

**BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS**  
**FORGIVING THE PENITENT SINNER**  
**2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-17**

**Introduction**

We've seen that this letter of Paul's to the Corinthian Church teaches us some wonderful truths about the comfort of God Who is the God of all comfort!

In chapter 1 we saw how that God comforts us in affliction (if we will allow Him to) so that we can become comforters to others for Him!

Paul even shared his own personal example of how he trusted the LORD through a time of great affliction!

Then we saw last week how Paul defended his integrity against personal attacks by some in the Corinthian Church.

Now we will see in Chapter 2 how we are to comfort a saint who is in need of restoration.

Leading into this subject, Paul continues with the subject of chapter 1 by further explaining his motives for not coming for a visit before this time. Then we'll see that he discusses the sinning saint in the congregation in Corinth. And then finally, he shows that God causes us to triumph in Christ!

**I. PAUL CONTINUES HIS EXPLANATION. (2:1-4)**

**Vs 1**

Paul admits that he was discouraged with them. If he had come to visit them, it would have been in sorrow and sadness.

**Vs 2**

Paul didn't want to come in his sadness, with tears in his eyes. That would have caused them to be sad, too. And then if that had happened, then who would there have been to make Paul glad? It would have been just one big cryfest!

**Vs 3**

Paul wanted to come to them in joy! He had been so hoping to get word from this Church telling him that they had corrected the things about which he had previously written them about!

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Now Paul opens his heart to them in *Vs 4*!

**Vs 4**

There are many people today who fall out with a preacher when he preaches a message that cuts to the heart.

Sometimes correction from the Word of God will really bear down on some! And there are some folks who think that a pastor shouldn't do that. But a faithful pastor must do that!

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-2 – *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*".

Any man of God who stands in the pulpit has a tremendous responsibility to rebuke what is wrong! Many of the saints don't like this, especially if they are in the midst of doing wrong!

Paul tells the Corinthians here that his rebuke was not because he was opposed to them, but because he loved them! A faithful pastor shows his love by preaching the Word of God as it is rather than preaching to what "*itching ears*" want to hear!

**II. PAUL SPEAKS OF RESTORING A SINNING SAINT! (2:5-13)**

Let me remind you that in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, he rebuked them because they were allowing gross immorality to go on in the congregation.

Remember the case of incest in their congregation that Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians 5? They were just allowing it to go on while at the same time they were acting as if they were very spiritual for overlooking it! This was something that even the heathen looked down on, yet the congregation was ignoring it! Paul had written them to get this matter straightened out.

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He told them, ". . . *put away from among yourselves that wicked person*" (1Cor. 5:13). And he warned them against having close fellowship with one such as this!

Well, the Church did listen to Paul and they excommunicated the man.

**Vs 5-6**

So, they had obeyed Paul. They had excommunicated the man, which was the right thing for them to do!

Then the man acknowledged his sin and came under great conviction! Now what were they to do? Well, Paul said they should forgive him!

**Vs 7-8**

Paul is basically saying, "*He will be overwhelmed, not only because of his sin, but because you won't receive him. So now put your arm about him, and restore him to your fellowship.*"

Remember Paul also wrote in *Galatians 6:1*: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*"

**Vs 9-11**

Just as Paul wanted them to be obedient in the matter of Church discipline, he wanted them to be obedient in the matter of forgiving a penitent sinner! (One who was sorrowful and had turned from his sin!)

Unfortunately, there are those who will not forgive anything. That can be the work of the Devil just as much as shutting one's eyes to immorality!

Forgiveness should come easy for us believers because we have been forgiven by our heavenly Father! But sadly many Christian stop being "Christlike" when it comes to real forgiveness.

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Satan gets the advantage of a great many Christians because they harbor an unforgiving spirit! There are two things that we don't see very often anymore, even in our fundamental churches:

1. We don't see many folks confessing and forsaking their sins and asking for forgiveness! (That is what blocks revival!) Instead, what we are seeing more of is that folks want their sins glossed over and overlooked! And even many of those that may confess their sins are unwilling to forsake them!
2. We also don't see folks forgiving those who genuinely confess and forsake their sin.  
i.e. There is an unforgiving spirit in many Churches.  
(This blocks revival too!)

May God help us to remember that we are all capable of any sin! Whatever someone else has done, we are also capable of doing! So, when such a man confesses his wrongdoing and repents from his sin, he is to be restored in the spirit of meekness! He is to be brought back into fellowship! This is the will of God!

We must always remember that the purpose of church discipline is not to punish but to cause a person to repent so that they may be restored.

**Why should we forgive and seek to restore those that have openly sinned and rebelled and then confessed and forsaken their sin?**

1. **For the sake of the sinner. 2 Corinthians 2:7** "*...lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.*"
2. **For the sake of simple obedience. 2 Corinthians 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.*"
3. **For the sake of the church as a whole. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11** "*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; {11} Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*"

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Vs 12-13

Paul came to Troas, and there he found an open door. (i.e. It was the will of God for him to stay there and to preach the gospel rather than proceed on to Corinth at that time.)

Paul was not being fickle. He was being faithful to God! He was faithful to the opportunity which God gave him until God led him elsewhere, which did happen!

Even while he was preaching the gospel in Troas, he was grieved at heart because Titus hadn't come to bring him word concerning the congregation in Corinth.

He waited for Titus to come, but Titus didn't come. Then Paul went over to Philippi in Macedonia. It was there that Titus came and brought Paul word that the Corinthians had dealt with this sin in their congregation and that the man had now repented and had turned from his sin.

**III. PAUL SPEAKS OF THE TRIUMPHANT MINISTRY! (2:14-17)**

Some have called this the power of the ministry! It is part of the greatness of the ministry! I rejoice to be able to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the precious Word of God that the LORD has so graciously given us! This is a grand and glorious picture Paul is presenting here!

Vs 14

Paul is saying that preaching the Gospel is like leading a victory march!

The picture here is of a Roman triumphal entry which they would be familiar with. One of the great Roman generals would go to various places where he would wage war and have victory after victory!

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The conqueror would then return to Rome, and there would be a big, triumphal entry into the city. It is said that sometimes the triumphal entry would begin in the morning and go on far into the night.

The Roman conqueror would be bringing in animals and other bounty which he had captured. In the front of the procession would be the people who were going to be released. They had been captured but would be freed and would become Roman citizens. In the back of the procession would be the captive people who were to be executed.

In these triumphal entries there was always the burning of incense. They would be burning the incense to their gods to whom they gave credit for the victory. All the way through the procession would be clouds of smoke from the incense, sometimes even obscuring the procession as it passed by.

With this as a background, Paul is saying, *"Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."*

This is a wonderful thing! **We can't lose** when we are in Christ! Paul says that God always causeth us to triumph!

Always? In every place? We know Paul had wonderful success in some places he went to, but not so much in others. But Paul triumphed in both kinds of places! He says here that, God **always causes us to triumph in Christ!** Paul was a winner either way because he was obedient to his calling!

As I look back on the ministry God has allowed me to have, there have been many triumphs and many difficulties! But through it all God has always turned even difficulties into triumph through the things I learned or through the things He accomplished in spite of me! Sometimes I couldn't even see all he did until years later! And I'm sure he'll show me even more in the days ahead and in the hereafter!

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It also says there in the last part of verse 14 "*And maketh manifest the savour [the sweet incense] of his knowledge by us in every place.*"  
Read on...

Vs 15

In that triumphal entry were those who were going to be set free as well as those who were going to be executed — but all of them were in the triumphal entry.

Our job is not so much to produce fruit as much as it is to be faithful, share the truth, and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ! When we are faithful to share the truth of the Gospel with others, then they are responsible for what they do with it! But God still gets great glory as His will is accomplished through it all!

Vs 16

Paul is overwhelmed by this — "*who is sufficient for these things?*"

The greatest privilege in the world is to give out the Word of God!  
There is nothing like it! It is glorious to give out the Word of God!  
Do you know why? Because God always causes us to triumph!

When the Gospel is preached and someone accepts Christ, that is wonderful and we rejoice! We can see the triumph there! We are a "*savour of life*" unto those who are saved!

But what about the crowd which rejects Christ? We are a "*savour of death*" to them. Is the Gospel any less glorious when we give the Gospel and it is rejected? No! And our God makes us triumph! We are winners either way! In the end He is glorified either way!

We are in the great triumphal entry of Jesus Christ because He has won! Every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! Every individual will have to bow to Him someday — regardless of whether He is the person's Savior or Judge! No wonder Paul exclaims, "*Who is sufficient for these things?*"

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"*To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.*" Today the incense is ascending; the precious Word of God is going out. And we are a savor of life to some and a savor of death to others!

Vs 17

We are **not to corrupt the Word of God**—by **adding to it** or **taking away from it** or by **changing it in any way!** We are not to **distort it** or **make merchandise of it**, but to give it out in sincerity as the Spirit of God reveals its truth to us!