

2 Corinthians

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Chapter Two

2Cor 2:1 “But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again.

2Cor 2:2 For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?

2Cor 2:3 And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy would be the joy of you all.

2Cor 2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”

Paul is referring to an earlier visit he made to Corinth when he first heard of the troubles in the church. He has left Ephesus to deal with the problems but was met with insults probably from some of the false apostles and the church did not defend him. It was this painful visit that prompted him to write the letter referred to in verse four. His delay in returning was to give them time to repent and was not based on any selfish motivations as accused by the false teachers. Paul was perfectly willing to discipline them even though the process was painful. By causing the sinning person sorrow he would then be made glad when the sorrowful person repented of his sins. His motive in writing them was so that when he did make his return visit he would not be made sad because the people did not repent but he would be made glad because they had repented. He had confidence that they would repent and then his joy would be the same as the joy all of them would experience from such repentance and return of the sinners to full membership in the church. We will read later that this confidence was not misplaced. His heart was saddened by the sinning in the church and it was because of his great love for them that he wrote the discipline letter. He took no pleasure in their sorrow but knew that only by church discipline would they be forced to carefully examine their actions and repent. Paul exemplified:

Prov 27:6 “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

2Cor 2:5 “But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree-- in order not to say too much-- to all of you.

2Cor 2:6 Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority,

2Cor 2:7 so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

2Cor 2:8 Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.

2Cor 2:9 For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

2Cor 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

2Cor 2:11 in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

Vengeance, rather than forgiveness, is highly regarded in our society as seen in many movies and TV programs popular today. But forgiveness brings healing whereas vengeance is a root of all sorts of personal and societal problems. By the grace of God, we are forgiven and we should mirror that grace in our interactions with people:

Heb 12:15 “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;”

MacArthur (“2 Corinthians Commentary”) lists 10 Biblical reasons for forgiving others (I modified his somewhat):

- 1.) We are more like God when we forgive.
- 2.) The sixth commandment, as elaborated by Jesus, forbids not only murder but also anger, malice, lack of forgiveness, and desire for revenge (Matt 5:21-22, 1 John 3:15).
- 3.) All sin is ultimately against God (Psa 51:4).
- 4.) We must “pass on” our forgiveness from God to others (Matt 18:21-35).
- 5.) Lack of forgiveness of brothers in Christ keeps us from benefiting from their fellowship.
- 6.) We will receive divine chastising (Matt 18:32-34, James 2:13).
- 7.) An unforgiving heart demonstrates a dead heart (Matt 6:14-15) so repentance is needed.
- 8.) Not forgiving others renders us unfit for worship (Matt 5:23-24).
- 9.) We are not the judge (Rom 12:19).
- 10.) We do not participate positively in a trial and thus hinder our sanctification.

Paul had forgiven the offender and so he did not want the congregation to take into account any offence against him. The person who sinned had caused sorrow in the church and that is good since they recognized that his sin was sin against God and reflected poorly on the church. However the person had repented and now he was to be publicly forgiven and restored to full fellowship in the church. The person who sinned had felt great sorrow since he had repented but it is not good for him to continue to be in such a sorrowful state since he has been forgiven. Not that Paul qualified the word “sorrow” with the word “excessive” since the correct amount of sorrow is required as a symptom to the sinner that he has indeed sinned against God and the church (note David’s response to his sin in Psa 51:12, 14). The same is true for us in our relationship to God. God has forgiven us and so we are loved by Him and part of His family. However, most sin results in severe consequences that will be seen forever by the person who caused them. Satan will continue to berate the sinner for his past sins hoping to reduce his effectiveness in the Kingdom of God. We should all let the repentant person know that he is fully forgiven and now is a full member of the church so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

Joseph is an excellent example of a person who had been horribly treated by his physical brothers and yet he forgave them (Gen 45:1-15). Jesus gave the procedure for church discipline (Matt 18:15-18) and such needs to be followed. Paul also had previously given the church information about dealing with a member who sinned (1 Cor 5:4-5, 11; 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15).

Paul stated that he had put them to a test in regard to their forgiveness. Similarly we are put to the test when people sin against us and in dealing with a congregational sinner. We are to forgive even if the sinner does not repent but when the person does repent we are to openly

forgive and accept him back into either our congregational or personal fellowship. Paul then states that since they forgive the person who sinned he will also. He downplays his personal forgiveness in light of the forgiveness of the congregation for he is dedicated to the development of the church more than even his own sanctification. Just as we all should so live, Paul consciously lived his life before the eyes of Jesus Christ. When we all live in such an understanding, all of our thoughts, actions, and inactions will be changed. We all also must be aware of the ways of Satan:

*Eph 4:26 “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,
Eph 4:27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.”*

Eph 6:11 “Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

We must all then immediately deal with sin and forgive sinners.

2Cor 2:12 “Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,

2Cor 2:13 I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.”

Paul was originally terribly disappointed over the problems in Corinth. Paul left Ephesus and came to Troas, about ten miles from the famous city of Troy. There was a serious rout in Ephesus as the result of Paul’s preaching (Acts 18:23-41), but Paul also very much intended to meet Titus to determine the current situation in the church at Corinth. Since he did not find Titus there, he was so concerned about Corinth that he had to leave them and go to Macedonia. Even though the Lord had opened a door for ministry in Troas, he could not have rest and continue in a new ministry with a possible failed ministry behind him.

2Cor 2:14 “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

2Cor 2:15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

2Cor 2:16 to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?

2Cor 2:17 For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”

Paul then writes about how his discouragement was turned into delight and encouragement by God’s actions. Paul sees that Christ is driving victoriously throughout the world and that He works through His people.

John 14:12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.”

There are two categories of people in the world: those who will be saved from the wrath of God and those who will forever suffer that wrath. To those who will be saved, the Word of God is a sweet perfume but to those who will not be saved the same Word is putrid.

John 1:10 “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

John 1:13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

No preacher or teacher of the Word of God is sufficient unto himself for he is bringing forth the Word of God, which has the power to transform lives and save people from God’s wrath. Paul states that he was not just a person peddling a message for his own benefit. He was serving God and He is the power and the One to receive the glory and blessings for His work even when such work is through humans. Paul knew the source of the power and he was not lifting up himself. Many then and now preach and teach even the Word of God for their glory. The Word can still perform its work, even through unworthy vessels, but God must be given the glory. Those who falsely proclaim the Word will receive their judgment. We have seen many such judgments in recent times but the total judgment awaits those who do not repent.