children of the living God'. And about Israel, this is what Isaiah cried out, 'Though the people of Israel are like the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved; for without hesitation or delay the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth.' As Isaiah foretold, had the Lord Sabaoth not left us a few survivors, we should be like Sodom, we should be the same as Gomorrah. What should we say, then? That the Gentiles, although they were not looking for saving justice, found it, and this was the saving justice that comes of faith; while Israel, looking for saving justice by law-keeping, did not succeed in fulfilling the Law.

And why? Because they were trying to find it in actions and not in faith, and so they stumbled over the stumbling-stone. As it says in scripture: 'Now I am laying in Zion a stumbling-stone, a rock to trip people up; but he who relies on this will not be brought to disgrace.'

Brothers, my dearest wish and my prayer to God is for them, that they may be saved. I readily testify to their fervor for God, but it is misguided. Not recognizing God's saving justice they have tried to establish their own, instead of submitting to the saving justice of God. But the Law has found its fulfilment in Christ so that all who have faith will be justified.

Moses writes of the saving justice that comes by the Law and says that whoever complies with it will find life in it. But the saving justice of faith says this: Do not think in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven?' That is to bring Christ down. Or 'Who will go down to the depths?' That is to bring Christ back from the dead. What does it say, then? The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith, the faith which we preach, that if you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. It is by believing with the heart that you are justified, and by making the declaration with your lips that you are saved.

When scripture says no one who relies on this will be brought to disgrace, it makes no distinction between Jew and Greek. The same Lord is the Lord of all, and his generosity is offered to all who appeal to him, for all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them? And how will there be preachers if they are not sent? As scripture says, 'How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of good news.' But in fact they have not all responded to the good news. As Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has given credence to what they have heard from us?' But it is in that way faith comes, from hearing, and that means hearing the word of Christ.

Well then, I say, is it possible that they have not heard? Indeed, they have, in the entire earth their voice stands out, their message reaches the whole world. Well, another question, then: is it possible that Israel did not understand? In the first place Moses said, 'I shall rouse you to jealousy with a non-people, I shall exasperate you with a stupid nation.' And Isaiah is even bold enough to say, 'I have let myself be found by those who did not seek me; I have let myself be seen by those who did not consult me;' and referring to Israel, he says, 'All day long I have been stretching out my hands to a disobedient and rebellious people.'

God has not abandoned his people, the Jews. Those whose hearts have not been hardened will be saved.

What I am saying is this, is it possible that God abandoned his people? Out of the question! I too am an Israelite, descended from Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God never abandoned his own people to whom, ages ago, he had given recognition. Do you not remember what scriptures says about Elijah and how he made a complaint to God against Israel: ‘Lord, they have put your prophets to the sword, torn down your altars. I am the only one left, and now they want to kill me?’

And what was the prophetic answer given? ‘I have spared for myself seven thousand men that have not bent the knee to Baal.’ In the same way, then, in our own time, there is a remnant, set aside by grace. And since it is by grace, it cannot now be by good actions, or grace would not be grace at all! What follows? Israel failed to find what it was seeking; only those who were chosen found it and the rest had their minds hardened; just as it says in scripture, ‘God has infused them with a spirit of lethargy; until today they have not eyes to see or ears to hear. David too says, ‘May their own table prove a trap for them, a pitfall and a snare; let that be their retribution. May their eyes grow so dim they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.’

I want the faith of the Gentiles to be the means of rousing to envy the people who are my own blood-brothers, and so of saving them.

What I am saying is this: Was this stumbling to lead to their final downfall? Out of the question! On the contrary, their failure has brought salvation for the Gentiles, in order to stir them to envy. And if their fall has proved a great gain to the world, and their loss has proved a great gain to the Gentiles, how much greater the gain will be when all is restored to them! Let me say then to you Gentiles that, as far as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in this work of service; and I want it to be the means of rousing to envy the people who are my own blood-relations and so of saving some of them.

Since their rejection meant the reconciliation of the world, do you know what their re-acceptance will mean? Nothing less than life from the dead! When the first-fruits are made holy, so is the whole batch; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. Now suppose that some branches were broken off, and you are wild olive, grafted among the rest to share with the others

the rich sap of the olive tree; then it is not for you to consider yourself superior to the other branches; and if you start feeling proud. Think, it is not you that sustain the root, but the root that sustains you. You will say, “Branches were broken off on purpose for me to be grafted in.” True, they through their unbelief were broken off, and you are established through your faith.

I tell them it is not for them to have pride, instead they should have fear, great fear.

So it is not pride that you should have, but fear; if God did not spare the natural branches, he might not spare you either. Remember God's severity as well as his goodness: his severity to those who fell, and his goodness to you as long as you persevere in it; if not, you too will be cut off. And they, if they do not persevere in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for it is within the power of God to graft them back again. After all, if you, cut off from what was by nature a wild olive, could then be grafted unnaturally on to a cultivated olive, how much easier will it be for them, the branches that naturally belong there, to be grafted on to the olive tree which is their own.

I want you to be quite certain, brothers, of this mystery, to save you from congratulating yourselves on your own good sense. Part of Israel had its mind hardened, but only until the Gentiles have wholly come in; and this is how all Israel will be saved. As scripture says, ‘From Zion will come the Redeemer, he will remove godlessness from Jacob. And this will be my covenant with them, when I take their sins away.’ As regards the gospel, they are enemies, but for your sake; but as regards those who are God's choice, they are still well loved for the sake of their ancestors. There is no change of mind on God's part about the gifts he has made or of his choice.

Just as you were in the past disobedient to God but now you have been shown mercy, through their disobedience; so in the same way they are disobedient now, so that through the mercy shown to you they too will receive mercy. God has imprisoned all human beings in their own disobedience only to show mercy to them all. How rich and deep are the wisdom and the knowledge of God! We cannot reach to the root of his decisions or his ways. Who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been his adviser? Who has given anything to him, so that his presents come only as a debt returned? Everything there is comes from him and is caused by him and exists for him. To him be glory forever! Amen.

We should think of ourselves as part of the body of Christ sharing his vales and virtues – love, joy, perseverance, forgiveness. We all have gifts, they are to be shared.

I urge you, then, brothers, remembering the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, dedicated and acceptable to God; that is the kind of worship for you, as sensible people. Do not model your behavior on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and mature. And through the grace that I have been given, I say this to every one of you: never pride yourself on being better than you really are, but think of yourself dispassionately, recognizing that God has given to each one his measure of faith.

Just as each of us has various parts in one body, and the parts do not all have the same function, in the same way, all of us, though there are so many of us, make up one body in Christ, and as different parts we are all joined to one another. Then since the gifts that we have differ according to the grace that was given to each of us: if it is a gift of prophecy, we should prophesy as much as our faith tells us; if it is a gift of practical service, let us devote ourselves to serving; if it is teaching, to teaching; if it is encouraging, to encouraging. When you give, you should give generously from the heart; if you are put in charge, you must be conscientious; if you do works of mercy, let it be because you enjoy doing them.

Let love be without any pretense. Avoid what is evil; stick to what is good. In brotherly love let your feelings of deep affection for one another come to expression and regard others as more important than yourself. In the service of the Lord, work not halfheartedly but with conscientiousness and an eager spirit.

Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly; share with any of God's holy people who are in need; look for opportunities to be hospitable. Bless your persecutors; never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with others when they rejoice, and be sad with those in sorrow. Give the same consideration to all others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their own terms. Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom. Never pay back evil with evil, but bear in mind the ideals that all regard with respect. As much as possible, and to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone.

Never try to get revenge: leave that, my dear friends, to the Retribution. As scripture says: 'Vengeance is mine, I will pay them back', the Lord promises. And more, 'If

your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat; if thirsty, something to drink. By this, you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head. Do not be mastered by evil, but master evil with good.'

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We need to keep our feet on the ground being obedient to authorities, keeping the 10 commandments summed up in "You shall love your neighbor as yourselves."

Everyone is to obey the governing authorities, because there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God. So anyone who disobeys an authority is rebelling against God's ordinance; and rebels must expect to receive the condemnation they deserve. Magistrates bring fear not to those who do good, but to those who do evil. So if you want to live with no fear of authority, live honestly and you will have its approval; it is there to serve God for you and for your good. But if you do wrong, then you may well be afraid; because it is not for nothing that the symbol of authority is the sword; it is there to serve God, too, as his avenger, to bring retribution to wrongdoers.

You must be obedient, therefore, not only because of this retribution, but also for conscience's sake. And this is why you should pay taxes, too, because the authorities are all serving God as his agents, even while they are busily occupied with that particular task. Pay to each one what is due to each; taxes to the one to whom tax is due; tolls to the one to whom tolls are due; respect to the one to whom respect is due; honor to the one to whom honor is due. The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfil the law.

All these: You shall not commit adultery; You shall not kill, You shall not steal; You shall not covet; and all the other commandments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.' Love can cause no harm to your neighbor, and so love is the fulfilment of the Law. Besides, you know the time has come; the moment is here for you to stop sleeping and wake up, because by now our salvation is nearer than when we first began to believe. The night is nearly over, daylight is on the way; so let us throw off everything that belongs to the darkness and equip ourselves for the light. Let us live decently, as in the light of day; with no orgies or drunkenness, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no

wrangling or jealousy. Let your armor be the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop worrying about how your disordered natural inclinations may be fulfilled.

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Do not judge others, we too shall be judged. For example, all food is clean but we are free to think otherwise.

Give a welcome to anyone whose faith is not strong, but do not get into arguments about doubtful points. One person may have faith enough to eat any kind of food; another, less strong, will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat freely are not to condemn those who are unwilling to eat freely; nor must the person who does not eat freely pass judgement on the one who does, because God has welcomed him.

And who are you, to sit in judgement over somebody else's servant? Whether he deserves to be upheld or to fall is for his own master to decide; and he shall be upheld, for the Lord has power to uphold him. One person thinks that some days are holier than others, and another thinks them all equal. Let each of them be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who makes special observance of a particular day observes it in honor of the Lord. So the one who eats freely, eats in honor of the Lord, making his thanksgiving to God; and the one who does not, abstains from eating in honor of the Lord and makes his thanksgiving to God.

For none of us lives for himself and none of us dies for himself; while we are alive, we are living for the Lord, and when we die, we die for the Lord: and so, alive or dead, we belong to the Lord. It was for this purpose that Christ both died and came to life again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why, then, does one of you make himself judge over his brother, and why does another among you despise his brother? All of us will have to stand in front of the judgement seat of God. As scripture says, 'By my own life says the Lord, every knee shall bow before me, every tongue shall give glory to God.'

It is to God, then, that each of us will have to give an account of himself. Let us each stop passing judgement, therefore, on one another and decide instead that none of us will place obstacles in any brother's way, or anything that can bring him down. I am sure, and quite convinced in the Lord Jesus, that no food is unclean in itself; it is only if someone classifies any kind of food as unclean, then for him it is unclean. And indeed, if through any kind of food you are causing offence to a brother, then you are no longer being guided by love. You are not to

let the food that you eat cause the ruin of anyone for whom Christ died. A privilege of yours must not be allowed to give rise to harmful talk; for it is not eating and drinking that make the kingdom of God, but the saving justice, the peace and the joy brought by the Holy Spirit.

It is the person who serves Christ in these things that will be approved by God and respected by everyone. So then, let us be always seeking the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another. Do not wreck God's work for the sake of food. Certainly all foods are clean; but all the same, any kind can be evil for someone to whom it is an offence to eat it. It is best to abstain from eating any meat, or drinking any wine, or from any other activity which might cause a brother to fall away, or to be scandalized, or to weaken. Within yourself, before God, hold on to what you already believe. Blessed is the person whose principles do not condemn his practice. But anyone who eats with qualms of conscience is condemned, because this eating does not spring from faith, and every action which does not spring from faith is sin.

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Accept one another then for the sake of God's glory as Christ has accepted you.

It is for us who are strong to bear with the susceptibilities of the weaker ones, and not please ourselves. Each of us must consider his neighbor's good, so that we support one another. Christ did not indulge his own feelings, either; indeed, as scripture says, 'The insults of those who insult you fall on me.' And all these things which were written so long ago were written so that we, learning perseverance and the encouragement which the scriptures give, should have hope. Now the God of perseverance and encouragement gave you all the same purpose, following the example of Christ Jesus, so that you may together give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one heart.

Accept one another, then, for the sake of God's glory, as Christ accepted you. I tell you that Christ's work was to serve the circumcised, fulfilling the truthfulness of God by carrying out the promises made to the fathers, and his work was also for the Gentiles, so that they should give glory to God for his faithful love; as scripture says, 'For this I shall praise you among the nations and sing praise to your name. And in another place it says, 'Nations, rejoice, with his people, and in another place again, 'Praise the Lord, all nations, extol him, all peoples. And in Isaiah, it says, 'The root of Jesse will appear, he who rises up to rule the nations, and in him the

nations will put their hope.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that in the power of the Holy Spirit you may be rich in hope.

I am proud in Christ Jesus of what I have done for God. I wish I had been able to visit you earlier but I am coming now. First, I must bring aid to the impoverished community in Jerusalem. Pray for me, in Judea I will be surrounded by enemies.

My brothers, I am quite sure that you, in particular, are full of goodness, fully instructed and capable of correcting each other. But I have special confidence in writing on some points to you, to refresh your memories, because of the grace that was given to me by God. I was given grace to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, dedicated to offer them the gospel of God, so that Gentiles might become an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. So I can be proud, in Christ Jesus, of what I have done for God.

Of course I can dare to speak only of the things which Christ has done through me to win the allegiance of the Gentiles, using what I have said and done, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God. In this way, from Jerusalem and all round, even as far as Illyricum, I have fully carried out the preaching of the gospel of Christ; and what is more, it has been my rule to preach the gospel only where the name of Christ has not already been heard, for I do not build on another's foundations; in accordance with scripture, ‘Those who have never been told about him will see him, and those who have never heard about him will understand.’

That is why I have been so often prevented from coming to see you; now, however, as there is nothing more to keep me in these parts, I hope, after longing for many years past to visit you, to see you when I am on the way to Spain, and after enjoying at least something of your company, to be sent on my way with your support. But now I have undertaken to go to Jerusalem in the service of the holy people of God there, since Macedonia and Achaia have chosen to make a generous contribution to the poor among God's holy people at Jerusalem.

Yes, they chose to, not that they did not owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have been given a share in their spiritual possessions, then in return to give them help with material possessions is repaying a debt to them. So when I have done this, and given this harvest into their possession, I shall visit you on the way to Spain. I am sure that, when I do come to you, I shall come with the fullest blessing of Christ.

Meanwhile I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, that in your prayers to God for me you exert yourselves to help me; praying that I may escape the unbelievers in Judaea, and that the aid I am carrying to Jerusalem will be acceptable to God's holy people. Then I shall come to you, if God wills, for a happy time of relaxation in your company. The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

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Greetings to you all, to whom I love especially.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae; give her, in the Lord, a welcome worthy of God's holy people, and help her with whatever she needs from you since she herself has come to the help of many people, including myself. My greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks to save my life; to them, thanks not only from me, but from all the churches among the Gentiles; and my greetings to the church at their house.

Greetings to my dear friend Epaphroditus, the first of Asia's offerings to Christ. Greetings to Mary, who worked so hard for you. Greetings to those outstanding apostles, Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow-prisoners, who were in Christ before me. Greetings to Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greetings to Urban, my fellow-worker in Christ, and to my dear friend Stachys. Greetings to Apelles, proved servant of Christ. Greetings to all the household of Aristobulus. Greetings to my kinsman, Herodion, and greetings to those who belong to the Lord in the household of Narcissus. Greetings to Tryphaena and Tryphosa who work hard in the Lord; greetings to my dear friend Persis, also a very hard worker in the Lord. Greetings to Rufus, chosen servant of the Lord, and to his mother, a mother to me too. Greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greetings to Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all God's holy people who are with them.

Be on your guard.

Greet each other with the holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send their greetings. I urge you, brothers, be on your guard against the people who are out to stir up disagreements and bring up difficulties against the teaching which you learnt. Avoid them. People of that sort are servants not of our Lord Christ, but of their own greed; and with talk that sounds smooth

and reasonable they deceive the minds of the unwary. Your obedience has become known to everyone, and I am very pleased with you for it; but I should want you to be learned only in what is good, and unsophisticated about all that is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Timothy, who is working with me, sends greetings to you, and so do my kinsmen Lucius, Jason and Sosipater. Tertius, who is writing this letter for me, greets you in the Lord. Greetings to you from Gaius, my host here, and host of the whole church. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends greetings to you, and also our brother Quartus. And now to him who can make you strong in accordance with the gospel that I preach and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, in accordance with that mystery which for endless ages was kept secret but now (as the prophets wrote) is revealed, as the eternal God commanded, to be made known to all the nations, so that they obey in faith. To him, the only wise God, give glory through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. Amen.

Chapter 13: Imprisonment in Jerusalem

Taking leave of Philip in Caesarea, I had my disciples make their preparations and off we went up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and took us to the house of a Cypriot with whom we were to lodge; he was called Mnason and had been one of the earliest disciples. On our arrival in Jerusalem the brothers gave us a very warm welcome. The next day all of us went to visit James, who was the Apostle entrusted with the church in Jerusalem, and all the elders were present. After greeting them I gave a detailed account of all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

They gave glory to God when they heard this. Then they said, “You see, brother, how thousands of Jews have now become believers, all of them staunch upholders of the Law; and what they have heard about you is that you instruct all Jews living among the Gentiles to break away from Moses, authorizing them not to circumcise their children or to follow the customary practices. What is to be done? A crowd is sure to gather, for they will hear that you have come. So this is what we suggest that you should do; we have four men here who are under a vow; take these men along and be purified with them and pay all the expenses connected with the shaving of their heads. This will let everyone know there is no truth in the reports they have heard about you, and that you too observe the Law by your way of life. About the Gentiles who have become believers, we have written giving them our decision that they must abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages.”

So the next day I went along with these four men and was purified with them, and I visited the Temple to give notice of the time when the period of purification would be over and the offering would have to be presented on behalf of each of them. The seven days were nearly over when some Jews from Asia caught sight of me in the Temple and stirred up the crowd and seized me, shouting, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who preaches to everyone everywhere against our people, against the Law and against this place. He has even profaned this Holy Place by bringing Greeks into the Temple.” They had, in fact, previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with me and thought that I had brought him into the Temple. This roused the whole city; people came running from all sides; they seized me and dragged me out of the Temple, and the gates were closed behind us.

While they were setting about killing me, word reached the tribune of the cohort that there was tumult all over Jerusalem. He immediately called out soldiers and centurions and charged down on the crowd, who stopped beating me when they saw the tribune and the soldiers. When the tribune came up he took me into custody, had me bound with two chains and enquired who I was and what I had done. People in the crowd called out different things, and since the noise made it impossible for him to get any positive information, the tribune ordered me to be taken into the fortress.

When I reached the steps, the crowd became so violent that I had to be carried by the soldiers; and indeed the whole mob was after them, shouting, "Do away with him!" As I was being taken into the fortress, I asked the tribune if I could have a word with him. The tribune said, "You speak Greek, then? Aren't you the Egyptian who started the recent revolt and led those four thousand cut-throats out into the desert?"

I replied, "No, not me. I am a Jew and a citizen of the well-known city of Tarsus in Cilicia. Please give me permission to speak to the people." The man gave his consent. Standing at the top of the steps, I raised my hand to the people for silence. A profound silence followed, and I started speaking to them in Hebrew.

"My brothers, my fathers, listen to what I have to say to you in my defense." When they realized I was speaking in Hebrew, the silence was even greater than before. "I am a Jew", I said, "and was born at Tarsus in Cilicia. I was brought up here in this city. It was under Gamaliel that I studied and was taught the exact observance of the Law of our ancestors. In fact, I was as full of duty towards God as you all are today. I even persecuted this Way to the death and sent women as well as men to prison in chains as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify. I even received letters from them to the brothers in Damascus, which I took with me when I set off to bring prisoners back from there to Jerusalem for punishment.

It happened that I was on that journey and nearly at Damascus when in the middle of the day a bright light from heaven suddenly shone round me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" I answered, "Who are you, Lord?" and he said to me, "I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting." The people with me saw the light but did not hear the voice which spoke to me. I said, "What am I to do, Lord?" The Lord answered, "Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told what you have

been appointed to do." Since the light had been so dazzling that I was blind, I got to Damascus only because my companions led me by the hand.

Someone called Ananias, a devout follower of the Law and highly thought of by all the Jews living there, came to see me; he stood beside me and said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." Instantly my sight came back and I was able to see him. Then he said, "The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Upright One and hear his own voice speaking, because you are to be his witness before all humanity, testifying to what you have seen and heard. And now why delay? Hurry and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name."

It happened that, when I got back to Jerusalem, and was praying in the Temple, I fell into a trance and then I saw him. "Hurry," he said, "leave Jerusalem at once; they will not accept the testimony you are giving about me." "Lord," I answered, "they know that I used to go from synagogue to synagogue, imprisoning and flogging those who believed in you; and that when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I, too, was standing by, in full agreement with his murderers, and in charge of their clothes." Then he said to me, "Go! I am sending you out to the Gentiles far away."

So far they had listened to me, but at these words they began to shout, "Rid the earth of the man! He is not fit to live!" They were yelling, waving their cloaks and throwing dust into the air, and so the tribune had me brought into the fortress and ordered me to be examined under the lash, to find out the reason for the outcry against him. But when they had strapped me down I said to the centurion on duty, "Is it legal for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and has not been brought to trial?" When he heard this the centurion went and told the tribune; "Do you realize what you are doing?" he said. "This man is a Roman citizen." So the tribune came and asked me, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" I answered "Yes". To this the tribune replied, "It cost me a large sum to acquire this citizenship." "But I was born to it," I replied.

Then those who were about to examine me hurriedly withdrew, and the tribune himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put a Roman citizen in chains. The next day, since he wanted to know for sure what charge the Jews were bringing, he freed me and gave orders for a meeting of the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin; then he brought me down and set me in front of them.

I looked steadily at the Sanhedrin and began to speak, “My brothers, to this day I have conducted myself before God with a perfectly clear conscience.” At this the high priest Ananias ordered his attendants to strike me on the mouth. Then I said to him, “God will surely strike you, you whitewashed wall! How can you sit there to judge me according to the Law, and then break the Law by ordering a man to strike me?”

The attendants said, “Are you insulting the high priest of God?” I answered, “Brothers, I did not realize it was the high priest; certainly scripture says: You will not curse your people's leader.” Now I was well aware that one party was made up of Sadducees and the other of Pharisees, so I called out to the Sanhedrin, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee and the son of Pharisees. It is for our hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial. “

As soon as I said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was split between the two parties. For the Sadducees say there is neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, while the Pharisees accept all three. The shouting grew louder, and some of the scribes from the Pharisees' party stood up and protested strongly, “We find nothing wrong with this man. Suppose a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel?” Feeling was running high, and the tribune, afraid that they would tear me to pieces, ordered his troops to go down and bring me into the fortress.

Next night, the Lord appeared to me and said, “Courage! You have borne witness for me in Jerusalem, now you must do the same in Rome.” When it was day, the Jews held a secret meeting at which they made a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed me. More than forty of them entered this pact, and they went to the chief priests and elders and told them, “We have made a solemn vow to let nothing pass our lips until we have killed Paul. Now it is up to you and the Sanhedrin together to apply to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you mean to examine his case more closely; we, on our side, are prepared to dispose of him before he reaches you.”

But my nephew, the son of my sister, heard of the ambush they were laying and made his way into the fortress and told me. I immediately called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the tribune; he has something to tell him.” So the man took my nephew to the tribune, and reported, “The prisoner Paul summoned me and requested me to bring this young man to you; he has something to tell you.” Then the tribune took the young man by the hand and drew him aside and questioned him in private, “What is it you have to tell me?”

My nephew replied, "The Jews have made a plan to ask you to take Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they meant to enquire more closely into his case. Do not believe them. There are more than forty of them lying in wait for him, and they have vowed not to eat or drink until they have got rid of him. They are ready now and only waiting for your order to be given." The tribune let the young man go with this order, "Tell no one that you have given me this information." Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea by the third hour of the night with seventy cavalry and two hundred auxiliaries; provide horses for Paul, and deliver him unharmed to Felix the governor."

He also wrote a letter in these terms: "Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. This man had been seized by the Jews and would have been murdered by them; but I came on the scene with my troops and got him away, having discovered that he was a Roman citizen. Wanting to find out what charge they were making against him, I brought him before their Sanhedrin. I found that the accusation concerned disputed points of their Law, but that there was no charge deserving death or imprisonment. Acting on information that there was a conspiracy against the man, I hasten to send him to you, and have notified his accusers that they must state their case against him in your presence."

The soldiers carried out their orders; they took me out and escorted me by night to Antipatris. Next day they left the mounted escort to go on with me and returned to the fortress. On arriving at Caesarea the escort delivered the letter to the governor and handed me over to him. When he had read it, he asked me what province I came from. Learning that I was from Cilicia he said, "I will hear your case as soon as your accusers are here too." Then he ordered me to be held in Herod's praetorium.

Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some of the elders and an advocate named Tertullus, and they laid information against me before the governor. I was called, and Tertullus opened for the prosecution, "Your Excellency, Felix, the unbroken peace we enjoy and the reforms this nation owes to your foresight are matters we accept, always and everywhere, with all gratitude. I do not want to take up too much of your time, but I urge you in your graciousness to give us a brief hearing. We have found this man a perfect pest; he stirs up trouble among Jews the world over and is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. He has even attempted to profane the Temple. We placed him under arrest. I know that you have

administered justice over this nation for many years, and I can therefore speak with confidence in my defense. If you ask him you can find out for yourself the truth of all our accusations against this man.” The Jews supported him, asserting that these were the facts.

When the governor motioned me to speak, I answered, “As you can verify for yourself, it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem on pilgrimage, and it is not true that they ever found me arguing with anyone or stirring up the mob, either in the Temple, in the synagogues, or about the town; neither can they give you any proof of the accusations they are making against me now. What I do admit to you is this; it is according to the Way, which they describe as a sect, that I worship the God of my ancestors, retaining my belief in all points of the Law and in what is written in the prophets; and I hold the same hope in God as they do that there will be a resurrection of the upright and the wicked alike. In these things, I, as much as they, do my best to keep a clear conscience at all times before God and everyone.

After several years I came to bring relief-money to my nation and to make offerings; it was in connection with these that they found me in the Temple; I had been purified, and there was no crowd involved, and no disturbance. But some Jews from Asia, these are the ones who should have appeared before you and accused me of whatever they had against me. At least let those who are present say what crime they held against me when I stood before the Sanhedrin, unless it were to do with this single claim, when I stood up among them and called out, it is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.”

At this, Felix, who was fairly well informed about the Way, adjourned the case, saying, “When Lysias the tribune comes down I will give judgement about your case.” He then gave orders to the centurion that I should be kept under arrest but free from restriction, and that none of my own people should be prevented from seeing to my needs.

Some days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla who was a Jewess. He sent for me and gave me a hearing on the subject of faith in Christ Jesus. But I began to speak of uprightness, self-control and the coming Judgement, Felix took fright and said, “You may go for the present; I will send for you when I find it convenient.” At the same time he had hopes of receiving ransom money from me, and for this reason he sent for me frequently and we talked some more.

In my captivity I was able to reflect more deeply on the mysteries surrounding our redemption in Christ. Surrounded as I was by Jews and not Gentiles, imprisoned as I was by

the underlings of the High Priest, I composed a theological letter in my mind, a letter to the Hebrews who would understand its import. Later in my Roman prison cell, my Greek disciples transcribed it for me as I dictated to them. I had the letter sent from my cell in a Roman prison to all the communities of believers in Israel, so they would know that the reign of the Chief High Priest of the Jews is over; Christ Jesus is the king of all the earth.

Chapter 14: My Letter to the Hebrews

The purpose of the letter is broader than my usual comparison between covenants; the purpose is to establish the dignity and identity of Jesus Christ as the new Melchizedek, the new Chief High Priest of the New Covenant. My heart was torn. I was a Pharisee Jew, I had served the Jewish community in Jerusalem, I was once the instrument of justice of the Chief High Priest, him I had obeyed and bowed to respectfully. But there is a new Chief High Priest now, my Lord Jesus Christ and him I serve unreservedly.

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God speaks to us through his Son who is far superior to the prophets, even to the angels. He too is God.

At many moments in the past and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our time, the final days, he has spoken to us in the person of his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the ages. He is the reflection of God's glory and bears the impress of God's own being, sustaining all things by his powerful command; and now that he has purged sins away, he has taken his seat at the right hand of the divine Majesty on high.

So he is now as far above the angels as the title which he has inherited is higher than their own name. To which of the angels, then, has God ever said, "You are my Son, today I have fathered you," or, 'I shall be a father to him and he a son to me?' 'Again, when he brings the First-born into the world, he says, 'Let all the angels of God pay him homage.' To the angels, he says he is appointing the winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants; but to the Son he says, 'Your throne, God, is for ever and ever; and the scepter of his kingdom is a scepter of justice; you love uprightness and detest evil. This is why God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness, as none of your rivals.'

And again, 'Long ago, Lord, you laid earth's foundations, the heavens are the work of your hands. They pass away but you remain, they all wear out like a garment. Like a cloak you will roll them up, like a garment, and they will be changed. But you never alter and your years are unending.' To which of the angels has God ever said, 'Take your seat at my right hand

till I have made your enemies your footstool?’ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

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We need to listen then to what Jesus says. Though the Son of God, he became a human being so he could suffer to redeem us.

We ought, then, to turn our minds more attentively than before to what we have been taught, so that we do not drift away. If a message that was spoken through angels proved to be so reliable that every infringement and disobedience brought its own proper punishment, then we shall certainly not go unpunished if we neglect such a great salvation.

It was first announced by the Lord himself, and is guaranteed to us by those who heard him; God himself confirmed their witness with signs and marvels and miracles of all kinds, and by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the various ways he wills. It was not under angels that he put the world to come, about which we are speaking. Someone witnesses to this somewhere with the words, ‘What are human beings that you spare a thought for them, a child of Adam that you care for him? For a short while you have made him less than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, put all things under his feet.’ For in putting all things under him he made no exceptions.

At present, it is true, we are not able to see that all things are under him, but we do see Jesus, who was for a short while made less than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he submitted to death; so that by God's grace his experience of death should benefit all humanity.

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should, in bringing many sons to glory, make perfect through suffering the leader of their salvation. For consecrator and consecrated are all of the same stock; that is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers in the text: I shall proclaim your name to my brothers, praise you in full assembly, or in the text: I shall put my hope in him, followed by: Look, I and the children whom God has given me.

Since all the children share the same human nature, he too shared equally in it, so that by his death he could set aside him who held the power of death, namely the devil, and set free

all those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself the line of Abraham.

Under the Mosaic Law the Chief High Priest offered sacrifice to expiate the sins of all the people. Christ needed to become human in order to take over this role.

It was essential that he should in this way be made completely like his brothers so that he could become a compassionate and trustworthy high priest for their relationship to God, able to expiate the sins of the people. For the suffering he himself passed through while being put to the test enables him to help others when they are being put to the test.

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Moses was the greatest of all the prophets but Christ is superior to him.

That is why all you who are holy brothers and share the same heavenly call should turn your minds to Jesus, the apostle and the high priest of our profession of faith. He was trustworthy to the one who appointed him, just like Moses, who remained trustworthy in all his household; but he deserves a greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house is more honored than the house itself. Every house is built by someone, of course; but God built everything that exists. It is true that Moses was trustworthy in the household of God, as a servant is, acting as witness to the things which were yet to be revealed, but Christ is trustworthy as a son is, over his household. And we are his household, as long as we fearlessly maintain the hope in which we glory.

That is why, as the Holy Spirit says, 'If only you would listen to him today! Do not harden your hearts, as at the rebellion, as at the time of testing in the desert, when your ancestors challenged me, and put me to the test, and saw what I could do for forty years. That was why that generation sickened me and I said, 'Always fickle hearts, that cannot grasp my ways! And then in my anger I swore that they would never enter my place of rest.'

Watch out for the peril of drifting away from Christ as the people in the desert did, hardening their hearts against Moses.

Take care, brothers, that none of you ever has a wicked heart, so unbelieving as to turn away from the living God. Every day, as long as this today lasts, keep encouraging one another so that none of you is hardened by the lure of sin, because we have been granted a share with Christ only if we keep the grasp of our first confidence firm to the end. In this saying 'If

only you would listen to him today; do not harden your hearts, as at the Rebellion,' who was it who listened and then rebelled? Surely all those whom Moses led out of Egypt. And with whom was he angry for forty years? Surely with those who sinned and whose dead bodies fell in the desert. To whom did he swear they would never enter his place of rest? Surely those who would not believe. So we see that it was their refusal to believe which prevented them from entering.

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It is the refusal to believe that prevents us from entering heaven. Others have faltered, those whom Moses would have led into paradise, those whom Joshua would have led. It's our time now, we have not come too late.

Let us beware then, since the promise never lapses, none of you must think that he has come too late for the promise of entering his place of rest. We received the gospel exactly as they did; but hearing the message did them no good because they did not share the faith of those who did listen. We, however, who have faith, are entering a place of rest, as in the text: And then in my anger I swore that they would never enter my place of rest. Now God's work was all finished at the beginning of the world; as one text says, referring to the seventh day: And God rested on the seventh day after all the work he had been doing. And, again, the passage above says: They will never reach my place of rest.

It remains the case, then, that there would be some people who would reach it, and since those who first heard the good news were prevented from entering by their refusal to believe, God fixed another day, a Today, when he said through David in the text already quoted, 'If only you would listen to him today; do not harden your hearts.' If Joshua had led them into this place of rest, God would not later have spoken of another day. There must still be, therefore, a seventh-day rest reserved for God's people, since to enter the place of rest is to rest after your work, as God did after his. Let us, then, press forward to enter this place of rest, or some of you might copy this example of refusal to believe and be lost.

God knows everything about us.

The word of God is something alive and active; it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword; it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or joints from marrow; it can pass judgement on secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing is hidden from him;

everything is uncovered and stretched fully open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.

Forget the Chief High Priest of the Law and useless sacrifices, Jesus Christ is the High Priest now and his sacrifice is pleasing to God. We need God's grace to believe this.

Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must hold firm to our profession of faith. For the high priest we have is not incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us, but has been put to the test in exactly the same way as ourselves, apart from sin. Let us, then, have no fear in approaching the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace when we are in need of help.

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God appoints the high priests. Jesus is now his choice. Through his sufferings and death, Christ has redeemed us all.

Every high priest is taken from among human beings and is appointed to act on their behalf in relationships with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can sympathize with those who are ignorant or who have gone astray, because he too is subject to the limitations of weakness. That is why he has to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honor on himself; it needs a call from God, as in Aaron's case. And so it was not Christ who gave himself the glory of becoming high priest, but the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have fathered you," and in another text, "You are a priest forever, of the order of Melchizedek."

During his life on earth, he offered up prayer and entreaty, with loud cries and with tears, to the one who had the power to save him from death, and, winning a hearing by his reverence, he learnt obedience, Son though he was, through his sufferings; when he had been perfected, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation and was acclaimed by God with the title of high priest of the order of Melchizedek.

These truths need to be repeated over and over.

On this subject we have many things to say, and they are difficult to explain because you have grown so slow at understanding. Indeed, when you should by this time have become masters, you need someone to teach you all over again the elements of the principles of God's sayings; you have gone back to needing milk and not solid food. Truly, no one who is still living

on milk can digest the doctrine of saving justice, being still a baby. Solid food is for adults with minds trained by practice to distinguish between good and bad.

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Let's go beyond the elementary teaching.

Let us leave behind us then all the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to its completion, without going over the fundamental doctrines again; the turning away from dead actions, faith in God, the teaching about baptisms and the laying-on of hands, about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement.

If you believed at one time and fell into disbelief you are doomed.

This, God willing, is what we propose to do. As for those people who were once brought into the light, and tasted the gift from heaven, and received a share of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the goodness of God's message and the powers of the world to come and yet in spite of this have fallen away; it is impossible for them to be brought to the freshness of repentance a second time, since they are crucifying the Son of God again for themselves, and making a public exhibition of him. A field that drinks up the rain that has fallen frequently on it, and yields the crops that are wanted by the owners who grew them, receives God's blessing; but one that grows brambles and thistles is worthless, and near to being cursed. It will end by being burnt.

You will be saved, you have kept believing. When God swears an oath he keeps it. We have an unalterable promise to hold on to.

But you, my dear friends, in spite of what we have just said, we are sure you are in a better state and on the way to salvation. God would not be so unjust as to forget all you have done, the love that you have for his name or the services you have done, and are still doing, for the holy people of God. Our desire is that every one of you should go on showing the same enthusiasm till the ultimate fulfilment of your hope, never growing careless, but taking as your model those who by their faith and perseverance are heirs of the promises.

When God made the promise to Abraham, he swore by his own self, since there was no one greater he could swear by: "I will shower blessings on you and give you many descendants." Because of that, Abraham persevered and received fulfilment of the promise. Human beings, of course, swear an oath by something greater than themselves, and between them, confirmation by an oath puts an end to all dispute. In the same way, when

God wanted to show the heirs of the promise even more clearly how unalterable his plan was, he conveyed it by an oath so that through two unalterable factors in which God could not be lying, we who have fled to him might have a vigorous encouragement to grasp the hope held out to us. This is the anchor our souls have, reaching right through inside the curtain where Jesus has entered as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever, of the order of Melchizedek.

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Melchizedek was a great man, a priest forever. He changed the priesthood, and therefore the Law, which depended on a High Priest chosen from the tribe of Levi, must be changed since our new High Priest, Jesus Christ, is of the tribe of Judah.

Melchizedek, king of Salem, a priest of God Most High, came to meet Abraham when he returned from defeating the kings, and blessed him; and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. By the interpretation of his name, he is, first, 'king of saving justice' and also king of Salem, that is, 'king of peace'; he has no father, mother or ancestry, and his life has no beginning or ending; he is like the Son of God. He remains a priest forever. Now think how great this man must have been, if the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the finest plunder. We know that any of the descendants of Levi who are admitted to the priesthood are obliged by the Law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their own brothers although they too are descended from Abraham. But this man, who was not of the same descent, took his tithe from Abraham, and he gave his blessing to the holder of the promises.

Now it is indisputable that a blessing is given by a superior to an inferior. Further, in the normal case it is ordinary mortal men who receive the tithes, whereas in that case it was one who is attested as being alive. It could be said that Levi himself, who receives tithes, actually paid tithes, in the person of Abraham, because he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek came to meet him. Now if perfection had been reached through the levitical priesthood, and this was the basis of the Law given to the people, why was it necessary for a different kind of priest to arise, spoken of as being of the order of Melchizedek rather than of the order of Aaron? Any change in the priesthood must mean a change in the Law as well.

So our Lord, of whom these things were said, belonged to a different tribe, the members of which have never done service at the altar; everyone knows he came from Judah, a tribe

which Moses did not mention at all when dealing with priests. This becomes even more clearly evident if another priest, of the type of Melchizedek, arises who is a priest not in virtue of a law of physical descent, but in virtue of the power of an indestructible life. For he is attested by the prophecy: 'You are a priest forever of the order of Melchizedek.'

The earlier commandment is thus abolished, because of its weakness and ineffectiveness since the Law could not make anything perfect; but now this commandment is replaced by something better, the hope that brings us close to God. Now the former priests became priests without any oath being sworn, but this one with the swearing of an oath by him who said to him, The Lord has sworn an oath he will never retract: you are a priest forever; the very fact that it occurred with the swearing of an oath makes the covenant of which Jesus is the guarantee all the greater.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ is perpetual.

Further, the former priests were many in number, because death put an end to each one of them; but this one, because he remains forever, has a perpetual priesthood. It follows, then, that his power to save those who come to God through him is absolute, since he lives forever to intercede for them. Such is the high priest that met our need, holy, innocent and uncontaminated, set apart from sinners, and raised up above the heavens; he has no need to offer sacrifices every day, as the high priests do, first for their own sins and only then for those of the people; this he did once and for all by offering himself. The Law appoints high priests who are men subject to weakness, but the promise on oath, which came after the Law, appointed the Son who is made perfect for ever.

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In Jesus we have a far superior chief high priest, a far superior covenant built on better promises.

The principal point of all that we have said is that we have a high priest of exactly this kind. He has taken his seat at the right of the throne of divine Majesty in the heavens, and he is the minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tent which the Lord, and not any man, set up. Every high priest is constituted to offer gifts and sacrifices, and so this one too must have something to offer. In fact, if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are others who make the offerings laid down by the Law, though these maintain the service only of

a model or a reflection of the heavenly realities; just as Moses, when he had the Tent to build, was warned by God who said, “See that you work to the design that was shown you on the mountain.”

As it is, he has been given a ministry as far superior as is the covenant of which he is the mediator, which is founded on better promises. If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no room for a second one to replace it. And in fact God does find fault with them; he says, “Look, the days are coming,” the Lord declares, “when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors, the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt, which covenant of mine they broke, and I too abandoned them,” the Lord declares.

No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel. When those days have come, the Lord declares, “In their minds I shall plant my laws writing them on their hearts. Then I shall be their God, and they shall be my people. There will be no further need for each to teach his neighbor, and each his brother, saying 'Learn to know the Lord!' No, they will all know me, from the least to the greatest, since I shall forgive their guilt and never more call their sins to mind.” By speaking of a new covenant, he implies that the first one is old. And anything old and ageing is ready to disappear.

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Let us recall the first covenant, then accept that through the shedding of his blood, Christ has given us a covenant far superior, a covenant purified by the shedding of blood, not that of animals as with Moses' covenant, but that of Christ, the Son of God.

The first covenant also had its laws governing worship and its sanctuary, a sanctuary on this earth. There was a tent which comprised two compartments. The first, in which the lamp-stand, the table and the loaves of permanent offering were kept, was called the Holy Place; then beyond the second veil, a second compartment which was called the Holy of Holies to which belonged the gold altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant, plated all over with gold. In this were kept the gold jar containing the manna, Aaron's branch that grew the buds, and the tables of the covenant. On top of it were the glorious winged creatures, overshadowing the throne of mercy. This is not the time to go into detail about this.

Under these provisions, priests go regularly into the outer tent to carry out their acts of worship, but the second tent is entered only once a year, and then only by the chief high priest who takes in the blood to make an offering for his own and the people's faults of inadvertence. By this, the Holy Spirit means us to see that as long as the old tent stands, the way into the holy place is not opened up; it is a symbol for this present time. None of the gifts and sacrifices offered under these regulations can possibly bring any worshipper to perfection in his conscience; they are rules about outward life, connected with food and drink and washing at various times, which are in force only until the time comes to set things right.

When Jesus died the veil of the temple was rent in two. The priesthood of the Chief High Priest was done; Jesus would offer his sacrifice of himself in full view of all, then and forever.

But now Christ has come, as the high priest of all the blessings which were to come. He has passed through the greater, the more perfect tent, not made by human hands, that is, not of this created order; and he has entered the sanctuary once and for all, taking with him not the blood of goats and bull calves, but his own blood, having won an eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on those who have incurred defilement, may restore their bodily purity. How much more will the blood of Christ, who offered himself, blameless as he was, to God through the eternal Spirit, purify our conscience from dead actions so that we can worship the living God.

This makes him the mediator of a new covenant, so that, now that a death has occurred to redeem the sins committed under an earlier covenant, those who have been called to an eternal inheritance may receive the promise. Now wherever a will is in question, the death of the testator must be established; a testament comes into effect only after a death, since it has no force while the testator is still alive. That is why even the earlier covenant was inaugurated with blood, and why, after Moses had promulgated all the commandments of the Law to the people, he took the calves' blood, the goats' blood and some water, and with these he sprinkled the book itself and all the people, using scarlet wool and hyssop; saying as he did so, "This is the blood of the covenant that God has made with you." And he sprinkled both the tent and all the liturgical vessels with blood in the same way.

In fact, according to the Law, practically every purification takes place by means of blood; and if there is no shedding of blood, there is no remission. Only the copies of heavenly things are purified in this way; the heavenly things themselves have to be purified by a higher

sort of sacrifice than this. It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was merely a model of the real one; he entered heaven itself, so that he now appears in the presence of God on our behalf. And he does not have to offer himself again and again, as the high priest goes into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. As it is, he has made his appearance once and for all, at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Since human beings die only once, after which comes judgement, so Christ too, having offered himself only once to bear the sin of many, will manifest himself a second time, sin being no more, to those who are waiting for him, to bring them salvation.

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The Law of Moses cannot make us perfect. Only the death of Christ can do that.

So, since the Law contains no more than a reflection of the good things which were still to come, and no true image of them, it is quite incapable of bringing the worshippers to perfection, by means of the same sacrifices repeatedly offered year after year. Otherwise, surely the offering of them would have stopped, because the worshippers, when they had been purified once, would have no awareness of sins. But in fact the sins are recalled year after year in the sacrifices. Bulls' blood and goats' blood are incapable of taking away sins, and that is why he said, on coming into the world: "You wanted no sacrifice or cereal offering, but you gave me a body. You took no pleasure in burnt offering or sacrifice for sin; then I said, 'Here I am, I am coming,' in the scroll of the book it is written of me, to do your will, God."

He says first: "You did not want what the Law lays down as the things to be offered, that is the sacrifices, the cereal offerings, the burnt offerings and the sacrifices for sin, and you took no pleasure in them;" and then he says: "Here I am! I am coming to do your will." He is abolishing the first sort to establish the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ made once and for all. Every priest stands at his duties every day, offering over and over again the same sacrifices which are quite incapable of taking away sins. He, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his seat forever, at the right hand of God, where he is now waiting till his enemies are made his footstool.

By virtue of that one single offering, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified. The Holy Spirit attests this to us, for after saying: “No, this is the covenant I will make with them, when those days have come.” the Lord says, “In their minds I will plant my Laws writing them on their hearts, and I shall never more call their sins to mind, or their offences.” When these have been forgiven, there can be no more sin offerings.

We have then, brothers, complete confidence through the blood of Jesus in entering the sanctuary, by a new way which he has opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, that is to say, his flesh. And we have the high priest over all the sanctuary of God. So as we go in, let us be sincere in heart and filled with faith, our hearts sprinkled and free from any trace of bad conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Keep firm in your faith, be steadfast in believing in Jesus, the Lord.

Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is trustworthy. Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. Do not absent yourself from your own assemblies, as some do, but encourage each other; the more so as you see the Day drawing near. If, after we have been given knowledge of the truth, we should deliberately commit any sins, then there is no longer any sacrifice for them. There is left only the dreadful prospect of judgement and of the fiery wrath that is to devour your enemies.

Anyone who disregards the Law of Moses is ruthlessly put to death on the word of two witnesses or three; and you may be sure that anyone who tramples on the Son of God, and who treats the blood of the covenant which sanctified him as if it were not holy, and who insults the Spirit of grace, will be condemned to a far severer punishment. We are all aware who it was that said: “Vengeance is mine; I will pay them back.” And again: “The Lord will vindicate his people. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Remember the great challenge of the sufferings that you had to meet after you received the light in earlier days; sometimes by being yourselves publicly exposed to humiliations and violence, and sometimes as associates of others who were treated in the same way. For you not only shared in the sufferings of those who were in prison, but you accepted with joy being stripped of your belongings, knowing that you owned something that was better and lasting. Do not lose your fearlessness now, then, since the reward is so great. You will need perseverance if you are to do God's will and gain what he has promised. Only a little while now, a very little while, for come he certainly will before too long. My upright person will live through faith but

if he draws back, my soul will take no pleasure in him. We are not the sort of people who draw back, and are lost by it; we are the sort who keep faith until our souls are saved.

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Faith is all. As it was for Abel, for Enoch, for Abraham, for Isaac, for Jacob, for Joseph, for Moses, for Joshua, even for the prostitute Rahab who hid the two spies in Jericho.

Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of realities that are unseen. It is for their faith that our ancestors are acknowledged. It is by faith that we understand that the ages were created by a word from God, so that from the invisible the visible world came to be. It was because of his faith that Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain, and for that he was acknowledged as upright when God himself made acknowledgement of his offerings. Though he is dead, he still speaks by faith.

It was because of his faith that Enoch was taken up and did not experience death; he was no more, because God took him, because before his assumption he was acknowledged to have pleased God. Now it is impossible to please God without faith, since anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him. It was through his faith that Noah, when he had been warned by God of something that had never been seen before, took care to build an ark to save his family. His faith was a judgement on the world, and he was able to claim the uprightness which comes from faith.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the Promised Land as though it were not his, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. He looked forward to the well-founded city, designed and built by God. It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise was faithful to it.

Because of this, there came from one man, Abraham, and one who already had the mark of death on him, descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore which cannot be counted. All these died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognizing that they were only strangers and nomads on earth. People who use such terms

about themselves make it quite plain that they are in search of a homeland. If they had meant the country they came from, they would have had the opportunity to return to it; but in fact they were longing for a better homeland, their heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, since he has founded the city for them.

It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though he had yet to receive what had been promised, and he had been told: "Isaac is the one through whom your name will be carried on." He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead. It was by faith that this same Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob and Esau for the still distant future.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, bowed in reverence, as he leant on his staff. It was by faith that, when he was about to die, Joseph mentioned the Exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his own remains. It was by faith that Moses, when he was born, was kept hidden by his parents for three months; because they saw that he was a fine child; they were not afraid of the royal edict. It was by faith that, when he was grown up, Moses refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be ill-treated in company with God's people rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin. He considered that the humiliations offered to the Anointed were something more precious than all the treasures of Egypt, because he had his eyes fixed on the reward.

It was by faith that he left Egypt without fear of the king's anger; he held to his purpose like someone who could see the Invisible. It was by faith that he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood to prevent the Destroyer from touching any of their first-born sons. It was by faith they crossed the Red Sea as easily as dry land, while the Egyptians, trying to do the same, were drowned. It was through faith that the walls of Jericho fell down when the people had marched round them for seven days. It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies and so was not killed with the unbelievers.

What more shall I say? There is not time for me to give an account of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, or of David, Samuel and the prophets. These were men who through faith conquered kingdoms, did what was upright and earned the promises. They could keep a lion's mouth shut, put out blazing fires and emerge unscathed from battle. They were weak people who were given strength to be brave in war and drive back foreign invaders.

Some returned to their wives from the dead by resurrection; and others submitted to torture, refusing release so that they would rise again to a better life. Some had to bear being pilloried and flogged, or even chained up in prison. They were stoned, or sawn in half, or killed by the sword; they were homeless, and wore only the skins of sheep and goats; they were in want and hardship, and maltreated. They were too good for the world and they wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and ravines. These all won acknowledgement through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, since God had made provision for us to have something better, and they were not to reach perfection except with us.

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We are in a fight, a fight for our souls, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus; we will suffer but our reward will be great.

With so many witnesses in a great cloud all around us, we too, then, should throw off everything that weighs us down and the sin that clings so closely, and with perseverance keep running in the race which lies ahead of us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which lay ahead of him, he endured the cross, disregarding the shame of it, and has taken his seat at the right of God's throne. Think of the way he persevered against such opposition from sinners and then you will not lose heart and come to grief.

In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of bloodshed. Have you forgotten that encouraging text in which you are addressed as sons? My son, do not scorn correction from the Lord, do not resent his training, for the Lord trains those he loves, and chastises every son he accepts. Perseverance is part of your training; God is treating you as his sons. Has there ever been any son whose father did not train him? If you were not getting this training, as all of you are, then you would be not sons but bastards.

Besides, we have all had our human fathers who punished us, and we respected them for it; all the more readily ought we to submit to the Father of spirits, and so earn life. Our human fathers were training us for a short life and according to their own lights; but he does it all for our own good, so that we may share his own holiness. Of course, any discipline is at the time a matter for grief, not joy; but later, in those who have undergone it, it bears fruit in peace and uprightness.

So steady all weary hands and trembling knees and make your crooked paths straight; then the injured limb will not be maimed, it will get better instead. Seek peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one can ever see the Lord. Be careful that no one is deprived of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness should begin to grow and make trouble; this can poison a large number. And be careful that there is no immoral person, or anyone worldly minded like Esau, who sold his birthright for one single meal. As you know, when he wanted to obtain the blessing afterwards, he was rejected and, though he pleaded for it with tears, he could find no way of reversing the decision.

We shall live in the city of the living God; make sure you never refuse to listen to Him.

What you have come to is nothing known to the senses; not a blazing fire, or gloom or total darkness, or a storm, or trumpet-blast, or the sound of a voice speaking which made everyone that heard it beg that no more should be said to them. They could not bear the order that was given: "If even a beast touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The whole scene was so terrible that Moses said, "I am afraid and trembling." But what you have come to is Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem where the millions of angels have gathered for the festival, with the whole Church of first-born sons, enrolled as citizens of heaven. You have come to God himself, the supreme Judge, and to the spirits of the upright who have been made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to purifying blood which pleads more insistently than Abel's.

Make sure that you never refuse to listen when he speaks. If the people who on earth refused to listen to a warning could not escape their punishment, how shall we possibly escape if we turn away from a voice that warns us from heaven? That time his voice made the earth shake, but now he has given us this promise: "I am going to shake the earth once more and not only the earth but heaven as well." The words once more indicate the removal of what is shaken, since these are created things, so that what is not shaken remains. We have been given possession of an unshakeable kingdom. Let us therefore be grateful and use our gratitude to worship God in the way that pleases him, in reverence and fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

Love is all. There is no permanent city for us here; we are looking for the one which is yet to be.

Continue to love each other like brothers, and remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Keep in mind those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; and those who are being badly treated, since you too are in the body. because the sexually immoral and adulterers will come under God's judgement. Put avarice out of your lives and be content with whatever you have; God himself has said: "I shall not fail you or desert you," and so we can say with confidence: "With the Lord on my side, I fear nothing: what can human beings do to me?"

Remember your leaders, who preached the word of God to you, and as you reflect on the outcome of their lives, take their faith as your model. Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever. Do not be led astray by all sorts of strange doctrines; it is better to rely on grace for inner strength than on food, which has done no good to those who concentrate on it. We have our own altar from which those who serve the Tent have no right to eat. The bodies of the animals whose blood is taken into the sanctuary by the high priest for the rite of expiation are burnt outside the camp, and so Jesus too suffered outside the gate to sanctify the people with his own blood.

Let us go to him, then, outside the camp, and bear his humiliation. There is no permanent city for us here; we are looking for the one which is yet to be. Through him, let us offer God an unending sacrifice of praise, the fruit of the lips of those who acknowledge his name. Keep doing good works and sharing your resources, for these are the kinds of sacrifice that please God. Obey your leaders and give way to them; they watch over your souls because they must give an account of them; make this a joy for them to do, and not a grief; you yourselves would be the losers.

Pray for us. We are sure that our own conscience is clear and we are certainly determined to behave honorably in everything we do. I ask you very particularly to pray that I may come back to you all the sooner. I pray that the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood that sealed an eternal covenant, may prepare you to do his will in every kind of good action; effecting in us all

whatever is acceptable to himself through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I urge you, brothers, to take these words of encouragement kindly; that is why I have written to you briefly. I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free. If he arrives in time, he will be with me when I see you. Greetings to all your leaders and to all God's holy people. God's holy people in Italy send you greetings. Grace be with you all.

Chapter 15: From Prison in Caesarea to Prison in Rome

After two years of my captivity in Caesarea, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus but, being anxious to gain favor with the Jews, Felix had left me in custody.

Three days after his arrival in the province, Festus went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. The chief priests and leaders of the Jews informed him of the case against me, urgently asking him to support them against me, and to have me transferred to Jerusalem. They were preparing an ambush to murder me on the way. But Festus replied that I was in custody in Caesarea, and that he would be going back there shortly himself. He said, "Let your authorities come down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, they can bring a charge against him."

After staying with them for eight or ten days at the most, he went down to Caesarea and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and had me brought in. As soon as I appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded me, making many serious accusations which they were unable to substantiate.

My defense was this, "I have committed no offence whatever against either Jewish law, or the Temple, or Caesar." Festus was anxious to gain favor with the Jews, so he said to me, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried on these charges before me there?" But that was certain death so I replied, "I am standing before the tribunal of Caesar and this is where I should be tried. I have done the Jews no wrong, as you very well know. If I am guilty of committing any capital crime, I do not ask to be spared the death penalty. But if there is no substance in the accusations these persons bring against me, no one has a right to surrender me to them. I appeal to Caesar." Then Festus conferred with his advisers and replied, "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go."

Some days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus. Their visit lasted several days, and Festus put my case before the king, saying, "There is a man here called Paul whom Felix left behind in custody, and while I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and elders of the Jews laid information against him, demanding his condemnation. But I told them that Romans are not in the habit of surrendering any man, until the accused confronts his accusers and is given an opportunity to defend himself against the charge. So they came here with me, and I wasted no time but took my seat on the tribunal the

very next day and had the man brought in. When confronted with him, his accusers did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected; but they had some argument or other with him about their own religion and about a dead man called Jesus whom Paul alleged to be alive.

Not feeling qualified to deal with questions of this sort, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried there on this issue. But this Paul put in an appeal for his case to be reserved for the judgement of the emperor, so I ordered him to be remanded until I could send him to Caesar.” Agrippa said to Festus, “I should like to hear the man myself.” He answered, “Tomorrow you shall hear him.”

So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived in great state and entered the audience chamber attended by the tribunes and the city notables and Festus ordered me to be brought in. Then Festus said, “King Agrippa, and all here present with us, you see before you the man about whom the whole Jewish community has petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, loudly protesting that he ought not to be allowed to remain alive. For my own part I am satisfied that he has committed no capital crime, but when he himself appealed to the emperor I decided to send him. But I have nothing definite that I can write to his Imperial Majesty about him; that is why I have produced him before you all, and before you in particular, King Agrippa, so that after the examination I may have something to write. It seems to me pointless to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him.”

Then Agrippa said to me, “You have leave to speak on your own behalf.” I began my defense: “I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, in that it is before you I am to answer today all the charges made against me by the Jews, the more so because you are an expert in matters of custom and controversy among the Jews. So I beg you to listen to me patiently.

My manner of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem, is common knowledge among the Jews. They have known me for a long time and could testify, if they would, that I followed the strictest party in our religion and lived as a Pharisee. And now it is for my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors that I am on trial, the promise that our twelve tribes, constant in worship night and day, hope to attain. For that hope, Your Majesty, I am actually put on trial by Jews! Why does it seem incredible to you that God should raise the dead?

As for me, I once thought it was my duty to use every means to oppose the name of Jesus the Nazarene. This I did in Jerusalem; I myself threw many of God's holy people into

prison, acting on authority from the chief priests, and when they were being sentenced to death I cast my vote against them. I often went around the synagogues inflicting penalties, trying in this way to force them to renounce their faith; my fury against them was so extreme that I even pursued them into foreign cities.

On such an expedition I was going to Damascus, armed with full powers and a commission from the chief priests, and in the middle of the day as I was on my way, Your Majesty, I saw a light from heaven shining more brilliantly than the sun round me and my fellow-travelers. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you, kicking against the goad." Then I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And the Lord answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason: to appoint you as my servant and as witness of this vision in which you have seen me, and of others in which I shall appear to you. I shall rescue you from the people and from the nations to whom I send you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, and receive, through faith in me, forgiveness of their sins and a share in the inheritance of the sanctified."

After that, King Agrippa, I could not disobey the heavenly vision. On the contrary I started preaching, first to the people of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and all Judaeen territory, and also to the Gentiles, urging them to repent and turn to God, proving their change of heart by their deeds. This was why the Jews laid hands on me in the Temple and tried to do away with me. But I was blessed with God's help, and so I have stood firm to this day, testifying to great and small alike, saying nothing more than what the prophets and Moses himself said would happen, that the Christ was to suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he was to proclaim a light for our people and for the Gentiles.

I had reached this point in my defense when Festus shouted out, "Paul, you are out of your mind; all that learning of yours is driving you mad." I answered, "Festus, your Excellency, I am not mad; I am speaking words of sober truth and good sense. The king understands these matters, and to him I now speak fearlessly. I am confident that nothing of all this comes as a surprise to him; after all, these things were not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe in the prophets? I know you do." At this Agrippa said to me, "A little more, and your arguments

would make a Christian of me.” I replied, “Little or much, I wish before God that not only you but all who are listening to me today would come to be as I am, except for these chains.”

At this the king rose to his feet, with the governor and Bernice and those who sat there with them. When they had retired, they talked together and agreed, “This man is doing nothing that deserves death or imprisonment.” And Agrippa remarked to Festus, “The man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

So off to Italy it was to be. I, some of my disciples and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion called Julius, of the Augustan cohort. We boarded a vessel from Adramyttium bound for ports on the Asiatic coast and put to sea; we had Aristarchus with us, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. Next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius was considerate enough to allow me to go to my friends to be looked after. From there we put to sea again, but as the winds were against us we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, then across the open sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, taking a fortnight to reach Myra in Lycia.

There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship leaving for Italy and put us aboard. For some days we made little headway, and we had difficulty in making Cnidus. The wind would not allow us to touch there, so we sailed under the lee of Crete off Cape Salmone and struggled along the coast until we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. A great deal of time had been lost, and navigation was already hazardous, since it was now well after the time of the Fast, so I gave them this warning, “Friends, I can see this voyage will be dangerous and that we will run considerable risk of losing not only the cargo and the ship but also our lives as well.”

But the centurion took more notice of the captain and the ship's owner than of what I was saying; and since the harbor was unsuitable for wintering, the majority were for putting out from there in the hope of wintering at Phoenix, a harbor in Crete, facing south-west and north-west. A southerly breeze sprang up and, thinking our objective as good as reached, we weighed anchor and began to sail past Crete, close inshore. But it was not long before a hurricane, the 'nor-easter' as they call it, burst on us from across the island. The ship was caught and could not keep head to wind, so we had to give way to the wind and let ourselves be driven.

We ran under the lee of a small island called Cauda and the crew managed with some difficulty to bring the ship's boat under control. Having hauled it up they used it to undergird the ship; then, afraid of running aground on the Syrtis banks, they floated out the sea-anchor

and so let themselves drift. As we were thoroughly storm-bound, the next day they began to jettison the cargo, and the third day they threw the ship's gear overboard with their own hands. For a number of days both the sun and the stars were invisible and the storm raged unabated until at last we gave up all hope of surviving.

Then, when we had been without food for a long time, I stood up among the men. "Friends," he said, "you should have listened to me and not put out from Crete. You would have spared yourselves all this damage and loss. But now I ask you not to give way to despair. There will be no loss of life at all, only of the ship. Last night there appeared beside me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You are destined to appear before Caesar, and God grants you the safety of all who are sailing with you.' So take courage, friends; I trust in God that things will turn out just as I was told; but we are to be stranded on some island."

On the fourteenth night we were being driven one way and another in the Adriatic, when about midnight the crew sensed that land of some sort was near. They took soundings and found twenty fathoms; after a short interval they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. Then, afraid that we might run aground somewhere on a reef, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. When the crew tried to escape from the ship and lowered the ship's boat into the sea as though they meant to lay out anchors from the bows, I said to the centurion and his men, "Unless those men stay on board you cannot hope to be saved." So the soldiers cut the boat's ropes and let it drop away.

Just before daybreak I urged them all to have something to eat. "For fourteen days", I said, "you have been in suspense, going hungry and eating nothing. I urge you to have something to eat; your safety depends on it. Not a hair of any of your heads will be lost." With these words I took some bread, gave thanks to God in view of them all, broke it and began to eat.

They all plucked up courage and took something to eat themselves. In all we were two hundred and seventy-six souls on board that ship. When they had eaten what they wanted they lightened the ship by throwing the corn overboard into the sea. When day came they did not recognize the land, but they could make out a bay with a beach; they planned to run the ship aground on this if they could. They slipped the anchors and let them fall into the sea, and at the same time loosened the lashings of the rudders; then, hoisting the foresail to the wind, they

headed for the beach. But the cross-currents carried them into a shoal and the vessel ran aground. The bows were wedged in and stuck fast, while the stern began to break up with the pounding of the waves.

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners for fear that any should swim off and escape. But the centurion was determined to bring me safely through and would not let them carry out their plan. He gave orders that those who could swim should jump overboard first and so get ashore, and the rest follow either on planks or on pieces of wreckage. In this way it happened that all came safe and sound to land.

Once we had come safely through, we discovered that the island was called Malta. The inhabitants treated us with unusual kindness. They made us all welcome by lighting a huge fire because it had started to rain and the weather was cold. I had collected a bundle of sticks and was putting them on the fire when a viper brought out by the heat attached itself to my hand. When the inhabitants saw the creature hanging from my hand they said to one another, "That man must be a murderer; he may have escaped the sea, but divine justice would not let him live." However, I shook the creature off into the fire and came to no harm, although they were expecting me at any moment to swell up or drop dead on the spot. After they had waited a long time without seeing anything out of the ordinary happen to me, they changed their minds and began to say I was a god.

In that neighborhood there were estates belonging to the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius. He received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. It happened that Publius' father was in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. I went in to see him, and after a prayer I laid my hands on the man and healed him. When this happened, the other sick people on the island also came and were cured; they honored us with many marks of respect, and when we sailed they put on board the provisions we needed. At the end of three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island; she came from Alexandria and her figurehead was the Twins.

We put in at Syracuse and spent three days there; from there we followed the coast up to Rhegium. After one day there, a south wind sprang up and on the second day we made Puteoli, where we found some brothers and had the great encouragement of staying a week with them. And so we came to Rome.

When the brothers there heard about us they came to meet us, as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns. When I saw them I thanked God and took courage. On our arrival in Rome I was allowed to stay in lodgings of my own with the soldier who guarded me. After three days I called together the leading Jews. When they had assembled, I said to them, “Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and would have set me free, since they found me guilty of nothing involving the death penalty; but the Jews lodged an objection, and I was forced to appeal to Caesar, though not because I had any accusation to make against my own nation. That is why I have urged you to see me and have a discussion with me, for it is on account of the hope of Israel that I wear this chain.”

They answered, “We have received no letters from Judaea about you, nor has any of the brothers arrived here with any report or story of anything to your discredit. We think it would be as well to hear your own account of your position; all we know about this sect is that it encounters opposition everywhere.” So they arranged a day with me and a large number of them visited me at my lodgings. I put my case to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them about Jesus, arguing from the Law of Moses and the prophets from early morning until evening; and some were convinced by what I said, while the rest were skeptical.

So they disagreed among themselves and, as they went away, I had one last thing to say to them, “How aptly the Holy Spirit spoke when he told your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah: “Go and say to this people: Listen and listen but never understand! Look and look but never perceive! This people's heart is torpid, their ears dulled, they have shut their eyes tight, to avoid using their eyes to see, their ears to hear, using their heart to understand, changing their ways and being healed by me.” You must realize, then, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen to it.”

I spent the whole of the two years in my own rented lodging. I welcomed all who came to visit me, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ with complete fearlessness and without any hindrance from anyone. I commenced writing letters to the churches in Asia, but first a brief note to a dear friend, Philemon.

Chapter 16: My Letter to Philemon

I want the slave Onesimus who has become like a son to me to be freed as a son of God.

From Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and from our brother Timothy; to our dear fellow worker Philemon, our sister Apphia, our fellow soldier Archippus and the church that meets in your house in Colossia. Grace and the peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God, mentioning you in my prayers, because I hear of the love and the faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and for all God's holy people. I pray that your fellowship in faith may come to expression in full knowledge of all the good we can do for Christ.

I have received much joy and encouragement by your love; you have set the hearts of God's holy people at rest. Therefore, although in Christ I have no hesitations about telling you what your duty is, I am rather appealing to your love, being what I am, Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for a child of mine, whose father I became while wearing these chains; I mean Onesimus. He was of no use to you before, but now he is useful both to you and to me. I am sending him back to you, that is to say, sending you my own heart.

I should have liked to keep him with me; he could have been a substitute for you, to help me while I am in the chains that the gospel has brought me. However, I did not want to do anything without your consent; it would have been forcing your act of kindness, which should be spontaneous. I suppose you have been deprived of Onesimus for a time, merely so that you could have him back for ever, no longer as a slave, but something much better than a slave, a dear brother; especially dear to me, but how much more to you, both on the natural plane and in the Lord. So if you grant me any fellowship with yourself, welcome him as you would me; if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, put it down to my account.

I am writing this in my own hand: I, Paul, shall pay it back; I make no mention of a further debt, that you owe your very self to me! Well then, brother, I am counting on you, in the Lord; set my heart at rest, in Christ. I am writing with complete confidence in your compliance, sure that you will do even more than I ask. There is another thing, will you get a place ready for me to stay in? I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

Epaphras, a prisoner with me in Christ Jesus, sends his greetings; so do my fellow-workers Mark (now reconciled with me), Aristarchus, Demas and Luke. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Chapter 17: My Letter to the Ephesians

My wish is for one family in Christ. I will preach this simple message to the church at Ephesus. I am writing from my prison in Rome to the church I nurtured for three years while staying in the home of Aquila and Priscilla.

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I thank God that through their union in Jesus Christ the believers are blessed with every spiritual blessing.

Paul, by the will of God an apostle of Christ Jesus, to God's holy people, faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made to be holy and faultless before him in love, marking us out for himself beforehand, to be adopted sons, through Jesus Christ. Such was his purpose and good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved, in whom, through his blood, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins.

I reveal God's secret plan that all things in heaven and earth would be joined together with Christ as the head.

Such is the richness of the grace which he has showered on us in all wisdom and insight. He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, according to his good pleasure which he determined beforehand in Christ, for him to act upon when the times had run their course; that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth. And it is in him that we have received our heritage, marked out beforehand as we were, under the plan of the One who guides all things as he decides by his own will, chosen to be, for the praise of his glory, the people who would put their hopes in Christ before he came.

Now you too, in him, have heard the message of the truth and the gospel of your salvation, and having put your trust in it you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance, for the freedom of the people whom God has taken for his own, for the praise of his glory. That is why I, having once heard

about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love for all God's holy people, have never failed to thank God for you and to remember you in my prayers.

My prayer for you is this.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people, and how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us believers; this accords with the strength of his power at work in Christ, the power which he exercised in raising him from the dead and enthroning him at his right hand, in heaven, far above every principality, ruling force, power or sovereignty, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as he is above all things, the head of the Church; which is his Body, the fullness of him who is filled, all in all.

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In the past your lives were ruled by the evil ones; but you have been saved by grace through believing, a free gift from God. We are God's work of art.

And you were dead, through the crimes and the sins which used to make up your way of life when you were living by the principles of this world, obeying the ruler who dominates the air, the spirit who is at work in those who rebel. We too were all among them once, living only by our natural inclinations, obeying the demands of human self-indulgence and our own whim; our nature made us no less liable to God's retribution than the rest of the world. But God, being rich in faithful love, through the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, brought us to life with Christ; it is through grace that you have been saved; and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how extraordinarily rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life.

Let me tell about the change in the spiritual position of you Gentiles as a result of the work of Christ. As Gentiles you were strangers to God's promises but now, in union with Christ, you are part of God's covenant people.

Do not forget, then, that there was a time when you who were Gentiles by physical descent, termed the uncircumcised by those who speak of themselves as the circumcised by reason of a physical operation; do not forget, I say, that you were at that time separate from Christ and excluded from membership of Israel, aliens with no part in the covenants of the Promise, limited to this world, without hope and without God. But now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far off have been brought close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and he has made the two, Jews and Gentile, into one entity and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, by destroying in his own person the hostility, that is, the Law of commandments with its decrees.

I love this simile: Christ is the unifier, the corner stone.

His purpose in this was, by restoring peace, to create a single New Man out of the two of them, and through the cross, to reconcile them both to God in one Body; in his own person he killed the hostility. He came to bring the good news of peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. Through him, then, we both in the one Spirit have free access to the Father. So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit.

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I give them an account of how I was selected and qualified to be an apostle to the Gentiles, in the hope that this will keep them from being dispirited.

It is because of this that I, Paul, am a prisoner of the Lord Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles. You have surely heard the way in which God entrusted me with the grace he gave me for your sake; he made known to me by a revelation the mystery I have just described briefly; a reading of it will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. This mystery, as it is now revealed in the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets, was unknown to

humanity in previous generations: that the Gentiles now have the same inheritance and form the same Body and enjoy the same promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

I have been made the servant of that gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by the workings of his power; I, who am less than the least of all God's holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the Gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything.

The purpose of this was, that now, through the Church, the principalities and ruling forces should learn how many-sided God's wisdom is, according to the plan which he had formed from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him we are bold enough to approach God in complete confidence, through our faith in him; so, I beg you, do not let the hardships I go through on your account make you waver; they are your glory.

My prayer for them is that Christ will dwell in their hearts by faith.

This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name. In the abundance of his glory may he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, with all God's holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; so that, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with the utter fullness of God. Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

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I pray for unity in the midst of the diversity of gifts given to the believers.

I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you therefore to lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called. With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, over all, through

all and within all. On each one of us God's favor has been bestowed in whatever way Christ allotted it.

That is why it says, 'He went up to the heights, took captives, he gave gifts to humanity.' When it says, 'he went up', it must mean that he had gone down to the deepest levels of the earth. The one who went down is none other than the one who went up above all the heavens to fill all things. And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; to knit God's holy people together for the work for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ, until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.

Then we shall no longer be children, or tossed one way and another, and carried hither and thither by every new gust of teaching, at the mercy of all the tricks people play and their unscrupulousness in deliberate deception. If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole Body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up in love.

So this I say to you and attest to you in the Lord. Do not go on living the empty-headed life that the Gentiles live. Intellectually they are in the dark, and they are estranged from the life of God, because of the ignorance which is the consequence of closed minds. Their sense of right and wrong once dulled, they have abandoned all self-control and pursue to excess every kind of uncleanness.

I send them my instructions about ordinary life and different relationships.

Now that is hardly the way you have learnt Christ, unless you failed to hear him properly when you were taught what the truth is in Jesus. You were to put aside your old self, which belongs to your old way of life and is corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind was to be renewed in spirit so that you could put on the New Man that has been created on God's principles, in the uprightness and holiness of the truth. So from now on, there must be no more lies. Speak the truth to one another, since we are all parts of one another. Even if you are angry, do not sin; never let the sun set on your anger or else you will give the devil a foothold.

Anyone who was a thief must stop stealing; instead he should exert himself at some honest job with his own hands so that he may have something to share with those in need. No

foul word should ever cross your lips; let your words be for the improvement of others, as occasion offers, and do good to your listeners; do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal, ready for the day when we shall be set free. Any bitterness or bad temper or anger or shouting or abuse must be far removed from you, as must every kind of malice. Be generous to one another, sympathetic, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.

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I warn them against the deeds of darkness: sexual immorality, drunkenness. Rather we need happy marriages and happy families.

As God's dear children, then, take him as your pattern, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up for us as an offering and a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God. Among you there must be not even a mention of sexual vice or impurity in any of its forms, or greed; this would scarcely become the holy people of God! There must be no foul or salacious talk or coarse jokes; all this is wrong for you; there should rather be thanksgiving. For you can be quite certain that nobody who indulges in sexual immorality or impurity or greed - which is worshipping a false god - can inherit the kingdom of God.

Do not let anyone deceive you with empty arguments; it is such behavior that draws down God's retribution on those who rebel against him. Make sure that you do not throw in your lot with them. You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; behave as children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and uprightness and truth. Try to discover what the Lord wants of you, take no part in the futile works of darkness but, on the contrary, show them up for what they are. The things which are done in secret are shameful even to speak of; but anything shown up by the light will be illuminated and anything illuminated is itself a light.

That is why it is said, 'Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' So be very careful about the sort of lives you lead, like intelligent and not like senseless people. Make the best of the present time, for it is a wicked age. This is why you must not be thoughtless but must recognize what is the will of the Lord. Do not get drunk with wine; this is simply dissipation; be filled with the Spirit. Sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs among yourselves, singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts, always and everywhere giving

thanks to God who is our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives should be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, since, as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; and as the Church is subject to Christ, so should wives be to their husbands, in everything.

Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy by washing her in cleansing water with a form of words, so that when he took the Church to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because we are parts of his Body. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh. This mystery has great significance, but I am applying it to Christ and the Church. To sum up, you also, each one of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband.

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I dream of a community of happy families

Children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord, that is what uprightness demands. The first commandment that has a promise attached to it is: 'Honor your father and your mother,' and the promise is, 'so that you may have long life and prosper in the land.' And parents, never drive your children to resentment but bring them up with correction and advice inspired by the Lord.

Slaves, be obedient to those who are, according to human reckoning, your masters, with deep respect and sincere loyalty, as you are obedient to Christ; not only when you are under their eye, as if you had only to please human beings, but as slaves of Christ who wholeheartedly do the will of God. Work willingly for the sake of the Lord and not for the sake of human beings. Never forget that everyone, whether a slave or a free man, will be rewarded by the Lord for whatever work he has done well. And those of you who are employers, treat your slaves in the same spirit; do so without threats, and never forget that they and you have the same Master in heaven and there is no favoritism with him.

We are in a spiritual war; we need to put on the armor of Christ to fight the evil one.

Finally, grow strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. Put on the full armor of God so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics. For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the heavens. That is why you must take up all God's armor, or you will not be able to put up any resistance on the evil day, or stand your ground even though you exert yourselves to the full. So stand your ground, with truth a belt round your waist, and uprightness a breastplate, wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace and always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to quench the burning arrows of the Evil One. And then you must take salvation as your helmet and the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God.

Pray for me to be fearless and trust in my messenger, Tychicus.

In all your prayer and entreaty keep praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all God's holy people, and pray for me to be given an opportunity to open my mouth and fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel of which I am an ambassador in chains; pray that in proclaiming it I may speak as fearlessly as I ought to.

So that you know, as well, what is happening to me and what I am doing, my dear friend Tychicus, my trustworthy helper in the Lord, will tell you everything. I am sending him to you precisely for this purpose, to give you news about us and encourage you thoroughly. May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grant peace, love and faith to all the brothers. May grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, in life imperishable.

Chapter 17: My Letter to the Colossians

I am dismayed about the news from Colossae. There are false teachings circulating among the members of that church. I must condemn these false teachings. I insist that angel worship, secret knowledge and asceticism have no place in Christian belief and I will repeat that Gentile believers do not need to adopt the Jewish religious Law or be circumcised.

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I love these people and greet them warmly; I am so proud of their faith in Christ Jesus.

From Paul, by the will of God an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy to God's holy people in Colossae, our faithful brothers in Christ. Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We give thanks for you to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, continually in our prayers, ever since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you show towards all God's holy people because of the hope which is stored up for you in heaven. News of this hope reached you not long ago through the word of truth, the gospel that came to you in the same way as it is bearing fruit and growing throughout the world. It has had the same effect among you, ever since you heard about the grace of God and recognized it for what it truly is.

This you learnt from Epaphras, our very dear fellow-worker and a trustworthy deputy for us as Christ's servant, and it was he who also told us all about your love in the Spirit. That is why, ever since the day he told us, we have never failed to remember you in our prayers and ask that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will and so be able to lead a life worthy of the Lord, a life acceptable to him in all its aspects, bearing fruit in every kind of good work and growing in knowledge of God, fortified, in accordance with his glorious strength, with all power always to persevere and endure, giving thanks with joy to the Father who has made you able to share the lot of God's holy people and with them to inherit the light.

I describe God's plan to bring mankind back to himself.

Because that is what he has done. It is he who has rescued us from the ruling force of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him we enjoy our freedom, the forgiveness of sin. He is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, everything visible and

everything invisible, thrones, ruling forces, sovereignties, powers; all things were created through him and for him. He exists before all things and in him all things hold together, and he is the Head of the Body, that is, the Church. He is the Beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that he should be supreme in every way; because God wanted all fullness to be found in him and through him to reconcile all things to him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, by making peace through his death on the cross.

You were once estranged and of hostile intent through your evil behavior; now he has reconciled you, by his death and in that mortal body, to bring you before himself holy, faultless and irreproachable, as long as you persevere and stand firm on the solid base of the faith, never letting yourselves drift away from the hope promised by the gospel, which you have heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become the servant.

I am happy to be suffering in order to proclaim God's message that Christ lives in all believers.

It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church, of which I was made a servant with the responsibility towards you that God gave to me, that of completing God's message, the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his holy people. It was God's purpose to reveal to them how rich is the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ among you, your hope of glory; this is the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing and instructing everyone in all wisdom, to make everyone perfect in Christ. And it is for this reason that I labor, striving with his energy which works in me mightily.

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I want you to know how hard I have worked for you.

I want you to know, then, what a struggle I am having on your behalf and on behalf of those in Laodicea, and on behalf of so many others who have never seen me face to face. It is all to bind them together in love and to encourage their resolution until they are rich in the assurance of their complete understanding and have knowledge of the mystery of God in which all the jewels of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. I say this to make sure that no one deceives

you with specious arguments. I may be absent in body, but in spirit I am there among you, delighted to find how well-ordered you are and to see how firm your faith in Christ is.

I warn them to be on the guard against false teachings.

So then, as you received Jesus as Lord and Christ, now live your lives in him, be rooted in him and built up on him, held firm by the faith you have been taught, and overflowing with thanksgiving. Make sure that no one captivates you with the empty lure of a 'philosophy' of the kind that human beings hand on, based on the principles of this world and not on Christ. In him, in bodily form, lives divinity in all its fullness, and in him you too find your own fulfilment, in the one who is the head of every sovereignty and ruling force.

Th truth I proclaim is that you have been saved not by circumcision done by hands but by Christ's circumcision that is his death.

In him you have been circumcised, with a circumcision performed, not by human hand, but by the complete stripping of your natural self. This is circumcision according to Christ. You have been buried with him by your baptism; by which, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead. You were dead, because you were sinners and uncircumcised in body; he has brought you to life with him, he has forgiven us every one of our sins. He has wiped out the record of our debt to the Law, which stood against us; he has destroyed it by nailing it to the cross; and he has stripped the sovereignties and the ruling forces, and paraded them in public, behind him in his triumphal procession.

Then never let anyone criticize you for what you eat or drink, or about observance of annual festivals, New Moons or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what was coming; the reality is the body of Christ. Do not be cheated of your prize by anyone who chooses to grovel to angels and worship them, pinning every hope on visions received, vainly puffed up by a human way of thinking; such a person has no connection to the Head, by which the whole body, given all that it needs and held together by its joints and sinews, grows with the growth given by God.

If you have really died with Christ to the principles of this world, why do you still let rules dictate to you, as though you were still living in the world? 'Do not pick up this, do not eat that, do not touch the other,' and all about things which perish even while they are being used according to merely human commandments and doctrines! In these rules you can indeed

find what seems to be good sense, the cultivation of the will, and a humility which takes no account of the body; but in fact they have no value against self-indulgence.

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I want them to listen to my rules for holy living; indecency and greed are replaced by compassion and humility. There is only Christ; he is everything.

Since you have been raised up to be with Christ, you must look for the things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on things above, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed, and he is your life, you, too, will be revealed with him in glory. That is why you must kill everything in you that is earthly: sexual vice, impurity, uncontrolled passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god; it is precisely these things which draw God's retribution upon those who resist.

And these things made up your way of life when you were living among such people, but now you also must give up all these things: human anger, hot temper, malice, abusive language and dirty talk; and do not lie to each other. You have stripped of your old behavior with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised and uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free.

There is only Christ; he is everything and he is in everything. As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body.

Always be thankful. Let the Word of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and whatever you say or do, let it be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thanksgiving to God the Father through him.

I remind them of my rules for Christian households.

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be sharp with them. Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents, do not irritate your children or they will lose heart. Slaves, be obedient in every way to the people who, according to human reckoning, are your masters; not only when you are under their eye, as if you had only to please human beings, but wholeheartedly, out of respect for the Master.

Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as done for the Lord and not for human beings, knowing that the Lord will repay you by making you his heirs. It is Christ the Lord that you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid in kind. For there is no favoritism.

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Masters, make sure that your slaves are given what is upright and fair, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven. Be persevering in your prayers and be thankful as you stay awake to pray. Pray for us especially, asking God to throw open a door for us to announce the message and proclaim the mystery of Christ, for the sake of which I am in chains; pray that I may proclaim it as clearly as I ought. Act wisely with outsiders, making the best of the present time. Always talk pleasantly and with a flavor of wit but be sensitive to the kind of answer each one requires.

The other disciples with me send their greetings as do I.

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a very dear brother, and a trustworthy helper and companion in the service of the Lord. I am sending him to you precisely for this purpose, to give you news about us and to encourage you thoroughly. With him I am sending Onesimus, (once Philemon's slave) that dear and trustworthy brother who is a fellow-citizen of yours. They will tell you everything that is happening here. Aristarchus, who is here in prison with me, sends his greetings, and so does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. You were sent some instructions about him; if he comes to you, give him a warm welcome; and Jesus Justus adds his greetings. Of all those who have come over from the circumcision, these are the only ones actually working with me for the kingdom of God. They have been a great comfort to me.

Epaphras, your fellow-citizen, sends his greetings; this servant of Christ Jesus never stops battling for you, praying that you will never lapse but always hold perfectly and securely

to the will of God. I can testify for him that he works hard for you, as well as for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Greetings from my dear friend Luke, the doctor, and also from Demas. Please give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church which meets in her house. After this letter has been read among you, send it on to be read in the church of the Laodiceans; and get the letter from Laodicea for you to read yourselves. Give Archippus this message: Remember the service that the Lord assigned to you, and try to carry it out. This greeting is in my own hand - PAUL. Remember the chains I wear. Grace be with you.

Chapter 18: My Letter to the Philippians

I must thank the believers in Philippi for their financial support while I am in prison. I will urge them to be humble like Jesus rather than selfish and proud and I will remind them that their life in union with Christ is the result of faith rather than by following the Jewish Law. I will let them know that Timothy is with me now.

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I will tell them they have a special place in my heart for what we shared together.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with their presiding elders and the deacons. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God whenever I think of you, and every time I pray for you all, I always pray with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the very first day up to the present. I am quite confident that the One who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the Day of Jesus Christ comes.

It is only right that I should feel like this towards you all, because you have a place in my heart, since you have all shared together in the grace that has been mine, both my chains and my work defending and establishing the gospel. For God will testify for me how much I long for you all with the warm longing of Christ Jesus; it is my prayer that your love for one another may grow more and more with the knowledge and complete understanding that will help you to come to true discernment, so that you will be innocent and free of any trace of guilt when the Day of Christ comes, entirely filled with the fruits of uprightness through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

I let them know that I have been able to witness freely while imprisoned in Rome and the members of the Praetorium, who stand guard over me, are well aware I am on trial because of my faith in Jesus Christ whom I insist is the Messiah.

Now I want you to realize, brothers, that the circumstances of my present life are helping rather than hindering the advance of the gospel. My chains in Christ have become well known not only to all the Praetorium, but to everybody else, and so most of the brothers in the Lord have gained confidence from my chains and are getting more and more daring in announcing the Message without any fear.

It is true that some of them are preaching Christ out of malice and rivalry; but there are many as well whose intentions are good; some are doing it out of love, knowing that I remain firm in my defense of the gospel. There are others who are proclaiming Christ out of jealousy, not in sincerity but meaning to add to the weight of my chains. But what does it matter? Only that in both ways, whether with false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and for that I am happy; and I shall go on being happy, too, because I know that this is what will save me, with your prayers and with the support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; all in accordance with my most confident hope and trust that I shall never have to admit defeat, but with complete fearlessness I shall go on, so that now, as always, Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or my death.

I am well aware I could be put to death any day. I am on the horns of a dilemma, I want to be with Christ in heaven but I also want to be with you on earth in order to strengthen your faith.

Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would be a positive gain. On the other hand again, if to be alive in the body gives me an opportunity for fruitful work, I do not know which I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma; I want to be gone and to be with Christ, and this is by far the stronger desire, yet for your sake to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need. This much I know for certain, that I shall stay and stand by you all, to encourage your advance and your joy in the faith, so that my return to be among you may increase to overflowing your pride in Jesus Christ on my account.

But you must always behave in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come to you and see for myself or whether I only hear all about you from a distance, I shall find that you are standing firm and united in spirit, battling, as a team with a single aim, for the faith of the gospel; undismayed by any of your opponents. This will be a clear sign, for them that they are to be lost, and for you that you are to be saved. This comes from God, for you have been granted the privilege for Christ's sake not only of believing in him but of suffering for him as well; you are fighting the same battle which you saw me fighting for him and which you hear I am fighting still.

Again I preach unity in Christ: Seek the mind of Christ. Be faultless before him. And for this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names; so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth or sympathy, I appeal to you, make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others.

Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. And for this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names; so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So, my dear friends, you have always been obedient; your obedience must not be limited to times when I am present. Now that I am absent it must be more in evidence, so work out your salvation in fear and trembling. It is God who, for his own generous purpose, gives you the intention and the powers to act. Let your behavior be free of murmuring and complaining so that you remain faultless and pure, unspoiled children of God surrounded by a deceitful and underhand brood, shining out among them like bright stars in the world, proffering to it the Word of life.

Then I shall have reason to be proud on the Day of Christ, for it will not be for nothing that I have run the race and toiled so hard. Indeed, even if my blood has to be poured as a libation over your sacrifice and the offering of your faith, then I shall be glad and join in your rejoicing; and in the same way, you must be glad and join in my rejoicing.

I cannot be with you but I will send others in my name and the name of Jesus.

I hope, in the Lord Jesus, to send Timothy to you soon, so that my mind may be set at rest when I hear how you are. There is nobody else that I can send who is like him and cares as sincerely for your well-being; they all want to work for themselves, not for Jesus Christ. But you know what sort of person he has proved himself, working with me for the sake of the gospel like a son with his father. That is the man, then, that I am hoping to send to you immediately I can make out what is going to happen to me; but I am confident in the Lord that I shall come myself, too, before long.

Nevertheless, I thought it essential to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and companion-in-arms since he came as your representative to look after my needs; because he was missing you all and was worrying because you had heard that he was ill. Indeed he was seriously ill and nearly died; but God took pity on him, and not only on him but also on me, to spare me one grief on top of another. So I am sending him back as promptly as I can so that you will have the joy of seeing him again, and that will be some comfort to me in my distress. Welcome him in the Lord, then, with all joy; hold people like him in honor, because it was for Christ's work that he came so near to dying, risking his life to do the duty to me which you could not do yourselves.

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Beware of those who insist on circumcision. I was once a fierce Pharisee but I miss nothing of all that, I have Christ Jesus, maybe not totally yet but I believe it will happen. I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. Copy me.

Finally, brothers, I wish you joy in the Lord. To write to you what I have already written before is no trouble to me and to you will be a protection. Beware of dogs! Beware of evil workmen! Beware of self-mutilators! We are the true people of the circumcision since we worship by the Spirit of God and make Christ Jesus our only boast, not relying on physical qualifications, although I myself could rely on these too. If anyone does claim to rely on them, my claim is better. Circumcised on the eighth day of my life, I was born of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents. In the matter of the Law, I was a Pharisee; as for religious fervor, I was a persecutor of the Church; as for the uprightness

embodied in the Law, I was faultless. But what were once my assets I now through Christ Jesus count as losses.

Yes, I will go further. Because of the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, I count everything else as loss. For him I have accepted the loss of all other things, and look on them all as filth if only I can gain Christ and be given a place in him, with the uprightness I have gained not from the Law, but through faith in Christ, an uprightness from God, based on faith, that I may come to know him and the power of his resurrection, and partake of his sufferings by being molded to the pattern of his death, striving towards the goal of resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have secured it already, nor yet reached my goal, but I am still pursuing it in the attempt to take hold of the prize for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not reckon myself as having taken hold of it; I can only say that, forgetting all that lies behind me, and straining forward to what lies in front, I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. So this is the way in which all of us who are mature should be thinking, and if you are still thinking differently in any way, then God has yet to make this matter clear to you. Meanwhile, let us go forward from the point we have each attained.

Brothers, be united in imitating me. Keep your eyes fixed on those who act according to the example you have from me. For there are so many people of whom I have often warned you, and now I warn you again with tears in my eyes, who behave like the enemies of Christ's cross. They are destined to be lost; their god is the stomach; they glory in what they should think shameful, since their minds are set on earthly things. But our homeland is in heaven and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the wretched body of ours into the mold of his glorious body, through the working of the power which he has, even to bring all things under his mastery.

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Farewell, I urge them to resolve conflicts with one another and be joyful. Again I must thank them for their support.

So then, my brothers and dear friends whom I miss so much, my joy and my crown, hold firm in the Lord, dear friends. I urge Euodia, and I urge Syntyche to come to agreement with each other in the Lord; and I ask you, Syzygus, really to be a 'partner' and help them. These

women have struggled hard for the gospel with me, along with Clement and all my other fellow-workers, whose names are written in the book of life.

Always be joyful, then, in the Lord; I repeat, be joyful. Let your good sense be obvious to everybody. The Lord is near. Never worry about anything, but tell God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with gratitude, and the peace of God which is beyond our understanding will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, let your minds be filled with everything that is true, everything that is honorable, everything that is upright and pure, everything that we love and admire, with whatever is good and praiseworthy. Keep doing everything you learnt from me and were told by me and have heard or seen me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

As for me, I am full of joy in the Lord, now that at last your consideration for me has blossomed again; though I recognize that you really did have consideration before, but had no opportunity to show it. I do not say this because I have lacked anything; I have learnt to manage with whatever I have. I know how to live modestly, and I know how to live luxuriously too: in every way now I have mastered the secret of all conditions: full stomach and empty stomach, plenty and poverty. There is nothing I cannot do in the One who strengthens me.

All the same, it was good of you to share with me in my hardships. In the early days of the gospel, as you of Philippi well know, when I left Macedonia, no church other than yourselves made common account with me in the matter of expenditure and receipts. You were the only ones; and what is more, you have twice sent me what I needed in Thessalonica. It is not the gift that I value most; what I value is the interest that is mounting up in your account. I have all that I need and more; I am fully provided, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the offering that you sent, a pleasing smell, the sacrifice which is acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will fulfil all your needs out of the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. And so glory be to God our Father, for ever and ever. Amen.

My greetings to every one of God's holy people in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. All God's holy people send you their greetings, especially those of Caesar's household. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Chapter 19: Release, Return to Asia, Westward to Spain

My release from house imprisonment in Rome was something of an anticlimax. I had built up a strong, friendly and respectful relationship with the members of the Praetorium Guard assigned as my jailers. They witnessed the comings and goings of hundreds of both Jews and Gentiles over the course of the years I spent in Rome. They talked with these people and admired their integrity and faith. They passed this on to their superiors; guarding me was eventually seen to be a waste of resources; I was not a threat to any individual and certainly not to the Roman empire. This message gradually made its way to the royal palace and to the Emperor's advisers. One day the guards said their goodbyes to me, I was free to go, no charges had been laid against me, no pardon was required, no scroll of freedom, just go! I was too old to argue, I left.

I went with Timothy back to Macedonia. Everywhere we went the believers were astounded I was still alive. I kept my journey from being a triumphal procession but I must admit I was deeply moved by the love I was surrounded by. We spent a few months in Philippi and the surrounding towns, then we moved on to Asia and Phrygia and finally Colossae. My letters had been well received and were read on a regular basis to the assemblies. A large number of disciples joined my party once they knew we were bent on spreading the gospel to other lands.

We sailed across the sea to Crete where I had nearly been shipwrecked in my journey to Rome and house arrest. We spent several months there founding the first Christian churches on that island. I selected several preachers and left them in charge. Most of the disciples continued to stay with me, consumed by missionary zeal.

I had always wanted to travel further west so off we sailed, around the boot of Italy and onwards to Spain, further on to Dalmatia. Everywhere we went we left one or two disciples to nurture a new community of believers. With just three of the disciples remaining, Timothy and I decided to travel even further west to Britannia. We did not stay too long there, Queen Boadicea was at war against the invading Romans and the country was in turmoil. But we did leave one new church.

I was not feeling well, I am an old man now; I wanted to visit Asia once more before I was far too old to travel. I left Timothy in charge of the blossoming community in Ephesus,

travelled on to Macedonia and Philippi then to Athens and Corinth in Greece. I wrote to Timothy from Greece.

Chapter 20: My First letter to Timothy

I left Timothy in charge of the Ephesus Church despite his youth but I was concerned for his well being.

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I want to warn Timothy about false teachings. He is still young, I will give him advice on Christian worship and church administration.

From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus appointed by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy, true child of mine in the faith. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord.

When I was setting out for Macedonia I urged you to stay on in Ephesus to instruct certain people not to spread wrong teaching or to give attention to myths and unending genealogies; these things only foster doubts instead of furthering God's plan which is founded on faith. The final goal at which this instruction aims is love, issuing from a pure heart, a clear conscience and a sincere faith.

The Law of Moses is for sinners, not the upright who live by faith.

Some people have missed the way to these things and turned to empty speculation, trying to be teachers of the Law; but they understand neither the words they use nor the matters about which they make such strong assertions. We are well aware that the Law is good, but only provided it is used legitimately, on the understanding that laws are not framed for people who are upright. On the contrary, they are for criminals and the insubordinate, for the irreligious and the wicked, for the sacrilegious and the godless; they are for people who kill their fathers or mothers and for murderers, for the promiscuous, homosexuals, kidnappers, for liars and for perjurers, and for everything else that is contrary to the sound teaching that accords with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, the gospel that was entrusted to me.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength. By calling me into his service he has judged me trustworthy, even though I used to be a blasphemer and a persecutor and contemptuous. Mercy, however, was shown me, because while I lacked faith I acted in ignorance; but the grace of our Lord filled me with faith and with the love that is in Christ

Jesus. Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I myself am the greatest of them; and if mercy has been shown to me, it is because Jesus Christ meant to make me the leading example of his inexhaustible patience for all the other people who were later to trust in him for eternal life. To the eternal King, the undying, invisible and only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Timothy, my son, these are the instructions that I am giving you, in accordance with the words once spoken over you by the prophets, so that in their light you may fight like a good soldier with faith and a good conscience for your weapons. Some people have put conscience aside and wrecked their faith in consequence. I mean men like Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan so that they may learn not to be blasphemous.

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I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving should be offered for everyone, for kings and others in authority, so that we may be able to live peaceful and quiet lives with all devotion and propriety. To do this is right, and acceptable to God our Savior; he wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth. For there is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and humanity, himself a human being, Christ Jesus, who offered himself as a ransom for all. This was the witness given at the appointed time, of which I was appointed herald and apostle and - I am telling the truth and no lie - a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Timothy, this is how believers should conduct themselves.

In every place, then, I want the men to lift their hands up reverently in prayer, with no anger or argument. Similarly, women are to wear suitable clothes and to be dressed quietly and modestly, without braided hair or gold and jewelry or expensive clothes; their adornment is to do the good works that are proper for women who claim to be religious. During instruction, a woman should be quiet and respectful. I give no permission for a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. A woman ought to be quiet, because Adam was formed first and Eve afterwards, and it was not Adam who was led astray but the woman who was led astray and fell into sin. Nevertheless, she will be saved by child-bearing, provided she lives a sensible life and is constant in faith and love and holiness.

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I shall give him instructions on who to select for leadership roles in the churches.

Here is a saying that you can rely on: to want to be a presiding elder is to desire a noble task. That is why the presiding elder must have an impeccable character. Husband of one wife, he must be temperate, discreet and courteous, hospitable and a good teacher; not a heavy drinker, nor hot-tempered, but gentle and peaceable, not avaricious, a man who manages his own household well and brings his children up to obey him and be well-behaved: how can any man who does not understand how to manage his own household take care of the Church of God? He should not be a new convert, in case pride should turn his head and he incur the same condemnation as the devil. It is also necessary that he be held in good repute by outsiders, so that he never falls into disrepute and into the devil's trap.

Similarly, deacons must be respectable, not double-tongued, moderate in the amount of wine they drink and with no squalid greed for money. They must hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. They are first to be examined, and admitted to serve as deacons only if there is nothing against them. Similarly, women must be respectable, not gossips, but sober and wholly reliable. Deacons must be husbands of one wife and must be people who manage their children and households well. Those of them who carry out their duties well as deacons will earn a high standing for themselves and an authoritative voice in matters concerning faith in Christ Jesus.

I write this to you in the hope that I may be able to come to you soon; but in case I should be delayed, I want you to know how people ought to behave in God's household, that is, in the Church of the living God, pillar and support of the truth. Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is very deep indeed: He was made visible in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed to the Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.

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I summarize: Everything God created is good.

The Spirit has explicitly said that during the last times some will desert the faith and pay attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines that come from devils, seduced by the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are branded as though with a red-hot iron; they forbid

marriage and prohibit foods which God created to be accepted with thanksgiving by all who believe and who know the truth. Everything God has created is good, and no food is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; the word of God and prayer make it holy.

I give some personal advice to the young Timothy.

If you put all this to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus and show that you have really digested the teaching of the faith and the good doctrine which you have always followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales. Train yourself for religion. Physical exercise is useful enough, but the usefulness of religion is unlimited, since it holds out promise both for life here and now and for the life to come; that is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt it. I mean that the point of all our toiling and battling is that we have put our trust in the living God and he is the Savior of the whole human race but particularly of all believers.

This is what you are to instruct and teach. Let no one disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity. Until I arrive, devote yourself to reading to the people, encouraging and teaching. You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you when the prophets spoke and the body of elders laid their hands on you; do not neglect it. Let this be your care and your occupation, and everyone will be able to see your progress. Be conscientious about what you do and what you teach; persevere in this, and in this way you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

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I have lots of advice for young Timothy, particularly about widows, old and young.

Never speak sharply to a man older than yourself, but appeal to him as you would to your own father; treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and young women as sisters with all propriety. Be considerate to widows, if they really are widowed. If a widow has children or grandchildren, they are to learn first of all to do their duty to their own families and repay their debt to their parents, because this is what pleases God. But a woman who is really widowed and left on her own has set her hope on God and perseveres night and day in petitions and prayer. The one who thinks only of pleasure is already dead while she is still alive: instruct them in this, too, so that their lives may be blameless.

Anyone who does not look after his own relations, especially if they are living with him, has rejected the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Enrolment as a widow is permissible only for a woman at least sixty years old who has had only one husband. She must be a woman known for her good works; whether she has brought up her children, been hospitable to strangers and washed the feet of God's holy people, helped people in hardship or been active in all kinds of good work.

Do not accept young widows because if their natural desires distract them from Christ, they want to marry again, and then people condemn them for being unfaithful to their original promise. Besides, they learn how to be idle and go around from house to house; and then, not merely idle, they learn to be gossips and meddlers in other people's affairs and to say what should remain unsaid. I think it is best for young widows to marry again and have children and a household to look after, and not give the enemy any chance to raise a scandal about them; there are already some who have turned aside to follow Satan.

If a woman believer has widowed relatives, she should support them and not make the Church bear the expense but enable it to support those who are really widowed. Elders who do their work well while they are in charge earn double reward, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. As scripture says, 'You must not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn;' and again, 'The worker deserves his wages.' Never accept any accusation brought against an elder unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. If anyone is at fault, reprimand him publicly, as a warning to the rest.

Before God, and before Jesus Christ and the angels he has chosen, I charge you to keep these rules impartially and never to be influenced by favoritism. Do not be too quick to lay hands on anyone, and never make yourself an accomplice in anybody else's sin; keep yourself pure. You should give up drinking only water and have a little wine for the sake of your digestion and the frequent bouts of illness that you have. The faults of some people are obvious long before they come to the reckoning, while others have faults that are not discovered until later. Similarly, the good that people do can be obvious; but even when it is not, it cannot remain hidden.

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I have some advice also on slaves and their masters.

All those under the yoke of slavery must have unqualified respect for their masters, so that the name of God and our teaching are not brought into disrepute. Those whose masters are believers are not to respect them less because they are brothers; on the contrary, they should serve them all the better, since those who have the benefit of their services are believers and dear to God. This is what you are to teach and urge. Anyone who teaches anything different and does not keep to the sound teaching which is that of our Lord Jesus Christ, the doctrine which is in accordance with true religion, is proud and has no understanding, but rather a weakness for questioning everything and arguing about words. All that can come of this is jealousy, contention, abuse and evil mistrust; and unending disputes by people who are depraved in mind and deprived of truth, and imagine that religion is a way of making a profit.

Because, young Timothy, the love of money is the root of all evils.

Religion, of course, does bring large profits, but only to those who are content with what they have. We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it; but as long as we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. People who long to be rich are a prey to trial; they get trapped into all sorts of foolish and harmful ambitions which plunge people into ruin and destruction. 'The love of money is the root of all evils' and there are some who, pursuing it, have wandered away from the faith and so given their souls any number of fatal wounds.

Here are my final thoughts.

But, as someone dedicated to God, avoid all that. You must aim to be upright and religious, filled with faith and love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called and for which you made your noble profession of faith before many witnesses. Now, before God, the source of all life, and before Jesus Christ, who witnessed to his noble profession of faith before Pontius Pilate, I charge you to do all that you have been told, with no faults or failures, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who at the due time will be revealed by God, the blessed and only Ruler of all, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal, whose home is in inaccessible light, whom no human being has seen or is able to see: to him be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Instruct those who are rich in this world's goods that they should not be proud and should set their hopes not on money, which is untrustworthy, but on God who gives us richly all that

we need for our happiness. They are to do good and be rich in good works, generous in giving and always ready to share; this is the way they can amass a good capital sum for the future if they want to possess the only life that is real.

My dear Timothy, take great care of all that has been entrusted to you. Turn away from godless philosophical discussions and the contradictions of the 'knowledge' which is not knowledge at all; by adopting this, some have missed the goal of faith. Grace be with you.

Chapter 21: In Danger Everywhere

Everywhere I went I was delighted with the strength and perseverance of the communities of believers. The Pharisee Jews within and without our numbers continued to harass us with both physical and doctrinal assaults. Several times the disciples hurried me away from danger zones.

The new church we had founded in Crete was also blossoming and I left Titus in charge of its several communities. Finally I visited Miletus, sailed on to Troas and with the winter approaching I first decided to stay in Corinth but eventually moved on to Nicopolis.

I wrote Titus a letter from Nicopolis, many of the same thoughts I had to written Timothy.

Chapter 22: My Letter to Titus

I left Titus behind in Crete to organize the churches there. I must give him my instructions about matters related to its organization.

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From Paul, servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ to bring those whom God has chosen to faith and to the knowledge of the truth that leads to true religion, and to give them the hope of the eternal life that was promised so long ago by God. He does not lie and so, in due time, he made known his message by a proclamation which was entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior. To Titus, true child of mine in the faith that we share. Grace and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Savior.

Appointing elders,

The reason I left you behind in Crete was for you to organize everything that still had to be done and appoint elders in every town, in the way that I told you, that is, each of them must be a man of irreproachable character, husband of one wife, and his children must be believers and not liable to be charged with disorderly conduct or insubordination. The presiding elder has to be irreproachable since he is God's representative; never arrogant or hot-tempered, nor a heavy drinker or violent, nor avaricious; but hospitable and a lover of goodness; sensible, upright, devout and self-controlled; and he must have a firm grasp of the unchanging message of the tradition, so that he can be counted on both for giving encouragement in sound doctrine and for refuting those who argue against it.

Confronting and silencing those upsetting the believers with false doctrines

And in fact there are many people who are insubordinate, who talk nonsense and try to make others believe it, particularly among those of the circumcision. They must be silenced; people of this kind upset whole families, by teaching things that they ought not to, and doing it for the sake of sordid gain. It was one of themselves, one of their own prophets, who said, 'Cretans were never anything but liars, dangerous animals, all greed and laziness'; and that is a true statement. So be severe in correcting them, and make them sound in the faith so that they stop taking notice of Jewish myths and the orders of people who turn away from the truth.

To those who are pure themselves, everything is pure; but to those who have been corrupted and lack faith, nothing can be pure, the corruption is both in their minds and in their consciences. They claim to know God but by their works they deny him; they are outrageously rebellious and quite untrustworthy for any good work.

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I tell Titus it is for the old to teach the young.

It is for you, then, to preach the behavior which goes with healthy doctrine. Older men should be reserved, dignified, moderate, sound in faith and love and perseverance. Similarly, older women should behave as befits religious people, with no scandal-mongering and no addiction to wine. They must be the teachers of right behavior and show younger women how they should love their husbands and love their children, how they must be sensible and chaste, and how to work in their homes, and be gentle, and obey their husbands, so that the message of God is not disgraced.

About the young men and about slaves

Similarly, urge younger men to be moderate in everything that they do, and you yourself set an example of good works, by sincerity and earnestness when you are teaching, and by a message sound and irreproachable so that any opponent will be at a loss, with no accusation to make against us. Slaves must be obedient to their masters in everything, and do what is wanted without argument; and there must be no pilfering; they must show complete honesty at all times, so that they are in every way a credit to the teaching of God our Savior.

We must give up everything contrary to true religion.

You see, God's grace has been revealed to save the whole human race; it has taught us that we should give up everything contrary to true religion and all our worldly passions; we must be self-restrained and live upright and religious lives in this present world, waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. He offered himself for us in order to ransom us from all our faults and to purify a people to be his very own and eager to do good. This is what you must say, encouraging or arguing with full authority; no one should despise you.

I tell Titus to instruct the believers as to how Christians should behave in society in general.

Remind them to be obedient to the officials in authority; to be ready to do good at every opportunity; not to go slandering other people but to be peaceable and gentle, and always polite to people of all kinds. There was a time when we too were ignorant, disobedient and misled and enslaved by different passions and dissipations; we lived then in wickedness and malice, hating each other and hateful ourselves. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior for humanity were revealed, it was not because of any upright actions we had done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own faithful love that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Savior; so that, justified by his grace, we should become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Teach what I have told you and avoid foolish disputes.

This is doctrine that you can rely on. I want you to be quite uncompromising in teaching all this, so that those who now believe in God may keep their minds constantly occupied in doing good works. All this is good, and useful for everybody. But avoid foolish speculations, and those genealogies, and the quibbles and disputes about the Law, they are useless and futile. If someone disputes what you teach, then after a first and a second warning, have no more to do with him; you will know that anyone of that sort is warped and is self-condemned as a sinner.

I promise to send support and I want Titus to join me in Nicopolis (not knowing I would be arrested before he could arrive).

As soon as I have sent Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to join me at Nicopolis, where I have decided to spend the winter. Help eagerly on their way Zenas the lawyer and Apollo, and make sure they have everything they need. All our people must also learn to occupy themselves in doing good works for their practical needs, and not to be unproductive. All those who are with me send their greetings. Greetings to those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

Chapter 23: Final Imprisonment

Everywhere I went the good news was spreading rapidly, the love of Christ could not be restrained. I was preaching in Nicopolis in a large meeting hall when the Roman soldiers, at the behest of the Pharisee Jews, arrested me once more, I thought trivially and not for long.

But Rome now had a new Emperor, Nero. He was quite mad, was rumored to have started a major fire in the slums of Rome that spread to the more affluent areas while he giggled and fiddled on his rooftop. He needed a scapegoat, the Jews were an obvious choice, this new sect of theirs, called Christians, even more so. They had started the fires! Nero had dozens arrested, tried by mock juries, found guilty and executed.

Once again I pleaded that I was a Roman citizen and to Rome I was duly transported, not this time to house arrest, but to a dark and dank dungeon. There I lay in stench for several months. Titus found out where I was and came to me. I wrote again to Timothy, I wanted him to come to me also, despite how dangerous to all Christians Rome had become.

Chapter 24: My Second letter to Timothy

I am dreadfully lonely in prison with only the slave Onesiphorus to care for me. I want Timothy and Titus by my side.

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I encourage Timothy to bear all his suffering (he had been briefly imprisoned in Ephesus) and to witness faithfully to Jesus Christ.

From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God in accordance with his promise of life in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, dear son of mine. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord. Night and day I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience as my ancestors did. I remember you in my prayers constantly night and day; I remember your tears and long to see you again to complete my joy. I also remember your sincere faith, a faith which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure dwells also in you. That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my hands.

God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power and love and self-control. So you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to our Lord, or ashamed of me for being his prisoner; but share in my hardships for the sake of the gospel, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy, not because of anything we ourselves had done but for his own purpose and by his own grace. This grace had already been granted to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time, but it has been revealed only by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus. He has abolished death, and he has brought to light immortality and life through the gospel, in whose service I have been made herald, apostle and teacher.

That is why I am experiencing my present sufferings; but I am not ashamed, because I know in whom I have put my trust, and I have no doubt at all that he is able to safeguard until that Day what I have entrusted to him. Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. With the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, look after that precious thing given in trust.

I feel deserted, thank God for Onesiphorus.

As you know, Phygelus and Hermogenes and all the others in Asia have deserted me. I hope the Lord will be kind to all the family of Onesiphorus, because he has often been a comfort to me and has never been ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, as soon as he reached Rome, he searched hard for me and found me. May the Lord grant him to find the Lord's mercy on that Day. You know better than anyone else how much he helped me at Ephesus.

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I urge Timothy to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

As for you, my dear son, take strength from the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Pass on to reliable people what you have heard from me through many witnesses so that they in turn will be able to teach others. Bear with your share of difficulties, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one on active service involves himself in the affairs of civilian life, because he must win the approval of the man who enlisted him; or again for someone who enters an athletic contest wins only by competing in the sports, a prize can be won only by competing according to the rules; and again, it is the farmer who works hard that has the first claim on any crop that is harvested.

Think over what I have said, and the Lord will give you full understanding. Remember the gospel that I carry: Jesus Christ risen from the dead, sprung from the race of David. It is on account of this that I have to put up with suffering, even to being chained like a criminal. But God's message cannot be chained up. So I persevere for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they, too, may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Here is a saying that you can rely on, 'If we have died with him, then we shall live with him. If we persevere, then we shall reign with him. If we disown him, then he will disown us. If we are faithless, he is faithful still, for he cannot disown his own self.'

I advise Timothy to avoid useless philosophical discussions and keep away from foolish and ignorant arguments.

Remind them of this, and tell them in the name of God that there must be no wrangling about words; all that this ever achieves is the destruction of those who are listening. Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who has no need to be ashamed, but who keeps the message of truth on a straight path. Have nothing to do with godless philosophical discussions, they only lead further and further away from true religion. Talk of

this kind spreads corruption like gangrene, as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus, the men who have gone astray from the truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting some people's faith.

However, God's solid foundation-stone stands firm, and this is the seal on it, "The Lord knows those who are his own" and "All who call on the name of the Lord must avoid evil." Not all the dishes in a large house are made of gold and silver; some are made of wood or earthenware: the former are held in honor, the latter held cheap. If someone holds himself aloof from these faults I speak of, he will be a vessel held in honor, dedicated and fit for the Master, ready for any good work.

Turn away from the passions of youth, concentrate on uprightness, faith, love and peace, in union with all those who call on the Lord with a pure heart. Avoid these foolish and undisciplined speculations, understanding that they only give rise to quarrels; and a servant of the Lord must not engage in quarrels, but must be kind to everyone, a good teacher, and patient. He must be gentle when he corrects people who oppose him, in the hope that God may give them a change of mind so that they recognize the truth and come to their senses, escaping the trap of the devil who made them his captives and subjected them to his will.

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I remind Timothy that the last days are coming, they will be difficult.

You may be quite sure that in the last days there will be some difficult times. People will be self-centered and avaricious, boastful, arrogant and rude; disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious; heartless and intractable; they will be slanderers, profligates, savages and enemies of everything that is good; they will be treacherous and reckless and demented by pride, preferring their own pleasure to God; they will keep up the outward appearance of religion but will have rejected the inner power of it. Keep away from people like that.

Of the same kind, too, are those men who insinuate themselves into families in order to get influence over silly women who are obsessed with their sins and follow one craze after another, always seeking learning, but unable ever to come to knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres defied Moses, so these men defy the truth, their minds corrupt and their

faith spurious. But they will not be able to go on much longer; their folly, like that of the other two, must become obvious to everybody.

I tell Timothy to take me as his model and be sure that anyone who lives in devotion to Christ is certain to be persecuted.

You, though, have followed my teaching, my way of life, my aims, my faith, my patience and my love, my perseverance and the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in places like Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, all the persecutions I have endured; and the Lord has rescued me from every one of them. But anybody who tries to live in devotion to Christ is certain to be persecuted; while these wicked impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others, and themselves deceived.

You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true; remember who your teachers were, and how, ever since you were a child, you have known the holy scriptures. From these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright. This is how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work.

4444

I urge Timothy to be strong, to be steadfast as I have been. My race is run.

Before God and before Christ Jesus who is to be judge of the living and the dead, I charge you, in the name of his appearing and of his kingdom; proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, give encouragement, but do all with patience and with care to instruct. The time is sure to come when people will not accept sound teaching, but their ears will be itching for anything new and they will collect to themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then they will shut their ears to the truth and will turn to myths.

But you must keep steady all the time; put up with suffering; do the work of preaching the gospel; fulfil the service asked of you. As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to depart. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come for me now is the crown

of uprightness which the Lord, the upright judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his appearing.

Come to me as soon as you can. Beware of Alexander the coppersmith.

Make every effort to come and see me as soon as you can. As it is, Demas has deserted me for love of this life and gone to Thessalonica, Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia; only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you; I find him a useful helper in my work. I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus in Troas, and the scrolls, especially the parchment ones.

Alexander the coppersmith has done me a lot of harm; the Lord will repay him as his deeds deserve. Be on your guard against him yourself, because he has been bitterly contesting everything that we say. The first time I had to present my defense, no one came into court to support me. Every one of them deserted me, may they not be held accountable for it. But the Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed for all the Gentiles to hear; and so I was saved from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Farewell. Give my love to all. Come as soon as you can.

Greetings to Prisca and Aquila, and the family of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed behind at Corinth, and I left Trophimus ill at Miletus. Make every effort to come before the winter. Greetings to you from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Chapter 25: Epilog

We can surmise that an extract of a letter jointly written by Titus and Timothy to the Christian communities in Asia was as follows.

“We were able to be with Paul in Rome in his last days. Paul has now joined his Lord in heaven. He was executed by beheading at the direct order of Emperor Nero two days before the date on this letter. On the same day our leader Peter was executed by being crucified upside down. Our church is in turmoil as the persecutions widen, it is rumored that several others of the Lord’s apostles have also been martyred. But God will prevail, let us always praise his name and thank him for giving us Peter and Paul. Let us unite in obedience to our new leader. As for us personally, both of us are now imprisoned, we feel our own end is near, we are rejoicing in our coming death on earth so we will enjoy eternal life in heaven. Peace be with you all in Jesus Christ our Savior.”

