

2 Corinthians 1:12-2:17 For the Sake of the Gospel

Have you ever been misunderstood? Character Maligned? Victim of Lies & Gossip

A) Often times this happens when People only know part of a story – they don't have all the facts & they jump to conclusions

B) Paul experienced this at the hands of the Corinthian Church

C) Last week we saw how Paul dealt with the questions that were related to his suffering –

1) If Paul was really a man of God – apostle
Why did he suffer so much ?

D) Tonight we are going to see how Paul responds when his integrity is in question.

See In an earlier letter Paul had expressed his desire to come & see them again to visit them a 2nd time

A) But he had been delayed

B) And those who were against Paul COMING were using his delay in coming to see them as ammunition – 1) To say – see Paul's word can't be trusted

He said he was coming – but look he hasn't come / we can't trust Paul – he doesn't keep his Promises & therefore we can't receive his letters as being from God

In his book, Profiles in Courage, John F. Kennedy wrote, "Great crises produce great men and great deeds of courage."

A) While it might be true that a crisis can help make a person,

B) It is also true that a crisis helps to reveal what a person is made of.

"How we handle the difficulties of life will depend largely on what kind of character we have; for what life does to us depends on what life finds in us." WW

C) Tonight we get a glimpse into what the Character of Paul was made of.

¹² For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. ¹³ For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end ¹⁴ (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

A) Paul begins by stating the fact that he was able to look back on his ministry with a clear conscience

B) Having a clear conscience was a big deal to Paul.

1) Confidence in ministry vs be gracious

C) Paul used the word conscience 23 times in his letters teachings ministry as given in Acts. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

D) It has been said – your Conscience is going to either accuse or excuse you.

1) Paul says: I make this my boast – My Conscience exonerates me

E) Paul is inviting the Corinthian believers to look back and examine his life and ministry with them

Paul gives 4 reasons why was able to say I was able to minister among you w/ a Clear Conscience

A) #1 He had the right Conduct among them

B) He says V.12 we conducted ourselves in Simplicity and godly sincerity

C) He behaved with Simplicity.

1) A better translation of this word would be Moral purity or even Holiness –

D) Paul wasn't living a life of Duplicity – Wasn't one way in person and another way in his letters

A man was being tailgated by a stressed out woman on a busy boulevard. Yellow light – He stops – this

pushes her over the top –

The woman was furious and honked her horn, screaming in frustration, obscenities - as she missed her chance to get through the intersection. Police officer pulls her over - license registration

She is wondering what she did wrong!

A) Her id and registration checked out

B) Then he said - You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping off the guy in front of you, and cussing up a storm and I noticed the 'What Would Jesus Do' bumper sticker, the 'Choose Life' license plate holder, and the chrome-plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk; naturally...I assumed you had stolen the car .." OUCH !!!!!

Our behavior matters – Paul was saying I'm not one way in person and another way in Private

A) Not one way in my Letters another way in person

B) Godly sincerity – The word "sincerity" is a marvelous word.

C) In the English, sincere comes from two Latin terms, sincera which means "without wax."

1) In the Greek Sincere meant "to be tested by the sun,"

Here was the idea: 1st century Shopping in the market place –

A) Sometimes crooked shop owners would take a pot had a crack – fill it with Wax

B) So a smart shopper – Take that pot and hold it up in the sun light –

1) Sunlight would reveal – wax or no wax

C) Stamp: Sincera = Without Wax! Authentic

D) There was no hypocrisy in Paul's life – There was no duplicity in his life

Paul wasn't trying to be something he wasn't either. We did not come to you with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Paul didn't come to Corinth trying to be something he wasn't

A) He wasn't trying to be impressive to wow them with his oratory skills or intellect

B) He wasn't even trying to preach creative - trendy messages –

1) I sought to know nothing but Jesus...crucified

C) Now because that was how Paul approached ministry –

1) he was able to look back w/ a Clear Conscience on his ministry there in Corinth

D) Paul knew his heart and he knew Jesus knew his heart

1) Which helped him deal w/ the accusations they were making about him

E) So the first reason that Paul gives for having a clear conscience – Right conduct that

1) Paul calls them to consider is his Right conduct in his ministry with them

Reason #2 Right Intentions V.15-18

¹⁵ And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit—¹⁶ to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea.

¹⁷ Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? ¹⁸ But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No.

A) Now here is Paul's point: A change of plan does not mean fickleness of heart

B) Paul did not make his plans carelessly or lightly; he sought the leading of the Lord

C) He had every intention to get back to see them
1) Notice to what he wrote them in his first letter

1 Corinthians 4:19, But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power

1 Corinthians 16:5-7

5 But I shall come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; 6 and perhaps I shall stay with you, or even spend the winter, that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. 7 For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.

D) Paul's plans to visit Corinth were not set in stone,
1) but they are contingent upon the Lord's will.

E) Which by the way is exactly what James instructed us to do in making plans James 4:13-16

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

A) You don't know what tomorrow holds – if the Lord wills that is the plan

B) Turn back to 2 Corinthians -Note: **Ch.2V12**

C) Paul gives further explanation for his delay – God had opened a door for him of ministry in Troas –
1) he couldn't just leave.

D) Paul was a great example of being led by the Lord
1) He had Plans, desires, goals but ultimately Paul knew that the Lord would direct his steps

E) He was at peace with that even if others were not

Now The Corinthian Christians were not wrong in being disappointed that Paul didn't come and visit

A) It was Ok for them to be disappointed.

B) But they were wrong in trying to *blame* Paul for the disappointment.

His intentions were sincere:

A) But He was seeking to please the Lord and not men.

B) So he was only going to come if the Lord permitted it –

C) No planes, trains, no telephones for easy communication –

1) There were a lot of factors that went into travel in those days

V.19 Paul draws further upon his proven conduct 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us--by me, Silvanus, and Timothy--was not Yes and No, Not VAGUE but in Him was Yes.

A) Think back to our message – it wasn't Vague – it wasn't wishy washy- not yes and no

B) There is too much of that in the church today!

C) But the gospel is not a message that is Vague
1) it a message that changes according to the Audience ;

D) It is not a chameleon gospel, which changed its color according to the, light that falls upon it,
1) or the Audience that is being addressed

E) Progressive Gospel – or Progressive Christianity

“Christians have been marked by their refusal to capitulate to the false ideas of culture. However, one of the hallmarks of progressive Christianity is its tendency to flow with societal norms.” –
Alias Childers

We call Homosexuality an alternative lifestyle when the Bible calls it sin

A) Adultery is an affair – Sin is a failure or a mistake

B) All in an attempt to soften it – make it more palatable

C) Paul in his preaching was not trying to conform to the Corinthians culture in order to be relevant

D) He just let the Bible speak for itself – the Bible is always relevant in speaking to the human condition

Paul is alluding to a Principle:

A) The message affects the messenger – Our preaching wasn't Vague – our intentions aren't either

B) Our preaching wasn't yes and NO – But in Him – in Jesus was yes

v. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

C) All the promises – over 7,000 promises – yes and amen in Christ

D) Guess where you are tonight if you are a believer?

1) You are in Christ

E) Promises are yours!

I love this verse – but the context is interesting

A) Paul doesn't do something here that I think is brilliant when dealing with conflict –

B) Paul goes vertical – They were questioning whether Paul was a man who keeps his promises

C) Paul says You know always keeps his promises – Jesus - Jesus is the great Promise Keeper

D) But understand Paul is not pointing this out as a copout –

1) Christians aren't perfect just forgiven bumper sticker

Copout – excuse my poor driving –

No Paul's point of bringing this up here is to say Jesus is the great promise keeper

A) And I am a representative of Jesus - So I do my best to keep my promises too.

B) But it is also a good reminder – men will fail you but Jesus never will

21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, 22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Now Paul shares 4 great things here about the work of the HS in our Lives

A) **1st He has established us** = To Fix or Strengthen – speaks of bringing Stability to our Lives

B) Prior to Christ – we were **meandering w/out any purpose** – being pushed around by various storms & Circumstances

1) But we have found a Stability in Christ

C) **2nd He has ANNOINTED US:** In the Old Testament, the only persons who were anointed by God were prophets, priests, and kings.

1) Their anointing equipped them for service.

D) But in the NT All Christians have been anointed by the Spirit– to be prepared/empowered for service

E) It is As we yield to the Spirit, He enables us to serve God and to live godly lives.

1) He gives us the special spiritual discernment that we need to serve God acceptably

3rd He has Sealed us

A) In the ancient world, a seal was used to **identify and to protect.**

B) If something was **sealed**, everyone knew who it belonged to (the seal had an insignia),

C) And the seal prevented anyone else from tampering with the item.

1) God has put his mark on you - The Holy Spirit is upon us to **identify** us and to **protect** us.

4th He is the guarantee that the Promise will come true! A deposit.

A) The word deposit or guarantee **is the word for a down payment**

B) We have been given the Holy Spirit as a down payment for the fullness of what God will do.

1) The Holy Spirit is just a pledge of greater things to come.

C) As Christians, God has given us an assurance that the work he started he is going to complete /

1)The Assurance we are going to make it !!

D)God is committed to you and because we are servants of God we are committed to you as well.

So Paul had a clear conscience in his dealings with Corinth because

#1Right Conduct

#2 Right intentions

#3 Right heart V.23

23 Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. 24 Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

Ch. 2:1 **But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. 2 For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me? 3 And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.**

This is huge: Paul says – another reason I haven't come yet is to spare you.

A)I didn't want to come to you again and have to deal strongly with you because of your sin

B)Paul didn't want to come across like he was trying to dominate them

1)legislate holiness –

C)We can't force people to walk with the Lord.

No it was love that led me to write to you and I did so with tears – It broke my heart to do it

A)But I did it because I loved you and wanted the best for you.

B)So Paul says God knew – I didn't want to come to you again in sorrow –

C)I don't enjoy being the heavy the disciplinarian

D)I don't get any joy out of your sorrow – contrary

My Joy comes from your Joy!

2 Powerful lessons here about Discipline

A)1st True love doesn't dominate – not forced

B)A Ministry is not there to control you – it is there to serve you.

C)Help you grow and become who the Lord wanted you to be.

But there is another lesson we learn from this

A)True love will discipline and rebuke even though it is not enjoyable

B)Paul didn't enjoy discipline – but he didn't run from it either

Paul said – That was hard – no enjoyment out of that – I didn't want to do it again-

A)God spared me in coming – while still problems

B)Sometimes in our relationships with those we love we have to say hard things – TRUTH HURTS

1)Love is not toleration –

C)But we are to Speak the truth in love

#4 Paul was seeking the right outcome

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. 6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, 7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. 9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. 10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices

Now one of the big Problems that Paul wrote to them about in 1 Cor is mentioned in Ch. 5 –

A)The situation involved a man who professed to be a believer & was fellowshiping in the Church – but who was living **sexually Mother in law**

B) There were 2 Problems involved w/ this: 1st Obvious – was the man's Sin

1)2nd was the Churches Tolerance of it – No one confronted the individual –

C) SO Paul wrote & rebuked them for not doing anything

1)gave the instructions to confront the individual & if he didn't repent

TURN HIM OVER TO SATAN { Dis Fellowship him } FOR THE DESRTUCTION OF HIS FLESH IN ORDER THAT SOUL SAVED

D) Well the Corinthians at first didn't like Paul's advice it was grievous to them –

E)but then they came to see the era of their ways

1)They did just that – Kicked the guy out –

But now there was another problem that was related to this situation.

A)After some time the guy turned from his sin and repented.

B)He wanted to get back into fellowship –

1)but now the church didn't want to receive him back into fellowship.

C)So now Paul was writing to exhort them of their need to forgive the man & Restore him –

D)Paul gives 4 reasons why Necessary & important

1)Take note : Our Church & Lives we need to be people who forgive

Four reasons why they were to forgive and restore

A)1st v.7&8 they were to forgive him for *his own sake, "lest [he] be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" {*

B)DEVoured by guilt

1)Sin brings feelings of Guilt – feel guilty because we are guilty –

C)often because we see the damage our sin has caused

Godly sorrow contrasted with worldly sorrow.

A)Worldly sorrow – sorrows over the fact that I got caught – sorrow over the damage

B)Godly sorrows sees the sin as first and foremost against God – affecting my relationship with God

C)Leads to repentance –a change – going in the opposite direction – different attitude

1)Not trying to justify sin / make excuses cast blame But Taking FULL RESPONSIBILITY

D)The man's sorrow had brought him to repentance = to Change

1)But now Paul would say – don't let the guy be devoured by his sorrow –

E)It was important that the church assure this repentant member of their love.

1)The church shoots their wounded

2nd They should confirm their love to the forgiven brother for the Lord's sake (Rd 2 Cor 2:9-10).

9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

A)This is Paul's point – Forgiveness is not an option /

B)it is NOT a matter of personal Preference it is a matter of Obedience to the Lord

C)The problem was not simply between a sinning brother and A grieving Church

1) it was also between a sinning brother and a grieving Savior.

D)The man had sinned against Paul and the church, but he had most of all sinned against the Lord

1)Recall David – *I have sinned against you Lord ...*

Here is the point The Lord forgave the man because of his repentance

A)And Jesus commands us to forgive others as He has forgiven us

B)See All of us have been guilty of Breaking Promises to Jesus / letting down Jesus /

1)hurting Jesus – Yet the soul that repents He forgives

C) Jesus commands us to be like Him & do the same

- 1) Forgiveness is a Must – Command –
- 2) Trust takes time to build

D) If we don't forgive {We open the door for Bitterness to destroy

Which leads to the 3rd reason Paul gave: they must forgive the offender for the church's sake V.11

¹¹lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices

A)The Greek phrase Take advantage - is used in four other verses in the New Testament

B) It has the idea of cheating someone out of something that belongs to them

C)Satan loves to use bitterness and unforgiveness to cheat us out of the joy and peace in Jesus

1)Bitterness and unforgiveness plague our conscience

D)Hebrews beware of roots of bitterness – many become defiled

Eph 4:26 *Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil.*

E) When we have bitterness & unforgiveness in our hearts we give place to the devil in our lives / foot ...

They needed to forgive and restore so that they didn't become defiled as a congregation

A)Broken people being transformed by a loving redeemer

B)The Church is to be like a hospital – not just a place we come to looking to feel better

1)A place we come to hoping to get better

C)A community of redemption – we love and forgive because we have been so greatly loved

1)So fully forgiven

Their response to this situation could really characterize the long term makeup of the church

4th Reason For the sake of their witness V.12-17

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, 13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

The Church is supposed to give off the fragrance of Christ to the world.

A)To those who are content to live in their rebellion the gospel is the fragrance of death

B)Condemns them – Those in darkness hate the light because it exposes their sinful deeds

C)But to those who recognize their sin and need for a savior it is the aroma of life –

Paul is drawing upon the analogy of the Roman victory Parade here

A)Streets lined – flowers – crushed – fragrance

B)To the captives – the aroma of death

C)To the army – the aroma of life

Here is what is interesting it takes the crushing to give off the aroma of the flower

A)So too Difficult situations in a church – bring a crushing that is going to give off an aroma

B)This situation in how the church dealt with this man was either going to give off a stench or a sweetness!

C)When we deal with situations in the right way Sweetness – beautiful – Jesus is glorified.