

## 2Corinthians – Week 23

### I. Review: vv. 1-10

A. Paul describes what a life impacted by the grace of God looks like using his own life:

- i. Paul was determined to put no stumbling block in anyone's way so that the Christian ministry would not be discredited:
  1. He glorified God in his sufferings.
  2. He glorified God in his conduct and speech.
  3. He glorified God through the positive and negative experiences.
- ii. Paul shared these personal truths about himself, not because he was bragging about himself, but because he was sharing his heart with them in hopes that they would reciprocate...

### II. Continuation

A. 2Cor. 6:11-12 (ESV), "*We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open.* <sup>12</sup> *You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections.*"

i. What Paul is saying here is that he has been very open and honest with them!

1. There is nothing hidden, nothing superficial in his relationship with them!

ii. The phrase "*our heart is wide open*" suggests that...

1. Paul has deep affection (Philadelphia) for them as a father to his child! (cf. vs. 13)

a. Jesus said that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks (Mt. 12:34).

b. Paul's deep affection towards them is what drove him to speak openly with them.

2. Since they are his letter of recommendation (3:2), he wants them to be a good letter of recommendation—which explains his admonitions...

a. Let's go back to 1Corinthians 4...

i. 1Cor. 4:14, 16 (ESV), "*I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children...* <sup>16</sup> *I urge you, then, be imitators of me*"

1. Paul did not get pleasure from admonishing the Corinthians.

a. He did not go around clenching his teeth say, "*Wait till I get my hands on them!*"

b. Neither was he seeking to shame them, even though a person may feel ashamed when admonished!

2. Paul's purpose was to warn them that they are getting into trouble and that they need to get right with God.

3. And as their spiritual father, he urges them to imitate him as he imitates Christ (cf. 1Cor. 11:1).

- b. In this passage, Paul admonishes them as their spiritual father and accuses them of closing their hearts to him (v. 12).

- c. By the way, Paul was not interested in restoring good relations with those whose lives were not right with God simply for the sake of peace and harmony!
    - i. Later on in chapter 12, Paul says...
      - 1. 2Cor. 12:20-21 (ESV), *“For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. <sup>21</sup> I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.”*
      - ii. Paul will not back down in proclaiming God’s absolute demand for holiness! Why? Because he loves God and the Corinthians!
  - iii. *“You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections”*
    - 1. The word *“affections”* literally is *“bowels”*
      - a. *“Bowels,”* in this context, refers to inward affection.
        - i. It also refers to compassion...
          - 1. 1John 3:17 (ESV), *“But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart (“bowels”) against him, how does God's love abide in him?”*
      - 2. Apparently, some of Paul’s opponents were convincing the Corinthians that he was the problem!
        - a. Paul turned the tables around by saying that he was not the problem!
          - i. He did not withhold his affection towards them!
            - 1. He spoke freely to them.
            - 2. The sufferings he experienced by the hands of wicked men did not deter his love for them.
            - 3. The slander and the dishonor that he received from men did not stop his love for them!
            - 4. He became poor so that they can become rich.
          - ii. But they withheld theirs from him!
            - 1. They were *“narrow-hearted”* because they loss affection towards their gospel father!
          - iii. If they truly love him, that love will show by their obedience.
            - 1. If they refuse to accept his teachings and admonition, they have closed their hearts not only to him, but to the Spirit!
          - iv. As a result, he says to them...
- B. 2Cor. 6:13 (ESV), *“In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.”*
  - i. It is clear from this passage that Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians was strained!
    - 1. And this caused by certain individuals who were stealing away the affection the Corinthians once had for Paul.
  - ii. He urges them widen their hearts and restore the relationship they once had with Paul...
    - 1. By devoting themselves to the ministry that he loves and labors to promote!
    - 2. By acknowledging his apostleship!
    - 3. By acknowledging his integrity as a servant of God.
    - 4. By acknowledging his teachings and admonition as coming from God.
    - 5. By remembering that he is their gospel father.
    - 6. By remembering that their salvation came through his message.
    - 7. By rebuking those who try to attack his integrity and ministry.