

How Love Can Hurt

2 Corinthians 1: 12-24; 2: 1-4

How Love Can Hurt

- “benevolent” pain
- Occasions when love must inflict pain on the loved one, for love’s sake
- Whenever love causes pain, it does so reciprocally
- “This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.”
- Such is the case in all loving discipline
- Such was the case in Paul’s relationship with them

Paul children: those he brought to faith in Jesus Christ

I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. (1 Cor. 4: 14-15)

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. ... I speak as to my children - open wide your hearts also. (2 Cor. 6: 11, 13)

2 Corinthians

- Most autobiographical of Paul's writings
- “Letter of the transparent apostle”
- Under influence of false teachers, church has started a movement to discredit or “impeach” Paul

- Impeach: to cast doubt on
- *especially* : to challenge the credibility or validity of a public figure

Homework question

- Since 2 Corinthians was written to counter the attacks of the “false teachers” and to re-establish Paul’s credibility as their legitimate leader, why would Paul plunge into an account of his recent troubles right at the beginning of the letter (2 Cor. 1: 1-11) ? wouldn’t it just show how weak a leader he was?

Corinthian Correspondence

- 1st letter (lost):

9 I wrote to you in my letter ... 11 But now I am writing to you ... (1 Cor. 5: 9, 11)

- 2nd letter: 1 Corinthians; written in Ephesus

- 3rd letter (lost) : the “painful letter”

- 4th letter: 2 Corinthians; written in Macedonia

8 Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. ... 12 So even though I wrote to you, ... (2 Cor. 7: 8, 12)

Corinthian Correspondence

1st letter (lost)

1 Corinthians (2nd letter)

less than

one

year

3rd letter (lost) : the “painful letter”

2 Corinthians (4th letter)



	Epistle	Possible dates of writing*
1	Galatians	AD 49-55
2	1 Thessalonians	AD 51-22
3	2 Thessalonians	AD 51-22
4	1 Corinthians	AD 55
5	2 Corinthians	AD 56
6	Romans	AD 57-58
7	Ephesians	AD 60-61
8	Philippians	AD 60-61
9	Colossians	AD 61
10	Philemon	AD 61
11	Titus	AD 62-67

Paul's Letters

- 35AD Paul's conversion**
- 46 - 48AD Paul's First Missionary Journey**
- 49 / 50AD Paul attends the Council of Jerusalem**
 - 50AD Letter to the Galatians
- 50 - 52AD Paul's Second Missionary Journey**
 - 51/52AD First Letter to the Thessalonians
 - 52AD Second Letter to the Thessalonians
- 53 - 57AD Paul's Third Missionary Journey**
 - 56AD First Letter to the Corinthians
 - 56AD Second Letter to the Corinthians
 - 57AD Letter to the Romans
- 57 - 60AD Paul's arrest, imprisonment & journey to Rome**
- 60 - 62AD Paul in Rome awaiting trial before Nero**
 - c.60AD Letter to the Ephesians
 - c.60AD Letter to the Colossians
 - c.60AD Letter to Philemon
 - c.60AD Letter to the Laodiceans (lost)
 - c.60AD Letter to the Philippians
- 62 - 67AD Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey**
 - c.63AD First Letter to Timothy
 - c.63/64AD Letter to Titus
 - c.67AD Second Letter to Timothy
- c.67AD Paul executed in Rome**

Invest your time by reading God's Word

<i>3 John</i>	<i>219 words</i>	<i>2.2 minutes</i>
<i>2 Corinthians</i>	<i>4,477 words</i>	<i>45 minutes</i>
<i>Jeremiah</i>	<i>33,002 words</i>	<i>330 minutes</i>

Paul's original travel plans

Since I was so sure of your understanding and trust, I wanted to give you a double blessing by visiting you twice— first on my way to Macedonia and again when I returned from Macedonia. Then you could send me on my way to Judea. (2 Cor. 1: 15-16; NLT)



Itinerary change led to smear campaign



1st “charge” vs Paul ?

12 Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. 13 For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, 14 as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus. (2 Cor. 1:12-14)

Paul's 1st counter-attack

- In our relationship with you, we have conducted ourselves with integrity and godly sincerity by relying on God's grace (NIV)
- ... we have lived with a God-given holiness [or honesty] and sincerity in all our dealings by depending on God's grace (NLT)
- "I am sincere and honest in my words and reliable in my actions."
- Not necessary to look for hidden meanings in my words; no need to read between the lines (vv. 13-14)

How about us?

- “Do I say what I mean? Do I mean what I say?”
- Or is it: “Yes may mean Yes; Yes may mean no; it all depends ...”?

When you make a promise, say only “Yes” or “No.” Anything else comes from the devil. (Matt. 5: 37; CEV)

Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’
Anything beyond this is from the evil one. (NLT)

2nd “charge” vs Paul ?

15 Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. 17 Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both “Yes, yes” and “No, no”? (2 Cor. 1: 15-17)

Paul's 2nd counter-attack

- “You say I’m fickle & inconsistent because I changed my mind about this visit?”
- “You say I’m a worldly man who vacillates between saying ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ as I fancy?”
- “I made plans as I thought best. I had to change them. Does that make me unspiritual?”
- “You have a very distorted view of how God guides His servants in their decisions!”

Paul's 2nd (and 3rd) counter-attack(s)

²³ I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. ...¹ So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. (2 Cor. 1: 23; 2: 1)

What's supernatural and what's not ?

- Paul received apostolic calling & message from God; always very definite about this

Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead ... ¹¹ I want you to know ... that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. ¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:1, 11-12)

What's supernatural and what's not ?

- However, nothing similarly supernatural and infallible about his decision making
- Like us, Paul sometimes had to change previously made plans and reverse prior decisions
- “Because I changed my mind about this visit, does that make me unspiritual?”

Review “Macedonian Call”

6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

“Macedonian Call”

9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16: 6-10)



How did God lead them to Europe?

- Supernaturally, through nighttime vision
- Was that all?
- They landed in Europe eventually; took place over a period of time

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- Was that all?



9 That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!”¹⁰ So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there. (Acts 16: 9-10; NLT)

- We = Luke plus Silas and Timothy (see Acts 15: 40; 16: 2-3)
- Having concluded: *syμβιβάζω* (sym + bibazo); to bring together; to put together in one’s mind; to infer from all the data; to conclude

How did God lead them to Europe?

- Over a period of time
- They kept moving “west”; next stop would be Macedonia
- Paul had nighttime vision with specific message
- Paul shared vision with his team members
- They concluded from all the above that God is calling them to go preach the Gospel in Europe

Back to 2 Corinthians

15 Since I was so sure of your understanding and trust, I wanted to give you a double blessing by visiting you twice— 16 first on my way to Macedonia and again when I returned from Macedonia. Then you could send me on my way to Judea. 17 You may be asking why I changed my plan. Do you think I make my plans carelessly? Do you think I am like people of the world who say “Yes” when they really mean “No”? (2 Cor. 1: 15-17; NLT)

23 Now I call upon God as my witness that I am telling the truth. The reason I didn't return to Corinth was to spare you from a severe rebuke. ... 1 So I decided that I would not bring you grief with another painful visit.

(2 Cor. 1: 23; 2: 1; NLT)

God's guidance

- At times, God does it supernaturally
- But that's not normal mode of guidance from God
- Usually a combination of factors, over a period of time, as we prayerfully wait upon & seek the Lord
- Never goes against teachings & principles in God's Word
- Seldom discerned individually
- Usually ends when God's people come together to ponder, discern and bring everything together in one's mind – *syμβιβazo* (cf. Jerusalem Council, Acts 15)

God's guidance

- Both –ve and +ve
- Both circumstantial and rational
- Both personal and corporate

Paul's opponents – complete misunderstanding of a true, growing, spiritual believer

- Paul can't be a true apostle because he goes through so much suffering
- Paul can't be a true apostle because he is fickle, insincere and deceitful
- Paul can't be a true apostle because he changes his mind and his plans
- “Paul is too ordinary; he's far too human to be a real apostle of Jesus Christ!”

What have we learned today ?

- True followers of Jesus Christ will suffer and experience trials
- True followers of Jesus Christ are sincere & honest in words, and completely reliable in actions
- True followers of Jesus Christ need to change their plans and reverse their decisions; after all, we are weak fallible human beings; however, our God is infinite in power and wisdom

How will we apply these truths ?

- True followers of Jesus Christ will suffer and experience trials
- True followers of Jesus Christ are sincere & honest in words, and completely reliable in actions
- True followers of Jesus Christ need to change their plans and reverse their decisions; after all, we are weak fallible human beings; however, our God is infinite in power and wisdom

