

2 Cor 2 pt. 1 v.1-11

The context - [2Co 1:23 NKJV] ...that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.

V.1-4 Paul continues to share his heart with the Corinthians, and demonstrates the strained relationship they had. He made it a point that he would not visit them again in sorrow, or heaviness.

There is wisdom in Paul's actions here.

Ever had somebody in your life that every time you met with them it was just heavy? Somebody who maybe you're bound to by obligation but there's no joy in the relationship? That can be draining. AND, that's not supposed to be the case for God's church! Paul says, my joy is of you all! or y'all.

We see too that Paul's lack of visiting wasn't born out of a fear of conflict. We know by his writings and accounts of his ministry that Paul wasn't a coward. So we wouldn't say he avoided visiting because he wanted to avoid conflict but because he cared for them deeply.

Paul carried this abundant, overflowing love for them. Being with them, thinking of them brought joy to Paul's life so he wanted to remind them of that and he wanted to be sensitive to their disposition and was unwilling to travel and stir up their grief needlessly just to prove a point.

He gives us some details into his distraught mindset when writing this letter to them. It pained him to see the state they were in - a church fraught with internal division; critical of God's servants; wounding one another; carelessly and fraudulently exercising the gifts of the Spirit for self-promotion; building cliques and generally running wild.

Paul was a father to this church, and good dads want the best for their kids. It breaks their heart to see their kids in pain.

[1Co 4:14-15 NKJV] 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn [you]. 15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [you do] not [have] many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

To hear of the mess they were in really hurt Paul. This is the heart of a Dad.

AND, with the heart of a father, he didn't write them off and move on to something bigger and better. He loved them enough to reach out to them in the middle of all their mess, to love them, to counsel them.

He loved them abundantly, just as our God does for us - and in that way Paul lived out the unmatched grace of God.

In the midst of all of our mess our God loves us, instructs us, speaks to us. Though we cause Him grief, He will never leave us nor forsake us. We are His children. God will never abandon, nor give up on His children - no matter how big of a mess we make.

No matter how we rage against him, He stands as our everlasting Father, desiring for His children to come home, to be reconciled, to be clothed in His righteousness, and to dwell in His house.

Paul has God's heart, "not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you."

#### V. 5-8 Forgiveness

There was an atmosphere of grief in the Corinthian church, not on Paul's account, but because the fledgling church in Corinth was dealing with some pretty dark stuff.

Paul makes mention of somebody who had caused tremendous grief in the church - so severely that it affected everybody. This is what sin does. In a real life church that is built on relationships and people doing life together there will be collateral damage from our own sin.

We would like to believe otherwise, that our own vices and sins are our own business and nobody else's but that's not how life works. That's certainly not how the church works.

The church isn't made up of a sterile, monochrome, conglomerate of perfect people but is a holy mish-mash of messed up, wounded, and healing people, who are being made into new creations.

Things had gotten so bad that they expelled one of their own from fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). This wasn't done on a basis of moral superiority, but rather exposing the hypocrisy that was in their midst in an attempt to curtail the wounding that was occurring.

Isn't hypocrisy one of the biggest criticisms of the church nowadays...the church is full of hypocrites? People living double lives? We can't trust anybody?

The whole point to this new life is that if you are a new person in Jesus Christ, then you will be new! You will be known by the totality of your personhood not just a few good deeds here and a few good words there. Remember the Pharisees were depicted as white washed tombs!

Paul, was protecting the church, he would not allow falsehood and hypocrisy. He would not allow people to fake it. He would not allow the church to stand idly by and be cool with hypocrisy and duplicity. Having been a pharisee himself he knew the dangers of performance religion.

There is a warning here for those who say, "yeah man, I'm a believer, praise the Lord." Those who can speak fluent Christianese but their hearts are dark, they're living in wickedness, they are poison in the Body.

They are fooling everybody except God. AND, what we find is that those kind of people are poisonous in the rest of their lives too. Trying to convince everybody they're one thing or the other, when they're fraudulent!

Gets me fired up...let's sniff out some sins, let's pass some judgements, let's throw some stones, let's do some excommunications.

The primary thought in all of this though IS...forgiveness, and love. Wow.

That's so counterintuitive to our way of operating. We would reasonably expect, even demand, restitution and copious apologies. In our bones, we just need somebody to be sorry! We want these rank sinners to experience the pain that we've experienced to the fullest extent. We want to revel in their repentance and their anguish.

BUT, Paul, who had experienced so much discomfort, heart ache, grief, criticism...instructs the church, and in a universal sense he instructs us, to forgive and comfort and reaffirm our love (agape) for those who have offended us, those who have wronged us.

[Gal 6:1-2 NKJV] 1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who [are] spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...

Why? That person who had been expelled from fellowship, the person who has been away from fellowship, can end up in such a dark place that they may be destroyed in their sorrow. They may end up completely lost in their grief. And that's not God's heart for anybody.

[2Co 7:10 NKJV] 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance [leading] to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

However, we all end up revealing our own callousness, we say “Amen, you get what you deserve, you reap what you sow!” But listen, that is not God’s heart!

[Psa 34:18 NKJV] 18 The LORD [is] near to those who have a broken heart,  
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

[Psa 51:17 NKJV] 17 The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit, A broken  
and a contrite heart--These, O God, You will not despise.

Have any of us lived blamelessly? No, not quite. We each of us deserve to be swallowed up in our own wickedness, missteps and mistakes - BUT God reaffirms His love for us day after day. His mercies are new to us every morning!

Forgiveness is one of those areas where we give one another license to resist God’s word. We allow for rejection of the one who has displayed contrition, and repentance.

We say “God may forgive you, but I won’t.”

Or we say, “you know man there’s consequences for sin.” That’s true, but sometimes what we mean by saying that is “I am going to inflict some consequences on you for your sin.”

We put ourselves in God's seat to pass judgement and extract restitution when we are instructed to forgive and comfort and reaffirm our love to the broken, depressed, and lost.

V. 9 - The obedience test. It's hard to forgive. We are called by God's word to a level of obedience that we are not comfortable with, and if I'm being honest I don't truly understand the depths of.

We are to reflect the same level of unreserved forgiveness that we find in the cross of Christ, where our sins are separated from us as far apart as the east is from the west, but we must admit that we fall short in this area of obedience.

The Father's heart for us: [Psa 103:10-14 NKJV] 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, [So] great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; 12 As far as the east is from the west, [So] far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father pities [his] children, [So] the LORD pities those who fear Him. 14 For He knows our frame; He remembers that we [are] dust.

This is how we are to demonstrate God's heart in mercy and forgiveness and grace — when every fiber of our being says, “never forget - you would be foolish to do so.”

We even say, “I may forgive, but I'll never forget.” How does that align with vast forgiveness that God displays towards us? It doesn't.

A note to help in forgiveness and extending grace to others: IF God remembers our frame, that we are dust, then we must remember, we are dust, each of us is so fragile, so prone to failure.

We have each of us fallen short of others expectations many times over. We have needed forgiveness. Even so we pray “[Luk 11:4 NKJV] ...forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us...”

So, what is this obedience test? Doing something even when we don't want to.

In regards to the disobedient believer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: “...the man in his disobedience pleads ignorance of the kindness as well as the commandment of God. He complains that God's commandment is uncertain, and susceptible of different interpretations. At first he was aware enough of his disobedience, but with his increasing hardness of heart that awareness grows ever fainter, and in the end he becomes so enmeshed that he loses all capacity for hearing the Word, and faith is quite impossible.”

Do you understand that our disobedience in forgiving, comforting and reaffirming our love for the broken is a trap that is set for our own destruction?! Read on!

V.10-11 Unity in forgiveness, forgiveness for the sake of others.

Satan, the father of lies, desires to take advantage of the church.

In this case, having failed to bring down the church by sin, his trap is to bring down the church through hardness of heart and withholding forgiveness!

Do not be ignorant, forgiveness matters. Obedience to forgive matters, we can't warm the bench on this one.

How many relationships, homes, marriages, churches have been destroyed by withholding forgiveness? Uncountable.

How many saints have turned sour by holding grudges?

Walk in obedience loved ones - forgive, and comfort, reaffirm your love, for Jesus sake - after all He has forgiven us.