



[2 Corinthians 6:11](#)

(11) We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you.

New International Version

Understanding II Corinthians as a whole requires knowledge of the often-strained relationship between the apostle Paul and the church in Corinth. The city was a crossroads of the pagan Mediterranean culture of the day, and every kind of philosophy, religion, and activity was available there. Thus, the people who responded to Paul's evangelism, mostly Gentiles, had to unlearn a great deal of worldliness—to put it lightly. They often went to extremes and were easily convinced one way or another. If we did not know that the apostle Paul's “thorn in the flesh” ([II Corinthians 12:7-10](#)) was an actual bodily ailment, the Corinthian church would have been a good candidate for it!

Many Corinthians appear not to have had a good opinion of Paul, especially when they compared him to Peter and Apollos ([I Corinthians 1:12](#); [3:4](#)). He was not to their stature, they thought, not as bold and powerful as Peter or as eloquent and dynamic as Apollos ([II Corinthians 10:10](#)). They suspected him of impure motives, and his demanding, corrective style (as they saw it) often rubbed them the wrong way. Besides, he said things that confused and constrained them, though he also spoke about freedom, and perhaps he was just a mite too intellectual for them.

In addition, he had written to them of his plan to spend some time with them (see [I Corinthians 16:5-7](#)), but due to a crisis in the Corinthian congregation (see [II Corinthians 12:21](#); [13:2](#)), he changed his plans, deciding that the crisis warranted an emergency visit, a year earlier than planned. But that visit was a painful disaster, a source of “sorrow” ([II Corinthians 2:1-2](#)) because, when Paul sought to correct the situation, it led to the “contentions, jealousies,

outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults” mentioned in [II Corinthians 12:20](#). He made plans to visit them twice more before returning to Judea (see [II Corinthians 1:15-16](#)).

After returning to Ephesus, however, he changed his mind about his plans (reverting to his original one) and sent them another epistle (lost to history), which has come to be known in scholarly circles as the “Severe Letter” (see [II Corinthians 2:3-4](#); [7:8-12](#)). He seems to have decided another face-to-face visit would cause further grief, and a letter would be less confrontational. But his new plan backfired on him, as the Corinthians were offended by his vacillation, thinking him “fleshly” (see [II Corinthians 1:12](#), 17), that is, carnal, not spiritually minded. Even so—wonder of wonders!—they responded positively to his correction in the “Severe Letter” and repented (see [II Corinthians 7:7-16](#)).

Finally, also undermining Paul's reputation, a group of false apostles, probably of a Jewish bent, had infiltrated the Corinthian church (see [II Corinthians 2:17-3:2](#); 5:11-13; 10:12-12:13). They accused him of peddling God's Word and commending himself, and they claimed he was not an apostle at all. These [false teachers](#) had shattered the Corinthians' confidence in Paul and his teaching.

Such is the setting of Paul's exclamation in [II Corinthians 6:11](#). His solution to his problems with the Corinthian members was to be completely open with them about everything. He would hold nothing back. In Greek, the sentence reads more literally, “Our mouth has been opened to you, Corinthians; our heart has been opened to you!” He lays his thinking and emotions bare to their scrutiny, telling them plainly, hoping they would see he had dealt with them genuinely and righteously. He loves them and wants to help them “come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” ([Ephesians 4:13](#)). He has done everything for their spiritual good.

In the next verses, he tells them he has not restrained his affection for them, as they probably thought he did not [love](#) them. But he does not hold back that their attitude toward him restricted them, stating that they needed to reciprocate, to be open with him ([II Corinthians 6:13](#)). In essence, he says,

“For my part, I've cleared the air and spoken the truth. Now you do the same.” We can take it as a lesson in interpersonal relations: Honesty and openness, with humility, are the best policy. But how hard it is to do!

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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