

"Paul's Integrity"

Part 2

2 Corinthians 1:12-22

Introduction: Last week in our study of 2 Corinthians we started into a section in which we are able to see the integrity of the Apostle Paul. In our study last week we looked at verse 12-14 of chapter 1. It is in these verses that Paul appealed to the highest human court which exists and that is the conscience.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:12

Paul had been accused by his critics of not being true to his word. Paul had written to the Corinthians in the first letter about his intentions.

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.

When Paul's plans did not go as planned and his visit was delayed the critics did their best to use the delay against him. They accused him of saying one thing and doing another. They accused him of being a man who was under the control of the flesh and not under the control of the Spirit. Let us remember that Paul was in the sights of the critics because the critics were being used by Satan to discredit Paul so as to discredit his letters which were inspired by God. This attack against Paul was really an attack against God's Word. Satan was trying his best to strip Paul of his credibility in order to strip his writings of credibility.

So here in the text before us Paul's critics have pronounced him guilty but he appeals to his conscience and he is found to be NOT GUILTY.

I. Paul's Plans

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:15-16

Paul refers to his confidence in his clear conscience. Now, let me help you to understand some of Paul's plans here.

He had originally planned to go through Macedonia and then down to Corinth. This was stated in his first letter.

1 Corinthians 16:5-6

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.*

He would pass through Macedonia and then he would come to Corinth and they would be able to help him in his travels. Paul then changed his plans as we see here in 2 Cor. 1:15-16. He decided to go through Corinth on the way to Macedonia and then when he departed from Macedonia he would come back through Corinth. Therefore, his plans would be a double blessing to the Corinthians.

But these plans seemed to be cast aside for a couple of reasons. First of all after sending the letter we know as 1 Corinthians the report had come back to him of the condition of the church. It was then that he made a quick visit to Corinth. When he departed he came back to Ephesus and he wrote the letter which we had talked about which was very sharp and pointed which after it was sent he seems to have regretted ever sending it. This letter has been lost.

Then the situation in Ephesus seemed to become very difficult and dangerous. This is what Paul referred to in the previous verses.

1 Corinthians 1:8-10

⁸ *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:*

⁹ *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:*

¹⁰ *Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

In all of this Paul was forced to flee for safety and so his plans of getting to Corinth had to be set aside. Now let us understand that in those days there was no way to call Corinth and inform them of what was happening so this is where the critics stepped in and they painted a false picture in the minds of the believers at Corinth. This is something which the critics used to declare that Paul would say one thing and then he would do another.

II. Paul's Defense

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:17

In his defense here Paul asks some questions.

1. Did I use lightness?

Paul is asking them if they thought he used "fickleness" when he had made his plans. The word "lightness" means "fickleness" and the word fickle means "to change frequently". In other words Paul is asking them if they thought he was wavering when he made the plans. Apparently the critics had convinced some of the believers at Corinth that Paul was a man that told people what they wanted to hear and then he did what was convenient for him.

2. Did I make my plans according to the flesh?

Here Paul is asking them if they thought he made his plans to please the flesh.

3. Did I say, "Yes, yes and no, no?"

Here he is asking them if they thought he was speaking "out of both sides of his mouth". In other words the critics were accusing Paul of telling people what they wanted to hear.

The bottom line was the critics of Paul were saying that he was just operating as any worldly person would. They were saying that he was a man who could not be trusted because he made promises and he never saw them carried out. So the entire thing was that if his word could not be trusted then neither could his written letters.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:18

Here is a contrast. Paul tells the Corinthians that just as God is true to His Word so Paul was also true to his word. He tells them he did not say "yes" and "no". He did not speak out of both sides of his mouth. He was a man who was true to his word and he had made plans to visit Corinth but circumstances out of his control stopped him from going.

Application:

Let us take a few minutes here and consider the importance of being true to our word. Let me show you what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:33-37

³³ *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:*

³⁴ *But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:*

³⁵ *Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.*

³⁶ *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

³⁷ **But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.**

There were many in Jesus day who were entering into oaths and were not keeping their end of the oath. They would swear by heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, and even by their own head. But they would not follow through because they believed if they did not swear by the name of the Lord that they were not bound by the oath. Jesus told them not to stop what they were doing and just be true to their promises. If they made a commitment they were to follow through with it. They did not need to enter an oath for in God's eyes their promises were just as binding as the oath.

This is exactly the way our lives are to be lived. We are to be people who are true to our promises. It is not wrong to enter into an oath but Jesus just wants us to know that our promises and just as binding as an oath. James says the same thing.

James 5:12

¹² *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

Ephesians 4:25

²⁵ *Wherefore putting away lying, **speak every man truth with his neighbour:** for we are members one of another.*

The point we need to understand is that is it not the nature of the believer to say one thing and do another. The nature of a true believer is to be true to their word. Let me show you why this is.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:19

Here we see that Paul declares that Jesus is TRUE to every one of the promises He has made.

John 14:6

⁶ *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:20a

All the promises of God in Christ are ,“YES” which means they are true and can never be broken.

Hebrews 6:18

¹⁸ *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

Numbers 23:19

¹⁹ *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*

1 Samuel 15:29

²⁹ *And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.*

Notice 1 Corinthians 1:20 again.

The end of this verse is interesting. Paul says that “in him is amen”. Let me explain what Paul is saying here. He is stating that God is TRUE to every promise He has made. We who are believers know this and so we hold on to His promises and we give Him glory and shout “AMEN”. This then is anchor for this life knowing that God is true to His Word and we can count on Him to fulfill His promises.

Hebrews 6:18-19

¹⁸ *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

¹⁹ *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;*

Here the writer of Hebrews speaks of the hope we have in God's faithfulness being the anchor of our soul. This makes us sure and stedfast.

Now let me get you back to Paul's thought. God's nature makes it impossible for Him to lie. When he says, "YES" we can say, "AMEN" because we know it is a sure Word of Truth. So since God's Word is True Paul is stating that his word is also true because he has within him the very nature of God.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Paul now states that he has within him the very nature of God and therefore it would be against the nature of God for Paul to say one thing and do another. In other words it is not the nature of the True believer NOT to be True to his or her word.

This is exactly what Paul is saying to the Corinthians. Some were believing the critics and had questioned the integrity of Paul. But Paul response was that as a child of God it would totally be against his NEW nature to NOT be True to his word.

Conclusion/Application:

This is a great reminder to you and me. When we were saved we too were given the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³ *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

¹⁴ *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Every believer receives the Spirit at the moment of salvation. This does not happen at a later time in the life of the believer as some teach.

Romans 8:9

⁹ *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Now since we have the Holy Spirit we also have the nature of God therefore we are to be true to our word just as God is to His Word.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The point of the application for us is that when we make a promise or a commitment we are to see it through to the end. There are sometime reasons why we cannot fulfill what we have promised just as in Paul case. But when there are no legitimate reasons to keep us from being true to our promises then we must see them through. This is a big part of our testimony.