

# “THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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## 2 CORINTHIANS 12-13

John McPherson is a cartoonist. Imagine with me one of his sketches... a couple is sitting on the sofa in their living room with friends. They're boring their guests with slides of their vacation. On the screen is a picture of the man's wife. The husband is pointing passionately at the screen, "[Here's another one of Rowena waving! And that's the Eiffel Tower in the background, and if you look closely...](#)" On and on he goes thinking his friends are as interested in their stroll down memory lane as he is. The man is oblivious to his guests. They're on the other side of the room, climbing out of the window. They're making their get-away... escaping the unbearable... *home movies*. If you want to hammer a nail in the coffin of a wonderful evening with friends just say the magic words, "[let's watch some home movies!](#)" Few folks enjoy reliving moments not their own.

This is one reason Paul was so reluctant to boast in his experiences. Talking about yourself sounds self-absorbed and self-serving. Paul is a little embarrassed. He's ashamed that he's resorting to "[home movies](#)." Yet the Corinthians had put him on the spot... They questioned the authority and legitimacy of his ministry, so to validate it, Paul boasted in its accomplishments.

And yet in keeping with Paul's humility, he talks about his ministry in a unassuming way. Rather than boast of *the miles he traveled, the crowds he drew, the amount of money he raised, the number of people he converted, the churches he started...* Paul spoke of the trials and burdens he endured for Jesus' sake. Paul could've pointed to the outward trappings of ministerial success - but no, he pointed to his scars. Here's his logic... if he wasn't **sincere** why would he have endured such trials - and if he wasn't **successful** why would the enemy have tried so hard to stop him. Paul took pride in his suffering. When it gets down to it - *it's scars, not stars* - that prove our spiritual medal.

For example, the last experience Paul mentions in chapter 11 was his humiliating exit from Damascus. His ministry created such ferocious opposition he escaped over the wall in a basket. What a *letdown!* You could say Paul was a "[real basket case](#)." Yet, Paul also experienced some real *pick-me-ups*. [He was let down in a basket, but caught up into heaven](#). In chapter 12 he continues boasting of his God-given revelations - and the thorn that followed.

Chapter 12 begins, "[It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast](#)." In other words, "[This boasting I've been doing is not preferable, but it is necessary](#)." "[I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord...](#)" Again, at the end of Chapter 11 Paul spoke of beatings, stonings, imprisonments - now he goes from *collisions to visions!* He was *beat-up for the cause of Christ*, but he was *picked-up by Christ Himself*. Understand, Paul was a mystic. He relied on spiritual illumination. He lived with his feet firmly planted on the ground, but he kept his head and heart in the heavens.

It reminds me of the day the king's son was born. The king ordered his royal gardener to go to work cultivating the most magnificent flower

ever grown. It would be his son's gift to his bride when the time came for the boy to marry. The gardener began many years of experimentation and cross-breeding until he finally developed his masterpiece - *the Rainbow Rose*. On the day of their wedding the couple visited the royal garden for the bride to pick out her rose, but when she stooped to pick the Rainbow Rose she picked the rose beside it - an ordinary rose. The gardener was stunned. What was wrong? How could she pick a common flower over *his* masterpiece? It turns out the new queen had discovered the Rainbow Rose's one flaw - *it had no scent*. Everyone else was so enamored by its beauty they ignored its imperfection. *But the queen hadn't - she was blind*.

And in the same way, Paul was not so enamored by what his eyes saw - not so caught up in the physical and tangible - that he missed *the spiritual scent*. He was sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. On countless occasions Paul was given divine guidance and supernatural assistance... *On the day he was converted he saw the Lord on the road to Damascus... At Troas he saw a vision of a man from Macedonia calling for him to cross the Aegean Sea and preach the Gospel... During the storm at sea an angel appeared to Paul with assurance and instruction...* Certainly, we need to read our Bible for guidance. God will never contradict His Word. But He is also able to confirm His Word, and even augment His Word with specific, supernaturally-discerned instructions. Be critical of dreams, visions, angelic appearances - *but be open*. Don't just look, be ready to smell, as well.

He tells us in verse 2, *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago..."* Paul is so uncomfortable with his boasting that he begins to speak in the third person. This was a literary device sometimes used among the rabbis. It was a way of deflecting the glory. *"Whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a one was caught up to the third heaven."* Here Paul elaborates on one of the spiritual experiences God provided him.

Since we're uncertain as to when Paul penned 2 Corinthians it's impossible to pinpoint 14 years earlier... *It could be toward the end of his preparation for ministry in his hometown of Tarsus... Or during his stay in Antioch before launching his first missionary journey... Or while on that trip in the town of Lystra...* Remember, Lystra was the scene of Paul's stoning. An angry mob pelted him with rocks and left him for dead. Notice, the state in which he was in at the time of his vision... *"whether in the body... or out of the body I do not know..."* I'm not sure if I was *dead or near-death*. It could be 14 years earlier parallel with Acts 14. What we know for sure is that early in Paul's ministry God prepared him with this vision. God knew that to withstand fierce *persecutions on earth*, Paul would need a profound sense of the *glories of heaven*.

Paul says he was *"in the body... or out of the body..."* He's not sure - but he was *"caught up."* This is the same Greek word used to describe the rapture. Could it be that God arranged a *mini-rapture* for Paul? His body was whisked off to heaven, then brought back? Or he could have been transported spiritually, while his body was left in limbo - under a pile of stones. This could've been a true *out-of-body experience*.

What impressed Paul was *what* he saw and heard. God gave him a glimpse of *"the third heaven."* Heaven number one is the earth's atmosphere. Heaven number two is outer space. But *"the third heaven"* is literally out-of-this-world! It's in a spiritual dimension. Incredibly, Paul was caught up into the presence of God - into His very throne-room. Modern technology enables man to travel to the first two heavens on his own, but we can't reach the third heaven without God's transport and permission. God took Paul to heaven.

Paul repeats his astonishing testimony in verse 3... *"And I know such a man - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows - how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."* I love the word Paul uses

to describe God's throne-room. "*Paradise*" is a Persian word which refers to "a walled garden." Wealthy desert sheiks would dig deep wells. They'd import luscious flowers, and shade trees, and spice bushes to plant around the spring. Then they'd enclose it all within a wall. It was a private oasis. This is picture the Bible gives us of heaven. Jesus told the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" - same word. Jesus saw heaven as an oasis. Forget about heaven as a sterile, white hospital corridor - a barge of fluffy clouds floating in thin air... No! heaven is an oasis. Its full of lush greenery, thick shade, cool streams, delicious fruit, tantalizing smells. Tahiti, Hawaii, the Caribbean combined can't touch it. Heaven will be a new and better Garden of Eden! It's mind-boggling to realize Paul was given the same privilege as the first man Adam - he walked with God in the garden. He heard mysteries explained by God Himself. Paul had literally been to heaven, yet he'd remained silent about it for fourteen years...

This is the real miracle... Paul's restraint. He didn't jump on the talk-show circuit, or publish a book, or launch a website... "[paradise.org](http://paradise.org)" Nor did he use his heavenly experience in his fundraising letters. What Paul saw and heard at the throne of God was too sacred, too holy, to try and put into earthly words. This is what makes me suspicious of pompous preachers today who claim similar experiences. If Paul stayed silent for 14 years. If he felt his feeble, human expressions could never do heaven justice - *who are they to flaunt their visions and revelations?* When you really do see the glory of God you're hushed - speechless. God, takes your breath away!

It reminds me of the 85 year old couple, who'd been married 60 years. They'd both been in good health mainly due to her interest in health food, and exercise. When they reached heaven, Peter took them to their luxurious mansion. As they "*oohed and aahed*" the old man asked Peter how much all this was going to cost. "*It's free,*" Peter replied, "*This is heaven.*" In addition, their home backed up to a championship golf course. Each day the course changed into a new one resembling one of the great courses on Earth. The old man asked, "*What are the green fees?*" And again Peter replied, "*This is heaven, you play for free.*" Next they went to the clubhouse and saw a lavish buffet. "*How much to eat?*" asked the man. Peter was growing impatient, "*Don't you get it! In heaven it's free!*" It was starting to seep in. The old man asked, "*Well, where are the low fat and low cholesterol tables?*" Peter lectured, "*That's the best part... you can eat as much as you like of whatever you like and you never get fat or sick. This is heaven.*" *That was it!* The old man went off in a rage. He was angry with his wife. After Peter calmed him down, he asked him what was wrong... He turned to his wife of 60 years, and said, "*This is your fault. If it weren't for your blasted bran muffins, I could have been here ten years ago!*" When we arrive in heaven we won't long for anything we've left behind on earth. *Heaven will be heavenly.* We may never be given as vivid a picture of heaven as Paul, but God has revealed our future glory in His Word. *He knows before we begin our ministry we need a vision of how it will end.* It's hard to endure the *rigors of serving God* without a clear view of its rewards.

Paul continues in verse 5, "*Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.*" Paul in his humility was far more comfortable discussing *the low points* when he cried out to God, than he was *the high points* when God spoke to him. "*For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.*" Paul was leery of inflating his pride. He would've never gone down this path of boasting had the Corinthians not doubted his ministry.

And God also knew of Paul's human tendency to become proud and puffed up. This is why He guards against it - verse 7, "*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.*" Notice, Paul doesn't actually identify his "*thorn in the flesh.*" But all kinds of theories have been advanced...

For me, the most plausible idea was an infectious eye-disease that flared up on him from time to time - especially when he moved into warmer climates. It could be that the blinding light on the road to Damascus weakened his eyes and he picked up an infection which caused his eyes to scab over. In Galatians 4:15 Paul speaks of their compassion toward him. They would've plucked out their own eyes and given them to Paul if it had been possible. In Galatians 6:11 he talks about the large letters with which he had written the letter - possibly another indication that he was having a problem with his vision.

The Greek word translated "*thorn*" means "a stake or dagger." A person suffering from trachoma develops a puss over the eye that causes the lashes to become brittle and at times even dig into the eye. If you've ever had a scratch on your cornea you can imagine the pain. It feels like a knife or a *thorn* thrust into the eye. All we know for sure about Paul's thorn is that it didn't go away. He writes in verse 8, "**Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.**" Remember Jesus prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane for the cup to pass from Him. Perhaps Paul was modeling Jesus' prayer.

"**And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."** With a spiritual blessing comes a tendency towards pride. And to safeguard against it, God will often plant a thorn in our life to keep us humble. It's a reminder of how desperately we need God. It's painful, but worth it. A thorn keeps driving us to our knees. Even though Paul prayed three times, God refused to remove the *thorn*. A weakened Paul learned that the greatest strength was found not in himself, but in God's sufficiency. Paul's thorn made him depend on God's all-sufficient grace in a way he never would without it.

Roy Campanella was an All Star catcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers before he lost the use of his arms and legs in an automobile accident. But Roy had an amazing attitude. He saw his handicap more as a *blessing* than a *blight*... Roy once commented, "**We're a rugged breed, us quads. If we weren't, we wouldn't be around today. In many ways we've been blessed with a savvy and spirit that isn't given to everybody.**" An interesting experience helped to form Campanella's attitude. For months he did his physical therapy at a hospital on the East River in New York. Countless times he rolled his wheelchair past a plague hanging on the wall. One day he stopped to read it, then read it again. Here's what was engraved... "**I asked God for strength, that I might achieve. I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey... I asked for health, that I might do great things. I was given infirmity, that I might do better things... I asked for riches, that I might be happy. I was given poverty, that I might be wise... I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness, that I might feel the need for God... I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life. I was given life, that I might enjoy all things... I got nothing I asked for - but everything I had hoped for. I am, among men, most richly blessed.**" This was the Apostle Paul. Rather than grow mad that God had failed to remove his *thorn* he viewed it as a gift from God. He rejoiced in his weakness, knowing that it was an opportunity for God to demonstrate His supernatural strength.

Paul finishes his thoughts on his thorn in verse 9, "**Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**" We're always stronger leaning on the Lord, than when we're standing tall and proud in our strength.

Verse 11, "**I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.**" The Corinthians should've appreciated Paul - instead they had forced him to boast and extol his own merits. The foolish Corinthians were proud of the wrong teachers. They exalted phony men of God. They called them "**eminent apostles,**" or literally "**super apostles.**" But in no way were they superior to Paul. Though Paul saw himself as a *nobody*, God made

him a *somebody*.

Verse 12, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." While in Corinth Paul had worked miracles. The Corinthians had seen God confirm Paul's apostleship.

"For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!" Paul's pen drips with sarcasm. The only thing these "*super apostles*" did that Paul didn't do was take the Corinthian's money. Paul is saying, "*Forgive me for not ripping you off.*" He'd taken financial support from other churches so he could minister freely to the Corinthians. He didn't want pleas for money to cast a cloud over his motives.

Verse 14, "Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you." Paul's coming again to Corinth, and he's not after their money - only their hearts. He wants to win them to Jesus! There are two approaches to ministry... Some pastors feel the congregation exists for them. They'd never say it or admit it, but in a thousand subtle ways that gets communicated. The church is there to build the pastor's dreams - finance his empire. But there *are* pastors who serve the congregation. They exists for the people, not vice versa. They're there to serve, and give, and love, and teach and help.

And Paul had this servant's attitude. He writes, "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." As a father I'm the one who scrapes and saves and sacrifices for my kids - not vice versa. My kids will one day do the same for their kids. Parents *lay up* - and *pay up* - for their kids. Which reminds me of the four kids who decided to chip in, and buy dad a Father's Day present. One of the kids suggested, "Let's get dad a gift we all can get something out of?" They decided to buy him a wallet. The best definition I've heard of a dad is "*a man who now carries picture where he once carried his money.*"

And a true pastor will have the heart of a father... Paul is saying if you're want to serve for *what you can get*, rather than *what you can give* - forget it! Christian service is equal to spiritual parenthood. You get involved in ministry because you're willing to spend your life to see others grow and mature. This is why Paul continues, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls..." Paul was willing to waste his life away on the Corinthians. He loved them so much he would exhaust his resources, and burn his energy, and sacrifice his health to see the souls of the Corinthians flower and flourish. Again, this is the heart of a true pastor. When you find a guy like this, support him, and follow him.

But that wasn't the Corinthian's attitude. Paul groans, "though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved." The church at Corinth was taking Paul's sacrificial ministry and this selfless minister for granted. The Corinthians were like ungrateful children who refused to appreciate the sacrifices of their parents. It's a kid's tendency to take his parents for granted, and sadly, some churches have the same lax attitude toward their leaders. This was the problem in Corinth.

Verse 16, "But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!" Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you?" It's a rhetorical question. The answer is an obvious "No." Paul was above-board. "I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?" Not once did Paul or his pals manipulate or intimidate. "Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification." Paul's only motivation was to edify - build up - these Corinthians.

Verse 20, "For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish..." Paul is afraid that his next visit to Corinth will get ugly. He'll find the believers in sin, and be forced to administer a stern rebuke. He fears what he'll find... "lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults..."

Here's an interesting exercise. Compare this list of fleshly behavior in 2 Corinthians 12 with Paul's early description of God's love he gave in 1 Corinthians 13... Here it's "Contentions" There it's "love is kind." "Jealousies" - love does not envy. "Outbursts of wrath" - love does not behave rudely. "Selfish ambitions" - love does not seek its own. "Backbitings" - love is not provoked. "Whisperings" - love thinks no evil. "Conceits" - love is not puffed up. Here it's "Tumults." There it's "love suffers long." The problem was simple - the Corinthians lacked love.

"Lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced." The Greek word Paul uses - that's translated "mourn" describes "mourning for the dead." Paul doesn't want his next visit to be a wake for a dead church. He wants some *fellowship* not a *funeral*.

Chapter 13, "This will be the third time I am coming to you." He's preparing for his upcoming visit. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." Here Paul quotes Deuteronomy 19:15. Under the law all that was needed to convict a person of a crime was two or three eye-witnesses. And Paul is mounting his case against the Corinthians. He's heard of their rebellion, now he'll see for himself. "Ready or not here I come" - He'll confront his accusers face to face, and put an end to their lies.

"I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare..." This is a threat! The word translated "spare" means "to spare in battle." Paul is declaring war on the false teachers. "Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you." Paul was criticized for being weak in appearance, unpolished in speech, unpretentious in mannerisms. He wasn't as flamboyant as his critics. And the carnal Corinthians had mistaken *gawdy* for *godly*. They were attracted to the outward trappings of the false teachers. Paul straightens them out by pointing to Christ. Jesus appeared weak. On the cross he was the antithesis of what the world considers successful, and pleasing, and pretty. He shattered worldly criteria. He proved that *physicality* can never measure *spirituality*.

And since appearances can be deceiving, Paul suggests that the Corinthians evaluate themselves... Verse 5, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you are disqualified." Here's the truth, just because you call yourself a Christian doesn't mean that you are one. Just because you attend church, wear Christian T-shirts, use Christian lingo, listen to Christian music, quote Bible verses - it doesn't make you a Christian. Paul concedes that some of the Corinthians maybe pulling the wool over their eyes - fooling themselves.

A mom overheard her little girl pray, "Now I lay me down to rest. I pray I pass tomorrow's test. If I should die before I wake, that's one less test I'll have to take." The truth is when we die we receive our final grade. It's a pass or fail. Either you embraced Jesus as Lord, or you don't - *you resist Him, or just never get around to taking Him seriously... Both receive failing grades.*

My mom sang in the choir and played the organ for our church before she ever committed her life to Jesus. I remember the night of the revival when the music stopped during the altar call. My mom had stopped playing, and walked to the altar in her choir robe. She was involved in church, but realized she wasn't a Christian. As a kid I was baptized three times thinking I was a Christian - yet I never surrendered my will to Jesus... It can happen. *We profess, but don't possess.* Sadly, hell will be shoulder-to-shoulder with church members.

I read of young man who enrolled in a seminary, but when the officials sent off for his college transcripts there was a mix-up. People at the college recalled the fellow - he'd been quite popular on campus - but there was no record of him actually being enrolled. There were no classes, no credits, no grades. When they contacted the student to clear up the confusion, he confessed. He'd taken the money his parents sent for all four years of college, but never officially enrolled. He went to class, but audited the courses. He attended college, yet never was a part. And I'm afraid that's exactly what we're going to find out about many people in the church one day. They attended class, but were never really enrolled, never a part. They audited the Christian life, and got no credit! It's been calculated by the time a person finishes college they will have taken over 2600 tests and quizzes. But there's one more exam you need to take. Examine your heart! Test your faith - see if Christ truly dwells in you. This is the most vital test you'll take.

By putting together several Scriptures - Romans 8:9, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 2:29, and 1John 5:4 I've constructed an SAT - **a salvation acquisition test**. Here are four questions you can ask yourself... *First*, do you sense the Holy Spirit's presence in your life? Is there an inner witness inside your heart? *Second*, do you love other believers? Is there an outer witness - a camaraderie with God's family? *Third*, do you practice righteousness? What God *puts in* eventually wiggles its *way out*. A cleansed heart ends up producing a changed and purified life. And *fourth*, are you overcoming the world? Have you experienced a newfound motivation and reason for living that helps you resist temptation and stand up?

If you're in Christ the answer to all four questions will be **"yes!"** Sure, none of us have arrived. We've got a long way to go, *but are you making progress? It's difficult to live the Christian life without knowing for sure that you are one.* God wants us to examine our hearts so we'll have an assurance of our salvation. Paul adds, **"But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified."** When Paul visits the Corinthians they'll agree that he's a true apostle. They'll see the power of God in his life. He'll flex his spiritual muscles.

**"Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong."** Paul is not looking for the Corinthians to stumble so he can come down on them, and prove His authority. He would love for them to be spiritually strong. He doesn't mind backing down and appearing weak. That would be fine. He just wants them to embrace the truth. I know people who criticize others to make themselves look better. This was not Paul's intention.

**"And this also we pray, that you may be made complete."** Paul's desire for the Corinthians was for them to be complete in Christ. The word translated **"complete"** means **"fully fitted, thoroughly equipped."** It reminds me of the first time you go snow skying. It's a new experience. You have no idea what equipment you need - boots, bindings, skies, poles. You trust the outfitter to equip you for the slopes. Likewise, Paul knows the Corinthians are new to the faith. They have no idea what it takes to grow. Paul though was a spiritual outfitter. If they would listen, he would supply them with everything they needed to mature spiritually. That the Corinthians questioned him, only delayed their growth.

Verse 10, “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.” A letter enabled Paul to say some hard things to the Corinthians. They had a chance to digest and stomach Paul’s rebuke, before responding. An opportunity to digest a truth can be helpful. Eat too fast - you can throw it up.

Verse 11, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Professor Michael Christian of Boston College has written two books on the subject of kissing. But since the release of his second book, “*The Art of Kissing*,” the good professor says his love life has gone downhill. Christian explains what’s happened to him, “Now when I kiss a woman she usually responds, “You wrote the book on kissing and that’s the best you can do.” Oh, the problem with being an expert! In his books, Christian says there’s around 25 different kisses. I’m not sure if Michael Christian includes the “*holy kiss*” in his list, but Paul tells the rest of us *Christians* to greet each other with a holy kiss. It’s a good thing to greet one another with a spiritual smack - a godly greeting. Just make sure it’s “*holy*”... Once, I had a man tell me that what first attracted him to church was all the hugging that went on. He walked around the room and hugged all the good-looking women... His hug was not a *holy hug*!

In Paul’s day a kiss was a cultural greeting, like a handshake is today. Perhaps if Paul were writing to us, he’d say, “Greet each other with a holy handshake.” The point is to extend warm, sincere greetings. Expressions of acceptance and togetherness are vital reminders. Christians should never take each other for granted. The fact we’re all here, still serving the Lord, needs to be celebrated! *Just keep it holy!*

Paul finishes his letter, “All the saints greet you.” The believers in Macedonia were sending their best. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” Notice, the Trinity, all three members of the Godhead, join together to conclude this letter. Paul ends with a blessing - may the Savior’s grace, the Father’s love, the Spirit’s presence - be with you all! May we live every minute of every day in all three!