II Corinthians 2:1-17

Introduction…

- **Overview …**
  - Paul had 2 main purposes in writing his epistle to the church....
  - 1st - To express his joy at how they had obeyed the first epistle to them...
    - I Corinthians was written as a rebuke to a carnal church - get right with God!
    - II Corinthians was an encouragement and comfort to a church that had repented...
  - 2nd - In defense against the false teachers flooding into Corinth...
    - Warning about certain doctrinal errors / instruction for Christians
    - To defend his apostleship against legalistic teachers who sought to bring bondage...
- **I Corinthians 1:1-11 - Greeting to the Church…**
  - An Apostle of Jesus - Paul established his authority over the church....
  - 1st - Greetings to the saints - in spite of all their problems - they were God's people!
  - 2nd - Comfort - Paul wanted to comfort the church - now that they had repented...
  - 3rd - Deliverance - God allows us to go through trials so we learn to trust in Him!
- **I Corinthians 1:12-24 - Men of your Word…**
  - 1st - The purpose of Paul's letters - not to give rules / but to impart grace / point to Jesus
  - 2nd - A change in plans - why Paul did not come when he said he would...
    - He made plans - but ultimately he was flexible to the Lord - **James 4:13-15**
    - Only Jesus knows for sure - in Him all God's promises are yes and amen...
  - 3rd - Working together in Christ - Paul just wanted to encourage the church in their walk!

Always Triumphant...

- **The sorrowful letter… vs. 1-4**
  - Paul was determined not to come to Corinth again to correct them...
    - He had written two letters - **I Corinthians** - a letter of correction to the church...
      - And his 2nd 'Severe' letter - an even sterner rebuke of the church...
      - He had even taken a 2nd trip to Corinth - and it had been a HARD visit...
    - Paul was unwilling to give up on the church - even if they refused to repent...
      - **Hebrews 3:13 -** "Exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
      - When we know someone who is caught up in sin - we need to warn them!
      - Sin is devastating - if we refuse to repent of our sin - it will harden our hearts...
      - That doesn't mean God does not keep fighting for us - but there will come a point...
      - If we continually choose sin - hardening our heart towards God...
      - God will give us what we want - He will give us over to our sin - **Genesis 6:1**
  - Paul looked at the church as his children - he did not want to be hard on them...
    - Paul's joy was tied into the joy of the church...
      - If Paul made the church sad by correcting them - he would also be sad...
      - If the church was walking with the Lord - then Paul would be full of joy!
      - **III John 1:4** - "I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth."

- No father likes to punish his children - it is the hardest part of being a dad...
  - I was a very 'mischievous' boy - I was always getting into some kind of trouble...
  - Which meant getting spanked by my father was almost a daily event...
  - He would always tell me - 'this hurts me more than it hurts you'...
  - I never believed him - till I got older and then began to understand...
  - My dad hated punishing me - it tore him up to see me hurting...
  - But He loved me too much to let me get away with doing bad things!
- Paul wrote the 'Severe letter' in many tears...
  - He did not want to hurt the church - he wanted to show them his love...
  - Not willing to let them continue going the wrong way - so he corrected them!
  - * **Hebrews 12:5-8 -** "You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD... For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives...'"
  - God loves us too much to let us get away with our sin - so He punishes us...
  - Not because He is angry - or mad at us - but because of His great love for us!
  - God desires to teach us - His kids - how to live a pure and holy life
  - Like any child - we have a hard time believing it is for 'our own good'...
  - But when we are 'punished' by the Lord - is proves we are His kids!
  - If a stranger's child sins - you do not punish them - not your kid...
  - But if your son does something wrong - because you love him - you correct him!

- **Repentance and restoration… vs. 5-11**
  - There had been a problem of sin in the church - **I Corinthians 5:1-8**...
    - It was commonly known - a man from the church was living in sexual immorality...
      - The sin was so serious - even non-believers would be ashamed to talk about it...
      - A man was living in with his father's wife - wording suggest it was his stepmother...
      - The church - rather than confront this man and his sin - ignored it...
    - Paul had told the church to remove the man - for the sake of the church...
      - Don't you know that a little leaven - leavens the whole lump - **Galatians 5:9**...
      - The church thought they were being 'loving' by not confronting the sin...
      - But in reality they were allowing sin into the church - endangering them all...
      - When sin goes unchecked it encourages others to sin...
      - Stand outside and look up - see how long it takes for others to look up too...
      - The power of example is amazing - people tend to follow - good or bad...
      - It only takes a 'little' mud to make a glass of water dirty...
      - A little sin can quickly spread out and infect a whole family or church!
    - The man was to be turned over to satan - so he might be saved...
      - We learned as a child not to touch a flame because when we did we got burned...
      - It is the consequences of our actions that teach us...
      - By facing the consequences of our sin we learn not to sin!
      - Better to face consequences now - and learn not to sin...
      - Than to live in sin - never have anyone correct us - then end up in hell...
  - Now let the man back into the church...
    - Apparently the church had followed Paul's advice - and kicked the man out of church...

        - It had the desired affect - the man had broken - and repented from his sin...
        - He now wanted to return to fellowship within the church...
    - But there were some who did not want him back...
        - There was a sense of - 'he is a sinner' - and therefore not welcome back...
        - Ironic because the church was just as guilty as this man - just with different sin...
        - Perhaps they felt less guilty if they focused on the mistakes of someone else...
        - People like to remind us of our mistakes - point out our flaws...
        - More often than not to hide their own mistakes and shortcomings!
        - But God doesn't hold onto our past - He removes/forgets our sin - **Psalms 103:12**
        - It doesn't matter how many times we make a mistake - if we are willing to repent...
        - God is ALWAYS willing to take us back - ready to receive us with open arms!
    - Being kicked out of the church was punishment enough...
        - There is a difference between conviction and condemnation...
            - The man had been convicted of his sin - and he had repented...
            - But without help - he could become condemned - overcome by sorrow...
            - Sin separates us from God - the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin to restore us...
            - When we repent and turn to the Lord - there is forgiveness and restoration!
            - Condemnation is when we dwell on our mistake - we know we messed up...
            - Instead of looking to Jesus - we focus on ourselves - and sink into despair
            - Conviction draws us closer to God - condemnation pulls us away from Him!
        - Do not let him become discouraged...
            - If the church did not take this man back into fellowship - he might not recover...
            - Imagine if you made a mistake - and everyone at church knew about it...
            - You are already hurting - broken over your sin - ashamed of what you did...
            - And when you show up - everyone stays away / whispers behind your back...
            - Would you go a second time - or would you feel abandoned / discouraged...
        - Forgive / Comfort / Love...
            - Paul gives the church 3 things the church was to do for this broken man...
            - Forgive him - God already had - who are we to hold onto his mistakes...
            - Comfort him - he is already beaten up - start to mend the wounds...
            - Love him - he needs to see the Love of God practically through the Church...
            - Instead of staying away and whispering - walk over and give them a hug!
            - Show them they are welcomed back into the family of God!
        - We are not ignorant of satan's devices...
            - Satan would love to keep a sinner from being restored by the Grace of God...
            - If he can keep someone condemned - beating themselves up - he will...
            - Don't let satan rob the church of a child of God Jesus died to save!
            - If you know someone who has messed up - but wants to get right with God...
            - Reach out to them - represent Jesus - forgive / comfort / love!

- **Fragrance of Christ… vs. 12-17**
    - Waiting for Titus... vs. 11-13
        - After Paul left Ephesus - on his way up to Macedonia he stopped in Troas...
            - He preached the Gospel there - and God opened a door - **Revelation 3:8**

        - Apparently there were many who were responding to the Gospel message...
        - It would have been reasonable then to assume Paul would have stayed there...
    - But Paul had no rest in his spirit...
        - Paul had sent Titus from Ephesus to Corinth to deliver the 'Severe Letter'...
        - He was supposed to then meet up with Titus in Troas to hear how it was received...
        - Troas is the port city in Turkey opposite from Greece/Corinth/Macedonia...
        - It was in Troas Paul received the vision that led him to Greece - **Acts 16**
        - But Titus was delayed - leaving Paul anxious - worried for the church in Corinth...
        - Paul went ahead to Macedonia - where he finally met Titus - **II Corinthians 7:5**
        - There at last he heard news - the church in Corinth had repented!
- Thanks be to God who ALWAYS leads us in triumph of Christ... vs. 14-16
    - Paul bursting out in praise reflecting on all God had done...
        - The man who had been caught up in sin - had repented and come back to God...
        - The Lord had opened a door to preach the Gospel in Troas...
        - Most of all - God opened the heart of the church in Corinth - they had repented!
    - The Triumph of Christ...
        - When a conquering nation returned - there was always a triumphant parade...
        - Those who had been conquered were led in as trophies of war...
        - Heralds would go before announcing the wonderful feats of the King...
        - Flowers were thrown at their feet - the sweet fragrance of victory...
        - Jesus triumphed over sin / death / and satan through the work of the cross...
        - **Colossians 2:15** - "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."
        - Part of His spoils of war was us - and He takes us along with Him in His procession...
        - Announcing as we go to the whole world the defeat of sin - the hope of salvation!
        - The fragrance of His Victory going before us into every place...
    - We are the fragrance of Christ...
        - To those who are being saved - we are the fragrance of life...
        - To those who are perishing - we are the fragrance of death...
        - We smell – whether we know it or not – we have an odor (*not that we need a bath*)
        - It is the fragrance of Jesus – to those who are saved – it is a wonderful smell...
        - Every notice when you walk into a room with believers in Jesus...
        - Even if you have never met them before - it feels like a family reunion...
        - There is immediate sweet fellowship through our common faith in Jesus!
        - They see the cross of Jesus in your life - and the hope of new life / forgiveness!
        - To those who are not saved – it is the stench of death – repulsive / offensive...
        - In contrast when you enter a room full of people who do not know Jesus...
        - They give you a look like as though you smell like a rotting dead animal - you stink!
        - They also see the cross of Jesus - but see only death - because they do not believe!
- We are not frauds...
    - There are many who preach just to make money - take advantage of people...
    - Paul spoke in sincerity - knowing that God was watching him...
    - His motive was pure - he only purpose was to preach Jesus so many could be saved!
    - But there were many who questioned Paul - false teachers...

- Men who did not want to build up the church - but rather bring it into bondage!
- Paul picks up in chapter 3 with his defense of these frauds / charlatans...