

# Forgiveness and Restoration

2 Cor 1:23-2:11

SS Lesson for 08/10/2014

**Devotional Scripture:** Col 3:5-17

## OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

#### OVERVIEW AND APPROACH TO LESSON

*Key Verse: 2 Cor 2:10*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

*Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*

#### LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### FAITH SHOULD BRING JOY (2 COR 1:23-2:3)

*Joy in being fellow workers (1:23-24)*

Fellow workers who work as if serving God (Eph 6:5-8)

Fellow workers who work with all their hearts (Col 3:22-24)

Fellow workers who can endure unjust treatment (1 Peter 2:18-20)

Fellow workers who are faithful in doing what has been assigned (Matt 24:45-47)

Fellow workers who are faithful to the trust given (1 Cor 4:2)

*Joy through a plan to edify, not make sorrowful (2:1)*

Edify one another at every opportunity (Rom 14:19)

Edify one another by seeking the good of others (1 Cor 10:23-24)

Edifying one another is one of the Church's duties (Eph 4:10-13)

Edify one another by controlling speech (Eph 4:29)

Edifying by praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20)

*Joy through promoting rejoicing (2:2-3)*

Rejoicing in worship (Ps 2:11)

Rejoicing in God's salvation (Ps 13:5)

Rejoicing in seeking God (Ps 40:16)

Rejoicing in the revival by God (Ps 85:6)

Rejoicing in God's righteousness (Ps 89:15-16)

Rejoicing in the Lord always (Phil 4:4)

Rejoicing in all circumstances (1 Thess 5:16-18)

#### CORRECTION SHOULD RESULT IN RESTORATION (2 COR 2:4-8)

*Correction using restraint (2:4-6)*

Restraint in the use of words (Prov 17:27-28)

Restraint that is lost because of a lack from revelations from God's Word (Prov 29:18)

Restraint that comes from the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

Restraint that is lost in the last days (2 Tim 3:1-5)

Restraint that should be part of maturing in the faith (2 Peter 1:3-8)

*Restoration through comforting (2:7)*

Comfort by encouraging and being patient (1 Thess 5:14)

Comfort in a way worthy of a saint (Rom 16:2)

Comforting others is a command from God (Gal 6:2)

Comfort during grief (Job 2:11-13)

Comfort through one another's faith (Rom 1:11-12)

Comfort through love (Col 3:12-14)

*Restoration through loving (2:8)*

Restore with gentle love (Gal 6:1)

Restore by being merciful (Jude 22-24)

Restore by bearing with one another's failings (Rom 15:1)

Restore by meeting the needs of others (James 2:15-17)

Restore with actions, not just words (1 John 3:16-18)

#### **FORGIVENESS SHOULD BE MUTUAL (2 COR 2:4-8)**

##### *Mutual obedience (2:9)*

Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

Obedience by walking in love (2 John 1:6)

Obedience that is better than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)

Obedience through putting God's words into practice (Matt 7:24-25)

Obedience through living holy (1 Peter 1:14-16)

##### *Mutual forgiveness (2:10)*

Forgiveness because all will face judgment (Heb 9:27)

Forgiveness because of being accountable to God (Rom 14:12)

Forgiveness because God will avenge (Rom 12:18-20)

Forgiveness because of remembering God's blessings (Ps 103:2-3)

##### *Mutual resistance to Satan (2:11)*

Resist Satan by not giving him a foothold (Eph 4:27)

Resist Satan by putting on the full armor of God (Eph 6:11-13)

Resist Satan by submitting to God (James 4:7)

Resist Satan by being alert and self-controlled (1 Thess 5:6)

#### **CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS**

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

# Introduction

## Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson teaches about how and why there should be **Forgiveness and Restoration**. The **study's aim** is to see the need for forgiveness and to discover the answer to the need. The **study's application** is to establish the attitude of forgiveness as a bedrock principle in our fellowship and to search our hearts for any unforgiven offense then to forgive it and restore fellowship immediately, without excuse or delay. (Adapted from *the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

### Key Verse: 2 Cor 2:10

*Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Paul had earlier begun to explain his change of plans (v. 15). There he had mentioned his “message” (v. 18) in connection with his own integrity, which led to his digression in verses 19-22. He now returned to explain his altered plans. He understood that his changed plans had caused a problem in Corinth. This is evident from the strength of his declaration, I call God as my witness (cf. Rom. 1:9; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10). With a solemn oath (with God as the Judge) Paul staked his life on the truthfulness of his explanation which followed. It was out of consideration for the Corinthians, a desire to avoid disciplinary action (to spare you) that Paul had deferred his visit. Even though he had great authority as an apostle (2 Cor. 10:2-8; cf. 1 Cor. 5:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20) Paul was reluctant to wield it. He did not lord it over their faith, that is, domineeringly take advantage of the fact that they came to faith in Christ through him. Dictatorial means can produce compliance but not the obedience that comes from faith which he sought. Authoritarian domination is often the manner of false apostles and the kingdom they serve (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15), but it was not the way of Christ (Luke 22:25-27) nor of those who stand in His stead (1 Peter 5:3). Paul assured the Corinthians, We work with you (lit., “we are fellow workers”; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9); he did not work against them or over them.

A servant of Christ is no stranger to pain and suffering (Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-20; 1 Peter 2:21). Paul had his share (cf. 2 Cor. 1:4-10; 11:16-32) which he did not shirk. But he was no fool. If he could avoid it and still accomplish his work he would do so. This belief led to his change of plans with the Corinthians. When his first painful visit occurred is an unsettled issue. It could have taken place after his founding visit but before the writing of 1 Corinthians, as many suggest. It is odd, however, if that was so, that no mention or intimation of such a visit is found in that letter. More likely, he went to Corinth from Ephesus after writing 1 Corinthians. His “painful visit” may be linked to the projected double visit previously mentioned (2 Cor. 1:15-16) and may thus refer to the first part of those unconsummated plans. During that visit some painful event transpired which grieved the Corinthians and Paul. To spare further grief for both of them Paul deferred his visit. He decided instead to write a letter, a daring venture in view of the Corinthians’ propensity for misunderstanding (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-10). If his “painful visit” (2 Cor. 2:1) had occurred before he wrote 1 Corinthians, the letter here referred to (I wrote as I did) would be that letter. But if, as seems more likely, the “painful visit” occurred after he wrote 1 Corinthians, the letter Paul referred to followed 1 Corinthians and is now lost (not having been intended by God as a part of the inspired Scriptures). What that letter contained can only be conjectured from the comments which follow in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 and 7:5-12. What is clear was Paul’s depth of feelings for the Corinthians and the level of his own discomfort experienced in writing the letter (great distress; “troubles or pressures”; cf. 1:4] and anguish of heart and with many tears) and in his waiting for news from Titus concerning its reception (cf. 7:5-8). The event that made his visit painful (v. 1) and prompted the severe letter seems to have centered around the action of a certain man at Corinth. Whether he was a member of the Corinthian church or someone visiting them is not clear. Paul did, however, regard him as a Christian. What this individual did to cause grief is uncertain. In the past many writers identified him with the incestuous man whom Paul had judged (1 Cor. 5). Relatively few now hold this view because of the severity of that judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5) when compared with this situation, and the unlikelihood that 1 Corinthians is the letter referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4. Paul’s diffidence in this verse suggests the more likely alternative that his authority as an apostle was affronted or challenged at some point in the course of his painful visit (v. 1). The Corinthians apparently failed to make the connection between a challenge to

Paul's authority and their own spiritual well-being. They had regarded this as a personal problem requiring no action on their parts, a view which Paul had dispelled in his letter and which they now realized. Their response had been to discipline the offender. Punishment may be too strong a translation of the Greek word *epitimia*. Perhaps "censure" is better. This discipline, whatever it was, was made by the church "as a whole" rather than the majority (cf. 7:11). Paul had reason to believe that their pendulum might swing too far (cf. 7:11). They were no longer dispassionate spectators of the wrongdoer, and might become impassioned prosecutors. In that case he would be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (lit., "grief"). The offender was apparently penitent so Paul urged the church to forgive and comfort him (for in fact it was they who had been wronged, 2:10) and extend "comfort" to him. As a church they were to affirm their love for this fellow Christian and admit him to their fellowship (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11). (Reaffirm may be too strong for the word *kyrōsai*; it occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Gal. 3:15 where it is trans. "has been duly established."). Paul's concern in this matter was not simply personal vindication or primarily that an erring brother be brought in line but that the Corinthian congregation could demonstrate the strength of their commitment to Paul (cf. 7:2). Their love and devotion to him would be affirmed by their being obedient to his directives (cf. John 15:14).

The expression of their solidarity with him was mutual. As one with him, they could forgive this offender who had wronged them by wronging Paul. Like their own sorrow for this wrong (2 Cor. 7:8) repentance resulted (cf. 7:9) so that Paul could offer forgiveness. Otherwise, Satan might use a bitterness of spirit to vitiate Paul's or the Corinthians' ministry. It was important that fellowship between Paul, the Corinthians, and the repentant offender be restored so that the incident not become an occasion for Satan to drive a wedge between the church and Paul. This was one of Satan's schemes (cf. 11:13-14) which Paul had worked so strenuously to thwart. In sum, his plans had changed. But that was out of concern for the well-being of the Corinthian church. In place of a personal visit Paul had sent Titus with a letter and accomplished his purpose. But he did not know that until he met Titus in Macedonia. The interim was not an easy time for Paul as 2:12-16 indicate.

### **Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

Paul had a very troubled relationship with the Corinthian church. The history was not pretty. There had been several visits, several letters, and many disappointments. At times they rejected Paul and his leadership. Paul, in turn, was often deeply disappointed in them. There were failures by individuals. There were problems caused by certain factions. It was a complex and troublesome history. When Paul wrote to them, he spoke candidly of sorrow, heaviness, affliction, anguish, tears, and grief (2 Cor. 2:1, 3-4). All of this was because of trouble and sin in relationships and in the church. What was the way forward in the midst of all this turmoil and pain? The only way forward was through forgiveness. In short, this was a situation that cried out for forgiveness. Paul was going to have to forgive them over and over. They were going to have to forgive one another. The only way forward was through the pathway of forgiveness. That is often how it is in the body of Christ. We have to be a forgiving people. The church cannot thrive or even survive without a healthy application of forgiving mercies, one to the other. First of all, there has to be a spirit of forgiveness in the church. This is part of bearing one another's burdens. Paul informed the Corinthians that if they had forgiven anyone and anything in the body of Christ, he joined in with it. This is a willing and forgiving spirit. Paul exhorted us elsewhere that in the body of Christ, we must live "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). This is a forgiving spirit. There also has to be a proper standard of forgiveness. That standard is Christ Himself. All of our forgiving goes back to the Person and work of Christ. He lived forgiveness, He taught forgiveness, and He manifested forgiveness. His whole life and work was devoted to the forgiving of sinners and to reconciling them to God. We have to go down low in humility and be willing to extend to others the forgiveness that Jesus has extended to us. Yes, that means we must forgive the worst offenses (since He forgave us our worst offenses). Yes, that means we must forgive prolonged offenses (since He forgave us our prolonged offenses). Yes, that means we must forgive all offenses (since He forgave all our offenses). This is the only way forward to a healthy spirit in the body of Christ. Since we all are sinners, it is absolutely necessary to forgive others in the body of Christ.

### ***Lesson Introduction and Background***

#### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Today in places where Christianity once dominated the culture, few people know the Bible well. But it seems that everyone in those cultures still knows one biblical commandment: "Do not judge" (Matthew 7:1). Judging others is bad

form in our world because it is "intolerant." But the Bible's stance on judgment is not as simple as a flippant "do not judge" sound bite would suggest, especially when one reads the rest of Matthew 7. The point of departure for proper understanding here is the fact that God is the ultimate judge. He sets the final standard of judgment. All humans are subject to his judgment and his standard. There is a judgment to face, and for many it will be a terrible one. Yet God's desire is not to judge but to forgive. For this reason, he sent his Son to die to pay sin's penalty so we can be forgiven. God sends his people around the world with this message of forgiveness. If we do not accept that we are subject to God's judgment, then we will never be able to accept his forgiveness or even sense a need for it. That reality keeps God's judgment in the forefront of the Christian message. For that reason, Christianity will always strike many people as judgmental and negative. But in truth, forgiveness has no meaning unless it is cast against the alternative of judgment. That is why the emphasis of the Christian message is on forgiveness. Sadly, though, some forget the reality of judgment after they receive forgiveness. Instead of living as grateful people who want to serve the one who forgave them, they fall back into the old habits of rebellion and evil, what the Bible calls sin. They treat their forgiveness not as precious and life-changing but as cheap and inconsequential. God's response to such contempt for his great gift is persistence in drawing the contemptuous back to repentance. That process can be painful, for it means bringing the backslider to a renewed awareness of the consequences of God's righteous judgment. When God shows us the reality of judgment, it's because he wants us to turn to him while there is still time.

Paul's letters to the church at Corinth addressed several specific problems. One of the most important had to do with a man who was carrying on a sexual relationship with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul gave the church very specific instructions regarding that situation: the man had to be separated from fellowship with the church (5:2, 11-13). The purpose of that punishment, which Paul compared with turning the man over to Satan, was to provoke the man to repent and end his sinful behavior (5:5). That message was difficult for the Corinthian church to receive. It appears that many in the church resented Paul's instruction, so Paul had to pay them a "painful visit" to address the situation (2 Corinthians 2:1, part of today's text). The church decided to follow Paul's instruction after that visit. As a result, the immoral individual was separated from fellowship with the church (today's lesson). While awaiting the outcome of all this, Paul planned yet another visit to Corinth, apparently announcing it in advance. But as explained in today's text, he cancelled his plans for specific reasons.

### **From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church seems to have had several unusual twists. Paul's response to the Corinthians' first letter was I Corinthians. Although it cannot be definitively described, at this point it seems that Paul found out the response to his letter was not good, so he made a quick personal visit there from Ephesus. The visit did not go well, so he evidently returned to Ephesus and wrote another letter (which is lost) and sent it to them with Titus (2 Cor. 7:5-16). It was severe and strong in its content (2:4; 7:8-9). Paul was eager to hear from Titus, but he had to leave Ephesus before he did (2 Cor. 2:13). He traveled to Macedonia (Acts 20:1), where Titus finally came with good news (2 Cor. 7:6-7). At this point, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, expressing his relief and defending his apostleship, among other things. The need for forgiveness is probably the most necessary lesson in the church today. In most congregations, there are old wounds and hurt feelings that have never been resolved. An unforgiving spirit is sometimes fostered in a family and passed down through succeeding generations. While we have been forgiven through the grace of God, we can sometimes hard-heartedly hold others to account for their wrongs against us. This is the total opposite of true Christ-likeness. Jesus made this abundantly clear in His comment on the model prayer, commonly known as the Lord's Prayer. It is the part of wisdom and of Christian maturity to consistently be a graciously forgiving person. When He said, "Neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15), He was not saying you will lose your salvation. He was saying that the sin of unforgiveness will break off your fellowship with your Heavenly Father just as it breaks your fellowship with the one you will not forgive.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Faith Should Bring Joy (2 Cor 1:23-2:3)**

1:23 Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.

24 Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.  
2:1 But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow.  
2 For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?  
3 And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.

### **Joy in being fellow workers (1:23-24)**

*Fellow workers who work as if serving God (Eph 6:5-8)*

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

*Fellow workers who work with all their hearts (Col 3:22-24)*

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

*Fellow workers who can endure unjust treatment (1 Peter 2:18-20)*

18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

*Fellow workers who are faithful in doing what has been assigned (Matt 24:45-47)*

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

*Fellow workers who are faithful to the trust given (1 Cor 4:2)*

2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

### **Joy through a plan to edify, not make sorrowful (2:1)**

*Edify one another at every opportunity (Rom 14:19)*

19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

*Edify one another by seeking the good of others (1 Cor 10:23-24)*

23 "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"-but not everything is constructive. 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

*Edifying one another is one of the Church's duties (Eph 4:10-13)*

10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)  
11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

*Edify one another by controlling speech (Eph 4:29)*

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

*Edifying by praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20)*

20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

### **Joy through promoting rejoicing (2:2-3)**

*Rejoicing in worship (Ps 2:11)*

11 Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

*Rejoicing in God's salvation (Ps 13:5)*

5 But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

*Rejoicing in seeking God (Ps 40:16)*

16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "The Lord be exalted!"

*Rejoicing in the revival by God (Ps 85:6)*

6 Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

*Rejoicing in God's righteousness (Ps 89:15-16)*

15 Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord. 16 They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness.

*Rejoicing in the Lord always (Phil 4:4)*

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

*Rejoicing in all circumstances (1 Thess 5:16-18)*

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

### **Correction Should Result In Restoration (2 Cor 2:4-8)**

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent--not to be too severe.

6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man,

7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

### **Correction using restraint (2:4-6)**

*Restraint in the use of words (Prov 17:27-28)*

27 A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. 28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.

*Restraint that is lost because of a lack from revelations from God's Word (Prov 29:18)*

18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.

*Restraint that comes from the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)*

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

*Restraint that is lost in the last days (2 Tim 3:1-5)*

1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them

*Restraint that should be part of maturing in the faith (2 Peter 1:3-8)*

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Restoration through comforting (2:7)**

*Comfort by encouraging and being patient (1 Thess 5:14)*

14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

*Comfort in a way worthy of a saint (Rom 16:2)*

2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

*Comforting others is a command from God (Gal 6:2)*

2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

*Comfort during grief (Job 2:11-13)*

11 When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. 12 When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. 13 Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

*Comfort through one another's faith (Rom 1:11-12)*

11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

*Comfort through love (Col 3:12-14)*

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

## **Restoration through loving (2:8)**

### *Restore with gentle love (Gal 6:1)*

6 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

### *Restore by being merciful (Jude 22-24)*

22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear-hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

### *Restore by bearing with one another's failings (Rom 15:1)*

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

### *Restore by meeting the needs of others (James 2:15-17)*

15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

### *Restore with actions, not just words (1 John 3:16-18)*

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

## **Forgiveness Should Be Mutual (2 Cor 2:4-8)**

9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

## **Mutual obedience (2:9)**

### *Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)*

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

### *Obedience by walking in love (2 John 1:6)*

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

### *Obedience that is better than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)*

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

### *Obedience through putting God's words into practice (Matt 7:24-25)*

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

*Obedience through living holy (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

### **Mutual forgiveness (2:10)**

*Forgiveness because all will face judgment (Heb 9:27)*

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

*Forgiveness because of being accountable to God (Rom 14:12)*

12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

*Forgiveness because God will avenge (Rom 12:18-20)*

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

*Forgiveness because of remembering God's blessings (Ps 103:2-3)*

2 Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

### **Mutual resistance to Satan (2:11)**

*Resist Satan by not giving him a foothold (Eph 4:27)*

27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

*Resist Satan by putting on the full armor of God (Eph 6:11-13)*

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

*Resist Satan by submitting to God (James 4:7)*

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

*Resist Satan by being alert and self-controlled (1 Thess 5:6)*

6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### **Commentary Thoughts From Bob Deffinbaugh**

Some take Paul's words in verses 5-11 to refer to the man **who was "living with his father's wife"** as we find in 1 Corinthians 5. That is one possibility, but the more I consider this text, the less inclined I am to embrace this opinion. Let me summarize some of the reasons I believe Paul is referring to someone else.

*(1) Nowhere does Paul specifically identify this person in our text with the person mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5. If his instructions concerned this individual, why does not Paul simply tell us so?*

**(2) Paul's references to this person seem to be deliberately vague,** as though he does not want anyone other than those at Corinth to know who he is. Paul seems to purposefully avoid naming names and being specific. Why then do we find it necessary to be specific by referring what Paul says to the only person who has been disciplined by the church?

**(3) Nothing is really gained or lost by knowing exactly to whom Paul refers.** The Corinthians knew who it was and what they should do. The rest did not know, and they did not need to know, but they could learn an important principle in the process of reading this epistle.

**(4) Paul speaks of the disciplinary measure to be taken against the man in 1 Corinthians 5, as though the outcome will be physical death.** The Corinthians may well have already attended this man's funeral.

**(5) It seems as though the person referred to has committed some offense against Paul, and the Corinthian church has taken up for Paul by censuring that person from their fellowship.** It further seems, in the context, as though this offense against Paul occurs at the time of his "painful visit" and his "painful letter," rather than at the time of the writing of his first epistle.

**(6) In the case of the man in 1 Corinthians, the church appears to have done too little too late.** In the case of the man in 2 Corinthians 2, the church seems to have gone too far, for too long.

The bottom line is that these appear to be two different individuals.

Paul hopes to come to Corinth twice, once on the way to Macedonia and once on his way from there to Judea. These hopes have not been realized, for Paul purposely delays his next journey to Corinth. This does not reflect a lack of love for the Corinthians or a desire to be with them. It is simply to give these saints time to deal with problems in the church so Paul can rejoin them with joy rather than further sorrow. One particular problem must be dealt with before his arrival, and this is spelled out in 2:5-11.

It seems that during Paul's second hasty and painful visit, he takes an aggressive course of action which causes both him and the Corinthians great sorrow. Paul deals further with this matter in chapter 7. But somewhere in the course of that visit, it seems one individual reacts in an unseemly manner toward Paul and his apostolic authority. It looks as though the church rushes to Paul's defense and censures this man by excluding him from their fellowship. The church seems to have exercised discipline on this man who in some way wronged Paul.

This is not like the situation in chapter 5. There, a man is committing a most serious offense by living with his father's wife, a sin which shocks even the pagan Corinthians. But the church continues to accept and embrace this man, even with pride rather than shame. Paul must act personally and from afar, turning this man over to Satan and challenging the church to step up to its duty and do likewise. Now, in 2 Corinthians we find the church has taken strong action against someone who apparently committed a much lesser offense. The man seems to have repented, but the church has not yet forgiven him and received him back into their fellowship. Paul urges them to do so before he can come to visit them again.

If I understand Paul correctly, there is an important lesson for us to learn here from his example. Someone has sinned against Paul, and the church has taken disciplinary action against that person. The man has repented, but the church has not forgiven him and received him back into fellowship. Paul now mentions this situation in the context of his prolonged absence from Corinth. I believe it is Paul's desire to forgive this man and be reconciled to him, but first the church must acknowledge his repentance and reverse their disciplinary action. If Paul were to return before the church restored this man, he would not be free to have fellowship with him because he would be bound by the church's disciplinary actions against the man. When the church does restore the man, Paul can come and be reconciled and thus find joy and comfort in his reunion with him. The church must first act to restore him and then Paul can have a sweet reunion with him, as well as with the rest of the church.

For the church to fail to reinstate this man hinders Paul's return, it hinders the unity of the church, and it makes the saints vulnerable to Satan's attacks (2:11). Further, it places upon this man an excessive burden of sorrow, which is no longer necessary because of his repentance (see 2:6-7). Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), loves nothing more than to accuse, especially when he can do so through others, like the church.

Think about this for a moment. We sometimes may do things which seem to be spiritual but which in reality are counter-productive. The church disciplined this man, thinking that in so doing they were protecting the purity of the church. But they went too far by refusing to receive him back into fellowship, and they were actually endangering the church and this man. Going too far with a good thing can be bad. We see this also in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul speaks to a husband and wife who decide to refrain from sexual relations. This may be beneficial for a short time, Paul tells us, such as when a couple sexually “fasts” in order to devote themselves to prayer (see 1 Corinthians 7:1-5). But sexual abstinence should not be maintained for too long a period of time, lest “**Satan tempt them for their lack of self-control**” (verse 5). Church discipline is necessary for so long a time as the sinning saint persists in rebellion against God, but once repentance has taken place, restoration should quickly follow. Failing to exercise discipline is dangerous to the whole church (1 Corinthians 5:6); to fail to remove discipline is also dangerous to the whole church (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

While we have considered a number of principles and their applications in this lesson, two final areas of application are critical to our understanding. ***First, notice that while Paul is absent from the Corinthians, he is deeply aware of the presence of God in his life and ministry. Paul practices the presence of God:***

10 But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes *in the presence of Christ* (2 Corinthians 2:10, emphasis mine).

Paul may be absent from the Corinthians, but he is never absent from God. Paul seeks to practice the presence of God by living in a conscious state of awareness of God’s presence. He must certainly agree with the psalmist, who writes (Psalm 139:7-10).

***Second, 1 and 2 Corinthians together help to remind us that sin is dynamic and not static.*** You will remember that after Satan tempted our Lord without success, Luke’s Gospel tells us that after “the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). Satan never gives up, and his temptations come in all sizes, shapes, and forms. I am particularly impressed with the way the Corinthians deal with sin.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul reminds these saints that he has previously written to them, instructing them not to associate with immoral people (5:9). The Corinthians misunderstand (or at least misapply) this instruction. They seek to separate themselves from the unbelieving world, while they continue to embrace professing Christians who live in a way pagans will not even accept. And so Paul must teach them to separate themselves from the man living with his father’s wife and to maintain some contact with the unsaved world, to whom they have the obligation to be witnesses.

Now in 2 Corinthians, we find the church has over-corrected their error. While they once failed to exercise church discipline where it was desperately needed, they are now reluctant to remove church discipline, when it is no longer necessary. My point is simply this: living the Christian life is like walking along a path (a common imagery in the Bible), and one can err by going astray on one side of the path or the other. I think that many times when we wander off the path in one direction, we often over-correct so that we then depart from the path in the opposite direction. Let us beware of thinking that once we have dealt with a particular problem, we will no longer struggle with it again. The same problem may, of course, recur. Or, in our zeal to avoid falling into the same sin, we may venture to the opposite extreme.

I look at the Christian life as a kind of sine wave. We have our ups and our downs, our peaks and our troughs. We will struggle with sin as long as we live, just as the Corinthians did over the course of Paul’s ministry to them. Christian maturity and spirituality are not the cessation of sin, but the gradual reduction of the extremes to which we wander. The ideal in this case would be to walk a straight line. We shall never do so in this life, but we can strive to avoid such hair-pin curves!

As Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthians continues, we see the dynamic nature of the spiritual life and the struggle with sin. We see some of the problems, still in embryonic form in 1 Corinthians, coming to full term and birthing before our eyes. We see other problems dealt with in such a way that new dangers arise. The struggle is life-long, and thus we suffer and groan, along with all creation, until sin is finally removed once for all.

***Finally, I wish to focus on the fact that Christ is God’s “Yes” to every promise He has made to us.*** Everything good which God has promised throughout the ages is summed up in Christ. He is the consummation of God’s purposes and promises (2 Corinthians 1:20; Romans 8:31-32; Colossians 1:16-20; Colossians 2:8-15; see also Ephesians 1:18-23).

If all of the promises of God are fulfilled and certain in Christ, there really is one key to obtaining all of God's blessed promises or rejecting them. *If we receive God's gift of salvation in Christ, we gain every blessing, and we shall receive every promise He has made to us.* But if we reject Him, either deliberately or by refusing to turn to Him in faith, all of the promises are forfeited. *The ultimate question in life is this: "What have you personally done with God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ?"* If you are "**in Christ,**" by acknowledging your sin and by trusting in Christ's death, burial and resurrection in your place, then all of the promises are yours. If you are not "**in Him,**" none of the promised blessings are yours, but only the promised condemnation of which He has warned you. The Apostle John puts it this way (1 John 5:10-12).

Do you have the Son, my friend? If so, all of the promised blessings of God are yours, in Christ. If not, you dare not deceive yourself about receiving any of God's blessings, for they come to us only through His Son, Jesus Christ.

*Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/why-paul%E2%80%99s-absence-should-make-corinthians%E2%80%99-hearts-grow-fonder-2-cor-112-211>*

### ***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

1. Godly leaders are not to be spiritual dictators but rather spiritual guides (2 Cor. 1:23-24; cf. Luke 22:25-27)
2. Biblical confrontation is necessary, but it should never be celebrated (2 Cor. 2:1-2)
3. Biblical confrontation should be motivated by love, not by pride or arrogance (vss. 3-4)
4. To openly sin against a brother is to sin against the whole body of Christ (vs. 5)
5. Biblical discipline is careful not to go too far (vss. 6-8)
6. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the goals of truly biblical discipline (vss. 9-11)