

"Paul's Integrity"

Part 1

2 Corinthians 1:12-22

Introduction: In our study of 2 Corinthians we have looked at 1:3-11, and it was in these verses that we were about to see how Paul defended himself against the critics. His critics had pointed to his suffering, and they were declaring that Paul was suffering because of sin in his life. But we were able to see in those verses that God was not chastening Paul, but he was comforting Paul in the midst of his suffering.

Now as we come to verse 12, Paul is going to address more accusations which the critics had launched against him. In verses 12-22 we are going to see the heart of the Apostle under the microscope. Before we get into this passage, let me remind you of something which Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 16:5-9

⁵ *Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.*

⁶ *And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.*

⁷ *For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.*

⁸ *But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.*

⁹ *For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.*

This was Paul's plan when it came to visiting with the believers at Corinth. When we looked at this text, we looked at how Paul had allowed flexibility in his plans so that God could lead him wherever He desired for Paul to be. Now when Paul's plans to go to Corinth were delayed, the critics were very quick to attempt to use his delay against him. We are not told what they said about Paul, but we do know it was an attack against him in an attempt to destroy Paul's integrity. When we get into these verses, we will see that one of the accusations against Paul was that he said one thing but did another. He was accused of never intending to visit them even though he had told them he would. They basically accused Paul of lying. So the critics had spread their lies about Paul among the believers at Corinth, and the sad part is that many of them believed the lies of the critics. So in the section before us Paul is going to lay bare his heart before the Corinthians so that they might see his integrity.

I. Paul's Appeal

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:12

Now before we get into this verse, let us understand that Paul's critics had already found them guilty in their minds as well as some of the believers in the Corinthian church. So in this verse we see Paul's appeal. In the first part of this verse Paul writes of his "rejoicing", which means "boasting". As the critics attacked Paul, he could boast in the "testimony of his conscience". In other words Paul had a clear conscience about how he conducted his ministry.

Someone has said that the conscience is the highest human court that exists. Let me explain how this can be seen. You can be arrested for a crime and be guilty and then be taken into court and tried for the crime and actually be declared "not guilty". The court and the jury which heard your case can declare you to be innocent. But the court and the jury which you stood before is not the high human court. They may have declared you to be innocent, but there is a higher human court that declares you to be guilty and that court is the conscience.

So what we see in this verse is Paul's appeal to the highest human court which exists, which is the conscience. As he writes to the believers at Corinth, he tells them that the testimony of his conscience has declared that he is NOT GUILTY in regard to how he has conducted his ministry and in regard to how he had treated the Corinthians. Let us consider a few thoughts concerning the conscience.

The conscience is the built-in warning system which God has placed in every individual that has come into the world.

John 1:9

⁹ *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

God places in every person a "light", which is the conscience. It is given to man by God as a warning device to convict man of sin.

John 8:4-9

³ *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,*

⁴ *They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.*

⁵ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

⁶ This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

⁷ So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

⁸ And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

⁹ And they which heard it, **being convicted by their own conscience**, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

Man must however be very careful because our conscience can be wounded, seared, and defiled.

1 Corinthians 8:12

¹² But when ye sin so against the brethren, and **wound their weak conscience**, ye sin against Christ.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

² Speaking lies in hypocrisy: **having their conscience seared with a hot iron**;

Titus 1:15

¹⁵ Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure: **but even their mind and conscience is defiled**.

Paul was a man who was very protective of his conscience and relied heavily upon his conscience. Let me show you a few verses in which Paul references his conscience.

Acts 23:1

And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good **conscience** before God until this day.

Acts 24:16

¹⁶ And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a **conscience** void to offence toward God, and toward men.

Romans 9:1

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 Timothy 1:3

³ I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

Now let us get back to 2 Corinthians.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:12 again.

The critics had declared Paul guilty, but his conscience declared that he was innocent. He then goes on to explain how he conducted his life among the Corinthians. He tells them that in SIMPLICITY and GODLY SINCERITY, he has had lived his life in the world and even more specifically toward them.

The word "simplicity" means "holiness" and "singleness". Let me show you another way the word is translated.

Ephesians 6:5

⁵ Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

Here the word is translated "singleness", and it is referring to singleness of heart which means servants are to serve their masters with a sincere desire to please their master's interest. So when Paul uses the same word in 2 Corinthians 1:12, he is explaining to the Corinthians that when he came to Corinth and he preached the Gospel he had their best interest in mind. He truly cared about their spiritual wellbeing. He truly longed to see them saved and to live a life that glorified God.

This was the opposite of what the critics were saying about him. They claimed he had hidden motives when he came to Corinth.

The other word which Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 1:12 that we need to see is the word "sincerity". This word comes from a root word that refers to "the sun's rays".

The Blue Letter Bible defines the root word this way: "***found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun's light***". In other words it has the idea that something of Paul's day could be held up to the light of the sun to check for hidden flaws. The light of the sun would cause whatever was held up to be transparent.

The idea which Paul has here is that they could take him and hold him up to the light, and there would be no hidden flaws found in him. His motives and his heart were pure. When I looked at the meaning of these words, it made me wonder if it was not a play on words. Maybe Paul was saying, "Just as you can hold an object up to the bright light of the sun to check for hidden flaws, so you are free to hold me up to the bright light of THE SON to check for hidden flaws." The bottom line was that Paul was completely transparent with his life. He had no hidden motives or agendas. He served God with a single and a pure heart. Let us look at the verse one more time.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:12

He served not with fleshly wisdom but "BY THE GRACE OF GOD", he had his conversation/lifestyle in the world and in Corinth with the Corinthians. Let me tell you what Paul is saying here. He is giving glory to God for the fruit of his labors. The church in Corinth was not born because of Paul. The church in Corinth was born because God chose to work through Paul and others who served there. He was very careful not to rob God of His glory. Paul knew that it was God who had saved these Corinthians, and it was God who opened their eyes to understand the Gospel. It was all by the grace of God as Paul served in Corinth.

So in all of this Paul never relied on human means when he served in Corinth. He did not use gimmicks or hidden motives. He went to Corinth, he preached the Gospel, and he trusted God for the results.

Application:

This is exactly how the church is to function today. We do not need to use "fleshly wisdom" to reach people with the Truth. We simply preach the Truth and trust God give the increase.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:13

Here in this verse Paul takes this thought a little further. He now refers to the letters he has written to them. He is letting them know that there was no double meaning in his words. Paul is letting them know that "he meant what he said" and "he said what he meant". Paul was straight to the point in his letters. There was no "fluff" it was straight forward substance when he wrote to them.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:14

Here in this verse Paul points ahead to a specific DAY. It is the DAY when all believers shall stand before the JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. On that day Paul tells them they will be his rejoicing and he will be their rejoicing. Let me explain why it is that Paul brings up the Judgment Seat of Christ. He knows and they know that on that Day every believer will stand before the Lord to give an account. Let me remind you of what he wrote in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:9-15

⁹ *For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

¹⁰ *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

¹¹ *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

¹² *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

¹³ *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for **the day** shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

¹⁴ *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

¹⁵ *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

Then in 2 Corinthians he will again touch on the Believer's Judgment.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

Paul references the Day because they knew that when the Believer's Judgment Day came that there would be nothing hidden. All deception would be exposed in that day. He was therefore reminding them of the Day of Judgment, and his point was that he knew the Day was coming and they knew the Day was coming so why would he not be transparent now? It would all be revealed on that Day.

Conclusion:

Paul was defending his ministry because there was so much at stake. If the enemy could discredit Paul, then it would discredit his letters which were inspired Scripture. So his life had to be pure and ready at any time to be held up to the LIGHT of the SON.

You and I are not writing Scripture on paper, but we are preaching a sermon everyday with our lives. It is so important that we live our lives in a way that we do NOT ever cause

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someone to doubt the Word of God. We **MUST** live in a way that others see Jesus Christ in us.

Many years ago I worked with a man who professed to be saved. At work he was miserable and grouchy. One day a man who was working with him said, "If that is what the Christian life is like, I never want anything to do with it."

In 2 Corinthians 1:14 Paul says something very interesting. On the Day of Judgment the Corinthians would be his rejoicing and Paul will be their rejoicing. This tells me that the influence we have on people and the time we invest into the lives of others will be revealed when we stand before the Lord.