

Background

Would the correction of 1 Cor. be taken as from God and would the assembly be obedient (2:9)? What was the manner in which the first letter was received?

Chapter Outline

- v1-2 Introduction
- v3-11 The God of Comfort
- v12-2:4 The Delay in Returning
- v2:5-13 Forgiveness

Introduction V1-2

Similar to other epistles, Paul is setting forth his apostleship (by God's will) as his credibility was still under attack. While not mentioned by name, it is assumed there were other churches in the area that is now southern Greece. It is by grace that each of us is saved and there is a peace that should follow throughout Christian experience.

The God of Comfort V3-11

- v3-7 General principles of comfort
- v8-11 Experience specific to Paul

v3-7 General principles of comfort

v3: Three titles:
Father of the Lord Jesus Christ (relationship)
Father of mercies (source)
God of all comfort (character)

Various words repeated through these verses:
Who comforteth us - means to call near
Comfort, consolation – same word for entreaty or solace
Tribulation, trouble, affliction– same word for pressure
Suffering – simply the word for hardship

v4-7: The common thread through these verses is suffering because of Christ and the gospel. This is suffering because of association with Christ. Both Paul and the Corinthians were sharing in the suffering. In the measure that Paul experienced God's comfort, he was now able to relate to others and comfort them.

God's will is that we would have comfort (be called near to Him) in suffering, and through that be able to help others. Not necessarily that we would be taken out of affliction. There is a comfort that is equal to the suffering. Consider the heart of the Apostle. Whether he was 'pressured' or 'called near' it was for the benefit of those believers. What an example to follow. Are we experiencing affliction? There is a reassurance from v7. Being partakers (fellowship) in suffering is just the reassurance of the consolation that must follow.

v8-11 – Personal experience of Paul

Paul turns to his own life to give an example of the comfort of God and to thank the Corinthians for their prayers.

v8-9. The strength of the words used give indication to the immensity of the tribulation. If in this experience Paul had been asked whether he was going to live or die, the answer would have been death. God allowed His servant to be brought to such an extremity - but God's comfort was this... if God does raise the dead, then He is able to preserve life.

v10. Three tenses of deliverance
Past – salvation
Present – affliction/tribulation in Christian experience
Future – rapture/resurrection
The future could also be future times of suffering.

v11. Deliverance comes only from God, but many have helped through prayer. The gift mentioned here is not monetary or fellowship, but likely refers to the deliverance received. Paul is attributing this gift to the prayers of the saints. As there is comfort equal to suffering, now there can be thanksgiving equal to the prayer.

The Delay in Returning V12-2:4

Having heard reports of disorders in the church, Paul had sent the 1 Corinthian letter, rather than go immediately. Having still not yet gone to Corinth, he is now writing 2 Cor. to set the record straight, as some wished to discredit Paul and by that to discredit the teaching.

- V12-14 Paul's Life and Conduct
- V15-22 Stating Original Plan & its Reasons
- V23-2:4 Reasons for the Delay

V12-14 Paul's Life and Conduct

The manner of Paul's life is set in direct contrast to the fleshly wisdom that he is being accused of exhibiting.

The conscience is not always trustworthy but this is an example of one that is trained through the guidance of God. Therefore Paul could rejoice in a clear conscience that had its source in a manner of life that had been directed by the grace of God.

The life and letters of Paul were the same, and did not require reading between the lines. It was transparent. As there was no fickleness or hypocrisy, was his teaching to be totally discredited?

v14 The Corinthians were to rejoice in Paul as an apostle, in the teaching that had been received, and in the truth that Paul had been the instrument of God's choosing in bringing them to the knowledge of Christ. Paul would rejoice as they were sons in the faith. That they were true believers is evidenced by the expectation of the joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of reward (referenced here as day of the Lord Jesus).

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v1-2	Introduction
v3-11	The God of Comfort
v12-2:4	The Delay in Returning
v2:5-13	Forgiveness

The Delay in Returning V12-2:4

V12-14	Paul's Life and Conduct
V15-22	Stating Original Plan & its Reasons
V23-2:4	Reasons for the Delay

V15-22 Stating Original Plans

Paul's intention was to be with the assembly for their benefit (grace, favor), however plans had changed. His plan was to come, be with them, return again to them, receive the fellowship that had been collected, and finally continue on to Judea.

The reasons for Paul's sincerity were based in the faithfulness of God. As a bondservant of God, he was bound to conduct himself in the same character. Paul didn't say contradictory things, even as the Lord and God did not. None of God's promises have or will fail; Paul's promise would be kept as well. The argument is...if Paul had changed his mind through carnal or natural reasons, and was like this in his character, then this would have been how he had presented Christ to them at the first.

Notice the working of the Godhead. There is nothing to be attributed to man.

Confirmed – there is a certain hope

Anointed – set apart for a purpose – consecrated

Sealed – Authentic, approved, the mark of ownership, sealed by the Spirit.

Earnest – pledge that the full will be paid in the future

The plans of Paul to come were sincere. He is using the faithfulness of God as an argument for them to believe that he is faithful as well. As Paul lived in the good of God's promises, he would relate to the Corinthians in the same trustworthy manner.

V23-4 Reason for the Delay

Claiming God as his witness, a number of reasons are stated for the delay in physically going to Corinth. He would not desire to come in harshness and severity.

He is writing to them not so much as a teacher, but as a shepherd caring for the flock. Having written of changes required, he gave them time to make the necessary corrections.

The assembly at Corinth would be established by faith, not by the dictate of a man, even the apostle himself. As one whom God used in planting this assembly, he was a fellow laborer with them, and the correction had not been out of selfish motives, but in consideration of their joy and faith.

The assembly did not remain in the disorders of 1 Cor. Further instruction was necessary, but there was a definite repentance from those sins.

Paul preferred to come when there were no disorders. Had he come he would be a person in a great state of grief.

There should have been mutual joy at his presence, but the severity of discipline would have spread sorrow through the entire church.

He had not come so that they might be spared, secondly, that they would not have overmuch sorrow.

The desire was that through the teaching of 1 Cor., the believers would make the necessary discipline on their own. Through this, he had confidence that it would be for the joy of all.

It pained his heart to hear that the assembly had tolerated sin. This is an example of dealing with the faults of others. It caused anguish, affliction, and tears. The proof of love is actually seen in a willingness to go in tears to another and seek their repentance.

The Corinthians needed to understand Paul was not writing for their hurt, but as proof of his love.

Paul saw their value as ones who were precious to God, and precious to him. This knowledge of their preciousness is what prompted the desire to write for their correction.

Having considered God's heart as displayed by His comfort, and proven his love and sincerity and heart in the manner of their reproof, the subject turns to their heart (forgiveness and restoration)

Forgiveness V2:5-13

It had been stated in 1 Cor 5 that one of the offenses to correct was immorality. A man had taken his father's wife for himself. God requires discipline that the assembly's holiness would be maintained and grief had been brought to all because of this matter.

Because of this sin, the individual was put out from the fellowship of the assembly in Corinth, but restoration must be the goal of every discipline.

Through the reports of Titus, Paul learned that the man had now shown evidence of true repentance.

Therefore, as the whole church had been involved in the putting away, it must be the whole church that would forgive and receive.

It is possible (from v6) that not all in the fellowship were in agreement with the discipline. How important to have the mind of God toward sin, and to acknowledge His ways and Lordship in the assembly

The assembly was not to needlessly prolong the discipline. The Corinthians had shown their obedience in obeying the first letter and dealing with the sin, now they must understand the truth of receiving back into the fellowship. In their forgiveness they were to be sure to make real (express) their love to this individual.

To continue the discipline would be disastrous. The man would drown in sorrow, there would have been no purpose in the correction, and the testimony of the assembly would be tarnished with this unforgiving spirit.

All of this would end up with giving Satan an advantage.

If the man who had repented was not received, it would then show that discipline's only purpose was destruction. It would be used by Satan to undermine the assembly.

V12-13 These verses pick up again from the topic of v4, in the reasons for Paul's delay in returning. Paul tells of such concern for this assembly, that even in the midst of gospel opportunity, he left it, not knowing the state of the Corinthians. Having then found Titus, and heard the reports, the letter which we now have as 2 Cor was written.