

Introduction

On March 5, we began a new series in 2 Corinthians. We covered the introduction the first week and saw that Paul and Timothy had written the letter to the church in Corinth, and the saints in Achaia. Even though the letter was from Paul and Timothy, it is clear that Timothy wrote it for Paul, because it is about Paul and a defense of his apostolic ministry. It is considered Paul's most personal letter. Even though this is named 2 Corinthians, it is Paul's fourth letter to the Corinthians. In Paul's first letter, he had written to them about some doctrinal issues. Then, Chloe's people and the household of Stephanas visited Paul, and gave him some information about what was going on. Paul also received a letter from the Corinthians with questions about what he had written. Paul wrote a second letter, which we have and is named 1 Corinthians, even though it was his second letter. Then, Paul wrote a third letter, which scholars have called the letter of sorrow. We do not have a copy of that letter, but Paul mentions this letter in chapter seven, saying he had caused them sorrow, and did not regret sending it to them because it made them sorrowful to the point of repentance.

(2 Co 7:8–9) “For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—*for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— {9} I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance...”

In the second message we saw that we are to be God's channels. When God comforts us, we are to comfort others with the same comfort that we received from God. The principle applies to all the other areas of our lives. We are to forgive others, just as God forgives us. We are to bless others, just as God has blessed us.

In this fourth letter, Paul is writing to defend himself. After planting the church, Apollos came and poured himself into the church. After Apollos left, some brethren came in and tried to discredit Paul and his apostolic ministry. They tried to malign his character, saying he was not a man of his word. They slandered his intentions, and they attacked his apostleship, claiming him to be a false apostle. Their goal was to remove his apostolic authority so that they could take control of the Corinthian church.

Have any of you ever had your character and reputation attacked? Has anyone had their reputation slandered by someone? It is painful to hear malicious accusations about you. There have been two notable occasions in my life where my character has been attacked. In one of those occasions, I went to one of my friends who had heard the things said about me, and I defended myself and cleared the air. I did not publicly defend myself because I did not want to cause the name of Christ or His church to be suffer. I chose rather to forgive the offender and move on.

Our passage today is 2 Corinthians 1:12 through 2 Corinthians 2:4. The verse and chapter numbers were added much later. The chapter divisions were created in AD 1227 by Stephen Langton. The Wycliff Bible was the first Bible to use the chapter divisions and it came out in AD 1382. All the modern translations use his division system. The verse numbers were developed in 1551 AD by Robert Estienne. The Geneva Bible in the sixteenth century was the first Bible to include both chapter and verse divisions for both Old and New Testaments. ¹ In preaching, I try to find the main idea of a passage, and break the passages down by main ideas.

¹ <https://www.compellingtruth.org/divided-Bible-chapters-verses.html>

In our passage today, Paul is beginning his defense, and his emphasis today is on his travel plans. We will look at the testimony of Paul's conscience. Second, we will look at his explanation of his intentions of his travel plans and why they changed. Third, we will look at the reason that he determined not to come to them at that time.

Paul's Defense

1. The testimony of his conscience (2 Cor 1:12-14)
2. His explanation of his travel intentions (2 Cor 1:15-21)
3. His reason for not coming (2 Cor 1:23-2:4)

(2 Co 1:12–14) “For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. {13} For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; {14} just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.”

(2 Cor 1:15-22) “In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; {16} that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. {17} Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*? {18} But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. {19} For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. {20} For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. {21} Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, {22} who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”

(2 Cor 1:23-2:4) “But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth. {24} Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm. {2:1} But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. {2} For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful? {3} This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be *the joy* of you all. {4} For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”

1. The testimony of Paul's conscience (2 Cor 1:12-14)

Paul began his defense with his conscience. He said, “Our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.” Paul was proudly confident in this confidence. When he was standing before the Sanhedrin Council in Acts 23, he said, “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.” In Acts 24, Paul made his defense before Governor Felix, and he said, “I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience before God and before men.” In Paul's letter to

the Romans he said, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit." Paul regularly relied on the testimony of his conscience.

(2 Co 1:12) "For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you."

(Ac 23:1) "Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

(Ac 24:16) "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men."

(Ro 9:1) "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,"

Paul maintained a good conscience, and he instructed others to maintain a good conscience. He wrote to the Romans and told them to be in subjection to governing authorities for conscience' sake. He wrote the Corinthians and told them not to eat meat for conscience' sake.

(Ro 13:5) "Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

(1 Co 10:25–27) "Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; {26} for the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains. {27} If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake."

In Paul's letters to Timothy, he wrote about the importance of conscience. He said that the goal of his instruction was love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. He also spoke to Timothy about the consequence of rejecting a good conscience: suffering shipwreck in regard to their faith. He included a clear conscience in the list of character qualities necessary for a deacon. A good conscience was extremely important to Paul.

(1 Ti 1:5) "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

(1 Ti 1:19) "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith."

(1 Ti 3:9) "*but* holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."

What is our conscience? Our conscience is like an instrument that is programmed to tell us when we are about to do something that goes against the moral plumbline. Our conscience insists that we do what we think is right and avoid what we think is wrong. If our conscience was programmed with a perfect understanding of God's word and ways, then our conscience would be a true gauge of sin and righteousness. However, if we have a lack of understanding or our consciences have been programmed with values not supported by scripture, we can get a faulty reading. Our consciences can be mistaken. Some people teach that our conscience must be our guide. In the movie, Pinocchio, Cricket told Pinocchio to always let his conscience be his guide.

The Word of God must always be our guide. Our conscience is a valuable tool if it is programmed with God's word, and it has not been seared or defiled. Ray Stedman, who was a great Biblical scholar and preacher said, *"There is a very common myth abroad that says conscience is the means by which we tell what is right and what is wrong. But conscience is never that. It is training that tells us what is right and wrong."*

What was the testimony of Paul's conscience? Paul's conscience testified of three things. First, Paul had conducted himself in holiness. God is a holy God, and He tells us to be holy, just as He is holy. The word sanctify means to make holy, and God is in the process of sanctifying His bride, that is making her holy and blameless. Paul lived a holy life. He was not living a life of compromise. There were no secret compartments of his life. He was living a holy life before God and before others.

(2 Co 1:12) "For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you."

Note: there is a difference between the KJV and the NASB in this verse. The Greek word that the NASB translates is hagiotes (Strong's G41), which means holiness. The Greek word that the KJV translates from is haplotes (Strong's G572), which means simplicity or singleness. I believe that the NASB is probably more accurate, as a full set of Greek texts was available to translate from, and there were some older manuscripts found and used in the NASB.

Second, Paul's conscience testified that he conducted himself in godly sincerity. The Greek word is eilikrineia (Strong's G1505). The compound word comes from heile, which means the shining or splendor of the sun, and krino, which means to judge. It means to judge with clearness, purity, or sincerity. Paul's conscience was not defiled, and he could see with clearness, purity, and sincerity. There were no hidden agendas or motives with Paul; he conducted his life with godly sincerity.

Third, Paul did not conduct himself in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God. Paul was well educated and gifted, yet he did not depend on fleshly wisdom. Paul relied upon and trusted God to supply all his needs.

After telling the Corinthians how he conducted himself, he tells them that he has been very straight-forward and transparent with them. He wrote nothing else to them than what they had read and understood. Paul hoped that they would understand until the end, and that they had partially understood him. Paul told them that they could be proud in him, just as he was of them.

(2 Co 1:13-14) "For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; {14} just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus."

2. Paul's Explanation of his Travel Intentions (2 Cor 1:15-22)

Paul's first defense was the testimony of his conscience. His second defense was to give them an explanation of his travel intentions. We do not have a copy of the third letter, the letter of sorrow, so we do not know if there were any mentions of travel plans in that letter. At the end of 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote of his travel plans, so let's review what he had said to them in chapter sixteen.

He wrote, "But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits." He also intended to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost because a wide door of effective service had opened up to him. A third element of his travel plans was that there were many adversaries. Any of those three things could change. God could forbid him to go. Second, the doors of opportunities in the ministry could be shut. Third, the adversaries could alter his plans. Paul had been stoned and run out of cities by these adversaries, particularly the Jewish adversaries.

(1 Co 16:5-9) "But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; {6} and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. {7} For I do not wish to see you now *just* in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. {8} But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; {9} for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

God tells us in Proverbs 16 that the plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. We have a responsibility to plan, but God has the final say. The Lord is sovereign and directs our steps, particularly when our lives are yielded to him. Paul had made plans to go to Corinth and spend some time with them. Paul loved the Corinthians and did not want to just see them in passing, but to remain with them for some time. But he prefaced his plans with, "if the Lord permits."

(Pr 16:1) "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord."

(Pr 16:9) "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

In James, we are cautioned not to make plans without allowing the Lord to have his way. James wrote that our lives are a vapor and we really don't know what the future holds. Therefore, we "ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" That is exactly what Paul had done in 1 Corinthians 16:5-9. But the Corinthians only partially understood what he was saying, and Paul is wanting to clarify and clear up any misunderstandings on what he had said.

(Jas 4:13-15) "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' {14} Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. {15} Instead, *you ought* to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'"

Now let's look at Paul's explanation of his travel intentions. He told them that he intended to come to them so that they might twice receive a blessing. He wanted to go to them on his way to Macedonia, and then back to them on his way to Judea. Those were his intentions, but he had prefaced it with "if the Lord permits."

(2 Cor 1:15-16) "In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; {16} that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea."

Paul was being discredited by some that were saying that he was not a man of his word. His accusers were saying that you cannot take what Paul says seriously, because he does not keep his word. So, Paul addresses this by saying, “Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be ye, yes and no, no at the same time? But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.” Paul is telling them that he is not one that vacillates and does not do what he said. He was not living his life according to the flesh. He was living a life that was submitted and yielded to God. Paul had never given them a firm commitment that was broken. He had only told them what his intentions were if the Lord permitted. Paul assures them that just as God is faithful and His word can be trusted, his word to them could also be trusted.

(2 Cor 1:17-19) “Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*? {18} But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. {19} For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.”

I like the assurance that Paul gave to the Corinthians. I have met many people that I cannot trust them to do what they say. When someone does not keep their word to me, I will forgive them, but my trust in them will go down a few notches. Several years ago, a church asked me to do some leadership training for them. They had a four-hour slot, and there is a lot of preparation involved to put together that much material. I was working as a CEO and traveling over thirty weeks a year, and also pastoring a church. I had weekly messages to prepare, and many other responsibilities as a senior pastor. The preparation to do their training was significant. The pastor said that they would pay me to do the training. At the end of the training, the pastor said that he did not have their church checkbook and he would send me a check. Later on, I checked with him, and the “check was in the mail.” The check was not in the mail, and never did come. There were some missed appointments with that pastor, and I had no trust that this man would do anything that he said. I want to live my life like Paul, and when I give someone my word, I want them to be able to trust that I will do what I say. Our yes needs to be yes and our no needs to be no. I also believe that we should be very careful about making plans without adding, “if the Lord wills or permits.”

This next verse has been a favorite of mine for many years. God gave me a song from this verse, which has helped me retain it in my memory. Paul wrote, “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. There are thousands of promises in Scripture, and God is always saying yes to His promises to us. He is glorified when we believe and trust Him about His promises. As I read through the Scriptures every day, if there is something that stands out to me, I pray it for my life.

(2 Cor 1:20) “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”

Some of God's promises to us are unconditional, meaning that He will do it without requiring anything from us. When God promised Noah that He would not destroy the earth again with a flood, that is an unconditional promise. However, when God tells us that He will fill our barns with plenty and overflow our vats with new wine, there is a condition; we must honor the Lord from our wealth and the first of all our produce.

(Pr 3:9–10) “Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; {10} so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.”

When God promises to make our paths straight, there is a condition to it. We must trust in the Lord with all our heart, not lean on our own understanding, and acknowledge Him in all our ways. When we do those three things, He promises to make our paths straight.

(Pr 3:5–6) “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. {6} In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

When God promises to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, there is a condition; we must confess our sins.

(1 Jn 1:9) “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

When my daughter was diagnosed with leukemia and not given many weeks to live, I was reading Psalm 41 and it jumped out at me. God says that He will deliver us in a day of trouble. He promises to protect and keep him alive. He promises to sustain us on our sickbed, and restore us to health. There is a condition in those promises; we must consider the helpless. At that time, Karen and I were doing foster care, and had two infants: Sandtasia and Darius. Kathleen was only six years old, but she mothered those babies. She fed them, changed diapers, pushed them in a stroller, and whatever else needed to be done. She had considered the helpless and met the conditions of that promise. I simply reminded God of this promise and then I had a peace about Kathleen being restored to health. I did not concern myself about whether God would do it or not. His yes is yes, and He says yes to all His promises. As you read the Scriptures, be on the lookout for promises that pertain to your own situations. If there are conditions, make sure that you are fulfilling your part, but receive these promises.

(Ps 41:1–3) “How blessed is he who considers the helpless; the Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble. {2} The Lord will protect him and keep him alive, and he shall be called blessed upon the earth; and do not give him over to the desire of his enemies. {3} The Lord will sustain him upon his sickbed; in his illness, You restore him to health.”

In Romans 4, Paul gives an example of Abraham receiving a promise. God promised to make him a father of nations. God promised him a son through Sarah. At that time, he was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, well past the age that she could have children. Paul wrote that with respect to the promise of God, Abraham did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God. Abraham was fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. We must receive God's promises by faith, and we are not to waver in unbelief, but grow strong in faith.

(Ro 4:19–22) “Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; {20} yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, {21} and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. {22} Therefore it was also credited to him as righteousness.”

In Numbers 23:19, God tells us “He is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will he not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it

good?" When God gives a promise to us, His yes is yes and He will make it good and fulfill the promise.

(Nu 23:19) "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Paul has been defending his credibility, and telling them that he would carry out his word just like God does. Next, Paul tells the Corinthians that it was God who established him with the Corinthians. It was God that anointed Paul, Timothy, and Silas. It was God who sealed them with the Holy Spirit and gave them the Holy Spirit as a pledge. If the Corinthians are questioning Paul's anointing as an apostle, and his work in establishing the church of Corinth in Christ, they need to understand that they are going against God, because it was Him that established, anointed, sealed, and gave them the Holy Spirit.

(2 Cor 1:21-22) "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, {22} who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."

3. Paul's Reason for Not Coming (2 Cor 1:23-2:4)

Paul has defended his travel plans by the testimony of his conscience. He has clarified his intentions that he communicated to them. Now, he tells them why his travel plans were changed, and he gives them his reasons for not coming. Paul said, with God as his witness, that he did not come in order to spare them. Some scholars believe that Paul is talking about the correction that he gave to the Corinthians about immorality, and he was giving them time to address that issue. However, other scholars believe that he is not talking about the immoral man in 1 Corinthians 5, but is speaking of the person that was slandering Paul and his ministry. In Paul's letter of sorrow, he had rebuked and corrected the person, and the church. He did not want to go to Corinth right away so that they would have time to work through this issue. Because 2 Corinthians is a defense of Paul and his apostolic ministry, the latter seems to be the most correct interpretation. In either case, Paul had corrected the church of Corinth, and had given them some steps of action to take. In 1 Corinthians he asked, "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?" Now he tells them that he did not come in order to spare them – to spare them of the rod. He did not want to have to come and bring further correction to them. He wanted to give them some time to repent and to take the steps of action that he had given them. Like us, we do not like to discipline and correct others; especially a second time for the same sin.

(2 Cor 1:23) "But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth."

(1 Co 4:21) "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?"

Paul's second reason was that he did not want it to appear that he was lording over them. Jesus taught the apostles not to lord over others, but to lead by example. Leaders are to lead as humble servants. Jesus had not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. Paul did not want to come and order them to do this or that, and appear as though he was lording over them. He wanted their obedience to be from the heart, not something that was a response to someone making them do something.

(2 Cor 1:24) "Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm."

(Mk 10:42-45) "Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. {43} "But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; {44} and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. {45} "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Instead of lording over them, Paul said that he was a worker with them for their joy. Paul did not have selfish ambitions or desires. Everything he did was for their edification and benefit. He wanted them to be built up and standing firm in their faith, and to be full of joy.

Paul's third reason for not going to the Corinthians was that he did not want to go to them in sorrow again. Paul did not like confrontation any more than you or I do. He would much rather bring joy to people and to have joy himself. He discerned that the Corinthians needed some time to work through the issues, and if he came before they had worked through those issues, he would have to address them again. He determined that he had caused enough sorrow already. He wanted to go to them in joy, not sorrow.

(2 Cor 2:1-3) "But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. {2} For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful? {3} This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be *the joy* of you all."

There was another letter in between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, the letter of sorrow. Paul said that "out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you." Paul's letter of confrontation and correction was painful for him to write. God gave Paul grace to do hard things, but it was still painful and caused him to have anguish of heart. It was so painful that it brought many tears to Paul. Some think that Paul was real hard, but here he said two things that show his tenderness and affection for them. Paul cried over the Corinthians. You weep over those that you love. He cared about them deeply. He cared enough to pray, write, correct, and weep over them. Second, he told them he wanted them to know the love which he had especially for them. Some people have a difficult time telling others that they love them. Paul demonstrated his love to the Corinthians. He had a pure love for them. It was not rooted in selfish ambition or control. He did not want to lord over them. He wanted them to grow and mature, and to be full of joy and peace. Paul had invested a year and six months in planting the church in Corinth and teaching them the word of God. Paul laid his life down for the Corinthians, an act of love. Paul did not just show his love, he told them that he especially loved them. Even though Paul's character and integrity is being attacked by some in Corinth, his love for them never waivered.

(2 Cor 2:4) "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you."

(Ac 18:11) “And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

Conclusion and Applications

Paul had communicated his travel intentions if the Lord permitted. Things did not work out and his travel plans changed. Nonetheless, he did go to Corinth and spent three months with them. However, some who wanted to take control of Corinth, attacked Paul's character, and said he was not a man of his word. Paul started his defense with a testimony of his conscience. He had lived his life with a good conscience, in holiness and godly sincerity.

Paul's second defense was to clarify his previous travel intentions, and to let them know that he did not vacillate in his intentions. He said that he was established, anointed by God, and sealed with the Holy Spirit, and given the Holy Spirit. Paul was God's servant and their issue was really with God.

Paul's third and final defense was the reasons that he had not come to them. Paul did not have to share these with them; he could have just said that the Lord had not permitted it. Paul shared it so that they would have a glimpse into his heart. He was not there to lord over them. He was not there to cause them sorrow. Paul wanted the best for them. He wanted to come in joy, not sorrow. Paul wanted the Corinthians to know how much he loved and cared for them.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for this letter of Paul's to the Corinthians. In the midst of attacks on our character, help us to respond in a loving and gracious way, the way that Paul did. Help us to share from our heart and be transparent. Help us to communicate love to others in the midst of the attacks. Help us to always maintain a good conscience so that the testimony of our conscience will be that we have lived in holiness and godly sincerity. Father, help us to be humble servants and look for ways to bring joy to others. Give us the grace to confront when necessary, but may that be the exception rather than a pattern. Help us communicate our love to one another in our words and our actions. Again, thank You for this letter and this passage. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Paul's Defense About His Travel Plans

Introduction (2 Co 7:8-9, 2 Co 1:12-2:4)

1. **The Testimony of Paul's Conscience** (2 Cor 1:12-14, Ac 23:1, 24:16, Rom 9:1, 13:5, 1 Cor 10:25-27, 1 Ti 1:5, 1:19, 3:9)
2. **Paul's Explanation of his Travel Intentions** (2 Cor 1:15-22, 1 Co 16:5-9, Pr 16:1, 16:9, Jas 4:13-15, Pr 3:9-10, 3:5-6, 1 Jn 1:9, Ps 41:1-3, Rom 4:19-22, Nu 23:19)
3. **Paul's Reason for Not Coming** (2 Cor 1:23-2:4, 1 Co 4:21, Mk 10:42-45, Ac 18:11)

Conclusion and Applications