

2 Corinthians, Part I

STUDY NUMBER 2 – 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

TEXT:

- v. 12 For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshy wisdom but in the grace of God, we ordered our behavior in the world, and especially toward you.
- v. 13 For we are writing nothing else to you than what you are reading and understanding, and I am hoping you will understand until the end.
- v. 14 Just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.
- v. 15 And in this confidence I was wishing at first to come to you, in order that you may be having a second grace,
- v. 16 and to pass through your (city) into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.
- v. 17 Therefore having this desire, I was not vacillating, was I? Or that which I am purposing, am I purposing according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?
- v. 18 But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.
- v. 19 For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us – by me and Silvanus and Timothy – did not become yes and no, but in Him has become yes.
- v. 20 For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.
- v. 21 Now He who is establishing us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,
- v. 22 who also sealed us and deposited the first installment of the Spirit in our hearts.
- v. 23 But I am calling God as witness to my soul, that sparing you I came no more to Corinth.
- v. 24 Not that we are lording it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you stand firm.

Chapter Two:

- v. 1 But I decided this for my own sake, not to come again to you in sorrow.
- v. 2 For if I am causing you grief, who then is making me glad except the one who is made to grieve by me?
- v. 3 And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest when I came I should have grief from those who ought to be making me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.
- v. 4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.

INTRODUCTION:

(How to Get Along with Difficult People by Florence Littauer)

Most vocal in criticizing the pastor and parishioners is Joyce Judging, who comes from a long line of people with discerning spirits. As far as Joyce is concerned, the Christian life is a long list of don'ts for other people, and she feels that God has appointed her as the watchdog of the community. Joyce has a great memory for Biblical instruction, and she feels led to tell other people where they are wrong and how they could improve to be like her. She loves to teach on the gifts of the Spirit and to show how she was personally anointed with the Gift of Correction toward other people.

She loves to tell how the Lord Himself led her down a dim alley to a pawnshop in Tel Aviv where she found the original marble tablet of Moses saying Thou Shalt Not. She keeps it on her mantle at home as a warning to her children, lest they stray from the straight and narrow.

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Joyce is always open to learning new truths, and this very afternoon she, Marvin, and the entire choir will be attending the new symposium, "Music in your Midlife Crisis." Joyce has taken courses on the "inner Life," the "Outer Life," and the "Upper Life." She has been baptized, sanctified, catechized, confirmed, and mesmerized, but all that her religious training seems to have done is provide her with a larger yardstick by which to measure the sins of other people.

Joyce is sincere, studious, and sinless – on the surface – but there are some people who find her superiority difficult.

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(Criticizing by William J. Diehm)

Criticism has caused more unhappiness, shattered more marriages, destroyed more children, discouraged more people, and stopped more progress than any other weapon. Even God doesn't like it. When the children of Israel were wandering through the wilderness on the way to the promised land, their faultfinding, complaints, and critical attitude gave God a heartache, and almost terminated the exodus (Exod. 32:9-10).

Often we fall into the habit of criticism without realizing how destructive our sharp-tongued words really are. In How to Win Friends and Influence People, Dale Carnegie entitle the first chapter, "Don't Criticize, Condemn, or Complain." When I worked for Mr. Carnegie, I asked him, "Why did you start your book with the negative, 'Don't criticize?'".

He replied, "I thought and thought, but I could find no other way of saying the most important idea of dealing with people. That idea is – don't criticize."

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...criticism divides and destroys like a pillaging army. Criticism simply doesn't work, because it hurts people's feelings; they feel put down and lose self-esteem. Criticism discourages people and often depresses them. It starts fights, destroys relationships, and attracts evil influences to itself. Criticism is a half-truth that focuses on bad news, creates

a negative atmosphere, and destroys the love that binds together the family, the community, and the church.

It is for this reason that I pass on to you the simple, but valuable advice, “Don’t criticize!”

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Why do we criticize? On the positive side, it may be because we are interested in others and desire to correct things that are wrong. Parents don’t want their children to make the same mistakes they did, so they criticize. Employers think of criticism as a management tool, and some people think that criticism is the only way to help change others.

Unfortunately, most critics do not realize how much criticism hurts – unless, of course, they are subjected to it themselves. Most critics suffer from low self-esteem. Many are insecure and become critical in order to protect themselves against criticism.

Some people are critics because they have developed the habit of being negative. In their attempt to correct others, they are honestly trying to improve them. But when we focus only on the negative, we let it grab the center stage. To harp on the negative gives one a negative attitude.

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A Listening Heart

One Sunday morning an old cowboy entered a church just before services were to begin. Although the old man and his clothes were spotlessly clean, he wore jeans, a denim shirt and boots that were very worn and ragged. In his hand he carried a worn out old hat and an equally worn out Bible.

The church he entered was in a very upscale and exclusive part of the city. It was the largest and most beautiful church the old cowboy had ever seen. The people of the congregation were all dressed with expensive clothes and accessories. As the cowboy took a seat, the others moved away from him. No one greeted, spoke to, or welcomed him. They were all appalled at his appearance and did not attempt to hide it.

The preacher gave a long sermon about hellfire and brimstone and a stern lecture on how much money the church needed to do God’s work.

As the old cowboy was leaving the church, the preacher approached him and asked the cowboy to do him a favor. “Before you come back in here again, have a talk with God and ask him what He thinks would be appropriate attire for worship.” The old cowboy assured the preacher he would.

The next Sunday, he showed back up for the services wearing the same ragged jeans, shirt, boots, and hat. Once again he was completely shunned and ignored.

The preacher approached the man and said, “I thought I asked you to speak to God before you came back to our church.”

“I did,” replied the old cowboy.

“If you spoke to God, what did he tell you the proper attire should be for worshipping in here?” asked the preacher.

“Well, sir, God told me that He didn’t have a clue what I should wear. He said He’d never been in this church before.”

Daily Special

Breakfast

We went to breakfast at a restaurant where the “senior’s special” was two eggs, bacon, hash browns and toast for \$1.99. “Sounds good,” My wife said. “But I don’t want the eggs.” “Then I’ll have to charge you two dollars and forty-nine cents because you’re ordering a la carte,” the waitress warned her. “You mean I’d have to pay for not taking the eggs?” My wife asked incredulously. “I’ll take the special.” “How do you want your eggs?” “Raw and in the shell,” my wife replied. She took the two eggs home.

DON’T MESS WITH SENIORS

I OWE MY MOTHER

1. My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE. “If you’re going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning.”
2. My mother taught me RELIGION. “You better pray that will come out of the carpet.”
3. My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL. “If you don’t straighten up, I’m going to knock you into the middle of next week!”
4. My mother taught me LOGIC. “Because I said so, that’s why.”
5. MY mother taught me MORE LOGIC. “If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you’re not going to the store with me.”
6. My mother taught me FORESIGHT. “Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you’re in an accident.”
7. My mother taught me IRONY. “Keep crying, and I’ll give you something to cry about.”
8. My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS. “Shut your mouth and eat your supper.”

9. My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM. “Will you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!”
10. My mother taught me about STAMINA. “You’ll sit there until all that spinach is gone.”
11. My mother taught me about WEATHER. “This room of yours looks as if a tornado went through it.”
12. My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY. “If I told you one, I’ve told you a million times. Don’t exaggerate!”
13. My mother taught me the CIRCLE OF LIFE. “I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.”
14. My mother taught me about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION. “Stop acting like your father!”
15. My mother taught me about ENVY. “There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don’t have wonderful parents like you do.”
16. My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION. “Just wait until we get home.”
17. My mother taught me about RECEIVING. “You are going to get it when you get home!”
18. My mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE. “If you don’t stop crossing your eyes, they are going to freeze that way.”
19. My mother taught me ESP. “Put your sweater on; don’t you think I know when you are cold?”
20. My mother taught me HUMOR. “When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don’t come running to me.”
21. My mother taught me HOW TO BECOME AN ADULT. “If you don’t eat your vegetables, you’ll never grow up.”
22. My mother taught me GENETICS. “You’re just like your father.”
23. My mother taught me about my ROOTS. “Shut that door behind you. Do you think you were born in a barn?”
24. My mother taught me WISDOM. “When you get to be my age, you’ll understand.”

25. And my favorite: My mother taught me about JUSTICE. “One day you’ll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!”

WOMEN’S REVENGE

“Cash, check or charge?” I asked, after folding items the woman wished to purchase. As she fumbled for her wallet I noticed a remote control for a television set in her purse.

“So, do you always carry your TV remote?” I asked.

“No,” she replied, “but my husband refused to come shopping with me, so I figured this was the only legal thing I could do to him.”

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN (A MAN’S PERSPECTIVE)

I know I’m not going to understand women.
I’ll never understand how you can take boiling hot wax,
Pour it onto your upper thigh,
Rip the hair out by the root,
And still be afraid of a spider.

MARRIAGE SEMINAR

While attending a Marriage Seminar dealing with communication,
Tom and his wife Grace listened to the instructor,
“It is essential that husbands and wives know the things
That are important to each other.”
She addressed the man,
“Can you describe your wife’s favorite flower?”
Tom leaned over, touched his wife’s hair gently and whispered,
“It’s Pillsbury, isn’t it?”
The rest of the story gets rather ugly, so I’ll stop right here.

CIGARETTES AND TAMPONS

A man walks into a pharmacy and wanders up and down the aisles. The sales girl notices him and asks him if she can help him. He answers that he is looking for a box of tampons for his wife. She directs him down the correct aisle. A few minutes later, he deposits a huge bag of cotton balls and a ball of string on the counter.

She says, confused,

“Sir, I thought you were looking for some tampons for your wife?”

He answers, “You see, it’s like this, yesterday, I sent my wife to the store to get me a carton of cigarettes, and she came back with a tin of tobacco and some rolling papers; cause it’s soooooooooo much cheaper. So, I figure if I have to roll my own.....so does she.

WIFE VS. HUSBAND

A couple drove down a country road for several miles,
Not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an
Argument and neither of them wanted to concede their
Position. As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats,
And pigs, the husband asked sarcastically,

“Relatives of yours?”

“Yep,” the wife replied, “in-laws.”

(Criticizing by William J. Diehm)

When you criticize someone, the result is often a counterattack. Accept, and you will be accepted; criticize and reject, and you will be criticized and rejected. We need to do as Jesus did – accept people unconditionally just as they are. If you want to see change take place in others, remember that it comes first of all from acceptance. If you cannot accept a person, then you cannot change him or her.

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Paul, in 2 Corinthians, must now turn from COMFORT TO CRITICISM.

He has been criticized by the Corinthian congregation over the fact that he changed his travel plans and therefore his word cannot be trusted.

I am sure that a number of the critics in the audience, as the letter was read, felt terrible when they heard the report of Paul’s affliction in Asia.

1:8 For we are not desiring you to be unaware, brethren, concerning our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of living.

Their critical spirits certainly had not sustained Paul in a very difficult conflict that he was facing in Asia.

How beautifully Paul responds to this situation, however, in verse 11:

You also joining in helping us through your prayers, in order that thanksgiving may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many.

You will find that it is a principle of life that it is PRETTY TOUGH TO CRITICIZE SOMEONE YOU ARE PRAYING FOR.

- v. 12 For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshy wisdom but in the grace of God, we ordered our behavior in the world, and especially toward you.

Paul begins immediately to meet this criticism that has come to him and his ministry. “FOR OUR GLORYING IS THIS” – we have something to be proud of. And that glorying is this: “THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE.”

1 Samuel 16:7

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

Psalms 119:165

Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.

Acts 24:16

In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

1 John 1:5-7

And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

“FOR OUR GLORYING IS THIS, THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE, THAT IN HOLINESS AND GODLY SINCERITY”

Here the apostle Paul characterizes his ministry to the Corinthians in the following two ways:

1. HOLINESS
2. GODLY SINCERITY

HOLINESS looks at ACTION, and GODLY SINCERITY looks at ATTITUDE.

HOLINESS looks OUTWARD, and GODLY SINCERITY looks INWARD.

Holiness is from the heart, and as a result: is real.

Dr. Norman Wakefield in his book Solving Problems Before They Become Conflicts says,

The Scriptures clearly state that God is a pure, righteous, holy Person. He is complete in every way – the only being that is absolutely whole, absolutely without defilement. Furthermore, in His love for man He is committed to bring every child of God to this same perfect completion. His own declaration “Be holy, because I am holy” expresses His intent to do so.

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God’s primary strategy to achieve practical holiness involves problems, trials, and suffering. From God’s perspective we have already been made holy through the death of Christ on the cross. Through the active ministry of the Spirit within us now, the daily reality of holiness is being worked out in our lives.

We should not be surprised that growth in spiritual wholeness occurs this way. It is a basic principle of life, which operates even in the natural world. An authority on motivation says, “Obstacles are your friends; you can’t grow without them.”...

Yes, obstacles, problems, and trials are essential ingredients in healthy growth. Should we expect they would be any less vital to spiritual life and maturity?

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We now understand a little better why these verses follow immediately upon the first chapter. We learned in our first study that God allows suffering to come into our lives so that we might have a ministry with other people. And now we understand that this suffering also has a ministry in us, and that is, a ministry of producing holiness and godly sincerity.

“FOR OUR GLORYING IS THIS, THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE, THAT IN HOLINESS AND GODLY SINCERITY, NOT IN FLESHLY WISDOM BUT IN THE GRACE OF GOD, WE ORDERED OUR BEHAVIOR IN THE WORLD, AND ESPECIALLY TOWARD YOU.”

Here the apostle makes a negative and a positive statement:

Negatively: This holiness and godly sincerity is not in fleshly wisdom.

Our behavior has not been unholy pretending or the wearing of a mask or living in the realm of hypocrisy.

James 3:14-16

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Whereas this holiness and godly sincerity did not come in fleshly wisdom, it did come in the grace of God.

Paul's conduct is a result of a relationship. He has come to know Jesus Christ, and the work of the Spirit of God in his life transforming him into the image of Jesus Christ has brought about this holiness and godly sincerity in his life.

You notice that it is IN THE GRACE OF GOD. It is not legalism. It is not a performance that is being spelled out here.

You can always tell the legalist because they have the list of rules and regulations in order for them to be acceptable to God. You have Sally Spiritual and Polly Pious. They quickly mount their spiritual soapboxes and toot their holy horns.

“NOT IN FLESHLY WISDOM BUT IN THE GRACE OF GOD, WE ORDERED OUR BEHAVIOR IN THE WORLD, AND ESPECIALLY TOWARD YOU.”

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

(The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians by Charles R. Erdman)

He had been charged with fickleness and double-dealing. This charge was based on three alleged grounds. First of all, he was approaching Corinth by a route different from that which he had promised to take. Secondly, after assuring the Corinthians of a speedy visit, he had long delayed his coming. Thirdly, he was now advising leniency toward the very man upon whose punishment he had insisted with such force.

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(If Those Who Reach Could Touch by Gail & Gordon MacDonald)

The principle of transparency focuses on the question of how much we will permit others to know about us. We could call it “knowability.” That of course would be the opposite of “unknowability,” and to the extent that any of us is “unknowable” the quality of our relationships will suffer.

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The very first indication that there was something wrong in the relationship between Adam and God came when there was suddenly an absence of transparency on Adam's part. The Bible says that God came into the garden seeking Adam. But Adam hid. He was ashamed, he said, and apparently he didn't want anyone, especially God to take note of his new-found condition of shame and embarrassment. There's no indication that he really understood what it was that was bothering him, but he seems to have known instinctively that whatever it was he didn't want the penetrating eyes of God to get hold of it. Thus, he hid, shutting the windows into his life for the first time.
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It is one thing to avoid transparency when with others. It is an ever more serious matter when we slowly become less transparent to ourselves. As we noted before, this can be called self-deceit. Unable to face some truth about a part of our lives, we being to suppress it, shading or bricking it over so that we can be done by lying to ourselves, blaming the event upon someone else, remaking the actual history into a story that is more suitable to our pride. Before long we have created a form of personal propaganda, which we not only share with others but come to believe ourselves.
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- v. 13 For we are writing nothing else to you than what you are reading and understanding, and I am hoping you will understand until the end.

The church in its history has been famous for its petitions and letter writings to maliciously destroy the reputation and confidence in the leadership.

Paul is saying here, "We are writing nothing else to you than what you are reading and understanding, and I am hoping you will understand until the end."

Plummer translates this 13th verse by saying,

Do not believe for a moment that I write one thing at one time and another at another. I write nothing different from what I have written before. My meaning lies on the surface. You read it and you recognize it as true, and I hope that the time will never come when you refuse to recognize it as such.

- v. 14 Just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

The problem in Corinth is a problem of partial knowledge. They didn't have the full picture.

Paul is saying that we are in this together. "We are your reason to be proud and you are also our reason to be proud at the judgment seat of Christ, that is, in the day of our Lord Jesus."

I have divided this section into five parts:

1. A CLEAR CONSCIENCE – verse 12-14
2. THE ITINERARY – verse 15, 16
3. THE QUESTIONS – verse 17
4. WHAT GOD HAS DONE – verses 18-22
5. SPARING AND SORROW – verse 23-2:4

In my mind's eye I see the apostle Paul pulling out his travel voucher from the travel agency and going over his original itinerary here in verses 15 and 16.

- v. 15 And in this confidence I was wishing at first to come to you, in order that you may be having a second grace,

As the apostle Paul was planning his trip, he was planning on coming to the city of Corinth first and then going on north to Macedonia and returning to the city of Corinth on the way back.

Basically, he is saying: my plan was to see you on the front end of the trip and the back end of the trip.

I wanted to see you going and coming.

My purpose in this plan was so that “you may be having a second grace.” You may be having the privilege of seeing us twice.

- v. 16 and to pass through your (city) into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.

Now the apostle explains the geography of this trip. He was going to come to Corinth first and then go on into Macedonia, which is 200 miles northwest to see the congregations in Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi. Then from Macedonia in the northwest to come to you.

He was going to stop off going and coming.

“AND BY YOU TO BE HELPED ON MY JOURNEY TO JUDEA.”

It was the purpose of the apostle, as we are going to see later in the epistle, to take an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. And he is wanting to come back through Corinth on the way and hoping they will help him on his journey to Judea.

This is 800 miles southeast of Corinth, 750 miles by water and 50 miles by land to get to Jerusalem in the province of Judea.

Whereas in verses 12-14, Paul speaks of his personal integrity, his transparency, his clear conscience, in verses 15-16 he has outlined his itinerary.

Now as we come to verse 17, we come to the third part of the passage:

3 THE QUESTIONS

To bring the truth to the surface. There are two questions in this verse:

- v. 17 Therefore having this desire, I was not vacillating, was I? Or that which I am purposing, am I purposing according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?

The word THEREFORE points back to what has been said.

These questions expose the critical spirit that is there in Corinth.

THEREFORE HAVING THIS DESIRE, that is, to visit them on these occasions...

QUESTION #1: "I was not vacillating, was I?"

I was not uncertain, going back and forth. I was not fickle in the sense that I said one thing and planned on doing another.

Paul is saying, "I wasn't flittin' and fluttering around from flower to flower like some butterfly in a haphazard fashion was I?"

Isaiah 50:7

Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will be put to shame.

1 Cor. 14:8

For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

1 Kings 18:21

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Joshua 24:15

But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the

River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

QUESTION #1: “Having this desire, I was not vacillating, was I?”

QUESTION #2: “Or that which I am purposing, am I purposing according to the flesh, that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”

In essence, Paul’s ministry in Corinth was in jeopardy because of his critics who were using this as an occasion to say that Paul is terribly uncertain. He is vacillating to and fro in his leadership, and you really cannot depend upon his word. They are saying that he can make a statement but his word doesn’t mean anything.

He is saying yes, yes and no, no at the same time.

(Criticizing by William J. Diehm)

In Revelation 12:10, Satan is called the “accuser of our brothers.” Accusation and criticism are Satan’s chief weapons. When the sons of God presented themselves before the heavenly throne (Job 1:6), the devil was there to criticize the human beings on earth. The book of Genesis tells how he began his approach to Adam and Eve by criticizing God. The book of Revelation depicts Christ riding a white horse with the sword of the Spirit coming from his mouth. This symbolizes the final defeat of the stinging words of Satan by the Word of Christ.

Whenever we pick up a weapon that Satan uses to fight and destroy – such as criticism – we endanger ourselves because that weapon is on his side.

Encouragement is a tool. Criticism is a weapon.

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Abraham Lincoln wrote a sharp letter of reproof to General Mead for failing to attack General Lee when the situation was favorable. He said, “I do not understand, General, how you could have failed to attack General Lee when he was on your side of the river. Now that he is on the other side of the river, it is much more hazardous to attack. You have prolonged the war and cost us the lives of thousands of young men. I am deeply disappointed.”

President Lincoln never mailed the above letter. It was found among his papers after his death. Even though the criticism was justified, Lincoln may not have wanted to be guilty of bitterness, and so he criticized with reluctance. Perhaps no man in history has received more criticism than Abraham Lincoln. His response to his critics was that he was doing the best he could. And when it was his turn to criticize, he would not allow even a hint of bitterness to creep in.

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Matthew 7:1-5

“Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye; and then you will see clearly enough to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

Romans 14:10-13

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall give praise to God.”

So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another any more, but rather determine this – not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.

In verses 18-22 the apostle Paul brings God into the picture. Whereas we have seen in verses 12-14 Paul has a clear conscience, in verses 15 and 16 he has outlined his itinerary plans. In verse 17 he has asked two questions, and now:

4. WHAT GOD HAS DONE - verses 18-22

The apostle Paul does not confront the Corinthians by himself but rather turns their minds away from the criticism to God Himself and what He has done.

The quicker you can bring God into the picture in the midst of your conflicts, the great potential for solution to the problem.

v. 18 But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.

“BUT AS GOD IS FAITHFUL” In other words, you can depend upon His word. He keeps His promises. You can stake your life on what He says.

“BUT AS GOD IS FAITHFUL, OUR WORD TO YOU IS NOT YES AND NO” That is, yes and no at the same time.

Like God you can depend on our word. When we say something, you can rely upon it. We will do what we promise.

v. 19 For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us – by me and Silvanus and Timothy – did not become yes and no, but in Him has become yes.

Now the apostle beautifully brings the Lord Jesus Christ into the conflict.

Before he is through, he will have the whole Trinity in the picture.

In verse 18 God is faithful, and now in verse 19 “the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us.”

The Lord Jesus Christ was the message of the three of us: I, Paul, and Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy.

We were not uncertain in our preaching. It “did not become yes and no, but in Him (Jesus Christ) has become yes.”

There is no vacillating or flitting around back and forth in the realm of uncertainty when it comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him there is no yes and no, but in Him has become yes.

In the Lord Jesus there is a certainty. In the Lord Jesus it is positive. In the Lord Jesus there is acceptance.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”

You can be assured that when you come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to get a “yes” answer.

When you die and ask the question in glory: “Can I come in?” in Jesus Christ, you’ll hear: “Yes.”

“Am I accepted?” In Jesus Christ, “Yes.”

“Is there a place for me?” In Jesus Christ, the answer is “Yes.”

v. 20 For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

As the apostle continues his argument, he makes the simple statement that: “as many as may be the promises of God (and they are numerous), in Him (that is, in Jesus Christ) they are yes; wherefore also by Him (that is, the Lord Jesus) is our Amen (So be it!) to the glory of God through us.”

v. 21 Now He who is establishing us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,

We are going to see four works of God here in these next two verses. And in these two verses we are also going to see the Trinity operative in this great transaction.

1. The first word that stands out in verse 21 is the word ESTABLISHING.

“NOW HE WHO IS ESTABLISHING US WITH YOU IN CHRIST”

The foundation of our common relationship is on the Rock – even Jesus Christ.

1 Cor. 3:11

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

“AND ANOINTED US IS GOD,”

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the evidence of regeneration. We are established in Christ when we receive Him by faith. We are then indwelt permanently by the Spirit of God, and the apostle uses the term “anointed” here to refer to this work of the Spirit of God.

He continues this work on into verse 22.

So the first two key words that we have looked at are:

1. ESTABLISHING us with you in Christ
 2. ANOINTED us
- v. 22 who also sealed us and deposited the first installment of the Spirit in our hearts.
3. The third word is the word SEALED.

The Daily Bread reading for Thursday, August 11 was entitled “Sealed Power”:

At one time in history a seal placed upon an official document or letter carried with it all the influence and authority of the ruler or government that applied it. The signet affixed to Christ’s tomb, for example, represented the full power of Rome and no Roman citizen dared to tamper with it.

Once we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we are sealed by God with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all the might and authority of heaven is available to protect and help us. In Beams of Light H. L. Hastings illustrated this by saying, “You write a letter. There are only two words in it, perhaps, but you put it in an envelope and put a stamp on it and drop it in the box. It is now out of your reach. Nobody touches it now but a sworn official of the government. And perhaps thousands of miles away, through flood and flame and storm and hindrances of various kinds, that little stamp carries the letter. It has all the power

of the government behind it. It is a little piece of paper of no account at all, but when you have the government stamp on it, you have got the government behind it. So when a man has the seal of God upon him, you may think you can restrain or crush him, but He who has all power in heaven and earth is behind him. If He says go, he goes. Fellow believer, God seals us with His Holy Spirit. He is the guarantee of God's presence, protection, and power. Let us go forth, then, not fearfully but with the confidence that we have the Lord's seal upon our lives.

God's guidance and help that we need day to day,
Is given to all who believe.
The Spirit has sealed us, He's God's guarantee
Of power that we can receive.

“WHO ALSO SEALED US AND DEPOSITED THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS.”

4. The fourth word here is the word DEPOSITED.

As God did this good work in our lives of establishing us in Christ and anointing or indwelling us with the Spirit of God, sealing us by that selfsame Spirit, making it an eternal transaction and a guarantee of future destiny, he also deposited the first installment of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians 1:13, 14

In, Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, the praise of His glory.

The Spirit of God is only the first installment of the fantastic inheritance that God has for us.

We are brought into relationship with Jesus Christ. We become heirs and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus. We have an inheritance to look forward to. And the Spirit of God is only the first installment of the inheritance. We are looked upon as the Bride of Christ, and the Spirit of God is the engagement ring. There is so much more to follow after the wedding feast.

In these five verses the apostle Paul has shown what God has done – the stability of it, the certainty of it, the guarantee of it all. And none of it is cast upon the winds of chance. He has established us in Christ, indwelt us by the Spirit of God, sealed us by the selfsame Spirit, guaranteeing His ownership and deposited the Spirit as the first installment of the inheritance which is ours in Jesus Christ.

Whereas Paul speaks from a clear conscience in verses 12-14,

he outline his itinerary in verses 15 and 16,

he raises the questions in verse 17,

in verses 18-22 it is what God has done,

and now:

verses 23-2:4 – he is telling us why he did not go to Corinth. The words that stand out are SPARING AND SORROW.

He is sparing them and it would have been sorrow to him.

v. 23 But I am calling God as witness to my soul, that sparing you I came no more to Corinth.

God is my witness. He knows my heart. You Corinthians only look on the outside and form your own opinion and judgment. God looks on the inside; He knows my heart. You have already heard the testimony of my conscience but now I am calling the next witness please. GOD is witness to my soul.

“THAT SPARING YOU I CAME NO MORE TO CORINTH.”

The Corinthians church has been a real problem for the apostle Paul. One only needs to read the first epistle written to this church to understand how many problems of interpersonal conflict and party spirit were among these Corinthians.

Paul knew by his coming that he was going to have to be faithful to God and to confront and deal with these problems. And so he is saying that by his not coming he was sparing them the pain of these confrontations.

v. 24 Not that we are lording it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you stand firm.

There is a negative and a positive in this 24th verse. He is not coming into Corinth as some POMPOUS, PIOUS, PROUD PREACHER to lord it over their faith. But he would be coming to Corinth, in contrast, as workers with them, for their own joy; for in their faith they stand firm.

It is not “lording over” but “working with” that the apostle Paul is speaking of here in this verse.

“IN YOUR FAITH YOU STAND FIRM”

Back in chap. 1:7 we read,

And our hope for you is firmly grounded...

1 Cor. 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always bounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

“WE ARE WORKERS WITH YOU FOR YOUR JOY”

The negative things must be dealt with to bring joy.

Joy is the first to fly when we get out of fellowship and live in the realm of disobedience.

Psalm 51:6-12

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
 you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.
 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
 wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
 Let me hear joy and gladness;
 let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
 Hide your face from my sins
 and blot out all my iniquity.
 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
 and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
 Do not cast me from your presence
 or take your Holy Spirit from me.
 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
 and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

(A Theology of Personal Ministry by Lawrence O. Richards and Gib Martin)

Discipleship involves the redirection of the Christian's life toward obedience, so that he might become like Jesus. In view of the truths we've seen about full participation of the whole laos of God in all that it means to be a Christian, we can understand why discipleship is for all Christians.

p. 219

(No More Mr. Nice Guy by Stephen Brown)

Someone tells the story of a college football team that was losing an important game by a wide margin. The coach stood on the sidelines yelling to his team, "Give the ball to Jack! Give the ball to Jack!" But Jack never got the ball, and the team continued to lose. The coach yelled again, "Give the ball to Jack!"

One of the players finally yelled back to the coach, “Jack says he doesn’t want the ball!”
p. 69

(Caring Enough to Confront by David Augsburg)

Care-fronting unites love and power. Care-fronting unifies concern for relationship with concerns for goals. So one can have something to stand for (goals) as well as someone to stand with (relationship) without sacrificing one for the other, or collapsing one into another. Thus one can love powerfully and be powerfully loving. These are not contradictory. They are complementary.

p. 10

Care-fronting is the way to communicate with both impact and respect, with truth and love.

“Speaking the truth in love” is the way to mature right relationships.

Care-fronting has a unique view of conflict. Conflict is natural, normal, neutral, and sometimes even delightful. It can turn into painful or disastrous ends, but it doesn’t need to. Conflict is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. Conflict simply is. How we view, approach and work through our differences does – to a large extent – determine our whole life pattern.

p. 11

Of the five options in conflict situations – (1) I win – you lose, (2), I want out, I’ll withdraw, (3) I’ll give in for good relations, (4) I’ll meet you halfway, (5) I can care and confront – the last is the most effective, the most truly loving, the most growth-promoting for human relationships. But often it will be not the starting point but the long term goal.

p. 17

Truth with love brings healing.

Truth told in love enables us to grow.

Truth in love produces change.

Truth and love are the two necessary ingredients for any relationship with integrity. Love – because all positive relationships begin with friendship, appreciation, respect. And truth – because no relationship of trust can long grow from dishonesty, deceit, betrayal; it springs up from the solid stuff of integrity.

p. 20

(Helping Those Who Don’t Want Help by Marshall Shelley)

Eugene Peterson writes, “Joy, separated from its roots in God...becomes mere sensation. It is as easy to separate experiences of joy from God as it is to separate experiences of suffering from God. If the result of the latter is bitterness, the result of the former is boredom. Our culture has appointed the entertainment and leisure industries as guides to the experience of joy. But they are blind guides.”

Only by reuniting the pursuit of joy with the source of joy will any lasting satisfaction be found.

p. 177

2:v. 1 But I decided this for my own sake, not to come again to you in sorrow.

I couldn't take any more sorrow, and I decided for my own sake not to come again to you in sorrow.

Whereas it was SPARING in verse 23, it is SORROW in verse 1.

Philippians 2:25-27

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

The apostle Paul recognized that the one thing that he did not need in his life right at this point was more sorrow.

v. 2 For if I am causing you grief, who then is making me glad except the one who is made to grieve by me?

Here is the reason, and it is in the form of a question: "If I am causing you grief, who then is making me glad except the one who is made to grieve by me?"

As they would respond to Paul's message and grieve in conviction, it would then be that response which would make the apostle glad.

v. 3 And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest when I came I should have grief from those who ought to be making me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.

Now the apostle return to what he had written them on the previous occasion. He was concerned that when he came, he should have grief from those who ought to be making him rejoice.

He has confidence in them, however, and concludes the verse with a word of affirmation: "HAVING CONFIDENCE IN YOU ALL THAT MY JOY IS THE JOY OF YOU ALL."

It is obvious from that statement that Paul is definitely a SOUTHERNER.

Philippians 1:6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

John 15:11

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

- v. 4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears not in order that you may be made to grieve but in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you.

Now the apostle describes his own situation as he wrote his previous letters to them.

There are four things that really stand out in this verse:

1. AFFLICTION
 2. ANGUISH OF HEART
 3. MANY TEARS
 4. LOVE
1. “FOR OUT OF MUCH AFFLICTION” of which we have seen already recorded in the earlier part of this chapter that came upon the apostle during his ministry in Asia.
 2. “ANGUISH OF HEART” – How he has been torn up inside by the lack of concern on the part of the Corinthians, their critical spirit, their carnality. It has literally wrenched the heart of the great apostle.
 3. I wrote to you with “MANY TEARS.” As he wrote, he found many times the page blotted with tears. It had to be wadded up and thrown in the wastebasket and started all over again.

There is a negative and a positive in the last part of this fourth verse:

Negatively: “not in order that you may be made to grieve”

But positively: “in order that you might know the love which I am having especially for you”

It is a love that is caring enough for the Corinthians to confront and correct.

(Quality Friendship: The Risks and Rewards by Gary Inrig)

God’s love is a tough love, a love that gives and bleeds.
p. 147

We are told that the godly George Mueller prayed constantly, “Lord, keep me from becoming a cranky old Christian.”

p. 161

(A Theology of Personal Ministry by Lawrence O. Richards and Gib Martin)

When we deal with the impact of relationships on personal ministries, we need to remember that God has always been concerned about the development of loving personal relationships. Love between believers is central to the nature of God and those outside the community of faith is also part of the essential nature of God. He loved even while we were still enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10). It is impossible to imagine a vital Christian community without visualizing a loving people who express that love in practical and meaningful ways.

It should be no surprise, then, when we insist that loving personal relationships provide the connect in which God intends personal ministries to take place.

p. 191

(Adventure in Adversity by Paul E. Billheimer)

It may be fitting here to quote from a paraphrase of Emmet Fox: “There is not difficulty that enough agape love will not conquer; no disease that enough agape love will not heal; no door that enough agape love will not open; no gulf that enough agape love will not bridge; no wall that enough agape love will not throw down; no sin that enough agape love will not redeem...”

“It makes no difference how deeply seated may be the trouble; how hopeless the outlook; how muddled the tangle; how great the mistake. A sufficient realization of agape love will dissolve it all...If only you could love enough you would be the happiest and most powerful being in the world.

p. 11

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: How good it is to be able to call upon the testimony of a clear conscience.

LESSON #2: Holiness and godly sincerity are produced in the suffering heart.

LESSON #3: Paul’s genuine character is the product of the grace of God, changing him through a relationship.

LESSON #4: It is never our right or responsibility to be criticizing our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

LESSON #5: God is faithful. His promises are sure. You can count on his word.

LESSON #6: If you are in Christ, when you get to heaven you can count on hearing “yes” to your questions.

LESSON #7: Paul cares enough for the Corinthians to confront them and correct their behavior.

LESSON #8: This letter is written out of much affliction, anguish of heart, and many tears to demonstrate his love for them.

(How to Get Along With Difficult People by Florence Littauer)

What will be your conclusion? Are you willing to make the effort it takes to get along with others? Even with the difficult people?

It's not easy to put other people's interests before our own. It's not natural to find their needs and fill them when we're craving to have someone believe in us. We have to decide whether it's worth the effort or whether we just want to have our own way.

We have to ask ourselves:

How important is it that I make my point, that I win?

Why do I need the approval of this other person?

Does it really matter?

From the time I was a child I remember seeking my mother's approval. I always did well in everything I tackled, and I knew enough not to attempt sports, art, or music because I had no talent in these areas. My mind could learn the rules, principles, or keyboard, but my body wouldn't cooperate. My mother, a violin and cello teacher, was disappointed that I couldn't even hold the bow correctly, so I set out to excel where I could. I got good grades and hoped that Mother would praise me.

Once when I asked her why she didn't tell other people how well I was doing in school after Peggy's mother had bragged about her, she replied, “You never know when you'll have to eat your words.”

Throughout life I've tried to pull a compliment out of Mother, but, while she was never negative, she hung in at neutral. One day within the past year I came home after a frustrating visit. I'd shown Mother my exciting schedule of speaking, including a European trip, a Cancun retreat, and an Alaskan cruise. Her response was, “It's amazing you're so busy considering what you do is something nobody needs.”

I was discouraged and I told Fred of this comment. He looked up and said, “When are you going to grow up and be able to function without your Mother's approval?” I was shocked at this question. I was grown-up, and my success didn't depend on my mother's approval – or did it?

Fred continued, “How old is your mother?”

“Eighty-five.”

“Has she praised you much before?”

“No.”

“Then what makes you think she’ll start today? If she hasn’t been excited about your life before, what makes you expect she’ll change now? Why don’t you stop trying to impress her, and just love her as she is? Isn’t that what you teach others?”

I wish I could say I enjoyed Fred’s analysis and that I was so spiritual that I leaped for his solution. Instead, I just kept quiet and thought about it. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized he was right. My mother is a Phlegmatic personality not given to enthusiasm or vain praises. I am part Sanguine, wanting credit and applause for what I do. How childish of me, understanding the different temperaments will, to be seeking for something my mother’s nature couldn’t give. I was being a difficult person.

As this truth sank into me I realized a principle in getting along with people: “We shouldn’t give them what they desire and not be looking for them to fill our needs. Was I able to do this? Once I faced the situation I was eager to act upon it.

I asked myself, “What does my mother need in her waning years?” She needs to know that she’s important and that she’s not been thrown into that large elderly wastebasket. What does my telling her about my trips do for her? It makes her feel older and of little significance. It in no way builds her up. It makes the difference between our lives – mine exciting and adventurous, hers dull and sedentary – even greater. I was approaching to praise the little girl when I should have been seeking to build her self-esteem.

As I stopped talking at her and began listening to her, I gained new respect for her attitude. One day she said, “I guess my life has been hard, but I’ve never looked at it that way as I was going through it.”

Another day as I asked her to tell me about her feelings for the retirement home in which she was living, she smiled and said softly, “They’ve put me at the head of the table and I’m the only one who has a chair with arms on it.”

What a beautiful summary of my mother’s last days. She had finally been put at the head of the table and she had the only chair with arms on it.

Here I had been trying for years to get her excited over the size of my chair, and all she had wanted was for someone to put her at the head of the table in a chair with arms on it.

I thank the Lord that Fred asked me when I was going to grow up and stop seeking from my mother what she couldn’t give and start giving her what she had always needed.

I began to appreciate Mother’s Phlegmatic and accepting nature. She didn’t get enthused, but she never complained about her circumstances. The last evening I spent with Mother, as the cancer had brought her from 130 pounds to 93, she said, “I’m so grateful I don’t have any pain. So many of the ladies here are in constant pain, and many are crippled and can’t walk. I’m comfortable. I’m just tired.” The next day Lauren brought her home to the room in Lauren’s house where she had lived for three years. Lauren washed and set her hair, and Mother picked the first rose off the bush outside her window. She sat in her room and played with her two great-grandsons. That night back in the retirement home she called her sister Jean in Massachusetts and said, “I wish it were all over, but I’m felling fine. I’m just tired.” She cut the tags off a new nightgown that my son had given her for Christmas that had been “too good to wear.” She put it on, went to sleep, and never woke up.

At the funeral my two brothers and I gave eulogies of what Mother's sweet and gentle spirit had meant to us, and I was able to say, "All she wanted was to sit at the head of the table and have a chair with arms on it, and now we know that she is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He has surely given her a big chair with arms on it."

Ask yourself today, in your human relationships, Are you looking for other people to fill your needs, to give you approval? If you are, you will never be happy. To get along with others we have to ask ourselves:

What is their need?
How can I fill it?

I had to learn to stop seeking from my mother what she couldn't give, and to start giving her what she had always needed.

Don't wait until it's too late; I almost did. Find out what the other person needs, and give it to him. It may be as simple as a chair at the head of the table with arms on it. When you give it to him, he may look at you in a whole new light. Don't make him wait until he gets to heaven to sit at the head of the table. Give him what he needs today.
pp. 161-64