

# The Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

## Chapter 1:12-24

November 15, 1998

- **Outline of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians:**
  - Chapter 1 God equips His people through trial, comfort and perseverance.
- **Introduction**

It is evident from the tone of this letter that Paul's previous letter was fruitful. Extra-biblical writings also confirm that the church in Corinth later became known for faithfulness throughout the region. Despite this, the church continued to be troubled by those who disparaged Paul's ministry and taught things contrary to that which he had taught them. This letter seeks to encourage the church as well as set the record straight in chapters 10 through 13 with regard to the accusations by the Judaizers.

- **Exposition of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:12-24**

*12 For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.*

- Evidently those who troubled the church did so by attacking the validity of Paul's ministry. Although the claim would be true that Paul's writing is sometimes difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:14-16), he testifies here that he treated them with simplicity and sincerity so as to instruct them best.
- Too frequently, we want Christianity to be a simple and neat religion where there are no questions. If our desire is to abandon our brains, then we have the wrong religion. God has seen fit to leave His word in such a way that in order to understand it we must be equipped with His Spirit and also diligent study.
- Paul states that they acted not with carnal reason but with a Godly demeanor in all of his dealings but especially toward the Corinthians whom he had ministered to many times. If any body would be able to testify to these things, they would be able to more.

*13 For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end<sup>14</sup> (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

- Paul's instructions to the church were not secretive or mysterious such that they needed some special code to understand them. It is easy to see why those outside would make the claim of not being able to understand his writing because without the Spirit of God, the things of God are foolishness. It is not completely clear whether Paul is saying that they understand part of what he has taught them or if he is saying that part of the Corinthians have come to understand his teaching ministry. Given the language of simplicity in instruction, it seems most likely that Paul is speaking of a portion of the Corinthians who are yet to embrace him and his ministry although both understandings are plausible.
- The concept of Paul boasting in his disciples is a common attribute of Paul. Despite his great academic background and depth of understanding given him in spiritual matters, Paul's love was for the lost and for those to whom he was a spiritual father in the faith. Notice that Paul's theology did not hamper his evangelism nor did his evangelism hamper his theology. Paul demonstrated a genuine love for evangelism and teaching which is consistent with his depth of insight.

*15 And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit—<sup>16</sup> to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?*

- Paul states that his original intention was to come visit them on his way to Macedonia and to return again later from Macedonia in preparation for his return to Judea.
- Here we begin to see what the content of the calumnies might be that were leveled against Paul by his detractors. To the extent that he could, Paul had conveyed his plans to the church but apparently later was detained and needed to make a change in his plans. He made plans by faith and then later found out that God's plan would make it necessary to change his own plans. Therefore, when Paul originally made these plans he was not saying one thing and meaning another. His word to them was as sure as he could have been without being arrogant. To level this charge against him gives us an indication that those who opposed Paul did not have much issues of substance against him.

*18 But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No.<sup>19</sup> For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.<sup>20</sup> For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

- Paul invokes an oath on the basis of the faithfulness of God, that Paul had not mislead them in the original plan of his travels. Paul's inability to keep his plans was not an indication of his lack of caring for the church but rather the obvious submission to the providence of God.
- Therefore, Paul declares that both the message he taught and the manner in which he conducted his personal affairs were in line with faithfulness of God. If Paul could not be trusted in the small things such as travel plans, how could they believe his message about spiritual matters? The answer is that the ground of faith for Paul in all of his teaching and dealings was inclusion in Christ.
- Apparently, the charges against Paul were not limited to his schedule keeping but also extended to questions about the truthfulness about his message. Verse 20 confirms the previous verses by teaching that Christ was and is not "Yes" and "No" as though he was inconsistent but rather in Christ all of the *promises made by God* are confidently "Yes". Christ completely satisfied all of the covenantal requirements of the Father such that the imputation of His righteousness to anybody would ensure that they became the beneficiary of all the promises of God.

***21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,<sup>22</sup> who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.***

- The assurance of blessing from God's promises is also confirmed by God anointing both Paul and all those who are in Christ. This anointing is a blessing of being declared Holy or set apart.
- In addition, God has set His seal upon us by the indwelling of His Spirit in us. Such indwelling is not simply a comfort for daily living (which it is) but is also a promise of future glory. As surely as He has placed His Spirit within us, He also shall surely bring us to glory in eternity in His presence.
- Notice also here the great promise of perseverance for those who are in Christ. This foundational doctrine of the Reformed faith reveals that it is God Himself who places us in Christ and equally important, it is He who keeps us there as well. If we were to begin our life in Christ resting on His mercy but later maintained our status in Him by means of our faithfulness no one would be able to persevere beyond the first day. Instead those who are truly elect, who have been sealed with His Spirit, although they may stumble in sin, they will not ultimately fall away as God will ensure their perseverance. Not persevering to the end is an indication of not truly being regenerate.

***23 Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.<sup>24</sup> Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand. NKJV***

- Paul again testifies invoking God as his witness that the reason Paul failed to visit as planned was not an intent to deceive or an indication of his lack of genuine love for the them but was actually out of compassion for them. This compassion was most likely in response to the "severe letter" that he sent to them. Not wanting to heap further burdens on them, Paul waited to visit them until after God granted repentance and fruit as a result of his letter to them.
- Paul made it clear that He was not acting as a lord over them but rather in their best interests as a fellow worker working together for their faithfulness.