Session 3: God’s Love is Sometimes Shown in Righteous Anger…Not in Soft Tones of Caress and Comfort!

**When does God Chasten Us in Lieu of Challenging Us?**

**When does God Rebuke Us in Lieu of Reviving Us?**

When does God Give Up on Us in Lieu of Forgiving Us

Over and Over Again?

# 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4, “*I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. 24Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. 2 1So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. 2For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? 3I wrote as I did, so that when I came I would not be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. 4For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.”*

# An Echo of Unhappy Things Going on in the Church—

**The situation at Corinth had evidently gone from bad to worse.**

The church was torn with:

* ***Party Divisions***
* ***Denial of Paul’s authority over the church.***

*Trying to mend things, Paul made a flying visit to Corinth. The visit made matters worse and it had nearly broken Paul’s heart.*

*In consequence, Paul wrote a very severe letter of rebuke, written with a sore heart and through tears.*

Because of this…Paul did not fulfill his promise of visiting them again. He felt that the visit would only have hurt him and them.

The passage here shows the heart of Paul…when he had to deal severely with those he loved:

1. **Paul used severity and rebuke very unwillingly.**

***He used them only when he was driven to use them and there was nothing else left to do.***

***There are some people whose:***

* ***Eyes are always focused to find fault***
* ***Tongues are always tuned to criticize***
* ***Voice is always a rasp and an edge***.

 I have found out in my short time on this earth…that:

* ***If we are constantly critical and fault-finding;***
* ***If we are habitually angry and harsh;***
* ***If we rebuke far more than we praise,***

***The plain fact is that even our severity loses its effect.***

 It is discounted because it is so constant.

The more seldom a man rebukes, the more effective it is when he does.

The eyes of a truly Christian man seek ever for things to praise and not for things to condemn.

1. **When Paul did rebuke, he did it in love.**

*He never spoke merely to hurt.*

*He never rebuked to cause pain; he always rebuked to restore joy.*

1. **When Paul rebuked, the last thing he wanted was to domineer.**

Have you ever heard a father say to a son… “I’ll beat the fear of the loving God into you.”…?

* The great danger of the preacher and teacher is for them to think that our duty is to compel others to think exactly as we do and to insist that if they do not see things as we see them, they must be wrong.
* The aim of the teacher is not to impose beliefs on other people…but to enable and to encourage them to think out their own beliefs.
* The aim is not to produce a copy of oneself…but a person that is copying the life of the living Lord…that of Giving not Getting…

Paul knew that as a teacher he must never domineer, although he must discipline and guide.

1. **Finally:**

**For all Paul’s reluctance to rebuke,**

 **For all his desire to see the best in others,**

 **For all the love that was in his heart,**

**Paul nonetheless does rebuke when rebuke becomes necessary.**

*We must be guided by love and by consideration not for our own pride but for the ultimate* ***good*** *of others.*

***If we bathe our thoughts in prayer before we speak, we will know the time to speak and the time to be silent.***

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## 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, “If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. 6The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. 7Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. 9Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

## Paul Pleads for a Sinner’s Pardon

*Evidently there had been one who had been a ringleader in opposition to Paul.*

*The one who had caused the hurt was penitent…but the church felt that the person had caused severe damage to the name of the Church at Corinth as well as Paul…and wanted even more severe discipline upon that person.*

***Paul states that more discipline would do far more harm than good. It might simply drive the man to despair…and to do that is not to serve Christ and the Church.***

***Paul’s true character comes out here. Here is a supreme example of Christian conduct in face of injury and insult.***

***Paul pleads for mercy on the man who had hurt him so much.***

1. ***Paul did not take the matter personally at all. Paul was more interested in the peace of the Church than his own reputation.***
2. ***Paul’s motive in the exercise of discipline was not vengeance but correction. He did not aim to knock a man down, but to help him to get up.***
3. ***Paul’s insistence was that punishment must never drive to despair and must never take the heart out of a man…***

***Paul wanted the Church to understand:***

* *That quite often, sins are good qualities gone wrong.*
* *That the man who can plan a successful burglary has initiative and organizing power.*
* *That pride is a kind of intensification of the independent spirit…and that:*

***Paul’s aim in discipline was, not to eradicate such qualities, but rather to harness them to higher purposes.***

***The Christian duty is not to render the sinner harmless by battering him into submission, but to inspire him to goodness.***

***“Spare the rod and spoil the child…yes; but, beside the rod keep an apple, to give the child when he has done well.” Martin Luther***

***2 Corinthians 2:12-17, “****Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, 13I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. 14But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? 17Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.”*

***Paul stated that when there is hurt in a church, it often affects the ministry in other areas.***

*Paul could not adequately preach and minister in Troas because of his anxiety to know what was happening in Corinth. Paul was restless…and he left Troas, although a fruitful field was there, to meet Titus where Paul rejoiced with Titus when news came from Corinth through Titus that there was great rejoicing and a happy ending in that Church that Paul loved so much.*

***Paul states that to some…his speaking is the perfume of death...and to others the perfume of life.***

 ***That…the triumph of Christ is found in the repentant sinner…who comes from death to life…from destruction to life…***

***Paul, in his mind, sees Christ marching in triumph throughout the world. Paul sees the conquering general with all the glory…and seeing the enemy defeated.***

***Paul ends this segment stating that in all his discipline, it was done with pure motive…that Christ Jesus might get the glory for it all.***

***2 Corinthians 3:1-3, “****Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? 2You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. 3You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”*

***A custom of that day is seen in this passage.***

***That of…letters of commendation sent with those that were moving to another place.***

***A letter to the community to introduce him…or the family…and to testify of his or their character.***

*Romans 16 is a letter of commendation written to introduce Phoebe, a member of the Church at Cenchrea, to the Church at Rome….*

***Wow! Not a bad idea! I wonder if that could be implemented in neighborhoods today??***

***What do you think?***

***Paul stated that surely the Church at Corinth did not think he was asking for a letter of commendation to prove that he was truthful and bound with integrity…nor did he need one to prove that you are who you are…products of the Spirit of the Living God.***

Paul said that what people see in them…as well as the apostles ...are not something that needs to be chiseled or written in stone…but on tablets which are real, life giving, life producing, life changing truth…Truth from God.

***Plato once wrote, “The good teacher does not write his message in ink that will fade; he writes it upon men.”***

***Jesus does that today…His Spirit testifies to the Truth that Jesus died, was buried and rose again…who was the First Resurrection.***

***This is a great warning to every Christian…Every man is an open letter of Jesus Christ.***

***Every Christian, whether he likes it or not, is an advertisement for Christianity.***

***The honor of Christ is in the hands of his followers.***

***We judge:***

* *A shopkeeper by the kind of goods he sells (good or bad quality);*
* *A craftsman by the kind of articles he produces;*
* *A church by the kind of men and women/boys and girls it creates;*

***And…therefore, men judge Christ by His followers!***

One of God’s successful pastors said… “After speaking with thousands of people outside the church, I have come to the conclusion that the greatest handicap the Church has is the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians.”

***Remember…when we go out into the world, we have the awe-inspiring responsibility of being open letters, advertisements, for Christ and the Church.***

***What do other people see in me?***

 ***A person of integrity…or a person in whom you cannot trust-----***

***A person who follows through with commitments…or a person who does not keep his promises------***

***A person who lives like he says he lives…or a person who lives a lie…and is a lie??***