

2 Corinthians 1:12-22 Standing On The Promises Falls Ch. AM 9/29/2024

In storybooks, nothing ever goes wrong for the hero. It was not like that for Paul. Paul promised to come visit the church in Corinth, but then Paul was delayed. Some in the church instantly started doubting Paul's sincerity.

Paul's view of his life was that he was above reproach, only by grace. Before his conversion, he had persecuted Christians. But after Paul's conversion, his life and gospel ministry rested on the death and resurrection of Christ.

**Since we can trust Jesus fully, we can have confidence in those who live by His Word and Spirit.**

**1. The Paul & Corinth two-way trust bond will be validated when Jesus comes. (v.12-14)**

Verse 12, this is the first time boasting appears, and it will appear 25 times in this letter. For Paul, boasting was the same as declaring with confidence. For example, Paul was saying that he could look his accusers in the eye and declare to them with confidence that their accusations were false.

Listen to verse 12, *"For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you."*

We normally think of a boastful person as self-centered. When Paul was speaking about his own character, Paul attributed it to God's gracious actions toward Paul. In that way, Paul's boasting was not self-centered. Paul wrote about his conscience. The conscience is the part of us that evaluates whether we did right or wrong. Others were condemning Paul, but Paul's conscience did not condemn Paul, and Paul's conscience was directed by the Spirit of God. This did not mean that Paul's conscience could never be wrong, for Paul was only a limited human being and a still a fallen sinner, even after his conversion and calling to be an apostle. But what Paul's clear conscience did mean was that to the extent that Paul's mind and heart had been educated by the Word of God and illuminated by the Spirit of God, to that same extent Paul was able to know accurately about himself that he had acted with a godly sincerity and full integrity.

In verses 13-14, Paul showed that because he operated on principle, they could expect that Paul will be consistent. What Paul was writing now will match with what Paul wrote in his first letter, and they can expect to have it all confirmed by God at the end of the world. Listen for that as I read verses 13 -14, *"For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand— 14 just as you did partially understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you."*

Paul's letters were straightforward. Paul's letters were not open to more than one interpretation. If the readers in Corinth failed to properly understand Paul, that fact indicated more about them than it indicated about Paul.

All of Paul's preaching and writing was done in the light of the future second coming of the Risen Lord Jesus. At that time, the value of Paul's work would be tested. To bear in mind constantly the second coming of Jesus would give seriousness to the way that they viewed Paul.

## **2. Paul's love for Corinth was genuine, arising from God's trustworthiness. (v.15-19)**

Here in verses 15-17, Paul explained why he had not visited them, as he said he would. The church in Corinth needed to hear this, but what is offered to us as modern readers 2,000 years later? These verses are of value to us because they reveal to us how Paul dealt with problems in church relationships.

Here Paul explained that he was not reneging on his promise to visit them; on the contrary, Paul doubled his plans to visit them.

Paul always took the ministry of Corinth seriously, and he saw Corinth as of strategic importance. Even though Paul was involved in pioneering missionary work at a time when every city needed its first church to be started, Paul always kept in mind the church back in Corinth.

Paul carried a deep concern for the stability and growth of the Christians in Corinth. In verse 15, the reason that Paul wanted to visit them twice was to preach and teach the grace of God. In verse 16, Paul also wanted them to become partners with him in his missionary work to new cities. For Corinth to partner with Paul would be for Corinth to experience a new dimension of God's grace, namely for them to support and encourage missionary work, the spread of the gospel to new places. In verse 17, Paul had no such waffling back and forth as they might have thought, but rather, Paul was always seeking the most gain for everyone.

Paul wanted their prayer support, their heart-felt support, and their financial support for the poor churches and the new churches.

Verses 18-19, Paul's argument was from the greater matter to the lesser matter. Since Paul had maintained integrity and truthfulness in the greater matter of preaching the gospel to them, then they should know that they could trust his integrity on the smaller matters surrounding his changed travel plans. Just as surely as Paul had proclaimed the truth of Christ, so also Paul lived out the truth of Christ in Paul's dealings with the church.

Listen to verses 18-19, “*As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes.*”

Just as God’s promises were represented in Jesus the Son of God, so also Jesus was represented by Paul the apostle. Just as God the Father is trustworthy, that meant that Jesus would need to be trustworthy, and so would Paul.

Paul is repeating what our Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 5:37, “*Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ anything more than this comes from evil.*”

### **3. God’s promises are fulfilled in Jesus and further confirmed by His Word and Spirit, to God’s glory. (v.20-22)**

In verse 20, Paul unpacked the beauty of God’s trustworthiness being shown through Jesus, “*For all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus Christ]. That is why it is through [Jesus Christ] that we utter our Amen to God for His glory.*”

What did that have to do with Paul? Paul’s whole ministry could be summed up with one word – Amen! The only thing that Paul was doing was announcing the trustworthiness of Jesus. Who cares about Paul? Can we trust Paul? The better question to ask is whether we can trust Christ. Did God promise us salvation in Christ, and did God provide it? Since we can trust God fully, we can have confidence in those whom God calls and sends to tell of God’s gospel, who live by God’s Word and Spirit, and who serve God’s church.

In verses 21 and 22, there are 4 ways that God’s trustworthiness is shown.

1. Establishes. “...*it is God who establishes us with you in Christ...*” God in the present tense now establishes. God continues to establish the ministry of Paul and Timothy to Corinth. God kept providing them with missionary return visits, and pastors, elders, and deacons. Wherever God establishes His church, God always establishes servants whose calling it was to serve and shepherd that church. God Himself remains always involved in building up bonds of ministry in church!

2. Anointed. Verse 21, “*It is God who...has anointed us.*” The word anointed in verse 21 reminds us of OT kings and priests anointed with oil. That leads us to the NT use of the word anointed, when in Luke 3:21-22, Jesus was baptized with water and then The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus while God the Father spoke from heaven! Later in Acts 4:27, it was confirmed that it was God who had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit. Anointing is associated with the receiving of the Spirit. Every believer has this privilege of having the Spirit of God, from the moment when we are converted. 1 John 2:20, “...*you have been anointed by the Holy One...*” 1 John 2:27, “...*the anointing that you received from Him abides in you...*” God is trustworthy to anoint us with His Spirit.

3. Seal. “*It is God who...has put His seal on us.*” A seal was a mark of ownership. This action of placing a seal on us is the prerogative of God alone. He declares that we belong to Him. God is trustworthy to give us the seal of the Spirit.

4. Spirit as a guarantee. “*It is God who...has given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*” Guarantee is a down payment indicating permanence. We did not temporarily receive the Spirit for a while, like we took out a library book that we cannot keep! No. We received the Spirit as a permanent gift to us to keep. The downpayment meant there is more blessings to come from God to us. The Spirit guarantees the rest of the blessings – we are children of God, citizens of heaven. We are protected, so that we cannot be inhabited by a demon. We have the comfort of knowing that we belong to Christ and we belong to our Father in heaven. We have gift of faith, the gift of repentance, the gift of eternal life, the gift of the Bible, and the gift of the rest of God’s promises yet to be fulfilled.

God’s trustworthiness was seen in God establishing His servants in ministry, God anointing, sealing and guaranteeing all His people. In this way, God made the Corinthians stand firm in Christ, and God made sure that Paul stood firm in Christ. God did not let them waver or stumble. God granted perseverance through affliction with God’s comfort. God helped the church in Corinth to trust Paul again, and helped Paul to live in simplicity and sincerity and integrity.

Because the gift of the Holy Spirit was a downpayment, the people in Corinth need not fear that the Holy Spirit would leave them. They need not fear that the Holy Spirit would leave Paul. The Holy Spirit remains with each person, as the proof of salvation received, and the proof of the blessings of heaven yet to come!

Without Christ, we are all untrustworthy sinners. If we get a good reputation, and we have personal integrity, it is only because Christ Jesus has come and granted us undeserved mercy and unmerited grace to become children of God.

God alone is holy. God alone is trustworthy.

As Christians, we do not stand on our own integrity.

We stand on God’s promises.

**Conclusion:** What should we do if church relationships get messed up?

1. Remember that the devil is the accuser. We learn from Paul that a lot of accusations should be ignored, and Christ will sort it out in the final day. We all must answer to God. In the final day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will all know the truth about it all.

2. When we answer an accusation, be straightforward. We speak our conscience, and we directly face the issues that are disrupting relationships. One

day, Paul would answer to God for everything he ever said, did, wrote or taught. Paul must answer to God. Sometimes, Paul must answer to the church.

3. We explain our actions. We learn from Paul that we live and speak with the final day of judgment in mind. We explain with simplicity and sincerity. For those of us who are leaders, we can learn something extra from this passage about Paul as a leader - when we leaders fail, we might cause people to doubt the trustworthiness of God Himself. That is why it is so important that we leaders explain how our actions missed the mark, but that Christ remains reliable. Point people away from ourselves and point them to Christ. If we have any reliability, it is from Him. If we have any wrongs, those are from us.

4. Remember grace. We learn from Paul in verse 12 to remember that we stand in the grace of God. God gives the grace of comfort in affliction. Being misunderstood was another affliction for Paul, but the God of all comfort provided comfort for Paul in this too. There is room for us after we mess up, to serve. In the OT, Moses and David killed people, and yet were restored and used by God through grace. In the NT, Paul persecuted the church, and Peter denied our Lord, and yet they were still used by God through grace. There is grace and forgiveness for people who mess up – prophets, kings, apostles, missionaries, pastors, elders, deacons and every believer. Relationships between believers can be healed by grace. The entire church was built on God’s grace, from start to finish, from top to bottom, inside and out. For daily need, God gives us daily grace; for sudden need, God gives us sudden grace; for overwhelming need, God gives us overwhelming grace. The Christian life is a matter of GRACE from beginning to end. God will continue to provide enough grace to last through all of our afflictions in this life. Remember grace. John 1:16, “*From Christ’s fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*”