

Integrity in the Ministry

2 Corinthians 1:15-2:4

47-7

Well, after a number of weeks we are greatly privileged to return to our study of 2 Corinthians, and what a joy it is to be back in that magnificent letter of the Apostle Paul in which he defends his character and his ministry. And we are looking at 2 Corinthians now, chapter 1. This morning's text is a rather lengthy one compared to what we can usually cover, starting in verse 15 and running all the way down to chapter 2 verse 4. This lengthy passage of Scripture really can be covered in one message because it is a narrative text and I think is best understood when taken in its completeness.

It's a text that gives us a look into the heart of Paul as a pastor. It's a text at first reading that may seem a bit trivial, it may seem that it doesn't yield many spiritual truths, may not seem to practical at the start. But as you dig a little bit deeper into it, it is profound, it is insightful, and it is a model for me of what a pastor's heart should look like. I appreciate the confidence and the love and the trust and the support and encouragement that you give to me. And I do not take it lightly. I relish it, I rejoice in it and I thank you and I thank God for it. But I also know this, God knows my heart, and the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 5 that the true evaluation of any man will only be left to God who knows the hidden things, the secret things. It is only God who ultimately can give man the praise that he deserves. For whatever praise you render to me I am grateful, for whatever God may render to me I am extremely grateful.

Paul as so often in his ministry was under siege. He was such a worthy servant and we could say why would such a worthy servant be so mercilessly attacked? Well the other side of it was he was also powerful. And because of his preeminent spiritual power in his ministry, he was the target for the enemies' enterprises. Some of us could only wish that we were under siege as much as he is, which would be some evidence of having the kind of power he had. But he was under siege. And it was coming in maybe the most unlikely place, as some would evaluate it, it was coming from a church that he had founded and loved. It was coming from inside that church. It was in the form of sin and mutiny and misrepresentation.

After having spent 18 months of his very valuable life investing in the church at Corinth, literally planting it, starting it, giving it its foundation, and then investing...who knows...how many hours, weeks, months of unending prayer on their behalf, and after having written to them that lengthy epistle we know as 1 Corinthians and a second letter which we call the severe letter, and interacting with people about them continuously since his time there, and now, of course, penning a second letter to them that is in the Scripture, in all writing them four letters, the Apostle Paul had made a major investment. Not only a major investment of his time and effort but a major investment of his love. He had placed tremendous confidence and tremendous affection in their hands and was feeling that even though he loved them more, they were loving him less.

What had happened was some false apostles had come into town and in order to get themselves in

a position to teach lies, they had to discredit the current reigning teacher who was Paul, and so they attacked his character and his ministry...they attacked him on every conceivable level, did everything they could to assault his reputation on every front in order that people's confidence in him might wither and die. And then in the place of the Apostle Paul they would erect themselves as the new gurus and they would begin to espouse their Christ-rejecting error. So they slandered Paul, they maligned Paul, they accused Paul of every imaginable kind of iniquity and compromise and deception both in his life and in his ministry. And as Paul writes this epistle, 2 Corinthians, it has the character of a defense. It is not self-serving, it is not ego-centered, it is humble, it is meek, but it is a defense. It is a defense of his character and a defense of his work. And we've already noted that just in this first chapter.

But as we come to verses 15 and following, he gets into the defense of a particular issue. And it is very, very important. He was being attacked on the issue of his integrity. That is to say that you couldn't trust him, he wasn't truthful. That was the attack. And, of course, that is a very, very important thing if you're going to discredit him. If you can get people to believe he lies, doesn't tell the truth and isn't trustworthy, has no integrity, then you can discredit him entirely.

Now remember, back in verses 12 to 14 he had already given a general defense of his life on the basis of a clear conscience. He said his proud confidence was the fact that his conscience affirmed that he was living in holiness and godly sincerity. So he went to the highest human court which is conscience, conscience from the human level knows more about us than anybody else, and his conscience was clear. So he gave a general defense of his life from conscience side, but now in verse 15 he moves into this whole issue of...is he trustworthy? Can you trust him? Can you believe him? Does he speak the truth? If they can succeed in convincing people that he is not trustworthy, that he is vacillating, they've gone a long way to defrocking him, dethroning him. It's a needless accusation, by the way, it's an accusation that has really no grounds at all. But they concoct some rather ridiculous triviality and exploded into this massive declaration against his integrity.

Look at verse 15. "And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you that you might receive...or, that you might twice receive a blessing." You say, what is the issue? The issue is he promised to come to them, twice and he didn't come. Out of that triviality was concocted this massive assault on the fact that he was a liar, untrustworthy, vacillating, fickle, couldn't be believed. He understands the import of this attack because if this thing succeeds and they are convinced that he doesn't tell the truth, everything he says is lost. And so very early here in the first chapter, very early in the epistle, he tackles this crucial issue.

Now if you read the text with me...at first it seems rather confusing and doesn't yield much, but I want to take you through it.

Pick it up then and let's read it again, "In this confidence I intended at first to come to you that you might twice receive a blessing, that is to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. Therefore I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? For that which I purposed do I purpose according to the flesh that with me there should be yes, yes and no, no at the same time? But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no; for the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no but is yes in Him. 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. And He who establishes us with you in Christ and appointed us is God who also sealed us and gave us the

Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Now that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm. But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful, and this is the very thing I wrote to you, lest when I came I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you."

Now having listened to that you probably had the same reaction I did after I read it through. What in the world is he talking about? Why doesn't he just say I didn't come and here's why? He doesn't do that because the issue is not why he didn't come, the issue is his integrity. The issue is his veracity. The issue is his truthfulness. And what that text yields is an xray of Paul's heart. It is an MRI of his attitudes, it is a glimpse into his inmost character. It is showing us...it's a magnifying glass that shows us the benchmarks of his heart. And as that text unrolls for us, there are seven attitudes that mark him, at least that's what I find here...seven attitudes. And Paul is going to deal with his character here, not just the reason he didn't come. So what you have here is a tremendous xray of the heart of a noble pastor. It's exemplary for me.

But what they're saying is this...if Paul can't be trusted to keep his appointments, if he can't be trusted to do what he says in his travel plans, then why in the world would you believe his theology? That's the bottom line, he's a liar. I mean, that's his character, it shows up in what he told you he was going to do and didn't do it so if his character is revealed in his travel plans, then why would you believe what he says when he preaches? That's their approach and it's just reasonable enough to find some dissenting victims.

He responds then by dealing with his character, not the reason he didn't come because his character is what is under attack. And the first attitude that he demonstrates here is loyalty...loyalty. Verse 15, "And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you that you might twice receive a blessing, that is to pass your way into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea."

He says this, the only reason that I ever made the plan to come in the first place was because I was loyal to you. The only reason I ever planned to come was to bless you twice. The original plan back in 1 Corinthians 16:5, I shall come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia, was changed. In the time since he sent the first letter he had decided he wouldn't wait until he went to Macedonia and see them when he was exiting, he would also stop on his way. So that way he would twice be with them. But the purpose of it, according to verse 15, was that they might receive a charis, a grace, a favor, a benefit, a benediction, a spiritual blessing. And he frankly says...My intention was to come to you and give you double blessing in this confidence...at the beginning of the verse. What confidence? The confidence expressed in verse 14, that you are as proud of us as we are of you. In other words, that we have a real relationship. It was on the assumption that we really have a relationship, that there really is trust and there really is love, and there really is care and that there's something that we mutually hold with respect and pride toward one another, a godly pride. And it was based on that assumption that I'm as important to you as you are to me, that I made my plans, it was born out of loyalty, not selfishness. With the confidence and the trust in my heart that you were as loyal to me as I am to you, I planned to come. If I wasn't loyal to you I maybe wouldn't have bothered to come once but to add and say I'm going to come twice,

what can that be but loyalty?

He would leave Ephesus, he planned, and go to Corinth on his way to Macedonia. He would then do his ministry in Macedonia, come by Corinth again so that they could help them, so that they could help him as he went to Judea for the next mission effort there.

Now the first visit didn't happen, that's the whole issue. The first of those two didn't happen. And that slight change in plan was pounced on by these enemies who used it as evidence of his untrustworthiness and his fickleness. But Paul is saying the only reason I ever planned it in the beginning was because I care, was because I'm loyal. There's no failure in his loyalty, he just wanted to give them double grace. His loyalty is evident. It's the only reason for planning the visits in the first place. And there's the mark of a noble-hearted pastor, there's the kind of thing that should exist in the heart of a true pastor, is the kind of loyalty that says whatever I need to do for your spiritual benefit, I'll do it. That's the only reason I ever made that plan. Things change, but don't doubt my heart.

Secondly, we see the attitude of honesty...not just that wonderful, wonderful loyalty that causes him to want to do for them what they spiritually will benefit from, but honesty. Now obviously they were bringing his honesty into question. It's very likely, frankly, in verse 17 that he is actually quoting some of the accusations specifically that were made against him. Look at verse 17, "Therefore I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I?" Perhaps they had said he's just a vacillating, fickle, unstable person who can't be trusted. He says I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I?

It's incredible to Paul that some people would actually believe that a change of plans reflects a lack of character of dishonesty. By the way, the two visits that he intended to make eventually became one long visit. First Corinthians 16:7, he hoped that he would come and see them not just in passing but to remain for some time. He really wanted to spend time with them and he would spend time with them, it was just this little triviality of whether he made two visits. But it was all they needed to discredit him.

Why are people like that? They're still like that, some, looking for any small way they can mount a case against a man of God. He was no shifty opportunist. He was no shallow, fickle, frivolous person.

There's two little Greek words there, meteara(?) and they are used to introduce a question which calls for an indignant negative answer. The question...Therefore, was I vacillating when I intended to do this? No way!

Then he says...Or that which I purposed to, I purposed according to the flesh? In other words, am I like an unregenerate person? I'm just operating like unconverted people, worldly unregenerate people operate, doing whatever I think is best for me, make a plan, change a plan, what's the difference? Only whatever pleases me? Am I like that? Is that how you know me as a man in the flesh? Don't you know me as a man who operates in the Spirit? Am I a man...he says in verse 17...who says yes, yes and no, no at the same time? Do I talk out of both sides of my mouth? And by the way, the duplicated yes, yes and the duplicated no, no strengthens the picture of the intensive dishonesty as the individual who fervently affirms what he fervently denies tries to persuade people with his duplicity. Am I that kind of a person? Am I a vacillating person who doesn't do what he says? Am I somebody operating out of the unregenerate flesh? Am I talking out of both sides of my mouth? Is that the man you know me to be? Am I so dishonest at heart?

No, verse 18 he says this, "As God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no." As God is trustworthy, pistos. Some people think he's making a sort of an oath here, calling God in to give testimony. That's possible. He does that in Romans 1:9, Galatians 1:20, 2 Corinthians 11:10 and 31, Philippians 1:8, 1 Thessalonians 2:5 and 10. He does do that when he wants to stress something is true. This indicates, by the way, that when Jesus was talking about forbidding oaths in Matthew 5:33 to 37, He was forbidding improper, ungodly, deceptive oaths. And according to Matthew 26:63, even Jesus Himself was willing to be placed under oath before the high priest.

So Paul is making perhaps an oath, perhaps it's just a reference to the fact that God is faithful and he who represents God is also faithful. When God speaks His word is true, and when I speak mine is also. My word to you, our word to you is not yes and no at the same time, I'm not dishonest. Timothy is not dishonest. Silas has not been dishonest. There's no vacillating. There's no deliberate deception. My word to you is as true as God's Word. God is trustworthy, I'm His spokesman, I'm trustworthy, too. No matter what the plans might be, no matter how they might be altered, you can trust my loyalty and you can trust my honesty.

Thirdly you see the virtue of reliability. Paul addresses the issue of reliability in verses 19 and 20. This is quite an interesting approach. The way he does it is really interesting. He says in verse 19, "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no, but is yes in Him."

Now what is he saying here? Well, first of all, let's get a little bit of a feeling for the background. It is very possible that these false apostles and false teachers were denying the deity of Christ, were denying...and, of course, all cults and all false teachers eventually attack the person of Christ, don't they? Because that's the heart and soul of the gospel. And it's very possible that these false apostles were really questioning Christ, questioning the truth of the gospel, the reliability of the message Paul preached. And that's why Paul uses the full title...for the Son of God, Christ Jesus who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy was not yes and no but it is yes in Him. He's making a very firm statement using the full rich title of our Lord, probably reflecting that the character of Christ and the nature of Christ, the work of Christ was under attack. Because Paul was not reliable in his travel plans, they were saying you couldn't trust his gospel either.

But he reminds them that he wasn't the only one to preach it, Silas or Silvanus preached...you remember him from the book of Acts, a leader of the church in Jerusalem who was to carry the decision of the Jerusalem Council, you remember, to Antioch according to Acts 15:22. He was Paul's companion on the second missionary journey after Paul and Barnabas split up over John Mark. That's also in the fifteenth chapter. Timothy was Paul's son in the faith, a Jewish Christian mother and a Gentile father made him a unique servant of the Lord. Both of them were with Paul when he came to Corinth. They all preached the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was unwavering truth. He says in verse 17...verse 19 rather, he says, "We preached the Son of God, Christ Jesus, I did, Silas did, and Timothy did and there was no yes and no, there was no back and forth, there was no duplicity, there was no double meaning, it was just yes in Him. It was not fickle, it was not vacillating, it was not unreliable, it was a clear yes to God's truth revealed in Jesus Christ.

You knew that. You heard it. You believed it. Now how can the Corinthians accept the unwavering truth these men preached as utterly reliable and believable and life-transforming, and then deem the preachers who preached it as unreliable? That's his point. Travel plans are the easy part. Getting the

message right is the hard part. And if they were reliable in the difficult and the eternal and the spiritual and the essential which comes from God, how can you suggest that they're going to be unreliable in the least?

I believe there's an interesting thought here. I think men who are exacting in Scripture are exacting in the lesser issues of life as much as they possible can be. I think when a man is serious about divine truth and really cutting it straight, his life reflects that throughout his life. Paul's saying...You know me, I came to you, I spoke truth, that truth was clearly yes, it was not yes and no, it was affirming the Word of God, the truth in Christ, the gospel in Christ, you heard it, you believed it, you affirmed it. I preached it, Silas preached, Timothy preached it. Do you think our life was unstable, vacillating and unreliable and that's why God picked us to be exacting in His truth? No. God doesn't select unstable, unreliable men to preach His truth. He doesn't call men void of truth to proclaim truth. Lenski says, "No mighty yes in Christ could have been transmitted by yes and no heralds."

So, for a year and a half the preaching had gone on in Corinth. For a year and a half they had heard, believed, it transformed their lives. Doesn't that say something about the instrument? Even if you trust his word about eternal things, and you know it's changed his life, you should also trust him about trivial things because if he's a man of integrity at the highest level, it will filter down all the way, won't it? Why would you trust his gospel and not his plain words about everyday things? You were living proof that I preached truth. You're proof of it.

Verse 20 he adds, "For as many as may be the promises of God." That little phrase simply means "all of them," as many promises of God as has ever been given in the Old Testament or the New Testament, as many promises that God has ever given, "In Him...that is in Jesus Christ...they are yes." As many as there are, they're fulfilled in Christ. All of God's promises of blessing and peace and joy and love and goodness and purpose and fellowship and forgiveness and strength and hope and a kingdom and heaven, salvation, sanctification, glorification, everything God ever promised is made possible in whom? Christ. In Him they are yes. He is the yes to all of God's promises, so we came and we didn't preach yes and no, vacillating here, we preached yes, yes, clear, precise truth. And you believed. We preached...you remember what Luke 24:44 says...that the law of Moses and the prophets and the writings have their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, that Christ is the all sufficient one, in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and you were complete in Him, in Him all fullness dwells. He has made unto us wisdom and righteousness and redemption. He is the one who brings us the surpassing values so that everything else is rubbish. And we preach that my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

We preached Jesus Christ and everything is in Him. We didn't preach a yes and no, we weren't vacillating, you know the character of our ministry. This is not a vacillating man or vacillating men.

And then he adds in verse 20, and this is really the clincher in his argument, "Wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." What is he talking about here? Well "amen" is really a Hebrew form of yes. We use the word yes in the way people use amen, even the secular world, you know. If something they like, they'll say...Yes! That's amen. The Hebrew equivalent is just amen. It's just...this is true, this is right, this is it...yes. And Paul said...Look...he said...you heard me, I told you in Christ are all the promises of God fulfilled, they're all yes in Him, and our Amen was the response. And I believe he's talking about the collective amen of the church. The early church people would say "amen." Some people still do that, we don't in this church say it very loudly, but I hear it occasionally, it's nice. It's an affirmation. It's a Hebrew word that really in its root means something is

true or trustworthy or reliable. Jesus used it...amen, amen, translated verily, verily, truly, truly.

And he says have you forgotten our Amen? Have you forgotten that collectively we all said yes? I came preaching Christ and everybody said "Amen, yes." And the amen was to the glory of God through us. God was pouring His glory through us, you saw it. Paul says so we came from God. We preached the truth. The truth changed your life. And you said amen. Now you tell me I'm unreliable? Now you're telling me you don't trust me? You've already glorified God and magnified God for what He spoke through me that was absolutely truthful, trustworthy and reliable. You've affirmed the trustworthiness and the reliability of God, you've affirmed the trustworthiness and the reliability of Christ, all is yes in Christ, and you have affirmed the reliability of His prophet or His spokesman, namely me, and I have come and you've all said "amen" to what I've taught, and now are you attacking me after amening me?

So, he looks into his heart and he finds loyalty and honesty and reliability there. It's an amazing way to argue, isn't it?

And then fourthly, authenticity...authenticity. Verse 21, he's going to tell us here now that if you're really questioning my integrity, you need to talk to God. Verse 21, "Now he who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God who also sealed us gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."

This shows how ridiculous it is to question his authenticity. Now he doesn't claim to be authentic due to some personal achievement or some education, or some practical wisdom or common sense, or genius. He says...Look, if you're going to question my life, if you're going to question my message, if you're going to question my integrity and my authenticity, then you need to talk to God because He's the one who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us and sealed us and gave us the Spirit.

Four great works here, this is really marvelous. Four great works are expressed in these verbs here. He says God establishes us in Christ. God anoints us. God sealed us. And God gave us the Spirit. Four tremendous truths.

But would you notice in verse 21 a little phrase "with you...with you?" This is a wonderful nuance. Paul is not simply saying God established us in Christ, God anointed us and God sealed us and God gave us the Holy Spirit, He's saying He did it to you, too. And what is so magnanimous about this and so kind and so gracious is he's presenting himself as authentic not in the sense that he's above them, but with them. They're all authenticated together by this. So he is saying in a sense if you attack my authenticity and my integrity, you're ripping the very fabric of the unity of the church. The word "us," our hearts with you, he's not just talking about himself and Silas and Timothy, he's talking about all the Corinthians. God has done four glorious works in Paul's life and in the lives of saints.

First, verse 21, He establishes us in Christ. He makes us stable, puts us on a foundation. That's the work of saving grace. Places us in union with each other in the body of Christ. They were united and rooted and grounded and founded in Christ together. So if I'm not authentic, you aren't either. You're tearing up the whole thing here. God put us all together, all in Christ, all grounded and founded and rooted. My authenticity can't be divorced from yours.

Secondly, he says He anointed us. God anointed us. The verb chriois used here. It was part of a

commissioning service often to anoint someone symbolically, kings and prophets and priests, special servants. And when we were saved we had an anointing, too. First John 2:20 and 27 talks about we have an anointing from God so that we need not any man to teach us. That anointing is the Holy Spirit who is our teacher. When the Lord anoints us, what does it mean there? It means that He's setting us apart for special service, kingly, priestly, prophetic service, the service of proclamation and ministry. And He gives us the anointing which is the Holy Spirit, the power we need to do the service. It's a sacred commission. You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, Acts 1:8 says.

And so, God has grounded us in Christ. And then God has commissioned us for service and given us the power for that service in the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly he says, verse 22, "He sealed us." What does that mean? Well sphragizomeans to put a seal on. You know, in ancient times they put wax and the wax would be soft and you would take a stamp and stamp on the wax and that signed the document, that authenticated it. It meant possession, ownership, authenticity, protection, all of that. Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30, 2 Timothy 2:19 says we were sealed with the Spirit. God says they're Mine, they're authenticate. They're Mine, don't touch them. They're protected. They're Mine, they're My possession. God has marked us out with ownership, authenticity, and protection. And he says it's me and it's you, we're all authentic, we've all been sealed with the Spirit.

And then he adds, "And He gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge," arrabon, engagement ring, down payment, guarantee, just the first installment of future glory. So he says...What has God done? He's taken us, grounded us in Christ, anointed us for holy service, sealed us with a mark of authenticity and protection and given us the down payment on our eternal inheritance. And He's done it for all of us. We're all together in this. And you're charging me of instability? The whole accusation is ridiculous, fabricated out of a minor issue to discredit the man of God.

Paul had authenticity just like the rest of the believers did. And they are the benchmarks of a noble heart, loyalty, honesty, reliability and authenticity. He came from God. And he doesn't even elevate himself here, and he could. He doesn't even pull apostolic rank and he could. He just says if you're going to attack my authenticity, you're going to be messing with your own because we're all in this thing together, we all believe in the same truth.

Fifthly, sensitivity, another marvelous mark of the servant of God is sensitivity. And here he finally gets to the reason he changed his plan. It took him a long time cause he's not operating in a simplistic way, he knows what's at stake is his character here. But in verse 23 he says, "I call God as witness." There is an oath. I'm asking God to witness the truth of what I say. He's appealing to the divine court to verify what he's saying. "I call God as witness to my soul that to spare you I came no more to Corinth." You know why I didn't come? To spare you. What do you mean? To hold back. If I'm lying, let God judge me. God knows I speak truth, it was for your sake. I didn't want to come until you repented.

Remember back in 1 Corinthians 4:21 he said, "You can decide whether I come with a rod or in love." And here he says I didn't want to come with a rod. I thought well it would be a great idea, I'll go on the way, and I'll go on the way back...and then I thought...No, if I go too soon I haven't given them time to repent. I wanted to give you time. I wanted to spare you the rod. What sensitivity.

He wanted them to correct the problems. The problems, by the way, were outlined in the first letter, 1 Corinthians. Also more problems outlined in the severe letter that they received about the insurrection, the mutiny. But, you know, severity is always ready to punish the faults it discovers. Sensitivity is reluctant to discover the faults it must punish.

He had sensitivity. He delayed to give them time to deal with the sin in their lives. He was waiting for a report back from Titus before he did anything. The report came and it's recorded in chapter 7 and it was a good report and he was so thrilled. But he said I didn't come because...because I wanted to spare you the rod. And then he's so humble, verse 24 he says, "Not that we lord it over your faith." Boy, he's really throwing in the disclaimer here. He says...by the way, when I talk about sparing you, I don't want you to think that I come with a rod and just wield it at my own will. I don't have some unilateral power to do that. We're just workers with you for your joy. I never did want to lord it over you, I don't want to come with burnished feet and the big brass rod and hammer on you. I didn't come because I don't want to do that. We're just worker with you. We just try to come alongside and try to keep you holy so that you'll have joy, that's all we want. We don't want the power and the prestige and the honor. We don't want all the trappings. We don't want to lord it over your faith...not me, not Silas, not Timothy. We're just committed to working alongside of you to produce joy.

The truth is, "For in your faith you are standing firm." What he means by that is if you're standing it's in your own. I can't live your life for you. I can't have your faith for you. You rise or fall on the basis of your own faith. And later in this letter he says if you're not sure about your faith, examine yourselves to see whether you be in the faith. I can't...I can't have your faith for you, it's got to be yours, so I might as well step back and give you time to be who you are. He just can't go charging in and hammering on people expecting to force them to be something. He was so sensitive. He wanted to be patient. You have to remember that in discipline. Give them time.

And then he says in verse 1, "I determined this also for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again." I just didn't want another sad meeting. I just didn't want that. I wasn't going to come and go through all that pain all over again. I didn't want you to have to do it, I didn't want it. What I want is joy. What I want is rejoicing. I don't like confrontation and pain. I don't want to have sorrow anymore. I'm tired of having to confront. I'm tired of these letters I write. I'm tired of these meetings. I'm not an autocrat. I'm a helper. And I don't want sorrow anymore so I didn't come. That's fair enough, isn't it?

There you see the sensitivity of his heart. Loyalty, honesty, reliability, authenticity, sensitivity. But then there's a sixth...purity. The truth is if he has to he will confront. He says in verse 2, "For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?" I don't want to do it...he says...but if I have to come and do it, if I have to come and cause you sorrow, who makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful.

If I come and make you sorrowful, the only thing that's going to change that, the only thing that's going to make me glad is repentance. That's what he's saying. If I cause sorrow by confronting sin, the only thing that will make me glad is repentance. So I might as well wait till repentance takes place.

"And this is the very thing I wrote you...verse 3...lest when I came I should have sorrow from those

who ought to make me rejoice." I just want to give time for purity to happen. I'll confront if I have to confront. But the whole point in writing to you was so that when I come we'd have rejoicing. Deal with your sin. Purity was still an issue. He wasn't so sensitive and so kind that he overlooked iniquity. Not at all. He said if I've made you sorrowful, the only way you're going to make me glad, the only way you're going to be glad is when the sorrowful person who is sorrowful because he's sinful repents. That's why I wrote so that when I come I won't have sorrow but I'll have joy. And when I didn't know whether you'd repented, I didn't come. That's his point.

"Having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all." I just want to wait and trust you that you're going to get to the place where we're just going to have joy.

You know, you get too aggressive in trying to confront everybody, it just tears up your life. You just tear your life up. You can't create someone's faith. You can't hold their faith. Confront and wait patiently because they have to stand in their own faith and wait for the time when you can embrace with joy.

He's saying, "Deal with your sin yourself, will you? So I don't have to deal with it again." He would if he had to. He didn't want to.

Loyalty, honesty, reliability, authenticity, sensitivity, purity, it's some pretty noble characteristics, aren't they? There's one more, charity...that means love. Look at verse 4, wonderful finish. "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears." Do you understand he's saying...do you understand that when I write to you I'm not like some demagogue, I'm not lording it over you, I'm not trying to hammer on you? Do you understand this is painful to me? Do you understand the affliction and the anguish of heart that I go through? Do you understand my many tears? Do you understand that I have a broken heart when I have to confront sin? Do you know that? And that my purpose is not that you should be made sorrowful, I don't get any joy out of that. Why would I get any joy out of you being sorrowful? "But that you might know the love which I have especially for you." I want you to know...to know that I love you so deeply, I want you to repent because I want you to know joy. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

It took real love to confront like Paul did...real love. Not sentimentalism, real love. The severe letter as well as the first epistle was written in anguish because of his great love. Critics were wrong about Paul. They were wrong. And they continue to be wrong about many men. They will take some trivial part of their life and build a case and discredit a man and then spread it around and find willing ears, destroy a ministry. It happens all the time. And the man is left to examine his own heart. As he looks deep in his own heart he may say before God, "As best I know I'm loyal and honest and reliable and authentic and sensitive and I have a love for purity and I do love my people and I don't know why this is happening." Paul is sort of in the same incredulous situation. I mean, what in the world is going on...you know me? How can you turn from me to these false apostles?

So in this defense we really do get a little xray of his heart, don't we? And what a model, what an example he is. And isn't it amazing that we went through so many verses? Don't expect it ever again. Let's bow in prayer.

We're humbled, Lord, when we see what this man was like. We...we understand what he meant when he said, "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." What character. And so maligned and so

falsely accused, so misrepresented, relentlessly attacked, and such a man of character. And our hearts just grieve when we hear him say at the end of his life, "All who are in Asia have forsaken me." When we hear him say, "At my first defense, no one stood by me." When we hear him say, "I have no one like-minded whom I can send to you except for Timothy, for everybody's concerned with his own things." The greatest of servants and yet one who suffered most.

And ministry can be like that. It's so hard to understand. His heart must have been broken as he tried to deal with the integrity of his own life and the accusations on the outside. Just did what the Savior did and committed himself to the faithful keeping of His Creator and God who knew his heart. We pray for such noble servants in the pulpit and in the pew. May we follow the pattern that Paul has set and may we live lives of integrity and we'll thank You for the privilege of naming the name of Christ and representing Him. Amen.

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