

Exegetical Notes – 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

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Verses 12-14

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 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.

- Paul had spent “some time” in the city of Corinth working among the Christians there (see Acts 18). During that time, he had conducted himself with “integrity and godly sincerity.” Still, rumors about him circulated among the Corinthians that questioned his integrity and sincerity (see 1 Corinthians 1:10-3:22). About this, Paul’s conscience was clear. He knew before God that he had acted as he should have acted even if they did not find that to be true.
- He was not relying on the wisdom of the world but on the grace of God. The two are sometimes vastly different and lead to drastically different plans and actions. Those who look at things from a worldly perspective often misunderstand a man of God.
- But, in 1 Corinthians, Paul had written to the Christians in Corinth in plain words that they could certainly understand. They could, if they were inclined to, understand him and what he had done and taught when he was with them. Someday, when the Lord made all things clear, they would understand him fully. They would see that he was indeed acting in accord with God’s instructions. Then they would be as proud of him as he was of them.

Verses 15-17

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”?

- Because he believed that they would read what he had written and understand that he was following God’s instructions, Paul had wanted to make a double visit to them. He intended to visit Corinth on his way to Macedonia, go on to Macedonia, and then stop at Corinth again on his way to Judea. But, for some reason unexplained to us, Paul changed his plans.
- Apparently, those who did not like Paul in Corinth accused him of being “fickle” because he changed his plans. They accused him of saying one thing and doing another.

Verses 18-23

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 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.

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.

- Paul calls on God as his witness. In changing his plans he was not being fickle.
- He points out that God’s word stands unchangeable. He points out that God’s promises stand unaltered. He points out that he was anointed by God, and all Christians, both he and all the Corinthians, should stand firm in Christ.
- He tells the Corinthians that he did not return to Corinth when he said he would to “spare” them. Apparently, he believed that two short visits to Corinth would only lead to more misunderstanding between him and the Corinthians. So, he resolved not to come to Corinth until he could stay long enough to resolve the situation.

Verses 24-2:4

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. ² 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.

- Paul explains that he does not want to grieve anyone in Corinth. That is not his goal. In fact, he wants to bring joy to them as they bring joy to him. He did not want to upset them by what he said or did.
- He wrote to them to help them not to grieve. He was confident that his letter to them would clear things up between he and the Corinthians. They would understand him and share his joy. It caused him pain to write to them as he had, but it was necessary if he was to stand firm in the Lord. Even though some of them did not see it as did he, he wrote to them as he did out of love and concern for them all.

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