

2 Corinthians Chapter 2

We found in 1 Corinthians that Paul had received disturbing news of further difficulties at Corinth, including the arrival of self-styled false apostles.

To create the platform to teach their false gospel, they began by assaulting the character of Paul.

They had to convince the people to turn from Paul to them if they were to succeed in preaching demon doctrine.

Temporarily abandoning the work at Ephesus, Paul went immediately to Corinth.

The visit (known as the painful visit) was not a successful one from Paul's perspective.

Someone in the Corinthian church (possibly one of the false apostles), even openly insulted him.

Saddened by the Corinthians' lack of loyalty to defend him, seeking to spare them further reproof, and perhaps hoping time would bring them to their senses, Paul returned to Ephesus.

From there Paul wrote what is known as the "severe letter" and sent it with Titus to Corinth.

Leaving Ephesus after the riot sparked by Demetrius (Acts 19:20 - 23-20:1), Paul went to Troas to meet Titus.

But Paul was so anxious for news of how the Corinthians had responded to the "severe letter," that he could not minister there though the Lord had opened the door.

So he left for Macedonia to look for Titus.

To Paul's immense relief and joy, Titus met him with the news that much of the Corinthians had repented of their rebellion against Paul.

Wise enough to know that some rebellious attitudes still smoldered under the surface, and could erupt again, Paul wrote (possibly from Philippi), the letter called 2 Corinthians.

In this letter, though the apostle expressed his relief and joy at their repentance (7:8-16), his main concern was to defend his apostleship, exhort the Corinthians to resume preparations for the collection for the poor at Jerusalem and confront the false apostles head on.

He then went to Corinth, as he had written.

The Corinthians' participation in the Jerusalem offering (Romans 15:26), implies that Paul's third visit to that church was successful.

2 Corinthians 2:1 "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness."

Paul in this lesson, is continuing to explain why he did not come directly from Ephesus to them.

We learned in the previous lesson that he did not want to come to them while he was upset.

He thought some of the members might quit the church, because of what he might say.

He already had a painful confrontation at Corinth after the writing of (1 Corinthians), where he had visited for the purpose of correcting abuses and dealing directly with those who were challenging his ministry and authority.

After which Paul had vowed within himself that he would not allow this to happen again.

2 Corinthians 2:2 "For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?"

Paul had been gladdened at the fact that this church had begun in Corinth.

It thrilled him in his heart that he had been somewhat responsible for the church's beginning.

If he went to Corinth and said what he needed to say, they would probably be very sorrowful.

These people were not deliberately doing wrong.

They had not been schooled long enough in the ways of God, and they had strayed to some extent in ignorance.

Paul is just saying, that he would not hurt these baby Christians at Corinth for anything.

The one which is made sorry by me refers to one convicted by his sin.

In particular, there was apparently on Paul's last visit, a man in the church who confronted him with the accusations taken from the false teachers.

The church had not dealt with that man in Paul's defense, and Paul was deeply grieved over that lack of loyalty.

The only thing that would bring Paul joy would be repentance from such a one and any who agreed with him, and Paul had been waiting for it.

2 Corinthians 2:3 "And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is [the joy] of you all."

Paul is saying, in a sense, that the letter would have been better than a personal visit, to keep down hard feelings.

Paul wants to be friends with the church people in Corinth.

He feels like a parent who has had to scold the children, but still loves them, and wants them to love him.

Paul's love for this church has not diminished at all.

A letter is sometimes taken better than an open rebuke.

His reason for writing was that those in sin would repent, then there could be mutual joy when the apostle came.

2 Corinthians 2:4 "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you."

Paul is trying to explain, that he prayed and thought about what he had to write to them.

It was painful for Paul to have to write anything negative to them at all.

He wrote the letter with tears in his eyes.

We see a bit of an apology in this chapter from Paul.

He is saying, perhaps, I acted hastily in the punishment of the sinner.

Paul's love for these people is very much like the parent for a child.

The letter had not been meant to be harsh but loving.

2 Corinthians 2:5 "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all."

In this, we see that Paul is not angry with the whole church for what this one man, who had sinned, had done.

Paul is also saying; you cannot let it affect the daily functions of the church.

You must get past this moment of problem and go on.

Paul's heart was broken about the man committing this sin, but he was not overwhelmed by grief with it.

Paul is acknowledging the reality of the offense and its ongoing effect, not just on him, but on the church.

With this deflection of any personal vengeance, he sought to soften the charge against the penitent offender and allow the church to deal with the man and those who were with him objectively, apart from Paul's personal anguish or offense.

This is the only time in the New Testament that "overcharge" was used.

It means to be heavy upon, to be expensive to, and to be severe towards.

Paul is saying, in this, that he will not be hard on all of them for what one had done.

2 Corinthians 2:6 "Sufficient to such a man [is] this punishment, which [was inflicted] of many."

Paul now feels that the humiliation that the man had endured from him and the whole church had been sufficient punishment.

This indicates that the church had followed the biblical process in disciplining the sinning man.

The process of discipline and punishment was enough; now it was time to show mercy because the man had repented.

2 Corinthians 2:7 "So that contrariwise ye [ought] rather to forgive [him], and comfort [him], lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."

Now Paul is saying, if he desires to be forgiven, forgive him.

Take him back into the church, and treat him again as a brother.

If they will not take him back, he might never get back in right standing with God.

He has grieved enough.

It was time to grant forgiveness so the man's joy would be restored.

Paul knew there was and is, no place in the church for man-made limits on God's grace, mercy and forgiveness toward repentant sinners.

Such restrictions could only rob the fellowship of the joy of unity.

2 Corinthians 2:8 "Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm [your] love toward him."

Paul is saying in this, forgive him, and forget the incident.

Restore him and love him as a brother.

2 Corinthians 2:9 "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things."

Paul was a watchman over their souls He had given them instruction on how to handle the situation, and was anxious to know whether they would take his instruction and do it.

2 Corinthians 2:10 "To whom ye forgive any thing, I [forgive] also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave [it], for your sakes [forgave I it] in the person of Christ;"

This is actually instruction on how they can forgive the man.

Paul is saying, in yourself you cannot.

When you remember what Christ forgave you, then Christ within you can forgive the man.

Paul is saying it is the power of Christ within him that gives him the power to forgive.

If we have something in our life that is hard to forgive, we should remember this and allow Christ within us to forgive.

Paul was constantly aware that his entire life was lived in the sight of God, who knew everything he thought, did and said.

2 Corinthians 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

It would really please Satan for these Christians not to forgive.

If you do not forgive, you cannot be forgiven.

It would please Satan greatly, if we could not be forgiven.

Paul used a different word but with similar meaning for devices (wiles).

It, along with the words for advantage and ignorant, strongly implies that Satan targets the believer's mind, but God has provided protection by unmasking Satan's schemes in Scripture, along with providing the counteracting truth.

2 Corinthians 2:12 "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to [preach] Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,"

Paul had been in Troas to minister, when he had the vision, and the Lord sent him to Macedonia.

If God does not send you and open the door for you to minister, you can forget being successful in your journey.

Go where God sends you.

Enter in at each door He opens.

The success that really counts is the success in God's eyes.

One of the main reasons Paul went to Troas was to meet Titus, returning from Corinth after delivering “the severe letter” and to hear how the Corinthians had responded to that letter.

God sovereignly provided a great evangelistic opportunity for Paul, which may have led to the planting of the church in Troas.

Because of the success of his preaching, Paul was assured that this opportunity was from God.

2 Corinthians 2:13 "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia."

Notice here, that Titus was more than just another brother in Christ.

Paul calls him my brother.

This indicates that Titus and Paul were very close.

Paul had wanted to wait until Titus brought information on how his letter to the Corinthians had been accepted, but he went on to Macedonia where God the Holy Spirit had opened a door of utterance for him.

Paul's concerns for the Corinthians' problems and how its members were responding to both those problems and his instructions caused Paul debilitating restlessness and anxiety.

These concerns then became so heavy and distracting that he was unable to give full attention to his ministry.

2 Corinthians 2:14 "Now thanks [be] unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place."

Jesus Christ won the victory on the cross.

The victory is ours for the claiming.

The best way to taste victory is to stay in the perfect will of God.

This is just saying, that the knowledge that Paul, or any of us, has is in Christ.

We are to take no thought for what we shall say.

If we are ministering in the fashion the Lord would have us to, the words that come from our mouth will not be from our accumulated learning (knowledge), but will be as an oracle of God.

God will speak through us the message He wants given.

“Manifest the savor of his knowledge”:

The imagery comes from the strong, sweet smell of incense from censers in the Triumph parade, which along with the fragrance of crushed flowers strewn under horse’s hooves, produced a powerful aroma that filled the city.

By analogy, every believer is transformed and called by the Lord to be an influence for His gospel throughout the world.

2 Corinthians 2:15 "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:"

Anything that made a sweet savor to God had been totally dedicated to God.

If we are totally dedicated to God, then it is not our responsibility whether the message is accepted or rejected.

God appreciates us just as much for bringing His message to those who will not accept it, as He does to those who do accept it.

Either way, we have pleased God.

2 Corinthians 2:16 "To the one [we are] the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who [is] sufficient for these things?"

If they reject the message that God has spoken through us, they are lost.

The great thing is, if we gave the message, we are not responsible for their souls.

Had we not given the message to them, then we would have been responsible for their souls.

If they are determined to die, and we have brought God's redemption message to them, God is pleased with us.

Those who receive the message that God has given through us, will receive life everlasting.

Our reward is the same, because we obeyed God.

It is the person's choice to receive life, or death.

Our responsibility is to bring the message to the best of our ability in Him.

2 Corinthians 2:17 "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

There are even more ministers today who corrupt the Word of God, than when Paul wrote this.

The Word of God is true.

We must not change the Word of God.

It is alright to explain what you believe the meaning of the Word to be.

It is not alright to add to, or take away from the Word of God.

Paul is saying, that he was sincere in the message he brought.

Paul is saying that his message is really God's message that was put in Paul's mouth.

Paul spoke under the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul is saying, Christ in me is bringing you this message.

He also says, God is my witness; it is Christ speaking in me.

2 Corinthians Chapter 2 Questions

1. In verse 1, Paul had determined what?
2. Why had Paul not come directly to Corinth?
3. What gave Paul joy about Corinth?
4. They had strayed in _____.
5. Why would the letter be better than a personal visit?
6. How had Paul written this letter to them?
7. Paul's love for these Corinthians was very much like a _____ for a _____.
8. The sinner had grieved Paul in _____.

9. What does "overcharge", in verse 5, mean?
10. Who had inflicted punishment on the man who sinned?
11. Should they continue to punish him?
12. Why is it so important to forgive?
13. They were to love him as a _____.
14. Paul was a watchman over their _____.
15. Paul's forgiveness was in _____.
16. If they did not forgive, whose advantage would it be to?
17. What was verse 12 saying about ministering?
18. Why had Paul had no rest in his spirit?
19. Where had Paul gone?
20. Who won the victory?
21. The victory is ours for the _____.
22. What is knowledge?
23. Anything that made a sweet savour to God was totally _____ to God.
24. How can we be not responsible for the lost?
25. Paul was not as many who _____ the Word.
26. You must not add, or take away from, the Word of God, but is it alright to explain what you believe each Scripture to mean?