

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 21ST, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

ABUNDANT LOVE (2 CORINTHIANS 1:23-2:4)

TELL THE TRUTH

Paul takes a **serious oath on his life, calling on God as a witness**, when Jesus taught that we should live out what we say in a way that oaths are not necessary (Matthew 5:33-37).

- It is not taught that oaths are prohibited, but that **we should do what we say and not use oaths to add weight to our words or to deceive.**

A SACRIFICIAL SERVANT (MARK 10:44-45)

Paul could have used his authority and demanded respect, but **he operated from a place of patience and love instead of lording his authority over them.**

- Paul is clearly a leader of men, but he is not anyone's lord. **He sets the example for leaders in the church to be co-laborers with their people to increase joy.**

PAUL SHOWS WISDOM AND RESTRAINT

Some in Corinth thought Paul was **not a man of integrity and did not come to them a second time out of selfish reasons.**

- Paul shows that his decision not to visit the church in Corinth after leaving Macedonia was not done selfishly, but out of **great concern for them and wanting to spare them another sorrowful visit full of conflict and unpleasantness.**

WORKING TOWARD A PLEASANT VISIT

Paul wanted to give them **time to process his rebukes and remove the opportunity for them to react hastily out of offense or hurt.**

- Paul wrote a letter so that when they met face-to-face, they would have had time to **consider Paul's words, realize his great care for them, and hopefully apply the things he wrote about.**

THE PAINS OF CONFRONTATION

Paul wrote the severe letter out of an extremely troubled and anguished heart. **Paul found no delight in correction, nor did he shy away from it.**

- Paul makes it clear that he did not intend to hurt them. Instead, **his willingness to correct them was born out of his abundant love for them.**

UNFORGIVENESS (2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11)

"THIS PUNISHMENT BY THE MAJORITY..."

An unnamed man had caused trouble, so **Paul instructed the church to discipline him for his sake and the sake of the church.**

- Whether this is the same man in 1 Corinthians 5 or a different man, it appears that the church disciplined, and the man responded, repented, and was restored. However, **the minority had not offered forgiveness and comfort to him.**

WE MUST DO BETTER!

Too often in church, we see the same mentality of the Corinthians and we swing from one extreme to another. **We either ignore sin and keep a casual attitude about it or treat those who have genuinely repented too harshly.**

- We either **lack discipline or the grace of forgiving and comforting those who have committed an offense and are truly repentant.**

SEEING IF THEY ARE OBEDIENT IN EVERYTHING

Paul shows that the purpose of restoring a sinner through church discipline was accomplished, so **he instructs them to forgive and affirm their love for him.**

- We should feel sorrow for our sins, but **we are not to feel excessive sorrow because of our treatment post-repentance, lest we become discouraged.**

CULTIVATING PEACE

We are to speak truth in peace, exposing the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11-14, Colossians 4:6). There is a difference between peacekeepers and peacemakers. Passivity is not peace, and there cannot be peace without purity (James 3:13-18).

- The things we allow to fester or sweep under the rug tend to multiply and become worse in the end.**

"SO THAT WE MAY NOT BE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF"

To "take advantage" means **to cheat someone out of something that belongs to them.**

- If we ignore the reality of an enemy and his schemes against us, we open ourselves up to be taken advantage of. **We allow Satan to take the things that belong to us through Christ, things like joy, peace, contentment, freedom, and salvation.**

"FOR WE ARE NOT IGNORANT OF HIS SCHEMES"

Satan schemed against the man by exploiting a **weakness** of the flesh. Then through **isolation, hopelessness** and **despair** set in because of his sin. Satan schemed against the church through their **tolerance of sin, undue harshness** in punishment, and **withholding of forgiveness**. Satan tried to use these conflicts in Corinth to **rob Paul's peace and make him less effective in ministry.**

THE AROMA OF CHRIST (2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-17)

UNABLE TO FIND REST IN HIS SPIRIT

Paul says **the Lord opened a door** for him, blessing his efforts, yet **he had no rest in his spirit.**

- The remarkable success Paul had in spreading the gospel in Troas was **overshadowed by the deep concern he had for the Corinthians while awaiting Titus and his report.**

"BUT THANKS BE TO GOD..."

Paul draws from the **image of a Roman victory parade to communicate the triumphant victory he has in Christ.**

- In a Roman victory parade the commander of the army would ride through town **displaying the spoils of war, including the captive enemy.** The Roman priests would walk with the procession **burning incense.**

"TO GOD WE ARE THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST"

The same aroma meant two different things depending on what group you were in. To the triumphant side, the incense meant **life and victory**, but to the conquered, it meant **defeat and death.**

- Paul sees Christ as the victor and we are the fragrance that follows, communicating His victory. **The gospel communicates life to some and death to those who reject it** (John 3:17-21).

WE SPEAK WITH SINCERITY

Paul reflects on God's plan to redeem humanity and our role in communicating it to the world and asks, **"Who is adequate for these things?"**

- Paul answers this question in the next section of his letter but here he assures the Corinthians that **the gospel is too powerful and important to water down and that the message he taught is pure and transparent.**

TRUE LOVE

- To truly love means **we put them first, but also we must be willing to put their good ahead of everything else.**
- True love **helps others grow.** For plants to thrive, they need pruning. Discipline is evidence of true love (Hebrews 12).
- To truly love someone means **we must forgive and encourage others.**

THE SCHEMES OF SATAN

- Through the Spirit are we aware of the schemes the enemy is trying to use against us right now? **Is there a weak point in our life that Satan is trying to exploit and gain a foothold?**
- One scheme of the enemy is to **keep us fighting a battle that has already been won.** "We do not fight for victory; we fight from victory" (Wiersbe).