

2 Corinthians

2:1. “for my own sake.” The Greek construction makes this the reading most preferred. (Cp. Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament; The International Critical Commentary). It is easier to read, but not really to the point to say, “I made up my mind.” The Greek gives a reason, represented in the ASV as “for myself,” and in the NASB as “for my own sake.” Paul is not just saying he determined (literally: “judged”) what to do, but rather, that he determined his course of action based on what was good for him. This is, no doubt, another effort to spare the Corinthians. Meyer calls it “and ingenious, affectionate turn” “the truth of which there is no doubt.” The Corinthians were already feeling badly about their sin, and had repented (2 Cor. 7:8-10) and it would have really hurt them for Paul to say he did not visit because of the sorrow it would cause. He did not lie when he said he judged that it was for his sake he did not come, for it is never easy to reprove and correct people. But it really was for the sake of the Corinthians, as is clear from the context.

2:16. “took you in by deceit.” Paul is employing the figure of speech *eironeia*, which we would call “irony” or “sarcasm.” Bullinger defines this figure as “The expression of thought in a form that naturally conveys its opposite” (*Figures of Speech*, p. 807). By writing, “we took you in by deceit,” Paul shows the ridiculousness of such a statement and thus powerfully communicates the opposite.

2:17. “adulterating.” The Greek is *kapeleuo* (#2585 *καπηλεύω*) It was used frequently of of tavern-keeping [because the owners would water down the wine.] “*trade in, peddle, huckster* (of retail trade)...Because of the tricks of small tradesmen the word almost comes to mean *adulterate* (so Vulg., Syr., Goth.)” (BDAG). We felt “adulterate” was the best translation here. The emphasis is not on “peddling,” as if evangelism was wrong. The point is that the street hucksters “watered down” what they sold to make a profit, so the product was adulterated, which is exactly what Paul says to the Corinthians he did not do. We feel that the Vulgate, Syriac, and Gothic translations got that point.

3:4. “in God through Christ.” Literally, the Greek reads, “we have such confidence through Christ towards God,” but this is difficult to read in English. We would not say, “I have confidence towards God,” rather, we would place our confidence *in* God. An alternate translation might read, “we have such confidence as this *directed* to God through Christ.”

3:11. “passes away *came* with glory... permanent *is* in glory.” The Greek phrasing here is very interesting. Paul uses two participles (passing away, remaining) and two prepositions (through, in) but no verbs. Literally, it would read, “the one fading away, through glory; the one remaining, in glory.” This effectively paints a picture of the old covenant temporarily passing *though* glory, fading away, while the new covenant remains *in* glory. The preposition *dia* (#1223 *διὰ*), meaning “through,” creates a feeling of the law momentarily journeying across the realm of glory, never meaning to permanently reside there—the Law is portrayed not as an end in-of-itself, but as a progression on the journey to bring us to Christ:

Galatians 3:23-25 (ESV)

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ

came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian...

The new covenant, on the other hand, is said to be the one remaining *en* (#1722 ἐν) glory. It is permanent, taking up its residence in glory land and is there to stay.

3:18. “reflecting as a mirror.” The verb translated as “reflecting” is *katoptrizomai* (#2734 κατοπτρίζομαι), which can mean “to behold” one’s self in a mirror, as many versions translate it (e.g. ESV; NASB; KJV; ASV; NAB), or to reflect one’s image, to mirror one’s self, as represented in NRSV; NIV; HCSB; NET; and NJB. The translators are evenly divided on the issue; however, it most likely means “reflecting” here. This can be seen from the context which speaks of Moses, whose face shown with glory and who covered his face with a veil (v. 13). Verse 18 is drawing a parallel between Christians and Moses. When he came down Mount Sinai, Moses was not *beholding* glory in a mirror but was *reflecting* the glory of God out to the Israelites. Furthermore, it is not reflecting as *in* a mirror but reflecting *as* a mirror; our job as Christians is to reflect the glory of God like a mirror reflects the beams of the sun. Unlike Moses who covered his face, we openly reflect the glory of the Lord and become transformed into this glory. This experience of transformation goes beyond what happened to Moses, whose mere external appearance was affected only temporarily.

4:2. The Greek reads “the hidden things of shame,” which is the figure of speech *antemereia*, “exchange of cases.” The adjective “shameful” is put in the nominative as the object of a genitive, to give it more force. However, it is somewhat confusing in English.

4:13. Quoted from Ps. 116:10.

5:1. “here on earth.” The Greek is *epigeios* (#1919 ἐπίγειος), and means existing upon the earth, earthly, terrestrial. It is an expression of locality, not of character, as if “earthly” were contrasted to “godly,” or some such. Our house, our tent, is here on earth. “our tent.” The Greek is the genitive of apposition. “The house of our tent,” where the house and the tent are the same thing. Our earthly body is called a “tent” because it is so temporary in nature.

5:2. “continually groan.” The verb “groan” is in the present active. We groan and groan.

5:5. “prepared.” The Greek is to *katergazomai* (#2716 κατεργάζομαι), and one of the meanings is to cause to be well prepared, prepare someone (BDAG). The Christian is well prepared for receiving a new, everlasting body.

“God.” The position of “God” in the sentence in Greek makes it emphatic. Our future clothing has nothing to do with us. We are prepared by God, we will be clothed by God. The crowning experience of the believer, a new body, is all of God, all we did was to accept the invitation.

5:10. “must.” The Greek word is *dei* (#1163 δεῖ), and refers to what is necessary. “Must” is a good translation. We cannot avoid or decline the Judgment.

“be exposed.” The Greek word is *phaneroo* (#5319 φανερόω), to be made manifest, to be revealed, to be exposed. Furthermore, it is in the passive voice, so it is not something that we do, but something that is done to us. “To be made manifest means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward façade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one’s character. All our hypocrisies and concealments, all our secret, intimate sins of thought and deed, will be open to the scrutiny of Christ...” (Philip Hughes, *The International Commentary on the New Testament; The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. P. 180).

“by means of.” This is very important. The body is shown to be the vehicle for the actions of the person’s will. The Greek word is not *en* (in) but *dia* (through, by means of). It is not just what a person does “in” the body, but what is done through the body that will be openly exposed. This would include allowing demon spirits entrance to our bodies and working evil through us. We need to be in control of ourselves, and think and live godly lives.

5:14. “For the love of Christ constrains us.” This is an important phrase and needs to be properly understood. The Greek word “constrain” is *sunecho* (#4912 συνέχω) and means, among other things, to hold together any whole, lest it fall to pieces or something fall away from it, to hold together with constraint, to compress, to be held by or closely occupied with, any business. What Paul is saying is that the love of Christ keeps him focused on his mission. It is true love that keeps one focused on the goal of bringing others to Christ and helping them grow.

5:15. “in place of everyone.” From the Greek preposition *huper* (#5228 ὑπέρ). See Romans 5:6 commentary on “in place of the ungodly... for... in our place.”

5:17. “new creation.” When the natural man of body and soul is born again, he takes on the very divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4), which becomes part of him. Thus he is indeed a “new creation.”

“things have become new.” Lenski correctly points out that the subject of “become” does not come from “have become new,” which contains its own subject. The subject is imported from the context, i.e., things (or perhaps “we”) have become new. The KJV imports “all things” from Rev. 21:5, but obviously not everything becomes new when someone is born again, just the things inside that believer. The Revised Version and the ASV, which have “they have become new” misses the point. It is not the old things that become new, it is that there are new things created.

5:18. “these things.” This is the meaning of this word in this context. Cp. Lenski.

5:19. “God was reconciling.” The emphasis of the verb is that God was reconciling, not that God was in Christ (cp. Vincent). God reconciled us to himself “through” (cp. Lenski) Christ.

5:20. “we are ambassadors.” We are “ambassadors” in that we speak for Christ. We represent his kingdom on earth. The Greek verb, *presbeuo* (#4243 πρεσβεύω) means “we are ambassadors,” and also “we are legates.” In ancient times it was important that kings, emperors, etc., had people with the authority to represent them. Someone had to be empowered to act as the king himself in any given situation. “Such delegates—Jewish or Greco-Roman—came with the authority of the sender, in his place, to secure his interests” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 310). “The term is frequently used of imperial legates, who represented the Roman emperor in foreign lands and govern there on his behalf with legionary troops” (*New International Biblical Commentary*, p. 140. Cp. *Kittel’s Theological Dictionary*, Vol. VI, p. 681). “...a legate is a noteworthy personage, at the top of the military hierarchy, and presbeuon and presbeutes are technical terms for imperial legates in the Greek Orient” (Spicq, *Theological Lexicon*, p. 174, 175).

6:1. “in an empty, *fruitless*, way.” The Greek is *kenos* (#2756 κενός), and it means, empty, vain, devoid of truth. Metaphorically it can mean destitute of spiritual wealth, of one who boasts of his faith as a transcendent possession, yet is without the fruits of faith. Also it is used metaphorically of endeavors, labors, acts, which result in nothing, are

fruitless, or are without effect. Lenski points out that here, *eis kenos* (literally “unto empty”) means “in an empty, hollow way.” In this case, Paul entreats the Corinthians that they do not receive the grace of God, but then have no real fruit from it. Verse three makes this clear: the Corinthians could receive the grace of God, but then, instead of producing good fruit, would by their actions produce offences that would cause others to blame the ministry. Heinz Cassirer (God’s New Covenant) translates the phrase, “you must not receive God’s gracious gift in a manner tending to make it profitless.” Although most translations read “in vain” for *eis kenos*, that is far too harsh, and often leads to the mistaken theology that a person can lose his salvation. We Christians never receive God’s grace “in vain,” as if there was no profit to it. Salvation itself is priceless. However, Christians can, and sadly often do, receive the grace of God but then do not produce the fruit of it in their lives.

6:2. Quoted from Isaiah 49:8.

6:4. “servants of God.” The Greek reads, “ministers of God,” the genitive of relation. This is not the genitive of possession, as if God owned the ministers, but rather of relation, ministers of the things of God.

6:7. This is another instance in which the verses in the English versions are obviously divided awkwardly. The shift from “in” for the first 19 things on the list to the last things on the list marked by the Greek *dia*, is very clear.

“through.” = *dia* with the genitive case means “through” (see appendix on Greek prepositions). The minister of the Good News cannot be someone who demonstrates his Christ-like character only when times are good and things are going well. The minister must purify his heart so that whether times are good or bad, he acts like Christ, can help others, and even can grow in character. As the minister lives day after day and year after year, he will pass through good times and bad. The minister of the Gospel works while some of his experiences are good and some are bad; some people are lauding him while some dishonor him; some reports about him are bad while some are good.

One of lesser known meanings of *dia* is “between,” and Lenski makes the case for *dia* meaning “between” in this context, and not “by,” or “through.” On this view of the verse, the minister of the Gospel works while some of his experiences are good and some are bad, and he is “between” them, some people are lauding him while some dishonor him, and he is “between” them; some reports about him are bad while some are good, and he is “between” them.

“the instruments.” R. C. H. Lenski has what we believe is a very good and sound interpretation of this verse. The Greek word that most versions translate as “wepons” or “armor” is *hoplon* (#3696 ὄπλον), which, like most Greek words, has more than one meaning (not all of which appear in the Bible). *Hoplon* can refer to any tool or implement for preparing a thing, armor (Rom. 13:12), arms or weapons used in warfare (John 18:3), or an instrument (Rom. 6:13). How are we to choose whether this word should be translated as an instrument or aid, or a weapon? The answer is the same way we always make that translation choice: by context. In the context of this verse there is a clear continuous parallelization between one good thing and one evil thing (glory vs. dishonor; evil report vs. good report; deceivers vs. true; unknown vs. well known; dying vs. we live; as punished vs., and *yet* not killed; grieved vs. always rejoicing; etc.). So if the phrase means, as most versions have, “by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,” then it is the only time in the list a good thing is not juxtaposed with an evil

thing—they are both positive weapons, just held in different hands. So in this case, the context makes it clear the verse is not referring to a weapon that is held in the right hand and the left, but rather “instruments,” or “aids” of righteousness some of which are “of the right hand” and some of which are “of the left hand.”

“of the right hand and of the left.” The Greek reads simply “of the right” or “of the right hand” and “of the left.” The key to understanding this verse is a biblical custom (more particularly a custom of the East than a custom of the Roman world but to some extent existent in the Roman world), that the right hand was the hand of blessing, and the left hand was the hand of cursing. The origin of the custom was the common practice of eating with a hand (not knives, forks, spoons, or other table utensils) and cleaning oneself after going to the bathroom with a hand and water (not toilet paper). In the biblical culture, it was the custom that people ate with their right hand and washed after using the bathroom with their left hand. Thus, the right hand became the hand of blessing, and the left hand was known as the hand of cursing. As the use of the right hand was dominant in the culture, it was almost always the strongest hand, and so also strength and power are attributed to the right hand. Gifts and blessings were given with the right hand (Ps. 16:11; Ps. 80:17; Gal. 2:9; Rev. 1:16). Oaths were made with the right hand (Isa. 62:8). An honored person was placed at the right hand (on the right hand side; Ps. 110:1; Matt. 26:64; Rom. 8:34). If someone was very deceitful, then his right hand was false (Ps. 144:8, 11). Joseph was upset with his father Jacob when Jacob blessed Joseph’s two children because Jacob put his right hand on the head of the younger child, when by custom the right hand of blessing should have been placed on the older child (Gen. 48:9-20).

When we understand the custom of the right and left hand, 2 Corinthians 6:7, becomes very graphic and powerful. The things in the right hand (the hand of blessing), and the left hand (the hand of cursing) can both be aids to righteousness if we have the proper attitude toward them. Even evil things can help us become more like Christ. Thus this would be similar to Romans 5:3, 4, “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

6:8. This is another instance in which the verses in the English versions are obviously divided awkwardly. The shift from *dia* to *hos* is very clear.

6:12. “You are not restrained by us.” There was nothing that Paul or his companions were doing that caused the Corinthians to hold back, it was simply that the Corinthians were not giving themselves totally to the relationship.

“bowels.” The Greek is *splagchnon* (#4698 σπλάγχνον) and it means “bowels.” For centuries scientists and theologians thought that the ancients only equated “bowels” with a person’s emotional life out of ignorance. Now scientists are now discovering that the bowels have a very large number of nerve cells, and actually can “think” on its own, and is a very important part of a person’s emotional life. Almost everyone is aware of times he or she has been afraid or upset and had their stomach “tied up in knots,” or became physically sick, or lost their appetite. The bowels play a huge part in our emotional life, and that fact is well represented in the Greek text. Unfortunately, it is very hard to see this in most versions of the Bible because “bowels” have been replaced by “heart,” “affection,” or a similar word. While the translators mean well by trying to translate the Greek in a way that communicates to the modern reader, the great truth that

the bowels are a huge part of a persons emotional life is lost. Also, translators use “heart” instead of the proper translation “bowels,” we lose another great truth in Scripture, that the heart is less associated with a person’s emotional life and more associated with the mental life. Verses that involve our bowels include:

- **Luke 1:78 (KJV)** Through the tender mercy [bowels] of our God;...
- **2 Cor. 6:12 (NASB)** ...you are restrained in your own affections [bowels].
- **2 Cor. 7:15 (NASB)** ...his affection [bowels] abounds all the more toward you....
- **Philippians 1:8 (NASB)** ...I long for you all with the affection [bowels] of Christ Jesus.
- **Philippians 2:1 (NASB)** If therefore there is any...affection [bowels] and compassion,
- **Colossians 3:12 (NASB)** put on a heart of compassion [literally: “put on bowels”]....
- **Philemon 1:7 (NASB)** ...the hearts[bowels] of the saints have been refreshed....
- **Philemon 1:12 (NASB)** And I have sent him...my very heart [bowels]....
- **Philemon 1:20 (NASB)** ...refresh my heart [bowels] in Christ.
- **1 John 3:17 (NASB)** But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart [bowels] against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

The words kidney (Rev. 2:23), and “belly” are also used.

6:13. Figure of Speech, *Interjectio*, or Interjection (cp. Bullinger, Figures of Speech).

6:16. Quoted from Lev. 26:12 and Ezek. 37:27.

6:17. “stop touching” See Lenski. Quoted from Isaiah 52:11.

6:18. Quoted from 2 Sam. 7:14.

7:9. “I am rejoicing.” The Greek is *chairo* (#5463 χαίρω), rejoice, as it is in the present active. Paul was in the act of rejoicing (cp. Lenski’s translation).

7:12. “before God.” The placement follows The New Testament by Williams and The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Placing the phrase at the end seemed much more confusing.

8:15. Quoted from Exod. 16:18.

9:9. Quoted from Ps. 112:9.

10:1 The verses that open 2 Corinthians 10 must be understood in light of the fact that false apostles had entered the Church and were spreading lies and false doctrine. This can be easily seen by reading chapters 10-12. These false apostles were accusing Paul of being two-faced, being bold in his letters when he was away from Corinth, but being timid when he was personally present in Corinth. Furthermore, they accused Paul of living by the standards of the world. Paul begs the Corinthians to listen to him, and hopes that he will not have to be bold with them as he will have to be with the pretenders. Paul uses the analogy of a war in this section of scripture, and asserts that he fights with spiritual weapons, and with them demolishes arguments, lies, and false doctrines, and will take captive the lies (thoughts) that are circulating in the Church. Furthermore, he will bring these disobedient people to justice, but he will only be able to do that when the Corinthians themselves are ready to stand firmly on the truth.

“clemency.” See note, Acts 24:4, and 1 Timothy 3:3. The Greek is *epieikeia*, (#1932), “consideration springing from a recognition of the danger that ever lurks upon the assertion of legal rights lest they be pushed to immoral limits. The virtue that rectifies

and redresses the severity of a sentence” (Zodhiates, *Word Study Dictionary*). Occurs only here and Acts 24:4. Paul is being very calm here, asking to be heard on the basis of the meekness and clemency of Christ. Thus, even if there are Corinthians who are set in their mind against Paul, they should still be meek enough to hear him out, giving clemency to Paul.

“timid... bold.” This was the accusation of Paul’s accusers. They accused him of being timid (actually, “low”) when he was with them, but “bold” in his letters when he was away. Paul uses their words to obviate their arguments, and hopefully make the Corinthians aware that they are lies. Paul was very bold when he was in Corinth, debating in the synagogue, standing against the Jews, and even being dragged into court before Gallio (Acts 18:1-18); and he had been just as bold in his letters (cp. 1 Corinthians).

10:2. For the *de* meaning “yes,” see Lenski.

“daring.” Greek is *tolmao* (#5111), “to show boldness or resolution in the face of danger, opposition, or a problem, *dare, bring oneself to (do someth.)*...have the courage, be brave enough” (BDAG). Paul’s accusers say he is timid when he is present, but now they will find out the truth, for Paul will be daring with them, showing firm resolution in the face of their opposition. Having established the Church himself, he now goes to war, fighting with courage and even daring, wielding the sword of the spirit to keep the people sound in the faith.

10:5. This verse is about Paul’s defense of the truth against the arguments of the “super-apostles” (11:5; 12:11) and others who brought in ideas that were against Paul and opposed to Christ. Although we often use this verse to teach that each Christian should take captive his own thoughts so that he can be an obedient Christian, that is not the primary reading of the text. The “thoughts” that needed to be taken captive were the false logic, lies, and false doctrines of those people who came in after Paul. They taught another Jesus and another gospel (11:4), and Paul calls them “false apostles,” and “deceitful workmen” (11:13). If a Church is going to be healthy, the false doctrines and beliefs have to be “taken captive.” The general principle still applies, however, for a healthy church is made up of healthy Christians, and if a person is going to be spiritually healthy and obedient to Christ, he must take his own thoughts captive to Christ. The fact that the primary meaning of the verse is taking captive the lies and false doctrines in the Church explains verse 6 (see below).

“thought.” Greek is *noema* (#3632 νόημα), “A mental perception, thought; 2. specifically, (an evil) purpose” (Thayer).

10:6. “whenever your obedience is complete.” Paul states that he is ready to bring to justice the people who are disobedient, but he must wait until the obedience of the Corinthians is complete. The point of bringing the disobedient ones, the ones spreading lies and false teaching, to justice is to have a healthy church. But if the Church itself is not ready to discipline those who are bringing lies and false doctrine, what is the point? The Church at Corinth “put up” with false teaching too easily (11:4), so Paul writes that he is ready, but will only be able to act when the Corinthians are ready. It is never easy, fun, or “nice” to confront lies and false doctrine, and there are many who are even critical of that, elevating the importance of “self expression” and “personal beliefs” above the truth, but we must make no mistake; there is a truth, and it comes from God to the Church. We must be willing to fight for it and defend it or we might as well not “play church” at all.

10:10. “treat...with contempt.” From *exoutheneo* (#1848 ἐξουθενέω), See commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

10:17. Quoted from Jer. 9:24.

11:6. “unskilled in speaking.” The Greeks took great pride in public speaking, and had schools, and even contests, for public oratory. Some used that against Paul, as if one had to be a “trained speaker” to be logical and know and present the Word of God. Paul was trained as a Rabbi, so he certainly was trained, just not in the Greek form of oratory.

11:24. “...received forty *lashes* less one.” This was a tradition of the Israelites that originated from the Mosaic Law. Deuteronomy 25:2-3 says, “...the judge shall make him [the criminal] lie down and have him flogged in his presence with the number of lashes his crime deserves, but he must not give him more than forty lashes. If he is flogged more than that, your brother will be degraded in your eyes.” To ensure that Israelites adhered to the Mosaic Law, the tradition was established to give thirty-nine lashes to prevent breaking the Law if there was a miscount. The one giving the lashes was subject to punishment if the stripes exceeded forty. These lashes were originally administered with a rod, but later the rod was exchanged for a leather strap consisting of three leather thongs. (*Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible*; Baker Book House, Vol. III, p. 2642; James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible*; Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I, p. 526).

12:20. “rivalries.” The Greek is *eritheia* (#2052 ἐριθεία). See note on “selfish ambition,” Romans 2:8.

13:1. Quoted from Deut. 19:15.

13:9. “fully equipped.” The Greek is the rare noun, *katartisis* (#2676 κατάρτισις), and it only occurs here in the New Testament (although the verb occurs in verse 11) .

According to Louw Nida, it means to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something, to furnish completely, to cause to be fully qualified. It can refer to the completion or perfection or equipping of the person (“soul” in the classics), or the character. The word means more than just having a mature or complete character, although that is certainly included. Also, closing the letter by saying that Paul was praying for their character seemed unkind. Rather, he is praying that they be fully equipped in every way. Some versions read “restoration,” although that too seems harsh for the ending of an epistle. The fact is that if the believers are fully equipped, they would be in the will of God and need no “restoration.”

13:11. “*Let yourselves* be fully equipped; *Let yourselves* be admonished; Be of the same mind; Live in peace.” The first two verbs are passive, hence “let yourselves,” which is necessary to communicate the passive. The last two are active. Importantly, the passive verbs point out that often we are our own worst enemies when it comes to godliness. We dig in our heels and refuse to let God do His perfect work in us, equipping and perfecting us, and we do not listen to the admonition of others.