

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 2:1-4

Session 16: The Second Category of the Sufferings of Christ, cont.

In chapter 2, Paul is dealing with three more accusations against him: 1) he lacks genuine love, 2) he does not care for them, and 3) his lack of concern for them. These accusations stem mainly from his failure to keep his word that he would make a quick return visit to them.

In chapter 2, Paul gives his “honest” reasons for why he did not return to Corinth when he said he would. In session 14, we did a quick overview of the three accusations. Now, we will begin our verse-by-verse study of the chapter. As we begin with verse 1, Paul is explaining why he decided to delay his return to Corinth.

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

God did not tell Paul to hold off returning to the Corinthians: Paul made a sonship decision (determined this with myself) not to return to Corinth yet. How did Paul come to this sonship decision? By looking at how the church would have been affected. He was making his decision with them in view.

Paul was not going to come to them again “in heaviness.” What does that mean? The “heaviness” Paul is referring to is the grief, which would have resulted in him and in the church by his immediate visit. How would that visit result in grief or heaviness? Because Paul knew, if he returned to Corinth at that time, he would have to do so with a severe act of judgment against those who were still rebellious against Paul and his ministry, and that would affect the whole church. Instead, Paul wants his visit to be agreeable and profitable to the whole church, and to himself.

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 is demonstrating his true motive behind his delay in returning; his genuine love for them. If Paul did not genuinely love the Corinthian church, it wouldn't matter if he came to them in heaviness or not. Paul's actions are the proof that the accusation that he does not genuinely love them is untrue.

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.

The writing to which Paul refers in verse 3 is the non-inspired letter written between 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul is asking the Corinthians to address the issues within the church before he comes to see them again because he does not want to come to them in sorrow, but in joy.

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.**

There are a couple of ways to look at this, but I think what Paul is saying is this: "I am confident that the things which bring me joy will give joy to all of you." This is the table of likes and dislikes which the Corinthians shared with Paul.

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.**

I believe Paul is referring to the letter he wrote between the two inspired Corinthian letters. This first phrase is why I refer to that letter as the "tearful letter."

The complaint that Paul's letter was too severe is dealt with in this verse. Paul wrote with "much affliction" which is the pain of his emotions. He also wrote with "many tears".

Paul was pained at their previous conduct. This is a great example of Paul's tenderness of heart and kindness toward the Corinthians. The evil conduct of

others can bring pain to a godly person, and the subsequent reproof and discipline are often painful to him who does it, just as it is to the recipients of the discipline.

It is my understanding that this whole section is written to those who have not returned to Paul. He is obviously not convincing those who are back on board with him, but he is attempting to persuade those who are still against him, by making the strength and depth of his love evident to them.

He loved them this way before and he still loves them. Just as he was patient with the church as a whole to repent and return to him, he is continuing to be patient with the holdouts.

Look, I want to tell you something that I discovered many years ago; churches are fragile. Even when they are large in number, churches are more fragile than most people imagine. A single event can destroy a church. A single member can destroy a church.

And it is not just churches, but the church is the one I want to focus on. When a pastor runs off the rails theologically or doctrinally, it can ruin a church. It takes less to damage a church than you might think. Let me give you an illustration from the airline market, which is much bigger than any church.

Do you know why people have had to take their shoes off as you they through security at the airport? Because of one guy who put a bomb in his shoe. In 2001, the same year as when we started MBI, Richard Reid, a British terrorist who had converted to Islam and was a member of Al Qaeda, attempted to detonate plastic explosives hidden in his shoes on a transatlantic flight.

His plot was foiled by passengers and crew who subdued him and the plane diverted and landed safely at Boston's Logan International Airport. For the last 20 years, everyone aged 12-75 has had to go through that inconvenience of removing their footwear because of one man, in one incident.

The point is, it does not take much to upset the order of things, and because there is an additional spiritual component, that is especially true of churches. I believe Paul knows this, and coupled with his great love for them, he is dealing with them in a way to preserve the Corinthian church, and not see it destroyed.

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 did not write this letter to grieve them.

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.**

If you recall our last session in Ephesians, I talked about having a godly motive and purpose behind our prayers and behind our actions. We can clearly see Paul identifying to the Corinthians what he is doing, and why he is doing it. Paul wrote that difficult letter so the Corinthians might know the love which he had “more abundantly” toward them.

This is one of the best evidences Paul could give. Firstly, it is proof of genuine friendship for another when we faithfully and affectionately admonish a brother or sister in Christ. It is all the more proof of affection when it is done with tears. And while it is not everyone’s character to actually weep under such circumstances, although it was certainly Paul’s, the idea is still reflective of an attitude that is reluctant to rebuke, that takes no pleasure in the correction, is only meant for their benefit, and is obviously a result of our love for them.

Paul is not just writing to convince one person, but an entire church. I can hardly imagine.

So let’s wrap up this first accusation that Paul lacks genuine love toward the Corinthians.

The remedy against these “fiery darts” which are meant to discourage Paul and negatively impact his ministry toward the Corinthian church is as follows:

The testimony of Paul’s conscience concerning things which are honest

- 2 Corinthians 2:1 – The “honest” reason for Paul’s delay
- 2 Corinthians 2:2 – Paul’s genuine love being the motive for his delay
- 2 Corinthians 2:3 – His genuine love previously expressed in a letter

- 2 Corinthians 2:4 – The depth of his love toward them evidenced by his action of delaying his visit

Before we move on in the chapter, I want to point out that we made a good decision to continue our study in 2 Corinthians instead of moving ahead in the book of Philippians. Let me show you one of the reasons why.

The first category had Paul charged with duplicity and having a hidden agenda, of being insincere and cavalier, of being a disappointment and the cause of their lack of enthusiasm, and finally, with being arrogant and domineering.

And what was the remedy for these attacks?

The General Overall Personal Attacks:

- The testimony of Paul’s conscience concerning what is “true” (2 Corinthians 1:12)

Duplicity/Hidden Agenda:

- The testimony that what Paul wrote to them was “true” with no duplicity or hidden agenda (2 Corinthians 1:13)
- That which was “true” concerning his desire toward them and the acknowledgement of his singular goal with them (2 Corinthians 1:14)

Insincere/Cavalier:

- That which was “true” regarding his previous mind toward them and his intention to have a second visit was not insincere (2 Corinthians 1:15-16)
- That which is “true” regarding him being “thus minded” proves he did not use lightness in his treatment of them (2 Corinthians 1:17a)

Disappointment/Lack of Enthusiasm:

- That which was “true” concerning the things which he purposed proves Paul did not purpose according to the flesh and therefore should not be a disappointment to them (2 Corinthians 1:17b)

- That which was “true” about his word (of his plans) toward them, and his preaching of Jesus Christ, which was designed to remedy their lack of enthusiasm (2 Corinthians 1:18-19)
- That which is “true” concerning Paul’s word and ministry being based on the truth and faithfulness of God (2 Corinthians 1:20-22)

Arrogant/Domineering:

- That which is “true” regarding why he changed his mind about coming to them for a second visit (2 Corinthians 1:23)
- That which is “true” regarding his position over them in the Lord, and his designs toward them (2 Corinthians 1:24)

Having completed the first category of the sufferings of Christ, we have begun studying the second category of the sufferings of Christ, contained in 2 Corinthians 2:1-17, where Paul was charged with not acting out of genuine love, care and concern.

The section also contains the doctrinal remedy for these attacks, which are coming against Paul from within the church at Corinth, which includes: 1) the testimony of Paul’s conscience concerning the things which are “honest,” 2) the overall “comfort” which Paul operates upon, and 3) the subsequent “salvation” which Paul has from the sufferings of Christ which involve his personal integrity.

In this section, Paul will set forth four things:

- 1) The “honest” reason for not yet coming to them, which reason is based upon his genuine love for them
- 2) The “honest” care Paul has for every member of the Corinthians church, which proves his genuine “care” for them
- 3) Paul “honest” concern for them, which is proven by his actions in Troas; and
- 4) The overall “comfort” which Paul operates upon, and the “salvation” he enjoys from the effects of the sufferings of Christ.

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The Most Important Decision