

RESTORED RELATIONSHIPS / Sunday, August 10, 2014

Unifying Topic: A COMMUNITY FORGIVES

Lesson Text

I. **An Accountability That Brings Joy** (2 Corinthians 1:23-2:3)

II. **An Accountability That Restores** (2 Corinthians 2:4-7)

III. **An Accountability That Loves** (2 Corinthians 2:8-11)

The Main Thought: To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:10, KJV).

Unifying Principle: When a person violates the code of conduct (rules) of a community, he or she may be ostracized or rejected. How can the offender be restored to wholeness within the community? Paul told the Corinthians to forgive the one who had caused them grief in order that the entire community might be made well again.

Lesson Aim: To extend genuine forgiveness to others and restore a person to a right relationship with the community and God.

Life Aim: To walk humbly before God and others so that believers are able to hold one another accountable.

1:23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

2:1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

2:2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

2:3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

2:8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

2:9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

2:10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

HISTORY:

Chapter 1:15-22 ¹Paul explained that he had intended to visit them twice. The first visit would have been on his way from Ephesus to Macedonia. The second visit would have been on his return journey. He did not intend to change his mind when he made those plans. He did not make promises that he did not intend to keep. He was not fickle or indecisive in his plans as some might have thought. To clarify things, he says, God is true; He's faithful; He can be relied on, therefore, the Good News they bring and deliver to them is not yes and no; it is true! As the truth of God stands, so does the word of the apostle. His change of plans is always in accord with the Will of God. Jesus is the Person about whom Timothy, Paul and Silas had preached. God says that Jesus is the 'yes' to all His promises. Jesus proves that all God's promises are true. So when we pray by Jesus Christ we can say 'Amen'. This is a Hebrew word that means 'firm, steady, trustworthy'. We use it at the end of prayers. It shows that we agree with them. In this way, we give glory to God. 'Standing firm' in business meant that they would keep their promises. The mark of possession was a 'seal.' This was a piece of wax that they put on an official

¹ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/2corinthians-lbw.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

piece of paper. It showed who owned it. A 'guarantee' (*certain promise*) was a payment of part of a sum of money. This was a sign that the full amount would be paid in the future. God gives us the Holy Spirit to show that we belong to Him. The sealing of the Holy Spirit has a threefold significance in the New Testament: 1) to indicate ownership, 2) to indicate genuineness, and 3) to preserve and keep safe. The Holy Spirit Himself is the down-payment, or pledge, or redemption. The indwelling Spirit is the surety and the security of all that is to follow in the final salvation of the believer.

LESSON:

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:3 An Accountability That Brings Joy

1:23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. What should a minister do when he is under attack by some persons in the church? Paul faced the problem, accusing him of every conceivable weakness and fault, and it almost broke his heart. Some of the church had also become corrupt (morally and doctrinally)—living in sin—teaching contrary to the Word of God. Paul was the center of controversy, being heavily criticized and he felt it was best not to come. He stood no chance to minister to the people. Therefore, he delayed his trip to Corinth. Just as Jesus Christ came first to save His people rather than to judge the world, so too, Paul's desire was not to cause any more sorrow among them, but come with joy instead of anguish. At this time it was best for the minister to spare the rod of discipline. He had the spiritual authority over their welfare, and would be forced to deal with their sin and shame. He wanted them to have time to repent and correct their sinful behavior. He waited instead for a report from Titus before taking further actions, hoping he would not have to come again, as he had earlier, to face their rebellion. He called God as his witness, for his soul shall answer to it.

1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand. Paul does not want to pull rank. He doesn't wish to dictate to them in an authoritative way as he goes on to express that he or others does not have dominion over their faith; he does not control their spiritual lives; he is not a dictator to take authority over their behavior. What he means is that when he comes to them, he wants to be able to minister to them; to be a helper of their joy; work along with them; join them in their efforts to grow; to help them in fulfilling their joy in Christ. The Corinthians were not to stand firm because of Paul but stand firm in their faith in Christ. They had to make the effort. They were engulfed in controversy over Paul and in sin before God. Paul and the others wanted only to be helpers of their joy, as they stood in faith in Christ!

2:1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. Paul said he determined; made a decision; resolved in his own mind that it was best for the minister to delay his trip at that time, so he would not cause pain; heaviness. He loved and cared for the people of Corinth and their church, but he just didn't want to be the cause of more pain and hurt; therefore, staying away was the risk he took.

2:2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?— So, Paul didn't want to put them in a painful and embarrassing position. How would they then be free to bring pleasure and gladness to him if they are sorrowful? What point would it be for him to depress the very people who could give him joy? His coming would only cause gloom and heaviness to settle over the congregation because of the rumors and controversy about him. A minister's presence should bring joy and cheer to a congregation, not conflict and stress. Jesus' Words—John 16:33: "*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*" There could be no gladness or joy until the rumors of Paul, and the sin stopped. It was best for the minister not to fight with those whom he loved.

2:3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. Paul had written a letter urging the church to put the Lord first and to quit the controversy. It was best for the minister not to be attacked and hurt time and again. His desire was that they would take care of these measures themselves, so that when he came, he would be able to rejoice in a congregation that acted obediently, and he would see that it had prompted repentant hearts and the restoration of those who had been disciplined. He longed to minister; not to have controversy and sin swirling

around him, and certainly not in the church.

A leader has to be accountable and the people have to be accountable. Accountability is the standard or order in making right choices. An important part of being accountable is being truthful and making amends for your choices. When all, come together, accountability will bring joy.

2 Corinthians 2:4-7 An Accountability That Restores

2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. Affliction, anguish, and many tears, all characterized Paul's emotional condition as he penned this letter to the Corinthians. It was best for the minister to write a strong appeal. Many say it was lost. He does not want them to be grieved, but to know the love he has for them. Sometimes others make choices that we know are wrong. If we ignore their behavior and let them continue, we aren't showing love to them. We aren't causing them to be accountable. Love mends and restores.

2:5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. When a person within the church is causing trouble, what should the church do? Church discipline is the message. There was an offender; his name is not mentioned; but he is a person who is causing grief and pain for the whole church. Paul is just acknowledging the grief and its continued affects, not so much him, in part (*to such a degree*), but on the whole congregation.

2:6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. Paul writes that it comes down to this: the man causing the mess has been punished enough by their united disapproval and discipline, and he does not want to be any harder on this man than what has already been done. Many churches will not deal with discipline; they overlook it; sweep it under the rug; don't correct. True discipline is an evidence of love. But always make sure you go in love, and not in harshness. One has to be restored back to God in order to continue in God's plan for their life.

2:7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Any believer who attacks God's minister and disturbs the church must be corrected. It doesn't stop there, after disciplinary actions, now it's time to forgive (*meaning to show it*), and comfort them, lest one becomes so bitter and discouraged that they won't be able to recover from this. This is all a part of the restoration process of a person.

1. The offending brother must be corrected not only for the sake of the church and the minister, but for his own sake.
2. The offending believer must be restored to the point that he loves God, the people of God; including the minister of God.

Note: the man here must have repented of his sin; he was gripped with sorrow for Paul to have said this. Therefore, the purpose of the discipline had been achieved and restoration was needed. There were four things involved in restoration: he had to repent (v. 7); they were to forgive (v.7); comfort (v.7), and they were to confirm their love (v.8). There is a point where discipline can go on too long and become destructive instead of corrective. Once the person has repented and demonstrated genuine sorrow, he is to be restored back into the fellowship of the church, thereby, causing accountability for all.

2 Corinthians 2:8-11 An Accountability That Loves

2:8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. Showing assurance and demonstrating their love toward the man was necessary. That means they were to go out of their way to show the man that he was loved. The discipline and correction were only to straighten out the mess and get everyone back on track of loving one another to minister for the Lord.

2:9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. Paul

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wanted to know the proof; the evidence of their obedience. As long as the church allowed the man to continue his disturbance, the church could not focus on its mission and ministry. Allowing the controversy and division to rule meant they would still be complaining and arguing. But Paul's aim in writing the letter was to see how they stood the test; whether they fully accepted his authority—being obedient in all things.

2:10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;— Paul declares that forgiveness is the best way:

1. Paul had forgiven the man to help the church and himself. If a church refuses to forgive one who truly repents, the church is denying its very nature and purpose for existing (God's existence in them).
2. Paul had forgiven the man for the sake of Christ. "*In the person of Christ*" means in the presence or face of Christ, that is, before Christ. Christ is so displeased with an unforgiving spirit that He refuses to forgive the sins of any man who is unforgiving. Paul loved Christ, loved Him with all of his heart; therefore, Paul could not cut the heart of Christ with an unforgiving spirit.

2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. Paul had to forgive the man for the sake of Christ which keeps Satan from getting an advantage!

1. Satan would have had an advantage over the man if the church had not forgiven him.
 - a. He would have remained out of the church; out in the world.
 - b. He would have been subject to falling into depression and despair; swallowed up with sorrow.
2. Satan would have had an advantage over Paul and his ministry. It would have become ineffective, for God could no longer bless a man who did not do what he was preaching: forgiving the sins of men.
3. Satan would have had an advantage over the church for the same reasons; for it was denying its very purpose for existing. Instead of opening its doors to the repentant sinner, it would be closing its doors to meeting the needs of people—people who are ever so precious to God.

We should not be ignorant to Satan's devices. Satan has great influence upon men and their affairs. His devices come to tempt and destroy people!

SUMMARY:

²The reason for Paul's delayed visit to Corinth was to spare them, calling God a witness to his soul that he was telling the truth. He did not want to suggest an attitude of domination nor "pull rank" on them, for he views himself as one working for their joy. He acknowledges that they stand on the basis of their faith. In his letter, he didn't want to cause pain and heaviness when he came to them, for he needed their joy. He wanted to bring accountability with joy, not with grief. He also wanted to receive their refreshment when he came (1:vv.23-24-2:vv.1-3).

Paul had shed many tears in writing this letter, not to give pain, but rather to let them know of his love for them. There was one who had grieved Paul, not as much as what was done to grieve the church. However, there was sufficient punishment inflicted upon this man by the majority of the church. Now it was time to restore him by forgiving and comforting him, so he would not be overcome with sorrow or bitterness (2:vv.4-7).

True discipline is an evidence of love, but there had to be a continuance of love toward the offender. They would in turn show their obedience in all things by restoring relationships. Paul had forgiven the man for the sake of Christ and the church had to do the same. It would help the church and it would please Christ, to not be ignorant of Satan's devices, thereby, keeping Satan from getting an advantage over them (2:vv.8-11).

APPLICATION:

God does not want us to be in offense with anyone! Are there people you need to forgive? Do it!

² http://executableoutlines.com/2co/2co_01.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>