“Your Best Interest in Mind”

(2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4)
10-25-2026

Introduction: 2 Corinthians 1:23

***As Paul, we who minister should have the best interest of the saints in mind.**

I. Good Ministers Don’t <u>Force</u> Faith
But <u>Encourage</u> <u>Faith</u> (1:24)
(Be a Builder of <u>Faith</u>)

II. Good Ministers Don’t <u>Impart</u> Sorrow
But <u>Relieve</u> <u>Sorrow</u> (2:1-3)
(Be a Giver of <u>Joy</u>)

III. Good Ministers Don’t <u>Neglect</u> Problems
But <u>Confront</u> <u>Problems</u> (2:4)
(Be a Counselor of <u>Love</u>)

Conclusion:

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Previous context:

Paul promised the Corinthians a visit. However, out of love (and for their benefit), he delayed his arrival.

Why? To give them time to deal with their own problems without “big brother” Paul looking over their shoulders and forcing them.

“Remember, Paul’s supposed vacillation (and lack of integrity) had come to the fore because he didn’t pay a second visit to the Corinthians as he had promised. Instead he sent them a harsh letter. This was considered to be another evidence of his spineless failure of character. So now, for the Corinthians who still believed this line, Paul demonstrates that he changed his plans purely out of mercy and love.” (Hughes, p. 43).

Paul defended his integrity by describing himself as “a man of his word.” He did not waffle on his promises. His yes was yes and his no was no. Just as the Lord is true and trustworthy, so Paul strived to be.

So as to vindicate himself, Paul used the Lord he loved and served as a model of trustworthiness. What God says He does! Such faithfulness is needed by all who minister for God.

v. 23

“I call God for a record upon my soul” - Paul says in effect, God is my witness, that I didn’t come yet to Corinth, so as to spare you of added heaviness (2:1) and sorrow (2:2-3).

***As Paul, we who minister should have the best interest of the saints in mind.**

I. Good Ministers Don't Force Faith But Encourage Faith (1:24) *(Be a Builder of Faith)*

"Dominion" - To act as Lord over, to dominate over, to rule over.

Paul and his apostolic associates did not act as lords over the faith of those they ministered to. They did not force or coerce the faith of the Corinthians. They would "stand" based on their faith and not due to someone pressuring them into believing the Gospel.

This is instructive to us in our personal evangelism efforts. We do not---as many within other world religions do---believe that we have a right to force someone to believe what we believe.

EX: --Islam (IMPORT Illustrations of Mohammed's effort to force people to Allah)

--Roman Catholicism of the Dark Ages

--Communism

--Cults that coerce belief

Why can't we force someone to believe?

1) Forced faith is no faith (People must come to Christ because they want to come to Christ, they see their need, they understand their predicament; they acknowledge Christ's death and resurrection and willingly and gladly trust Him)

2) Instilling faith is the work of the Holy Spirit (sure, the Holy Spirit utilizes the witness of people; but some people [even well-meaning people] often go beyond what is expected of them and start to "play God" in someone's life). We need to know when to back off and to spend more time in secret prayer, asking god to do what only He can do.

IMPORT notes from personal evangelism on "Going as far as the Spirit leads"

3) Faith is personal. It is "your faith" not my faith for you. No one gets into heaven based on the faith of someone else.

"Helpers of your joy" – true faith brings joy. Forced faith may get someone off your back, but it does not bring joy.

Paul's ministry involved the benefit of the one or ones he ministered to. He was not interested in adding another notch in his soul winner's belt of having a pin for having the most fish in the church's fisherman's club. But he wanted the Corinthians to have the joy that God gives to those who trust and obey.

II. Good Ministers Don't <u>Impart</u> Sorrow But <u>Relieve</u> <u>Sorrow</u> (2:1-3) *(Be a Giver of <u>Joy</u>)*

v. 1
"Heaviness" – in deep sorrow.

Due to the sin that the Corinthians allowed in the camp (where a man had his father's wife – 1 Cor. 5), Paul (as God) was grieved.

He wanted the Corinthians to deal with their own moral issue (Paul would not act as a pope and lord it over them). Every church is autonomous. It governs itself and needs no outside authority to rule it.

v. 2

Paul could not be encouraged by people he discouraged. He could not receive joy for those he imparted sorrow.

Note: When you come to church, do you come to be a blessing? To impart hope.

[Note: Confronting sin does bring sorrow, but sorrow is not our goal. Restoration and the accompanying joy of the repentant sinner is our goal.]

Do you live for the joy of others?

1 Corinthians 12:26 –

v. 3
"My joy is the joy of you all" –

Paul says I get joy when you have joy.

When you give joy, you get joy. When you seek to bless, you get the blessing.

Do you find joy in the joy of others?

III. Good Ministers Don't <u>Neglect</u> Problems
But <u>Confront</u> <u>Problems</u> (2:4)
(Be a Counselor of <u>Love</u>)

v. 4
"Affliction" - pressure or tribulation (in the soul). Paul's heart (Like God's heart) felt the affliction of other's sin and suffering.

"Anguish of heart" - distress of heart. A heart that feels compressed. "A state of mental distress involving acute anxiety" (Reinencker, p. 395).

Paul was deeply bothered by the troubles and sin of others. Their burdens were his burdens.

Often we are so self-absorbed that we really don't care about the plight of others.
"The Corinthians had been a source of much affliction and heartache to Paul, a truly excruciating part of what he terms "the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (11:38). And it had been while Paul was undergoing the unbearable affliction in Asia, when his strength began to fail and he despaired of life, that the Corinthians' criticisms heaped internal grief upon his external miseries. These people whom he had wrestled into the kingdom through his early evangelistic disputations in Corinth and then instructed in the faith, and over whom he had prayed when they met opposition – these same people had savaged his character and motives, even questioning his apostleship. What hurt and grief to Paul's heart!" (Hughes, p. 43-44).

Paul's concern drove him to Biblical loving action. He would not merely grieve over sin in others, he would confront them in love.

"I wrote unto you with many tears" – Paul's confrontation was not a cold, uncaring rebuke, but one that involved tears. He really cared for the saints. He had a shepherd's heart for the sheep.

Even in his letter of rebuke, his goal was not their grief, but that they might know that he loved them.

You see, love may confront, and love may rebuke, but love never ignor3es. Those who ignore problems manifest an uncaring attitude.

Paul confronted the erring church with love, a desire for their well-being and blessing.

The parent who loves his/her child does not leave the child to their troubled path; He does everything in his power to rescue the soul, never giving up, never quitting on that individual bent on self-destruction.

Conclusion:

Paul had a heart for people like that of his Master, Jesus Christ. Let's ask God to give us His love for others.