



Comfort/encouragement from Second Corinthians ...

Paul — An “Open Book”

As an exponent of the gospel, part of Paul's work involved calling people to repentance. Outside the church, he would be exposed to being ridiculed, threatened, run out of town, or incarcerated. Inside the church, his life would put under microscopic examination, because even saints — when they are feeling pressure to upgrade their performance — often try to find fault with the person who calling them upward. Hence, the details of elders', teachers', and preachers' lives can often undergo a level of scrutiny that others would not experience. The apostle lets the congregation in Corinth know he is ready for such probing. “Our proud confidence is this,” he asserts, “the testimony of our conscience.” He is open to all challenges.

- **His writing** — The apostle knows his conduct, his verbal speech, and his written communication are in honest agreement. In written form, he notes, “For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand” (2 Corinthians 1:13). There are no hidden meanings in his communication, no saying things that mean one thing to one part of his audience and something else to another, and no verbal obfuscation. His point is plain: “you can read and you can understand.”
- **Reason for proper pride** — In the grace and sight of God, asserts the apostle, “we have conducted ourselves in the world” and in the church. Without cryptic conversation and without a hidden agenda, he preached to the unbelievers and taught the believers. His writing, he says, could thus be understood, “and,” he labors to point out, “I hope you will understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus” (2 Corinthians 1:13,14). For Paul, the consciousness of the Day of Judgment is never far off. Hence he conducts himself honorably in the sight of the Lord, and knows that faithful brethren would therefore be proud of him and proud of having been acquainted with him when things become clear on that last day. But that same positive pride is reversed; Paul will be excited to have been associated with these faithful brethren when the sons of the God are revealed at Jesus' return and the Day of Judgment is ushered in.
- **Paul's confidence in coming to Corinth** — Again, with Paul there is no hidden agenda and no game-playing. Hence, when he states that he fully intended to come to Corinth, he was not “messing with their minds” or falsely getting their hopes up. Referring back to “his proud confidence” that he always conducted himself in holiness and godly sincerity, he goes on to state, “And in this confidence I intended at first to come to you, that you might twice receive a blessing; 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” (2 Corinthians 1:15,16). It is clear that he purposed in his heart to go through Corinth twice — once on his way north to Macedonia (wherein were Philippi and Thessalonica), and once on his way back south. The fact, then, that it did not happen as planned should not be used to castigate the apostle, as Paul anticipates that his enemies will so use those circumstances.

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The language of the epistle here is important. One of the reasons for its importance is that it shows that this is a real letter, and not something made up by someone pretending to be an inspired author. Herein Paul is defending the legitimacy of his sincerity in pointing out in a very high level and spiritual way that his plans for being in Corinth did not work out. “Therefore,” he points out to his potential critics, “I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I?” (2 Corinthians 1:17). And it also shows the clear difficulties of travel and communication that God allowed even His apostles to experience in the first century. This, of course, has been the condition of the world until extremely recent modern times. These records help us moderns, who can communicate nearly instantaneously with anyone in the world and who can travel anywhere on earth in two days, to have a glimpse of what it was like in not-so-ancient times!

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