

“Forgiveness”

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11

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Teaching Aim: To show the importance of forgiving others when they have sinned against us. To demonstrate church discipline is for the spiritual wellbeing of the local church. To realize we need to handle sin in different ways for different people. To understand, *“It may be hard to forgive, but it is even harder not to forgive.”*

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: Paul’s reason for not keeping his original plans (2 Cor. 1:23-2:2)

1. Who does Paul call on to be his witness in **verse 23**? Is there a danger in doing this? When? Is it okay to say, *“I swear to God!”* or *“God is my witness”* when testifying to the truthfulness of a statement? (See **Rom. 1:9; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:5,10**) Paul takes his oath in **verse 23** to an extreme level, what does he mean when he says, *“I call God as a witness against my soul”*?

2. According to **verse 23b**, why didn’t Paul come to Corinth at the time he originally planned? (See **1 Cor. 16:5-8; 2 Cor. 2:1**) What did Paul spare the Corinthians from by delaying his visit? Sometimes it is better not to say anything than to say words in anger, why? (See **Jam. 1:19-20**)

3. According to **verse 24**, what was Paul apparently being accused of by the false apostles who had infiltrated the church at Corinth? How does Paul respond to these false accusations? There are no big Christians and little Christians in the church of Jesus Christ, *“the ground is level at the foot of the cross.”* How does this statement relate to Paul’s words in **verse 24b**? Why is teamwork so important to the success any church? (See **Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-12; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11**)

4. Paul had already made one *“painful visit”* to Corinth in order to deal with problems that had come up between the writing of 1st and 2nd Corinthians, he didn’t want to make a second *“painful visit”* on the heels of his previous trip, why? (**vs. 1**)

5. What was Paul's hope in delaying his visit (**vs. 2**)? Who was Paul praying would make him glad? How could the Corinthians do this? What should our hope be when we are working through differences with other people? Was Paul avoiding or simply delaying his visit with the Corinthians for a more opportune time? Do you see the letter of **2 Corinthians** as an attempt by Paul to work out some of his issues with the Corinthians? According to Paul, how quickly should we deal with conflicts that come up and make us angry? (See **Eph. 4:26-27**) Should we ever write a letter, email, or facebook message in anger? Why is this not a good idea?

Part II: Paul's command for the church to forgive the repentant offender (2 Cor. 2:3-7)

1. Paul refers to a lost letter in **verses 3 & 4** which he wrote between his writings of **1st & 2nd Corinthians**. Do you think this missing letter was also intended to be included in Scripture? Why or why not? What was Paul's hope in **verse 3**? What did Paul say would bring him joy? (See **Luke 17:3-4**)
2. Paul loved the Corinthians enough to confront them over their sin. According to **verse 4**, how did writing the lost letter described in **verses 3 & 4** emotionally affect the Apostle Paul? Why? Have you ever had to confront a family member or friend that you loved because of sin in their life? Without mentioning names, how did it feel? Are you glad you confronted this person? Did their behavior change?
3. Notice the grace that Paul demonstrates here, not only does he forgive the offender, but he doesn't even mention his or her name (**vs. 5**). Forgiveness doesn't necessarily mean forgetting what happened but letting go of the anger and bitterness of the past, "*its water under the bridge.*" Forgiveness actually brings freedom to us when we let go and give it to God. What is the danger of not letting go and continually bringing up the past? What can this unforgiving kind of mindset do to a marriage? What can this mindset do to other relationships?
4. There are a couple of views of who Paul might be referring to here: 1) the incestuous man of **1 Cor. 5:1-8**; and 2) an individual who had mistreated Paul during his "*painful visit*" between the writings of **1st & 2nd Corinthians**. Who do you think Paul is referring to here? Why?

5. **Verse 6** is a clear indication that church discipline was carried out on the person (or people) involved. What is church discipline and why is it important to the spiritual health of the local church body? (See **Matt. 18:15-17**) What will happen to the church if sin is openly allowed and simply swept under the carpet? What are two major mistakes churches make when it comes to church discipline?
- 1.
 - 2.
6. According to **verse 6**, does it appear that the offender repented following this church discipline? How should the church respond when an offender under church discipline repents (**vs. 7**)? The goal of church discipline is always repentance, reconciliation and restoration. Why are all three elements important? The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, but what does Satan do? (See **1 Pet. 5:8**) What is the difference between “*conviction*” and “*condemnation*?”

Part III: The Christian is not only to forgive, but to love (2 Cor. 2:8-11)

1. In **verse 8** Paul urges the church to “*reaffirm their love for*” the repentant sinner. What are some ways we can reaffirm our love today for believers who have fallen into sin and repented? Is there ever a time when a person is disqualified from carrying on their previous ministry in the church? (See **1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 5:19-20**) What was Paul’s purpose in writing the letter that was lost (**vs. 9**)?
2. Why is it so important for us to forgive repentant believers who have fallen into sin (**vs. 10**)? (See **v. 7**) Why is it especially important for us as Christians to forgive people who have hurt us? (See **Matt. 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 17:3-4**) How can unforgiveness lead to bitterness? What are some ways a bitter spirit can affect us and who does it hurt the most? According to **verse 10**, does Paul hold a grudge against this individual? Is there anyone you are holding a grudge against? In light of the Scriptures above, how should you respond to these feelings?
3. According to **verse 10b**, what had Paul done in the presence of the Lord? Are you willing to do likewise to people who have hurt you? (See **Luke 17:3-4; Eph. 4:32**) Does reading through **2 Cor. 4:3-4** help you better understand the spiritual blindness of people who don’t know Christ? Were you once there yourself?

4. What happens if we aren't willing to forgive according to **verse 11**? What are some ways Satan takes advantage of unforgiveness in individuals? In churches? How can unforgiveness destroy the testimony of individuals and the local church? Can you think of any stories of forgiveness that touched your heart? How were the individuals involved affected? (See **Col. 3:12-13**)

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- There are no big Christians and little Christians in the Christian church, "*the ground is level at the foot of the cross.*" We are all sinners saved by grace!
- Open sin in the church was breaking Paul's heart; it should break ours as well.
- Church discipline is one of the marks of the true church; when applied it is always with the goal of repentance, reconciliation, and restoration of the sinning person.
- As Christians we are to forgive others, even as Christ has forgiven us.
- Unforgiveness can lead to bitterness. Bitterness is like holding a hot coal in your hand, others may get burned, but the one who gets burned the worse is you.
- Satan will use an unforgiving spirit to destroy both individuals and churches.