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A Thorn in the Flesh

7 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for ^apower is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

11 I have become foolish for your sakes, as I told you. Actually I should have been commended by you for my service, as I was inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. 12 The ^asigns of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. 13 For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself had become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

14 Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for *their* parents, but parents for *their* children. 15 And I will most gladly spend and be expended for *your* souls, if only I may have loved the less? 16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit. 17 *Certainly* I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? 18 I urged Titus *to go*, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit *and walk* in the same steps?

19 All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. *Actually*, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved. 20

For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps *there may be* strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; 21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

*My grace is sufficient for you,
for My strength
is made perfect
in weakness*

13:1 THIS is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. 2 I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again, I will not spare *anyone*, 3 since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. 4 For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God *directed* toward you. 5 Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you ^cfail the test? 6 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. 7 Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we should appear unapproved. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but *only* for the truth. 9 For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete. 10 For this reason I am writing these things while absent, in order that when present I may not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.

11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, ^bbe made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and

2 Corinthians 12:9