



— SECOND — CORINTHIANS



The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People

Part 8 — “Wisdom in the Midst of Strained Relationships” (2 Cor. 1:23–2:4) — 5 November 2023

Introduction: Relational Strife in a Fallen World

Paul addressed criticism of his change of plans to visit Corinth by focusing on the clarity and reliability of the message that he and his companions had preached about Messiah. If the Corinthians could trust the Lord Jesus, they should trust His apostle, Paul. In order to demonstrate the unity they had together in Christ, Paul highlighted what God had done for them in the past, what He was doing in them presently, and what He would do in the future. Paul then went on to explain to them the reason that he did not come again to Corinth but instead chose to write to them.

Main Point: Relational strife in a fallen world is _____. Believers should therefore be characterized by the _____ of the Lord in seeking, as is possible, to be reconciled to one another.

The Painful Reason for Paul’s Change of Plans

Introductory Considerations

I. The strained _____ between Paul and the Corinthians is the primary focus of the passage.

“pain” —λύπη (*lypē*)—(n.) pain of mind or spirit, grief, sorrow, affliction; used two times in this passage (2:1,3)
—λυπέω (*lypeō*)—(v.) to cause or experience mental or emotional distress or sorrow; used three times in this passage (2:2,4)

⇒ Both Paul and the Corinthians have experienced _____ as a result of their recent interactions.

His surprise _____ to them.

His severe _____ to them.

2. Paul understands that the relationships believers have with one another should be characterized by mutual _____.

“joy” —χαρά (*chara*)—(n.) the experience of gladness; pertaining to a thing which causes joy; used twice in this passage (1:24; 2:3)
—χαίρω (*chairō*)—(v.) to be in a state of well-being or to rejoice; used once here in this passage (2:3) along with a synonym (2:2)

⇒ This is particularly true of _____ and those that they shepherd.

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4

• Paul explained in general terms why he had not returned to Corinth as planned (1:23-24)

Observations:

1. Paul called on _____ as a witness to the truth of what he was saying.

2. The decision was, in his mind, for their _____.

“to spare you”

⇒ This is likely a reference to his _____ that, upon returning to the city, he would have been forced to exercise in bringing discipline upon those of the congregation who remained defiantly in their sin.

“These persons included those who had not repented of their unclean lives, those who have not withdrawn from their associations with idolatry, and those who have been stirring up the dissensions.” —David Garland

3. Paul wanted them to see that the authority he had over them was ultimately for their _____.

“lord it over your faith”

“we work with you”

4. Paul wanted them to understand the authority that they possessed by _____ in the Lord Jesus.

“you stand firm in your faith”

⇒ Because of their faith in Christ, they possessed His authority by His _____ and _____ to address the various issues of sin within their midst.

Key Point: Paul understood the authority that he possessed in the lives of the Corinthians, but he considered _____ to properly exercise it in the wisdom of the Lord.

- Paul went on to explain specifically why he had not made another visit and chose instead to write to them (2:I-4)

Observations:

1. His prior visit had been a source of great pain for both Paul and the Corinthians.

⇒ There appears to have been some kind of confrontation in which Paul _____ an offender or opponent but was not supported by the congregation.

“Paul caused grief to both the offender and the Corinthian congregation by his demand for disciplinary action. There can be little joy in his relationship with the Corinthians until the offender has been disciplined, brought to repentance and restored to fellowship. Then the ‘one’ whom Paul grieved will make him glad.” —Colin Kruse

2. Paul then referenced the ‘severe’ letter and stated his _____ reason for writing it.

“so that when I came I might not suffer pain”

3. He also spoke his confidence in the Corinthian believers.

“for I felt sure”

⇒ Paul was confident in the Spirit’s _____ in them and that they would respond in faith even if the letter included elements of rebuke.

4. He gave them insight into the _____ of his pain in writing the letter.

“much affliction”

“anguish of heart”

5. Although the letter was ‘severe,’ he intended for them to recognize his love for them through it.

“abundant love”

Key Point: Although it grieved him, Paul knew that he had to directly address the matters of _____ within the Corinthian church. He did so, however, in _____ and in accordance with the _____ of Scripture.

Concluding Thoughts

- Sin is the ultimate cause of our relational _____ (Gen. 3:8-13)

Gen. 3:12—The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

- Sin is ultimately dealt with through the _____

2 Cor. 5:21—For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Confronting sin must be done in accordance with God’s wisdom in Christ. (Isa. 11:1-2; 42:1-4)

James 1:5—If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Col. 2:2-3—² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

If we are led to pray...

2 Cor. 13:9—For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for.

If we are led to speak...

Eph. 4:15-16—¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.



SECOND CORINTHIANS

The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People



Part 8 — “Wisdom in the Midst of Strained Relationships” (2 Cor. 1:23–2:4) — 5 November 2023

Introduction: Relational Strife in a Fallen World

Paul addressed criticism of his change of plans to visit Corinth by focusing on the clarity and reliability of the message that he and his companions had preached about Messiah. If the Corinthians could trust the Lord Jesus, they should trust His apostle, Paul. In order to demonstrate the unity they had together in Christ, Paul highlighted what God had done for them in the past, what He was doing in them presently, and what He would do in the future. Paul then went on to explain to them the reason that he did not come again to Corinth but instead chose to write to them.

Main Point: Relational strife in a fallen world is unavoidable. Believers should therefore be characterized by the wisdom of the Lord in seeking, as is possible, to be reconciled to one another.

The Painful Reason for Paul’s Change of Plans

Introductory Considerations

I. The strained relationship between Paul and the Corinthians is the primary focus of the passage.

“pain” —λύπη (*lypē*)—(n.) pain of mind or spirit, grief, sorrow, affliction; used two times in this passage (2:1,3)

—λυπέω (*lypeō*)—(v.) to cause or experience mental or emotional distress or sorrow; used three times in this passage (2:2,4)

⇒ Both Paul and the Corinthians have experienced grief as a result of their recent interactions.

His surprise visit to them.

His severe letter to them.

2. Paul understands that the relationships believers have with one another should be characterized by mutual joy.

“joy” —χαρά (*chara*)—(n.) the experience of gladness; pertaining to a thing which causes joy; used twice in this passage (1:24; 2:3)

—χαίρω (*chairō*)—(v.) to be in a state of well-being or to rejoice; used once here in this passage (2:3) along with a synonym (2:2)

⇒ This is particularly true of leaders and those that they shepherd.

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4

• Paul explained in general terms why he had not returned to Corinth as planned (1:23-24)

Observations:

1. Paul called on God as a witness to the truth of what he was saying.

2. The decision was, in his mind, for their benefit.

“to spare you”

⇒ This is likely a reference to his authority that, upon returning to the city, he would have been forced to exercise in bringing discipline upon those of the congregation who remained defiantly in their sin.

“These persons included those who had not repented of their unclean lives, those who have not withdrawn from their associations with idolatry, and those who have been stirring up the dissensions.” —David Garland

3. Paul wanted them to see that the authority he had over them was ultimately for their good.

“lord it over your faith”

“we work with you”

4. Paul wanted them to understand the authority that they possessed by faith in the Lord Jesus.

“you stand firm in your faith”

⇒ Because of their faith in Christ, they possessed His authority by His Word and Spirit to address the various issues of sin within their midst.

Key Point: Paul understood the authority that he possessed in the lives of the Corinthians, but he considered how to properly exercise it in the wisdom of the Lord.

- Paul went on to explain specifically why he had not made another visit and chose instead to write to them (2:I-4)

Observations:

1. His prior visit had been a source of great pain for both Paul and the Corinthians.

⇒ There appears to have been some kind of confrontation in which Paul **rebuked** an offender or opponent but was not supported by the congregation.

“Paul caused grief to both the offender and the Corinthian congregation by his demand for disciplinary action. There can be little joy in his relationship with the Corinthians unto the offender has been disciplined, brought to repentance and restored to fellowship. Then the ‘one’ whom Paul grieved will make him glad.” —Colin Kruse

2. Paul then referenced the ‘severe’ letter and stated his **personal** reason for writing it.

“so that when I came I might not suffer pain”

3. He also spoke his confidence in the Corinthian believers.

“for I felt sure”

⇒ Paul was confident in the Spirit’s **work** in them and that they would respond in faith even if the letter included elements of rebuke.

4. He gave them insight into the **depth** of his pain in writing the letter.

“much affliction”

“anguish of heart”

5. Although the letter was ‘severe,’ he intended for them to recognize his love for them through it.

“abundant love”

Key Point: Although it grieved him, Paul knew that he had to directly address the matters of **sin** within the Corinthian church. He did so, however, in **love** and in accordance with the **truth** of Scripture.

Concluding Thoughts

- Sin is the ultimate cause of our relational **strife** (Gen. 3:8-13)

Gen. 3:12—The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”

- Sin is ultimately dealt with through the **Gospel**

2 Cor. 5:21—For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Confronting sin must be done in accordance with God’s wisdom in Christ. (Isa. 11:1-2; 42:1-4)

James 1:5—If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Col. 2:2-3—² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

If we are led to pray...

2 Cor. 13:9—For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for.

If we are led to speak...

Eph. 4:15-16—¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.