

God is Faithful

II Corinthians 17: 1-24

12/2/01

Intro

- Thank you to the church for the “baby” shower.
- We could use men in the choir.

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This is a letter from Paul which follows I Corinthians by only about a year.

1. Paul wants the church in Corinth to take a regular offering for the church in Jerusalem. Apparently, the church in Jerusalem was going through a difficult time and Paul wanted to bless them.
2. Paul has an attitude of just waiting on the Lord’s direction. He doesn’t have it all planned out. Paul is a good example of a person who anticipates being led by the Spirit in all things.
3. Paul was to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost (about June). There was an open door for effective service and there were many adversaries. *Paul did not run when there were adversaries. Instead, he readily faced the challenges.*

Illus- This reminds me of Caleb who wanted the mountain country where the great Anakim lived in fortified cities.

In this chapter we also have Paul’s strong counsel on how to live out our faith well in a non-Christian world.

Illus – There is deep oppressive spirit in Moscow. What an example of a non-Christian world.

In this chapter we focus on some very specific principles for living out our faith well in a non-Christian world.

I. The promises of God provide encouragement.

II Cor 1: 19-20

A. In Christ, the promises of God are “yes.”

- Your adversary lurks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom He may devour.

B. The prowling lion especially desires to devour the young ones.

- We need to be like Job who prayed for his children lest they curse God in their hearts.

C. We need to be alert for spiritual apathy.

Rev 3:1-3

- The church at Sardis was asked to wake up from **spiritual dullness!!**

II. He also gave the Holt Spirit as a pledge (down-payment).

A. No going backwards.

- We should not compromise our faith.

Illus- One of David's mighty men, Shammah by name, was asked to guard the lentil field.

B. The fallacy of the slippery slope.

- Compromise consists of small steps.

Illus- Donald Barnhouse once led a young man to the Lord who served in the military during WWII. He immediately told those who served with him about his new faith. But after the war ended was concerned that he when he went back to his old friends that he might compromise his faith...

III. Stand firm in your faith.

A. In the original, this means to "acquit yourselves like men."

- The only place this word occurs in the Bible, but it is a very strong word.
- Be men of substance (act like men).

B. Paul had said earlier that, "when he was a child he reasoned as a child..., but when he became a man he put away childish things..."

- Paul considers worldly things to be childish because they focus so much on "me."

C. Be strong.

- Literally it means to **be made** strong.
- Made strong by what we receive from the Lord. (I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.)
- Ps 27 "The Lord is the strength of my life.

Illus – The director of the orphanage (Boarding School) is motivated by love.

A. Love is a great balance to Paul's comments on courage and strength.

B. God has awesome power and might, but He chooses to express Himself in His love.

C. This is what Paul calls, "A More Excellent Way."

Conclusion

These insights are so needed today. We need to be alert and to stand firm in the faith like never before. Without question it would be good to receive Paul's word to "act like men" and to do all in love.

When the church in Corinth received Paul's first epistle, those who were against Paul became more vocal, even expressing doubts about Paul's authority and apostleship. This second epistle is mainly Paul's defense and testimony of his ministry.

- v.16- 24 Paul had planned to visit Corinth on the way to Macedonia. He decided not to go when he heard of the turmoil his first letter of correction had caused.
- v.22 "Earnest" means a "deposit", which shows good faith.

THE COMFORT OF GOD

- v.1 God, not man, calls and ordains people for the ministry. Paul's authority was from God.
- v.2 God is the source of grace and peace, and Christ is the avenue by which grace and peace flow to us.
- v.3 "Blessed" means "praise be unto". "Mercies" also means "blessings". "Comfort" is the Greek word used for the Holy Spirit which means "One who comes along to help".
- v.4 When we experience God's help and comfort during a trial, we're better prepared to minister to others (1 Corinthians 11:23).
- v.5 Paul had endured many sufferings and had even been given up for dead. Those who say that all Christians should be healthy don't understand God's dealings with man. Though God didn't remove Paul's thorn in the flesh, He did give him the strength to bear it (Chapter 12:7-9).
- v.6-7 Paul could see the purpose for his sufferings.
- v.8 Paul may have been speaking here of a serious illness, being fed to the lions, or some other torture he had to endure (1 Corinthians 15:32).
- v.9 When Paul thought he was dying, he found a deeper trust in God.
- v.10 It takes more faith to make a total commitment to God and to rest in whatever He chooses to do with us, than it does to demand that He heal us and to put conditions on our service to Him.