

"Paul's Love"

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:

Introduction: Last week in our study of 2 Corinthians we looked at 1:15-22. In these verses Paul wrote about his plans to visit Corinth 2 times. He had planned to go Corinth as he had described in 1 Corinthians and then he changed those plans. In his new plans he determined to through Corinth on his way to Macedonia and then after he departed Macedonia he had planned to stop in Corinth again.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:15-16

Because of circumstances out of Paul's control he was not able to carry out the plans. This is where the critics stepped in to paint THEIR picture of Paul's character. Let us always keep in mind that the critics were false teachers who desired to get within the church at Corinth to spread their false doctrine. In order to do this they needed to discredit Paul's teaching and therefore in an attempt to discredit Paul's letters and his teaching they attacked his character. So it was the letters of Paul which were the Word of God that was under attack.

In our study last week we looked at how Paul explained to the believers at Corinth that he did not make his plans as some worldly man would. His plans were not made in the flesh and he did not promise one thing and then do another. He then went on to explain to them as a child of God Paul had within him the Spirit of God and therefore it would be completely contrary to the Christian character for him or anyone else who is a true believer to speak and then not be true to their word.

As we continue in our study tonight we shall see other reasons why Paul delayed his visit to the city of Corinth. Not only were there circumstances out of his control that caused him to delay his visit but there were also reasons which he could control which caused him to delay his visit.

I. **Paul's Wisdom**

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:23

Paul had appealed to the highest human court which was his conscience and here he calls the Greatest Witness to the stand and that is God. Paul was letting them know that God knew his heart and God knew the reason why he had not yet made his journey to Corinth.

Here we see that Paul delayed his visit so as to spare the Corinthians. This means Paul had decided that he did not want to come with a rebuking spirit about him. He had made one visit that seems to have been confrontational and had even written a letter that was very sharp and pointed. So he did not desire to inflict upon them anymore pain.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:24a

This verse contains much wisdom for church leadership.

Paul first of all states that he did not have dominion over their faith. The idea here is that Paul did not desire to lord over their faith. Paul did not see himself as a dictator. But there is even more to this and I really want you to understand what the Spirit is stating here. Paul had written 1 Corinthians and he had made a short abrasive visit so they knew what they needed to do. They knew they needed to deal with the sin within their own lives and within the church. He knew that it would do no good to force them to conform to God's Word. If he were to force them to conform then it would not be of God. So Paul had stated the Truth and then he waited for God to do His work within their hearts. He waited for them to be TRANSFORMED by the Spirit.

This is a very important principle which needs to be understood by the church today. It does no good to force a person to live a certain way because if they are forced to change then the change is not of God and God is not in it. They will eventually return back to the sin. The proper way to handle these situations is to speak the Truth of God's Word and then step back and give the Spirit time and room to work in the heart of the individual. This does not mean that Biblical discipline is neglected. Biblical discipline is often what God uses to work in the heart of His children. Let me show you an example of this.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 11-13

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

² And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

³ For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

⁵ To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

¹¹ *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

¹² *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?*

¹³ *But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

Here was the situation in Corinth. This man was to be put out of the church and to not be permitted to fellowship with the other believers. The discipline was to help him to see the seriousness of sin. After he was put out it was then that God was able to work on his heart. He was basically committed to God to allow God to work on his heart. He would later be permitted to come back into the fellowship but it was only after he had showed Godly sorrow and repentance. In other words they took him back into the church after God was finished with him.

This is the very approach which Paul took with the church at Corinth. Let me show you the results.

2 Corinthians 7:6-9

⁶ *Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;*

⁷ *And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.*

⁸ *For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.*

⁹ *Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.*

Let me show you another example of this in action.

Luke 15:11-20

¹¹ *And he said, A certain man had two sons:*

¹² *And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.*

¹³ *And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*

¹⁴ *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

¹⁵ *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*

¹⁶ *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.*

¹⁷ *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*

¹⁸ *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*

¹⁹ *And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

²⁰ *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

When the prodigal son left home the father allowed him to leave and then he waited. He did not attempt to force him to stay. He did not try to conform him to into what he wanted him to be. He allowed him to go out and he gave God the space to work in his life and to change/transform his heart which is exactly what God did.

So Paul would not use his office as an Apostle to lord over the Corinthians.

I want to show you what the Bible Knowledge Commentary says concerning this.

"Dictatorial means can produce compliance but not the obedience that comes from faith. Authoritarian domination is often the manner of false apostles and the kingdom they serve but this is not the way of Jesus Christ."

Luke 22:25-27

²⁵ *And he [Jesus] said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*

²⁶ *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*

²⁷ *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

Jesus made it very clear that His disciples were not to be as the Gentiles who lord over their people. Instead His disciples were to have the hearts of servants. Notice what Peter wrote.

1 Peter 5:1-3

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.

Notice 2 Corinthians 1:24b

Instead of lording over their faith Paul tells them that he was a helper of their joy. The point is they were fellow workers in the body of Jesus Christ. Let me show you a verse that we looked at last week.

2 Corinthians 1:21

²¹ Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

Paul was not called to be an apostle so as to lord over those in the church. He was a fellow worker with those who were of the body of Jesus Christ.

This is a great example of what a Pastor of the church is. He is a man who works alongside of his flock. Paul tells us here that there is joy within the body of Christ when the leaders work alongside the people.

Notice 1 Corinthians 2:1

Paul had made one visit in heaviness but he was determined that he would not come to them in heaviness again. He had said what he needed to say and now he would allow God to do His work within their hearts. Paul refused to beat them down in spirit.

Notice 1 Corinthians 2:2

The Christian life is to be a life of joy. If Paul continued to beat them down it would not do them any good nor would it be a help to him because they were supposed to be a source of joy in his life. For Paul to come in heaviness again would just cause conflict between them and Paul again so he determined he would keep his distance until God was finished working in their hearts. Let me show you what Clark says about this verse.

"Because of the scandals that were among them he could not see them comfortably; and therefore he determined not to see them at all till he had reason to believe that those evils were put away."

Have you ever had someone you desired to see but because of sin in their life it was just not comfortable to visit them or to be in their presence? It just makes an awkward situation and while no one may bring up the sin still everyone is aware of the "elephant" in the room. This would have been the situation between Paul and the Corinthians. Therefore he chose not to step into that awkward situation and just to give God time to work.

What a great lesson in all of this for us. If there is someone we love who steps into a life of sin it is right for us to point out their sin. But it will do absolutely no good to keep badgering them. There comes a time when we must step back to give God the space to work with them.

Notice 2 Corinthians 2:3

Now Paul was sensitive and he was compassionate but he did not and he would not ignore sin. So he wrote to those at Corinth so that they could address the issues in the church. He wanted to visit them and rejoice together but that would only happen if they would repent.

Notice 2 Corinthians 2:4

This verse is so very important because we see that 1 Corinthians and the sharp, pointed, lost letter were both written out of love for the believers at Corinth. Paul loved these people and this is what true love does, it confronts the sin that exists within a believer's life.

Conclusion:

Too many believers have been misled into believing that we should never point out sin in another believer's life. I have heard many quote the Words of Jesus in John 8.

John 8:3-7

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.*

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PM Service

This was a situation where the religious leaders were trying to trap Jesus and they were looking to condemn the woman.

When we point out sin in a fellow believer's life we are not condemning but we are showing love.

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.