

**A Change in Plans**  
**2 Corinthians 1:18-20**  
**Part 4**

It is a very sad thing when someone who is honestly and sincerely seeking to serve is turned upon and is unfairly criticized or even personally attacked by the very individual or individuals whom he or she is seeking to serve.

But unfortunately this is what happens all too often. Husbands who are genuinely seeking to serve their wives can be criticized or even personally attacked by those wives. Wives who are genuinely seeking to serve their husbands can be criticized and even personally attacked by those husbands. Parents who are genuinely seeking to serve their children can be criticized and even personally attacked by those children. Children who are genuinely seeking to serve their parents can be criticized and even personally attacked by those parents. And this very same dynamic can easily happen within the church as well. Faithful servants of God can be criticized and even attacked by those whom they are seeking to serve.

And a case in point is the criticism and the personal attacks that were launched against Paul by certain false teachers and other members of the Corinthian church simply because of a change in travel plans. And what were they saying? They in essence were saying, in light of his changed travel plans, that Paul's words could not be trusted because he cared far more for himself than for them.

Was this attack serious? Of course it was serious. And therefore Paul felt that he had to respond. For how could he continue to serve effectively as an apostle of Christ if he was no longer viewed as a man of integrity, or in other words as man whose word could be trusted.

And this brings us back to our current study of **2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4** which is Paul's response to the attack that had been leveled against him. So, how did Paul respond to the charges against him, that he lacked personal integrity in 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4? This is how he responded. Paul, first of all, responded to the charges against him by introducing the testimony of his conscience (2 Corinthians 1:12-14).

Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 1:12-14**. “**For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. (13) For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; (14) just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.**”

So how did Paul initially respond to the charges made against Him? He initially responded by introducing the testimony of his conscience. And then what did he do?

Paul, secondly, responded to the charges against him by denying them (2 Corinthians 1:15-17). We saw this in **2 Corinthians 1:15-17**. Let me now read these verses for you. “**In this confidence [in the confidence you had in me and I had in you] I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; (16) that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. (17) Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?**” And of course the answer that Paul expected would have been no! You had not purposed according to the flesh!

Clearly Paul, in responding to the charges against him, not only introduced the testimony of his conscience in **verses 12-14**, but he also denied the charges that had been made against him in **verses 15-17**.

Yes, he may have changed his plans but he never wavered in his commitment to the Lord or to them as the false teachers had insinuated. So how else did Paul respond to the charges against him? Not only did he respond by introducing the testimony of his conscience, and by denying the charges against him, but Paul, thirdly, responded to the charges against him by affirming his faithfulness as a messenger of God (2 Corinthians 1:18-22). He did this in two different ways. A few weeks ago we considered the first way that Paul attempted to affirm his faithfulness as a messenger of God. So how did Paul initially do this?

Paul initially affirmed his faithfulness as a messenger of God by reminding the Corinthians how the message he had preached concerning Christ perfectly aligned with God's Old Testament promises (2 Corinthians 1:18-20).

We saw this in **2 Corinthians 1:18-20**. Let me now read these verses for you. **“But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. (19) For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.** [And what does he mean by this? He goes on to explain it in verse 20.] **(20) For as many as are the promises of God** [or in other words, the promises of God concerning Christ in the Old Testament], **in Him** [or in other words, “in Christ”] **they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. ”**

When Paul came into the city of Corinth, with Silvanus and Timothy, they preached the gospel message. This gospel message aligned perfectly with what God had said about the coming Christ in the Old Testament; or in other words, this gospel message aligned perfectly with what God had promised concerning the coming Messiah in the Old Testament. He was God's “Amen!” Therefore when Paul and his companions made all this clear to the Corinthians they were able to see the truth of the gospel message and were able through God's “Amen” to say “Amen” to the gospel message that Paul, Silvanus and Timothy had preached to the glory of God.

So how did Paul initially affirm himself to be a faithful messenger in **2 Corinthians 1:18-22**? Paul initially affirmed his faithfulness as a messenger of God by reminding the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 1:18-20** how the message he had preached to the Corinthians concerning Christ perfectly aligned with God's Old Testament promises.

But this was not the only way Paul attempted to affirm himself as a faithful messenger of God. There was another way and this morning I want to highlight this other way for you.

My hope for this message as I seek to highlight this other way is that we will not only be more inclined to have eyes to see those who are seeking to serve us, especially those who are in positions of spiritual oversight over us, but that we would also find ourselves wanting to find additional ways to

encourage them as well. So, what was this other way that Paul utilized to affirm himself as a faithful messenger of God in **2 Corinthians 1:18-22**?

Paul also affirmed his faithfulness as a messenger of God by reminding the Corinthians how God, through the message he had preached, had joined them to Christ and would keep them joined to Christ (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). Paul had loved and served the Corinthians as a faithful messenger of God and yet some of them, with the encouragement of certain false teachers, had turned on Paul and had begun to criticize and even to attack him, the very one whom God had used to serve them. The very one whom God had used to bring them the gospel message and ultimately into union with Christ and therefore salvation, a union with Christ that God had not only established through the gospel message, but a union that He was committed to continue to establish until their salvation was realized in its fullest and perfect sense.

And where do we see this? We see this thought spelled out for us at the very beginning of **2 Corinthians 1:21**. **“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God.”**

Notice that Paul did not say that God established us in Christ. Rather Paul said that God establishes us in Christ. This is significant. Once God has established us in Christ He continues to establish us in Christ.

If you are here this morning and are truly born again and have been established in Christ, God will continue to establish you in Christ. In other words, there is absolutely no way He is going to allow us to be separated from His Son. God is therefore ever present to make sure that this does not happen. Did He establish us in Christ yesterday? Yes! Will He establish us in Christ today? Yes! Will He establish us in Christ tomorrow? Yes! In other words, not only will we be assured, once we respond to the gospel of Christ in a positive way, that we will be established in Christ, we can also be assured that He will continue to establish us in Christ.

When we respond to the gospel of Christ and God places us into Christ, through the baptizing work of the Spirit, God permanently joins us to Christ (1 Corinthians 1:4-8).

And if there is any doubt about this let me read for you a parallel passage in **1 Corinthians 1:4-8**. **“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, (5) that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, (6) even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed [or in other words, established] in you, (7) so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, (8) who will also confirm [or in other words, establish] you [what?] to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

When we respond to the gospel, God by His grace places us into Christ, or in other words establishes us and confirms us, and will continue to establish and confirm us to the end. And what a wonderful thing for us to be able to experience, but let us be mindful of this. Apart from someone having taken the time and having been willing to make the personal sacrifices necessary for us to hear the gospel message, this could not be our present experience. And certainly apart from Paul having taken the time and having been willing to make the personal sacrifices that he had made on behalf of the Corinthians, this certainly would not have been their experience. But it was.

So was Paul a faithful messenger of God? Paul certainly believed that he was and he hoped that that if the Corinthians would simply reflect for a moment on all that they had experienced and was continuing to experience because of the message that he had faithfully proclaimed to them, they would know this as well.

But how can the Corinthians and we ourselves as be assured that once we have responded to the gospel message and have been established in Christ that God will continue to establish us? Let us now read **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** together. **“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, (22) who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”**

So, what assurances do we have that we, by God’s grace, will be joined to Christ forever? Or in other words, what assurances do we have that we will be continuously established and confirmed by God forever? We can be assured of this based on certain past actions that God through the Spirit has performed on our behalf when we responded to the gospel of Christ in a positive way.

And what was the first past action that God through the Spirit has done on our behalf, or in other words, on behalf of all those who have responded to the gospel of Christ in a positive way? He anointed us.

Let us go back **2 Corinthians 1:21** one more time. **“Now He who establishes us [or in other words confirms us] with you in Christ [who placed you into Christ and keep you there] and anointed us is God.”**

Now notice how Paul went from present tense to a past tense. He had been speaking about how God was establishing, or in other words, confirming them to now speaking about how God had anointed them. The present action of God, in continuing to establish or confirm, is tied to God’s past action of having anointed them.

So when was this done? The Corinthians were anointed (CHRIO) when they, in responding to the gospel, were joined to Christ (CHRISTOS), or in other words to “the Anointed One.”

And what is the significance of having been joined to Christ, “the Anointed One,” and therefore having become an anointed one in Him? In the Old Testament the verb “to anoint” was used for commissioning to a particular office, but in **Isaiah 6:1-4** it appears as a metaphor for the Spirit’s equipping for mission or service. And this is how I believe we should understand it here.

When the Corinthians were joined to “the anointed one” and thus became anointed, they were set apart for Christ’s mission in this world.”

So why would God continue to establish us and confirm us in Christ, or in other words keep us joined to Christ? God will continue to establish and confirm us because we, in having been joined to Christ, have been joined to His mission and we have work to do. And we had better get at it.

God’s present action of continuing to establish or confirm us is not only tied to God’s past action of having anointed us, but also to God’s past action of having sealed us (2 Corinthians 1:22).

Let me now read for you not only **2 Corinthians 1:21** but the very first part of **2 Corinthians 1:22**. **“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ**

**and anointed us is God, (22) who also sealed us.”** Again notice that it does not say “seals us” but rather “sealed us,” not a present action but a past action.

So, what is the significance of having been sealed? The seal in biblical times had a number of different meanings but the meaning, I believe, that is prominent here is ownership.

The city of Ephesus was well known as a seaport where there was an extensive timber trade from the neighboring areas. When the timber was brought into port a merchant would come, select his timber, and mark it with his own individual seal by pressing his signet ring into a blob of soft wax and thus claim ownership. Later he would send his agent to collect all the timber he had bought and had marked with his seal. And so it is with those who respond to the gospel of Christ in a positive way.

When the Corinthians responded to the gospel they became God’s property and were marked with God’s seal, or in other words, marked with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). Let me read for you **Ephesians 1:13. “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”** And was it God’s intent, once He has secured ownership, to relinquish it? Absolutely not! According to **Ephesians 4:30** we have been sealed by the Spirit until the day of redemption.

So why would God continue to establish and confirm us in Christ; or in other words, why would God keep us joined to Christ? God will continue to establish and confirm us, not only because we, as God’s anointed ones, have work to do, but also because we, as those who have been bought with the precious blood of Christ and have been sealed, or in other words, have been identified as His property and will not be delivered over to another. Therefore He will continue to establish and confirm us. But there is even more.

God’s present action of continuing to establish or confirm us is not only tied to God’s past action, of having anointed and sealed us, but also in having given us the Spirit as a pledge (2 Corinthians 1:22).

Let us go back once again and read **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** but time we will read these verses in their entirety. **“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, (22) who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”** What has God given us? He has given us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

The word “pledge” (ARRABON) comes from the world of legal documents and may also be rendered “first installment” (Ephesians 1:14). God, at the moment of our salvation, entered into a contract with us. Or in other words, when we placed our faith in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, God promised us that we would receive life and life abundant; but not only that we would receive life and life abundant, but that one day we would be set free this body of flesh, which is mortal and corruptible and given a new body that would be fashioned after the risen glorified body of Christ, which will be immortal and incorruptible. And how do we know that this will eventually happen; or in other words, how do we know that God will continue to establish and confirm us to the end? He has given us His Spirit as a pledge, or in other words, as a first installment.

Although the believer has already been blessed with bountiful spiritual gifts, he does not yet have all of what has been graciously provided through Christ’s redemptive death (Romans 8:18-23). Let me read for you **Romans 8:18-23.** **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (19) For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (23) And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”** So how do we know that God will continue to establish us and confirm us to the end? We know that He will continue to establish us and confirm us to the end because He has anointed us, sealed us, and given us the Spirit as a pledge.

It is a very sad thing when someone who is honestly and sincerely seeking to serve is turned upon and is unfairly criticized or even personally attacked by the very individual or individuals whom he or she is seeking to serve.

But unfortunately this is what happens all too often. Husbands who are genuinely seeking to serve their wives can be criticized or even personally attacked by those wives. Wives who are genuinely seeking to serve their husbands can be criticized and even personally attacked by those husbands. Parents who are genuinely seeking to serve their children can be criticized and even personally attacked by those children. Children who are genuinely seeking to serve their parents can be criticized and even personally attacked by those parents. And this very same dynamic can easily happen within the church as well. And it certainly happened to Paul.

Did he deserve this criticism? No! Did he deserve this attack? No! He had been a faithful messenger of God. He gave them a message that was perfectly aligned with all the promises of God in the Old Testament and which God used to save them, not only bringing to them life and life abundant but of future glory. Rather than criticizing him and attacking him that should have been thanking him for his faithfulness and seeking to encourage in whatever ways they could

May God give us the grace to see those who are faithfully serving us and the grace to find ways to encourage them.