

Second Corinthians 2

Introduction:

1. When you open the Bible, you should be fully convinced and excited that you have God's inspired words before you.
2. Having concluded the first chapter with a reason for not visiting Corinth (1:23-24), Paul gives further reasons (2:1-11).
3. Having called for the exclusion of the fornicator (I Cor 5:1-13), Paul now calls for his complete restoration (2:5-11).
4. Having introduced his recent preaching itinerary (2:12-13), Paul teaches the sovereignty of God in preaching (2:14-17).

Outline of Chapter 2:

- 1-4 Further explanations for not visiting.
- 5-8 Restoration of excluded fornicator.
- 9-11 Forgiveness would preserve the church.
- 12-13 Recent itinerary and preaching.
- 14-17 Total triumph of pure gospel preaching.

2:1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

- A. He ended chapter one defending his deferred visit out of mercy for their many problems (1:23-24).
 1. He was righteously angry enough after the first epistle to have come with an apostolic rod!
 2. He was waiting for their correction of the problems, so he would not have to visit with authority.
- B. He then added further explanation for not visiting yet – his desire to come only in joy and gladness.
 1. Paul made a “personal decision” that he would wait to see a repentant church with gladness.
 2. Every faithful and true minister dislikes sorrow for a church's sins and the heaviness of rebuke.
 3. Like a good father, Paul would so much rather have joy and peace with his children, not grief.

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

- A. Paul and others loved visiting churches for the mutual comfort and joy in the gospel (Acts 11:23; Romans 1:12; 15:24,32; II Timothy 1:4; II John 1:4,12; III John 1:3-4).
- B. If Paul had visited in apostolic authority to correct their many errors, he would have made the very party sad by whom he wished to be made glad. He would deny himself the pleasure of the church.
- C. Every wise father and pastor will observe and reflect on the prudent reasons for Paul's wise choices.

2:3 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.

- A. Paul had written his rebuke to them rather than visit them, so the visit could be much more pleasant, if they would heed his instructions, reproofs, and warnings, and correct their numerous problems.
 1. Paul “wrote this same” to them; it does not say, “I write this same” unto them, as in this epistle.
 2. Paul is referring to his first epistle, where he gave remedies and expressed reluctance to chasten.
 3. The next verse clearly indicates that Paul was referring to his first epistle written in great grief.
- B. He had written clearly enough with threats of coming in apostolic judgment (I Cor 4:18-21; 5:1-13).
- C. Paul desired Corinth to correct their errors by his first epistle, so his second visit could be joyful.
- D. Paul was confident in the most part of the church that considered his apostolic joy to be their joy.

2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

- A. Paul's first epistle to Corinth, filled with reproofs and corrections, was sent in affliction and anguish.
 - 1. Paul's intent was not merely to be authoritative and correct them, but to save them (7:8-11).
 - 2. Parents may say and believe their words before child discipline, "This hurts me more than you."
 - 3. To be like the Most High, those in power cannot afflict or grieve their subjects arbitrarily; there must be a just and holy cause (Lam 3:33; Isaiah 28:21; Ezek 18:32; 33:11; Heb 12:9-10).
- B. His purpose was not merely to grieve or rebuke them, but to show his great ministerial love for them.
 - 1. All ministers should learn here to dislike and resent chastening and discipline to be like Paul.
 - 2. If ministerial authority must be exercised, then it should be done fully, but yet done with grief.
 - 3. Fathers should make certain that their children know their great love in correcting their children.

2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

- A. Paul's affliction and grief in the first epistle was in this context by the single incestuous fornicator.
 - 1. An entire chapter in the first epistle is dedicated to the punishment of this sinner (I Cor 5:1-13).
 - 2. The following verses indicate clearly that this is Paul's line of reasoning about "any" and "he."
- B. Paul had only been grieved in part, in that he was not equally upset with the whole church, but primarily with the incestuous fornicator and his party only.
- C. Paul knew that not all the church was as guilty as the fornicator, so he guarded himself against extreme measures and taking out excessive judgment on the rest of the church.

2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

- A. Paul calls for an end to the church discipline brought against the incestuous fornicator by the church.
 - 1. Paul had commanded his exclusion from their communion and companionship (I Cor 5:1-13).
 - 2. The punishment he had endured was enough for the case, and they should now end it as a church.
 - 3. The following verse indicates that he was approaching a point of being swallowed up with grief.
- B. Here is where we obtain apostolic direction for receiving repenting brothers back into fellowship.
 - 1. Exclusion is a punishment, and it is a severe one; let all effeminate compromises take notice.
 - 2. It is more than losing communion; it is also losing friends (Rom 16:17-18; II Thess 3:6,14-15).
 - 3. It is less than Rome and her barbarian torture of heretics, imprisonment, banishment, or death.
 - 4. The demonstrative "such" indicates that we are to follow similar procedures for similar sinners.
 - 5. There are more than forty sins similar to fornication (I Cor 5:11:6-9-10; Gal 5:19-21; etc., etc.).
- C. Church judgment is a congregational ordinance, which must be unanimous in following Jesus Christ.
 - 1. The use of the word "many" does not imply a mere quorum or any other minority or majority.
 - 2. The apostle gave the law for Christ's churches being of one mind in judgment (I Cor 1:10).
 - 3. Church discipline is not a ministerial ordinance, but rather an act of the whole church (I Cor 5:4).

2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

- A. Opposite of the way you have been treating him, now it is time for forgiveness, comfort, and love.
 - 1. From these words, we understand the fornicator was not forgiven, comforted, or loved during his time of exclusion and shunning. It was now time to specifically and specially do all three.
 - 2. Gentleness and compromise do not deter sinners or protect Christ's churches, in spite of what seeker sensitive types may think. The church of the old covenant would have stoned him!

- B. Godly ministers will manage the discipline of church members to find the righteous length of time.
 1. The minimum must establish repentance, be a punishment, and clear the party (II Cor 7:10-11).
 2. The maximum must be short of discouraging the repentant brother and driving him to despair.
 3. The wisdom required is little more than that required of every father with children (Col 3:21).
- C. The minimum time for exclusion of one year for any offence cannot be taught from this passage.
 1. There is no more basis for this connection than numbering the elect by Methuselah's age.
 2. It cannot be proved how long or how deeply this fornicator had been repenting for his sin.
 3. It cannot be proved how much time transpired between his exclusion and his restoration.
 4. Every sin and its circumstances are different, requiring varying degrees of judgment in clearing.

2:8 *Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.*

- A. In contrast to his earlier request for his exclusion, he now calls for his full restoration (I Cor 5:1-13).
- B. The clear conclusion, "wherefore," is based on sufficient punishment and avoiding too much grief.
- C. If the angels of God rejoice over a sinner that repents, then a church should rejoice (Luke 15:7,10)!
 1. It should be one of their most sublime moments on earth to show the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.
 2. Let the same zeal as the prodigal's father drive the celebration of restoration (Luke 15:22-24).
 3. If anyone resents a celebration over a repenting sinner, look out (Luke 5:29-32; 15:1-3; 18:9-14)!

2:9 *For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.*

- A. Having given reasons for writing his first epistle and delaying a visit, he now gives a further reason.
 1. The adverb "also" connects us to previous reasons given for the first epistle, not the second.
 2. He had written and not visited in order to spare them from his apostolic authority (1:23-24).
 3. He had written and not visited in order to give them opportunity to repent and reform (2:3).
 4. He had written and not visited in order to prove his love of them through a harsh epistle (2:4).
 5. He now explains that his epistle had given them an opportunity to prove their fidelity to Christ.
- B. Having confirmed their obedience in excluding the fornicator, he then called for his full restoration.

2:10 *To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;*

- A. Paul confirmed his agreement with their forgiveness toward the fornicator, as in the place of Christ.
 1. He made a general rule of approving their forgiveness, though the fornicator was in context.
 2. And he also pointed out that he approved the forgiveness for the benefit of the whole church.
- B. The switch from the present tense, subjunctive mood to the past tense, indicative is right (I Cor 5:3).
 1. Paul used a similar style in calling for his exclusion: he had already passed apostolic judgment.
 2. He is being as thorough as possible in sanctioning their forgiveness by his apostolic authority.

2:11 *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

- A. Here is a text often quoted without its context, which makes it a pretext or at best a very weak text.
- B. How would Satan get an advantage of the church for not forgiving the repentant, excluded brother?
 1. He could certainly destroy the sinner's heart through despair in turning away from Christ (2:7).
 2. The purpose of exclusion and shunning is not destruction, but rather salvation (I Cor 5:5).
 3. Satan could use excessive harshness in church discipline to get advantage of the whole church.
 4. Bitterness and lack of mercy are trademarks of the murderous and merciless devil (John 8:44).
 5. Excessive judgment and harsh treatment of sinners can be as destructive as ungodly compromise.
 6. It is a spiritual warfare that we are fighting, and a lack of forgiveness gives place to the devil.
 7. The wisdom from hell is that of bitter envy and strife among the people of God (James 3:14-16).
 8. The Holy Spirit is the source of peace, Whom we grieve by not forgiving (Rom 14:17; Eph 4:3).

9. Division and strife are the devil's tools for conquering churches from the inside (Gal 5:14-16).
10. Churches that are harsh, unmerciful, and vengeful are dead without Christ (Pr 21:16; Rev 2:5).

2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

- A. Paul made a definite transition from the restoration of the fornicator to glorify his gospel preaching.
- B. The delay in visiting Corinth had not been wasted, for God had used him well in the city of Troas.
- C. God can open (1) doors of opportunity to preach, (2) liberty in doing so, and/or (3) hearts of hearers.
- D. In spite of the open door at Troas, he was greatly affected by not hearing from Titus about Corinth.
- E. The welfare of each church and all the churches were important enough to Paul to cause this care.
- F. Paul confirms his great affection and care for the church at Corinth by these two transitional verses.

2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

- A. In spite of the open door at Troas, Paul was greatly affected by not hearing from Titus about Corinth.
- B. Leaving a blessed situation in Troas, Paul went to Macedonia to discover how Corinth was reacting.
- C. He did encounter Titus there, where he received much comfort by a good report from Corinth (7:6).
- D. Paul makes repeated references to Titus and Corinth in this epistle (7:6,13-14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18).

2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

- A. Let us grasp the sense clearly from the opening text of this profound and neglected section (2:14-17).
 5. Paul had already transitioned from restoring the fornicator to defending his ministry (2:12-13), which he pursued for several chapters with little interruption (3:1,6; 4:1-7; 5:9-12,18-20; 6:1-10).
 6. Thanksgiving belonged to God for His gracious operations in apostolic preaching of the gospel.
 7. This is a ministerial text, in that Paul used the pronoun "us" for preachers of the word (2:17).
 8. Paul always triumphed, whether positively at Troas (2:12), or negatively at Ephesus and Macedonia (1:8-10; 7:5), in preaching the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.
 9. God used apostolic preaching to reveal the savour that the truth provoked in men, for the gospel justified damnation in those rejecting it and salvation in those believing (I Cor 1:18-24; 2:14-15).
 10. As the following verses show, God received a sweet aroma from apostolic preaching about God and His Son Jesus Christ to both the saved and the lost in every place (2:15-16).
 11. Paul and sincere ministers like him are always victorious preaching the truth, regardless of the response, for God is glorified by the aroma from both believers and unbelievers (4:1-7).
 12. The gospel of Christ properly preached creates a manifest division and display of human hearts, for it confronts men with what they will do with God's Son (Matt 10:34-39; 21:44; Luke 2:34-35; John 7:12,43; 9:16; 10:19; Acts 14:4; 28:24; I John 2:19; etc.; etc.).
 13. The preaching of the gospel, which conveys the knowledge of God and the witness of Jesus Christ to the world, is a sweet savour, or aroma, to God in every place.
 14. The Corinthian saints were manifestly declared to be the children of God by their response (3:3).
 15. God is to get all the praise for this incense by the gospel, for the work is of God (I Cor 2:1-5).
 16. Measuring godliness by the quantity of the believers and followers, which is the common criterion today by which most men measure their ministry, is patently false (I Tim 6:3-5).
- B. Paul had success at Troas (2:12), but he had opposition at Ephesus and Macedonia (1:8-10; 7:5).
- C. Consider Paul's comparable burden of thanksgiving for the Thessalonians (II Thess 2:9-17).

2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

- A. God's true ministers, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, are a sweet savour to God in all hearers.
 - 1. The savour is not to the saved or perishing, but rather to God, by way of preaching the truth.
 - 2. Gospel preachers are a sweet aroma to God of Jesus Christ, for they preach Him to all hearers.
 - 3. God is honored by the faithful declaration about His Son, regardless of how men respond to it.
- B. Preaching is a savour "in them that are saved" by revealing their ordination to eternal life.
 - 1. Men wish it read, "We are a savour unto God in them that are being saved by our preaching."
 - 2. But it states that they are already saved [perfect tense], in agreement with the rest of the New Testament (John 3:3; 8:47; 10:26-27; Acts 13:46-48; I Cor 1:18,24; 2:14-15).
- C. How is preaching to the perishing a sweet savour of Christ to God? Because it justifies damnation.
 - 1. John and Jesus warned their generation often of judgment (Matt 3:7-12; 21:33-46; 22:1-7).
 - 2. When men reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, they judge themselves worthy of hell (Acts 13:46).
 - 3. When men reject truth of God and Christ, they deserve delusion to damnation (II Thess 2:9-12).
 - 4. God is honored by the smoke of the torment of his enemies arising from hell (Rev 14:10; 19:3).

2:16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

- A. Faithful preaching of the pure gospel is a sweet savour to God of Christ regardless of the response.
 - 1. Paul had just explained that ministers always triumph in preaching the apostolic gospel (2:14).
 - 2. And he had just explained the sweet savour applied to both the saved and the perishing (2:15).
- B. The faithful preaching of Jesus Christ to those who will perish is a sweet savour to the blessed God.
 - 1. The preaching to them is the savour of death unto death – the gospel reveals their dead vital condition (John 8:43,47; 10:26; Acts 7:51; I Cor 1:18,22-24; 2:14; II Cor 4:3-4; II Thess 3:1-2).
 - 2. The preaching to them is the savour of death unto death – they are worthy of the second death (Pr 8:36; Mark 16:16; John 3:18,36; 8:24; Acts 13:46).
 - 3. The savour of "death unto death" reveals a dead soul by the dead reaction of a rebel (Eph 2:1-3)!
 - 4. Natural men think the gospel is foolish, and they despise and ridicule it (I Cor 1:18,22-23; 2:14).
 - 5. The Lord Jesus Christ will soon return to destroy all those rejecting the gospel (II Thess 1:7-10).
 - 6. No man will ever be sent to hell without having had opportunities to recognize God (Rom 1:20).
- C. The faithful preaching of Jesus Christ to those who are saved is a sweet savour to the blessed God.
 - 1. The preaching to them is the savour of life unto life – the gospel reveals their living vital condition as children of God (John 3:3; 5:24; 6:47; 8:47; 10:27; I Cor 1:18,24; I John 4:15; 5:1).
 - 2. The preaching to them is the savour of life unto life – they shall surely inherit eternal life through Jesus Christ (John 5:24; Acts 13:48; Rom 10:9-17; II Tim 1:9-10).
 - 3. Only those already born again by the creative act of God believe and obey the gospel, and it is these elect and predestinated souls that shall also inherit eternal life in the world to come.
 - 4. Paul loved to preach the gospel to saved saints, for only they truly benefit by it (Rom 1:8-17).
- D. The gospel is never the savour of death unto life, as 99% of people false think and preach today.
 - 1. The majority of Christians are sacramentalists; even Baptists think the gospel brings eternal life.
 - 2. The gospel does not bring life and immortality; it only brings them to light (II Timothy 1:9-10).
 - 3. The gospel only saves in a practical way of imparting knowledge to the elect (I Cor 1:21; 15:2; II Thess 2:9-14; I Tim 4:16; Jas 1:21; 5:19-20).
- E. Who is sufficient for these things? What minister grasps his role in God's grand plan of salvation?
 - 1. What minister is able to fully understand the power and wisdom of God in only saving some?
 - 2. What minister is able to fully understand the divisive nature of the gospel in glorifying God?
 - 3. No matter what the minister may do, only God can give increase (I Cor 3:5-9; II Tim 2:25-26).

4. The sufficiency is the comprehension or ability of God that makes the difference in a man's ministerial labors, which Paul teaches in the following context (II Cor 3:1-6; 4:1-7).
5. The Corinthians proved God's sufficiency in changing their hearts and using Paul ministerially.

2:17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

- A. There were, are, and always will be many who corrupt God's word to alter His gospel purposes.
 1. Many are disappointed with few believers, so they alter the message to attract even the perishing.
 2. But the proper preaching of the gospel will reveal the elect and drive away the reprobates.
 3. Here are seeker sensitive types with their casual worship, compromising doctrine, and so forth.
 4. If we modify the message and requirements of the gospel enough, all men will want to be saved!
 5. There is no cultural or environmental change that will cause the lost to get saved (Isaiah 26:10).
 6. There is no appeal, argument, or illustration that will cause the lost to get saved (Luke 16:31).
 7. Therefore, Paul preached without man's wisdom to leave the issue in God's hands (I Cor 2:1-5).
 8. The gospel is foolish and offensive, a stumbling block, and it must stay that way (I Cor 1:18-24).
 9. Consider in Paul's day the problems with Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, counterfeit epistles, false apostles, doctrines of devils, and other corrupters (Acts 15:1; Rom 16:17-18; I Cor 15:12; II Cor 4:2; 11:3-4,13-15; Gal 1:6-9; 2:1-5; 3:1; 5:1-12; II Thess 2:1-3; I Tim 1:19-20; 4:1-3; 6:3-5; II Tim 2:16-18; 3:1-5; 4:3-4; Titus 1:9-11; 3:10-11; II Pet 2:1-3; I John 4:1-6; II John 1:7-11; III John 1:9-10; Jude 1:4; Rev 2:2,9,14-15,20; 3:9).
- B. The text also condemns Bible revisers and their annual model changeovers to appeal to the lost.
 1. It is amazing that many think earlier manuscripts must be purer, because corruption came later!
 2. These faithless skeptics will ignore 500 fruitful manuscripts to adore 1 earlier fruitless one.
 3. The case for Vaticanus and Sinaiticus falls into this category of profane reasoning for antiquity.
 4. Of course, since this verse is so condemning, modern versions changed "corrupt" to "peddle."
 5. They evade guilt by changing the crime from corrupting God's word to peddling it for a profit.
- C. Paul sincerely preached the gospel of Jesus Christ with great solemnity and without human wisdom.
 1. He preached sincerely, as an ambassador from God, who was measured by God, for Jesus Christ.
 2. He refused to allow any human modifications to make the message more palatable (I Cor 2:1-5).
 3. He made the truth as manifestly clear as he could and left the rest to God (II Cor 4:1-7; Col 4:4).

Conclusion:

1. There are practical lessons by Paul's example of wise and prudent dealing with this church (2:1-4).
2. There is instruction for sound church practice in forgiving and restoring excluded members (2:5-11).
3. There is a lesson of God's sovereignty through the gospel and its inviolate presentation (2:12-17).

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "[Why Preach the Gospel?](#)" which details the purpose and effect of gospel preaching.
2. The sermon outline, "[Church Discipline](#)," which details the process of exclusion and restoration, including 2:6-11 above.