

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Chapter 12

Paul's Vision and His Thorn

I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴ was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. ⁵ I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. ⁶ Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. ⁷ To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

12:1 MOST GO ON BOASTING – Paul is continuing with his boasting, this time about visions and revelations, in particular a special vision the Lord had granted him at an earlier point in his ministry. It was an experience which up to this time he had almost certainly not disclosed to the Corinthians since he realized there was nothing to be gained by doing so. Paul knew that ministers of the gospel do not help their people by boasting about their own personal religious experiences. Faith is engendered and faith grows by proclaiming the word, not by parading experiences. (PBC)

Sarcasm or hyperbole. Paul’s boasting gained a sharper contrast between himself and the super-apostles. (TLSB)

In these particular circumstances, however, Paul feels compelled to do a little boasting about his religious experiences. Although we are not specially told so, the “super-apostles” apparently were using some supposed visions and revelations to back up their claim to spiritual authority. Paul therefore, asserts that he too can speak of visions and revelations from the Lord. (PBC)

visions and revelations.† If his adversaries falsely claimed to have received their teaching directly from God through visions and revelations, Paul could claim that it was truly so in his case. But he mentions it here to show that the supreme height to which he was raised through these ecstatic experiences was counterbalanced by the humbling depth of a particular affliction he was given to bear (see v. 7), so that he should continue to glory not in self but only in the “God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10). (CSB)

Faith is not built on mystical experiences. Paul met Jesus Himself on the Damascus Road (Ac 26:12–18). (TLSB)

revelations of the Lord. Paul saw the risen Lord and received information from Him (cf Ac 16:7–10). (TLSB)

In Bible times God often communicated with His people by means of visions and revelations. The book of Acts records several occasions on which Paul himself received a divine revelation. At the beginning of his second missionary journey, it was through a vision that Paul was directed to bring the gospel to Macedonia (cf. Acts 16:9-10). During Paul’s stay in Corinth the Lord spoke to him in a vision, encouraging him to keep on proclaiming the gospel and promising him that no one would harm him (cf. 18:9-11). (PBC)

The vision Paul speaks of here, however, is not mentioned in the book of Acts or in any other letter of Paul. It was an intensely personal experience, which even now he hesitates to speak of. Note how she shies away from using the personal pronoun “I.” Rather, he relates the incident in the third person, speaking simply of a man in Christ, that is, a Christian. (PBC)

12:2 *man in Christ.* A roundabout way of speaking. Clearly, Paul is speaking of himself. See “in Christ.”

FOURTEEN YEARS AGO – This vision would have occurred prior to Paul’s first missionary journey, during the time he was in Tarsus waiting for further direction from the Lord (cf. Galatians 1:21). (PBC)

caught up to the third heaven ... caught up to paradise.† Paul is sure of this remarkable experience, but he is unsure whether this rapture (being “caught up”) was one that included the body or one that took place in separation from the body. The third heaven designates a place beyond the immediate heaven of the earth’s atmosphere and beyond the further heaven of outer space and its constellations into the presence of God himself. Thus the risen and glorified Lord is said to have passed “through the heavens” (Heb 4:14), and now, having “ascended higher than all the heavens” (Eph 4:10), to be “exalted above the heavens” (Heb 7:26). Some assume that the term “paradise” is synonymous with the third heaven, where those believers who have died are even now “at home with the Lord” (5:8; cf. “with Christ,” Php 1:23). The nature of the inexpressible

things that Paul heard remains unknown to us because this is something Paul was not permitted to tell. It was an experience that must have given incalculable strength to his apostleship, which involved him in such constant and extreme suffering. Moreover, as this experience was not self-induced, it afforded him no room for self-glorification (vv. 5–6). (CSB)

Paul is absolutely passive; the Lord alone is doing and giving. (TLSB)

CAUGHT UP – The word translated “caught up” is used also in 1 Thessalonians. There it describes what will happen to the believers who are still alive when Jesus returns. They will be “caught up ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). That reference clearly refers to a bodily ascent into heaven. (PBC)

THIRD HEAVEN – Paul is possibly using terminology used by the Jews of his day. Some of them spoke of a three, others of a five – and others of a seven-layered heaven. At any rate, Paul defines what he means by the third heaven when he says that he was caught up to paradise. (PBC)

The highest heaven. “Heaven” is plural in Hbr, likely because the earthly atmosphere and the realm of God were distinguished. Here, Paul uses terminology typical of intertestamental Judaism, but he shows no interest in its details. (TLSB)

PARADISE – “Paradise” is the word used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, to describe the Garden of Eden. It is from a Persian word that means “park.” (PBC)

In the NT the word “paradise” is used two other times. To the thief on the cross Jesus said, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). In the book of Revelation we find this promise of Jesus: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). From these two references it appears clear that by the terms third heaven and paradise Paul is referring to the place where the beauty and perfection of what once was in Eden will be restored and never end, the place the Bible in most cases simply calls “heaven.” (PBC)

INEXPRESSIBLE – Not only had Paul seen an amazing sight, he had also heard some amazing sounds. So amazing were they, in fact, Paul says they were inexpressible. Besides that, says Paul, they were things that man is not permitted to tell. What Paul heard while he was given a revelation of paradise was impossible for him to repeat, and even if he could have done so, he had been instructed not to. (PBC)

These words are a reminder that new and exciting experiences await the believer in heaven, sights and sounds that cannot be described in human language. St. John writes in his first epistle, “Dear friends, now we are children of God and what

we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Many great and wonderful surprises await children of God when on the last day they are caught up into heaven. (PBC)

Paul had been given an advance glimpse of this glory awaiting him and all believers. Why the Lord granted this vision to him Paul does not state. We can safely assume, however, that it was one way by which the Lord strengthened Paul for the years of missionary work that lay before him. In difficult days he could keep before his eyes the vision of the glory that one day would be his, as he write to the Romans, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). (PBC)

in the body or out of the body. His spiritual faculties were alert, but Paul’s total focus on the Lord and complete forgetfulness of self made him unaware of how his body related to this experience. He may have had the experience as a vision, or he may have been physically taken to heaven. (TLSB)

12:3 *paradise.* Used here as an equivalent to “third heaven,” v 2. This Persian term for an aristocrat’s private park became a loanword in intertestamental Judaism to describe first the Garden of Eden and then the dwelling place of believing souls after death. Some Jewish interpreters held that God took Eden to heaven. (TLSB)

12:4 *things that cannot be told.* It was impossible to put into words and not something people needed to know. (TLSB)

12:5 *I will boast about a man like that.* Some believe that the man “caught up to the third heaven” (v. 2) was not Paul and that Paul here insists that he will not boast about such a glorious experience but only about his weakness. (CSB)

God alone enacts this experience, so Paul can claim no credit. (TLSB)

In saying that he will boast about a make like that, Paul is continuing to use the third person in speaking of his vision of paradise. In fact, he speaks so indirectly about this “man in Christ,” one might even be led to conclude that he is talking about another person. The verses that follow, however, verse 7 especially, make it clear that Paul is describing himself. (PBC)

Though the Corinthians, in their obsession with externals, have forced Paul to boast about this experience, he emphasizes, I will not boast about myself. He wants them to know that by revealing this experience to them he is not say, “Look how great I am.” Let the super-apostles speak that way. (PBC)

EXCEPT ABOUT MY WEAKNESSES – He wants the Corinthians to see only the greatness of God. God’s greatness is seen most clearly as he carries out his work through weak human beings. Paul, therefore, will not hesitate to boast about his weaknesses (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:30). (PBC)

Or, “illnesses.” Paul turns from boasting to confess his faults. (TLSB)

With these words Paul is turning from the subject of being caught up into paradise. He is ready to move on to something that magnified God's greatness through Paul's weakness. Before do so, however, he wants to make it clear that he has been totally honest about everything of which he has been boasting. (PBC)

12:6 EVEN IF I SHOULD CHOOSE TO BOAST – Throughout the final chapters of 2 Corinthians, beginning with chapter ten, Paul has made it clear that he feels uneasy in boasting about himself – his ancestry, his labors, his experiences. The boast of the “super-apostles,” however, had thrust him into this uncomfortable role. (PBC)

I WOULD BE SPEAKING THE TRUTH – In these words there is likely the implication that the “super-apostles” were not speaking the truth. If Paul has to resort to boasting about his labors and experiences, at least what he says will not exceed the bounds of truth. (PBC)

BUT I REFRAIN – He has come to the end of such boasting and is getting back to more comfortable ground: boasting about his weaknesses and God's power. Paul wants people to accept him and his message, not because of such phenomena as miraculous visions, but because of the power of the message alone. (PBC)

A wise choice, because Paul remained chief of sinners, living by pardoning grace. (TLSB)

Isaiah 42:2, He will not shout or cry out, or raise His voice in the streets.”

42:2 *not shout or cry out*. He will bring peace (see 9:6). (CSB)

He (Jesus the Suffering Servant) is so sure of Himself and of the cause He represents that He can well expect His message to carry itself successfully through every test. How often Jesus shunned publicity, even though His aim was to carry His gospel to all men. (Luther)

This passage is quoted in Matthew (12:18). It is an appreciation of the Word to make us take notice and be submissive and obedient. (Luther)

12:7 KEEP ME FROM BECOMING CONCEITED – *aupeirairomai* □ To exalt one's self and become haughty. This can easily happen when we experience success like Paul had in much of his ministry.

So overwhelming was this anticipation of the world to come that the Lord saw fit to bring Paul back to earth with a thump. (TLSB)

Pride would be a natural reaction to the kinds of revelations Paul had received. Such pride may well have been at the root of his opponents' boastful claims and the cause of their downfall (see 1 Tim 3:6), but Paul's theology of the cross is also a theology of humility. For Paul to do his proper work of revealing Christ, he must be humble in circumstances and in soul. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

thorn in my flesh. The precise nature of this severe affliction remains unknown. (CSB)

Probably a chronic health problem, but we are not told. (TLSB)

Bible commentators down through the ages have offered numerous suggestions. The majority lean toward the idea that it was some kind of chronic physical problem. Paul is possibly referring to this thorn in Galatians when he says, "AS you know, it was because of an illness [literally, "a weakness of the flesh," or "bodily weakness"] that I first preached the gospel to you" (Galatians 4:13). That has led some to speculate that Paul's thorn was malaria, a reoccurrence of which had supposedly forced him to leave low-lying Perga quickly and move up to Antioch of Pisida, which lay at a higher elevation (cf. Acts 13:13). (PBC)

Others suppose it may have been a severe eye problem (cf. Galatians 4:15; 6:11). Still others speculate the thorn may have been a speech impediment of some sort, such as stammering, which Paul's opponents in Corinth would have contrasted with their skill in oratory. (PBC)

The truth of the matter is that we don't know and won't know this side of heaven what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. We can infer from the word "thorn," however, that it was a sharp pain of some sort. We can also infer that it was a reoccurring, nagging pain. The Greek text brings out that Paul's thorn in the flesh was given to "keep on tormenting" him. (PBC)

Deuteronomy 8:5 "Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you."

messenger of Satan. A further description of Paul's thorn (cf. 1Co 5:5; 11:30; 1Ti 1:20; see Job 2:10). (CSB)

Evils of body and soul—permitted by God to work a greater good—occur through demonic agency. (TLSB)

Satan was an unwitting tool of God in this respect. Satan would have seen the thorn as an opportunity to bring evil upon a child of God, but God used the thorn to accomplish His good purpose of keeping Paul humble. (PBC)

TO TORMENT ME – kolapaizo ☐To hit with the fist or buffet.

Job 2:7 “So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.”

1 Peter 5:8 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

12:8 THREE TIMES I PLEADED – Paul prayed for this problem to be removed; most of us would do the same. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

Probably a literal number but also a way of getting across a serious and prolonged prayer concern. (TLSB)

Paul might have argued that the thorn kept him from fulfilling his apostolic task of preaching the Gospel and that its removal would have advanced the Gospel. But the Lord’s work did not depend on Paul’s strength or ability. God’s grace alone would get the Gospel out into the world. God in His grace had chosen Paul. God’s grace would be enough to supply Paul’s every need. The power of grace is made perfect in weakness. (LL)

Paul’s prayers about his thorn are reminiscent of Jesus’ prayer in the garden of Gethsemane in that both asked three times. He was persistent in his prayer, just as his Savior had been. Believers today also are encouraged to call upon their Lord in the day of trouble. The Lord promises to deliver us (cf. Psalm 50:15). The Lord’s deliverance, however, does not always take the form we might expect. So it was with Paul and his thorn. (PBC)

12:9 *My grace is sufficient for you.* A better solution than to remove Paul’s thorn. Human weakness provides the ideal opportunity for the display of divine power. (CSB)

arkeo To be satisfied because what we have is more than we really need. What Paul lacked, the Lord supplied. A poster states, “Pray not for an easier life but for strength to deal with the problems.” (QV)

Such dependence is not easy; it is one of the things which experience of failure and frailty alone can bring us. (PC)

Christ's almighty power works great things through feeble instruments (cf 4:7). "Troubles are not always punishments for certain past deeds, but they are God's works, intended for our benefit, and that God's power might be made more apparent in our weakness. So Paul says God's strength 'is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). Because of God's will, our bodies should be sacrifices, to declare our obedience, and not to pay for eternal death. God has another price for that: the death of His own Son" (Ap XIIB 63–64) (TLSB)

All Paul's weaknesses are covered and hidden away under the tent of Christ's power. It cannot be spread over one whose boast is in his own strength. (Lenski)

- * Can't pour much tea into a full cup – story of young man and Shinto priest.
- * Doctor us useless if you don't admit your illness.

Isaiah 40:31 "but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Isaiah 41:10 "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand

The responded by showing him the thorn's true purpose, thereby assuring him that what appeared to be a hindrance actually strengthened his work. Christ abundantly provided whatever was lacking due to Paul's weakness. Christ's power was more fully relied upon and more plainly seen when Paul's limitation were apparent. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

We carry the comparison between Jesus in Gethsemane and Paul one step further. Lord brought positive good out of both situations. By drinking the cup Jesus paid the ransom price of death to win forgiveness for the world. By continuing to suffer with his thorn, Paul kept the spotlight shining on Jesus rather than himself. As people looked at and listened to the weak, frail, thorn-in-the-flesh-beset Paul, they would be led to concluded: There must be a greater power behind this man to enable him to do all things he is doing. That power, of course, was the Lord, the Savior. (PBC)

12:10 When affliction reduces Paul to total dependence on God, then he is most of all a supple instrument in Christ's hand. (TLSB)

Cf. Eph 3:16; Php 4:13. (CSB)

I DELIGHT IN WEAKNESS; IN INSULTS; IN HARSHIPS – Paul’s weaknesses are covered and hidden away under the tent of Christ’s power. Peter often boasted and then fell on his face because he tried to go it alone.

With these words Paul is turning the table on his opponents. They had pointed to his weaknesses as evidence that he could hardly be a genuine apostle. This is another way of saying what Paul had already stated in this letter: “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (4:7) (PBC)

Tempests may toss but those storms will purify the atmosphere. (PC)

WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG – We are dealing with a paradox here. The world says, “Only when I am strong, only when I have status, power, influence, wealth, only then I am strong.” The Christian says, “Only when I am weak, only when I realize that the world’s symbols of strength mean nothing even if I have them all, only then am I strong.” Those who find their strength in Christ can then, with Paul, be strong for Christ. (PBC)

For now Paul realized that when he is weak, when he can no longer depend on himself – then he is truly strong, for then he depends entirely upon God. And God is completely dependable. (LL)

See Judges chapter 6.

Paul concludes his boasting. He will accept weakness and hardship and even welcome them as part of his ministry – not because he finds perverse pleasure in experiencing pain, but because he knows that people will see the glory and power of Christ working through him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

Acts 5:41 “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”

Romans 5:3-6 “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly”

12:1–10 Like scarcely any other person before or since, Paul tasted the powers and bliss of heaven, but at the same time suffered bitterly under the curse of sin. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gn 3:19), yet believers truly already sit in the heavenly places (cf Eph 1:3). • Lord, help us keep our balance as we walk with one foot in the perishing world and the other in the world to come! Amen. (TLSB)

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

¹¹ I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the “super-apostles,” even though I am nothing. ¹² The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance. ¹³ How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong! ¹⁴ Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. ¹⁵ So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? ¹⁶ Be that as it may, I have not been a burden to you. Yet, crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery! ¹⁷ Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? ¹⁸ I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course? ¹⁹ Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening. ²⁰ For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. ²¹ I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

12:11 *made a fool of myself.* See note on 11:1. (CSB)

you drove me to it. The Corinthian Christians have put Paul under pressure to write about himself as he did because they had accepted the claims of the “super-apostles” who had invaded their ranks, challenging Paul’s apostolic authority. (CSB)

commended. As living proof of his genuine apostleship (3:2–3), the Corinthians should have commended Paul to one another and esp to his severe critics.

I am nothing. He is nothing in himself, but in Christ and as an apostle, he has much in every way. (TLSB)

12:12 *things that mark an apostle.* Extraordinary gifts and powers had been displayed in their midst. By implication, the false teachers had come to them without these apostolic signs (cf. Heb 2:3–4). (CSB)

The chief sign is the Gentiles' deliverance from darkness to light through the Gospel.(TLSB)

signs and wonders and mighty works. Such miracles proved Paul's equality with the Twelve and confirmed his true apostleship. Paul described the apostolic ministry as esp signaled by miracles, which God provided in that era. God can certainly still work miracles today, yet He chose to distinguish the apostles in this way. (TLSB)

12:13 *I was never a burden to you.* † See note on 11:9. Paul's refusal to accept any payment when preaching the gospel to the Corinthians had been slanderously twisted by his adversaries (see note on 11:7). They, who had grasped at all they could get, were saying that it was he who had sinned against the Corinthians. (CSB)

Forgive me this wrong! Irony—resuming the line of discussion in 11:7–12.

Half-humorous, half-biting remark. (TLSB)

12:14 *third time.* See note on 2:1. (CSB)

Paul's first visit (at the founding of the Corinthian Church) was an 18-month stay during his second missionary journey (Ac 18:1–17). His second trip was the "painful visit" referred to in 2:1, a searing experience that led Paul to postpone the visit announced in 1Co 16:5 and change his original travel plans. (TLSB)

not be a burden. Chiefly now, so that the falsity and greed of the "super-apostles" may be clearly exposed (see 11:12). (CSB)

John Hus: "Rapacious wolves ... seek more the money of those subject to them than their salvation" (*The Church*, p 226). Paul sought the people. (TLSB)

children. Paul is their spiritual father (cf. 6:13). (CSB)

The Fourth Commandment would have adult children provide for aged parents. But Paul is not yet in his dotage, and the Corinthians are far from spiritual maturity. Paul wishes to continue his spiritual fatherhood in Corinth (1Co 4:15). (TLSB)

12:15 His paternal devotion to them is shown not merely in his readiness to spend whatever money he has for them but, much more deeply, in his joyful willingness to spend himself completely for their sake.

12:16 *I caught you by trickery!* Sarcastically echoes another of the slanders being made against Paul by the false apostles: that he was exploiting them by the trick of organizing a collection for the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem—contributions that would never reach the mother-city because they went into Paul's own pocket (v. 17). No wonder, then, that he could afford not to

be a burden to them! The fact is, however, that it is these false apostles who are the “deceitful workmen” masquerading as “servants of righteousness” (11:13–14). Paul is unblemished both in conduct and in conscience, and the Corinthians are fully aware of this. (CSB)

Some Corinthians suspected Paul’s refusal to accept maintenance was a smoke screen to cover up pilfering from the Judean relief funds. (TLSB)

12:18 *Titus ... our brother.* See notes on 8:6, 16, 18–23. (CSB)

Probably refers to the impending visit announced in 8:17. Mention of one companion rather than two occurs perhaps because the brother of 8:22 is Paul’s representative and the brother of 8:18 is an emissary of the churches. (TLSB)

Titus take advantage. Paul’s question refers to Titus’s behavior on an earlier visit, when he began the collection (8:6), and possibly a second, to deliver the letter of “many tears” (2:4). (TLSB)

12:19 *defending ourselves.* Paul is not currying favor for himself and his colleagues. (TLSB)

speaking in the sight of God ... in Christ. Paul’s concern in speaking of himself is not for his own personal prestige and reputation before people (cf. 1Co 4:3–4). It is before God that he stands, and his standing before God is in Christ. Far from being self-centered, his concern is for the Corinthians, his dear friends—for their strengthening as they too stand before God in Christ. His entire ministry, with its sufferings, is directed to this end (cf. 10:8). (CSB)

He asserts his faithful stewardship of office before God, whose judgment ultimately is the only thing that counts (cf 1Co 4:2–5). (TLSB)

upbuilding. The three autobiographical chapters aim at the collective repentance and spiritual growth of the Corinthian Church, which Paul greets as beloved. (TLSB)

12:20 If this Letter does not bring a genuine change of hearts, the congregation will confront Paul with the fruit of his opponents’ intrusion. (TLSB)

12:21 *God may humble me.* Lack of repentance on the Corinthians’ part is the personal failure Paul dreads. *may ... mourn.* Paul would lament if some Corinthians continued in a state of spiritual death. (TLSB)

have not repented. Then, as now, many cheerfully ignore the somber warning of 1Co 6:9–10. “The [justifying] faith of which we speak exists in repentance ... neither does it dwell with mortal [grave] sin” (Ap V 21, 23). (TLSB)

12:11–21 The Corinthians should not have sat on their hands while the intruders tore Paul apart. The apostle wants to return for another visit, his heart and arms open wide with love, but he is also prepared to be firm if necessary. People and pastors today,

remember your vows to God concerning one another, and keep them well. The Lord still comes into our troubled lives, with His heart set to do His proper work of mercy. • Jesus, may Your coming to us in grace not be in vain, but for our good. Amen. (TLSB)