

"Paul's Love for the Corinthians"

Part 1

2 Corinthians 7:2-16

Introduction: True love is always seen in the way in which it cares for the one who is loved. True love manifests itself in many different ways.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

⁴ *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

⁵ *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

⁶ *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

⁷ *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

⁸ *Charity never faileth:*

There is yet another characteristic of love which is not plainly described in this text and it is, "LOVE WILL POINT OUR SIN WHEN IT IS SEEN IN THE LIFE OF THE ONE WHO IS LOVED."

Leviticus 19:17

¹⁷ *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

To see sin in the life of a brother and NOT point it out for him to see is hatred in the eyes of the Lord. Now this does not mean we are to police the people who are around us. Criticism is not a spiritual gift given to the body of Christ. We are not to be critics of others but if we see sin in the life of a friend or family member it is our responsibility to help them to see it and to get free from it.

John 11:43-44

⁴³ *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

⁴⁴ *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead He did not lose him from the graveclothes but instead Jesus entrusted that to his friends. The picture here is that when we get

entangled in "graveclothes" it is the responsibility of the body of Christ to help us get free. Keep that thought at the front of your mind for a moment.

Let me now give you some back ground which we have not considered for a while. The church at Corinth was started on Paul's 2nd missionary journey. He had spent 18 months in Corinth and then he moved on. On Paul's 3rd missionary journey he spent time at Ephesus and while he was there he received word that the Corinthians had not separated from the immoral practices of the city. This news caused him to write to the Corinthians but that letter has since been lost. The response however to the first letter prompted Paul to write a 2nd letter which we know as First Corinthians. Before the letter was completed Paul received word again of the problems in Corinth which the Corinthians had neglected to reveal. Paul finished the letter and sent it off and it seems it was not received very well so Paul made another trip to Corinth. This visit seems to have been one of confrontation and so when he returned he wrote another letter which many refer to as the "Sharp/pointed letter". This letter has also been lost and we have no record but only Paul's reference to the POINTED LETTER.

2 Corinthians 2:1-4

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

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

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.

⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears:

This is a reference to the POINTED LETTER which Paul wrote. It seems however after Paul sent the letter that he regretted writing and sending the letter. The letter was written out of love but it seems it was also written out of Paul's emotions.

This back ground now brings us to our text tonight. In the section we are stepping into we MUST keep in mind that Paul is thinking about the POINTED LETTER which he had sent to the Corinthians.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:8

We can clearly see that Paul has the POINTED LETTER in mind.

I. Paul's Plea

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:2

Paul begins this verse with the plea to "receive us". Paul is here picking up where he stopped in chapter 6:11-13.

Notice 2 Corinthians 6:11-13

Here in these verses Paul pleaded with them to be open to him. They were withholding their love not because of Paul but because of what they had listened to. The words of Paul's critics had caused them to step away from embracing Paul. This is why he injected the passage concerning unequal yokes.

Now in 7:2 his mind has gone back to 6:11-13 and the words "RECEIVE US" really mean "MAKE ROOM IN YOUR HEARTS FOR US". Paul goes on to make 3 declarations.

1. **We have wronged no man.**

The word "wronged" here can mean "to someone harm". We have no idea what the accusations were which were brought against Paul but it seems as though one accusation was that he was guilty of physically harming people. This accusation may have been carried over from his life before he was saved. But as a believer he was NOT guilty of harming anyone and he had a clear conscience as he wrote this letter.

2. **We have corrupted no man.**

This statement no doubt referred to his teaching of the Word of God. His enemies accused him of corrupting those who believed his message. But his message of the Gospel was not a message of corruption but it was a message of freedom and forgiveness.

3. **We have defrauded no man.**

The word "defrauded" means "to cheat for personal profit". The false teachers of Paul's day were guilty of deceiving people for their money.

2 Peter 2:1-3a

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

² *And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

³ *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:*

Paul NEVER used anyone for personal gain. Let me show you his words in Acts.

Acts 20:26-27, 33-35

²⁶ *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.*

²⁷ *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

³³ *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.*

³⁴ *Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.*

³⁵ *I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Let us now get back to our text. I believe it is important to notice that while Paul to what he did NOT do he NEVER boasted of the good which he did here in this verse.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:3

Paul was not saying what he was saying in order to condemn the Corinthians. In other words he was not stating the false charges against him in order to bring counter charges against them. In other words he was not saying, "I never took advantage of any man, I never harmed any man, and I never cheated any man but I know what you have done!" This would have been "playground" talk and Paul was above that. This was not about who is more sinful this was about reconciling relationship for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Application:

There is an application here which we must grasp and it is seen at the end of verse 3.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:3 again.

The order here is so very important. Paul does not say he desires to live and to die with the Corinthians but he tells them he desires to DIE and LIVE with them. In the midst of the accusations brought against Paul he refused to get into a battle with the Corinthians. He had every right to point out all of their faults but it would only have stirred the fires of strife even more. There was something far more important at hand here and it was the Gospel. Therefore Paul would DIE to his rights in order to LIVE with the Corinthians.

To illustrate this let me take you back to David's life.

2 Samuel 16:5-11

⁵ And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

⁶ And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

⁷ And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:

⁸ The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

⁹ Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

¹⁰ And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

¹¹ And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

¹² It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

David was fleeing from his own son Absalom and Shimei came out to curse him and to falsely accuse him. David's body guard Abishai wanted to kill him on the spot but David was able to see a bigger picture. His own son had turned on him and he would therefore surrender Shimei over to the Lord. Shimei was a small matter for there was something far greater to be concerned about.

This is the way we need to view the confrontations which we face in this life. It does NO GOOD to start slinging accusations back and forth with people. Even if they have done something wrong we are commanded to refrain from slander.

1 Peter 3:8-15

⁸ Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

¹⁰ For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

¹¹ *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

¹² *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

¹³ *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

¹⁴ *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*

¹⁵ *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

Let us now get back to our text. Here in 2 Corinthians 7:3 Paul is actually doing what the writer of Hebrews commanded the Hebrew believers to do.

Hebrews 12:12-15

¹² *Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;*

¹³ *And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

¹⁴ ***Follow peace with all men, and holiness***, without which no man shall see the Lord:

¹⁵ *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

Paul was encouraging the weak, he was careful stay on the path appointed to him so as to not turn some away from Jesus Christ, he was pursuing peace with ALL men, he was pursuing holiness with God and he was very careful not to allow bitterness to grip his heart.

Conclusion:

There was something else which Paul practiced in his life which was really Christ in him and that was forgiveness. These people had caused so much pain in Paul's life because of their actions and their belief of the false accusations. But Paul allowed all of that to stay in the past and he pursued PEACE because the Gospel needed to be protected.

2 Corinthians 6:3

³ *Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:*

Before we say or do anything we need to ask ourselves, "How will this affect the Gospel?"