

## 2 Corinthians 1.12-2.11

**Background:** Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around AD 55/56 a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote Romans from Corinth. He seeks to above all to defend the legitimacy of his apostolic ministry and so restore relationships between himself and the Corinthian church in view of an upcoming visit (hinted at 2.3).

**Theme:** A response to criticisms of ungodliness and insincerity with faithful, Christ-centred gospel ministry and the Faithfulness of God.

**Aim:** To be confident in the faithfulness of Paul's gospel ministry, and the faithfulness of God, leading to obedience to the gospel call for forgiveness

**Opening Question:** How much do you think our culture values truth and trustworthiness today?

### A boast in godly conduct v.12-14

**12** Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity<sup>[a]</sup> and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. **13** For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, **14** as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

- 1) What is Paul boasting in? v.12-13 (What clue is there that this isn't proud boasting?)
  - 2) What impact does he want his ministry to have on the Corinthians? (What future does he look forward to for them?) v.14
- Why is the conduct (/behaviour) of someone who preaches the gospel so important? (How might that impact how we pray for/support those who preach the gospel to us?)

### Faithful God, Faithful messengers, changed plans v.15-24

**15** Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. **16** I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. **17** Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

**18** But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." **19** For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas<sup>[b]</sup> and Timothy—was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." **20** For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. **21** Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,

**22** set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

3) What did Paul originally intend to do? v.15-16. What criticism does he challenge? V.17

4) How does Paul link the Faithfulness of God to his own words? (Why do you think it is important that he does this?) v.18-19

5) How is God's faithfulness seen in Christ? v.19-20

6) How is God's faithfulness seen in the lives of Paul, his co-workers, and the Corinthians? v.21-22

- Why are the reliability of the words of someone who preaches the gospel so important? How should that impact how we speak ourselves?
- What difference does it make to know that all God's promises are 'Yes' in Christ? (How does it impact how we read the Bible? (Cf Luke 24.44) (How does it help us as we wait for some NT promises to be fulfilled?)

#### **A ministry of joy 1.23-2.4**

**23** I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. **24** Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

**1** So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. **2** For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? **3** I wrote as I did, so that when I came I would not be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. **4** For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

7) What was Paul's reason for changing his travel plans?

8) What stands out to you about Paul's heart towards the Corinthians? What does he want most for them? (Why do you think he links joy and faith together? v.24)

- Does anything stand out to you in these verses about the role of emotion and relationship in ministry? How do think this should impact our ministry at All Saints?

#### **The need to forgive the offender v.5-11**

**5** If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. **6** The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. **7** Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. **8** I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. **9** Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. **10** Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the

sight of Christ for your sake, **11** in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

9) What situation does Paul seem to be addressing in v. 5-8? (Why is it important that the offender is forgiven?)

10) How is their willingness to punish and then to forgive linked to obedience? v.10. How is forgiveness possible? v.10

11) Why do you think forgiveness in the church is a way of dealing with Satan?

- How do discipline and forgiveness go together in the life of the church? Why is it important not to have one without the other?

### Wrapping up:

What stands out to you most about the relationship between the church and the gospel preacher? What do you think we at All Saints can be most encouraged by or learn from?

### Notes:

#### More info re. Paul's change in travel plans:

- Originally Paul had planned to travel from Ephesus through Macedonia to Corinth on his way back to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16.5-9)
- In the meantime he sent Timothy to visit the Corinthians on his behalf (Acts 19.22, 1 Cor 16.10-11.). Timothy found the church in turmoil (most likely due to the arrival of Paul's opponents from the east) , so Paul decided to go to Corinth immediately, then travel on to Macedonia before returning to Corinth for a second visit on his way to Jerusalem (2 Cor 1.15)
- Paul's visit was very painful due to the church's rebellion against him (2.1, 5-8, 7.8-13, 11.4). Paul decided it was best to suffer humiliation and leave without retaliating in order to extend mercy to the Corinthians (1.23-24). Once back in Ephesus Paul sent Titus back to Corinth with a tearful and severe letter (now lost), warning the church of God's judgement if they did not repent (2.3-4, 7.8-16)
- To Paul's joy the majority of the Corinthians did repent, but a rebellious minority continued to reject Paul and his gospel. In response, and as another act of mercy, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia in anticipation of his 3rd impending visit to Corinth before going on to Jerusalem.

V. 12-14 It seems likely from these verses that sections of the Corinthian church believe Paul has not conducted himself properly toward them. 2 matters of concern for them = He failed to reappear in Corinth as he'd undertaken to do during his 2nd visit. Instead he sent them a severe letter. Second his refusal to accept payment (11.7-9) was thought to have been inspired by craftiness

v.12 -14 **boast** - the word is used more in 2 Corinthians than any other of Paul's letters. His use here contrasts with the ungodly boasting of the culture. He knows that boasting can only be in the Lord and so his use of the word here is similar to 'confidence' or 'justifiable pride' rather than some kind of self glorification

## V.12 conscience - 2 Cor 4.2 /5.11

v.14 their boasting in him is appropriate because *their salvation can't be separated from his ministry to them. He evangelised them, 1.19, fathered them in the gospel, 6.13, and will present them to Christ. They owe their reconciliation with God to Paul's labours.*

v.18-20 as God is faithful, so too is Paul's 'word'. As God's apostle His personal 'word' is tied with his gospel 'word.' God's faithfulness is seen in the Son of God preached in Corinth as God's unambiguous Yes to all His promises, as proclaimed by the apostles. (Cf Luke 24.44)

v.21 God is the guarantor of our relationship with Christ. God confirms Paul's gospel word and the Corinthians as Christ's people in giving them the Spirit.

v.22 the 'seal' often in wax is a mark of ownership, but also a guarantee of authenticity  
The Spirit as God's seal and deposit is the evidence within us as individuals and as congregations that the old covenant has been fulfilled but that the coming age is 'not yet'

v.23 The 'grief' of the unscheduled visit arose from the unjust action of a Corinthian against Paul, possibly associated with serious public quarrelling and disorder. Therefore he chose to write to them instead of coming, admonishing them to adopt an active approach to their disciplining Paul's aggressor.

2v.2 further discipline from Paul would bring 'grief' to them, thus destroying their capacity to bring him the gladness appropriate to the relationship between a church and its apostle. His proper role is to mediate the comfort of God to them 1.4 not grief and sadness.

2.3-4 2 Corinthians is the 4th letter that Paul sent to the Corinthian church. (The first letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5.9, the 2nd letter is our 1 Corinthians, the 3rd letter is the (severe) one mentioned here, the 4th letter is our 2 Corinthians)

2.5 Who was the offending man? Although many commentators have identified him as the 'incestuous man' of 1 Cor 5.1-15, 13, there is no compelling reason to do so.  
All that can be said with confidence, is that he had wronged Paul during that visit (7.12, cf 2.10).

2.7 Paul wrote his earlier letter to the Corinthians that they may know his love for them (2.4). Now he exhorts them to show their love to this man who had wronged Paul and whom Paul had forgiven

2.9 their obedience was the symbol or 'proof' whereby Paul might 'know' the greater reality that they acknowledge him to be their apostle and so would welcome him on a future occasion

2.10 The power to forgive was given to Paul 'in the Presence of Christ' (lit in the Face of Christ), as Christ looked on in approval an empowerment.

2.10 It would serve Satan's purposes for the Corinthians to be separated from the authority and influence of the apostle Paul