

A COMPASSIONATE HEART

2 Corinthians 2:1 – 11

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*,
vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 634–635.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:1 – 11 (NKJV)

¹ But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow.

² For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?

³ And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.

⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

⁵ But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe.

⁶ This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man,

⁷ so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

⁸ Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

⁹ For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

¹⁰ Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

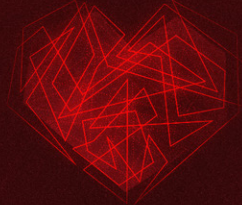
¹¹ lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

**One of the Corinthian church members caused Paul
a great deal of pain.**

We are not sure if this is the same man Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 5, the man who was living in open fornication, or if it was another person, someone who publicly challenged Paul's apostolic authority.

PAUL'S COMPASSION

Paul made a quick visit to Corinth to deal with this problem (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1) and wrote a painful letter to them about the situation. In all of this, he revealed a compassionate heart. Note the evidence of Paul's love.



LOVE PUTS OTHERS FIRST

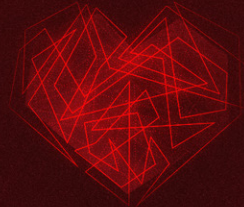
(VV. 1 – 4)

- Paul did not think of his feelings but the feelings of others. In Christian ministry, those who bring us great joy can also create for us great sorrow; and this was what Paul was experiencing.
- He wrote them a stern letter, born out of the anguish of his own heart and bathed in Christian love.

Paul's great desire was that the church might obey the Word, discipline the offender, and bring purity and peace to the congregation.

PROVERBS 27:6 (NKJV)

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

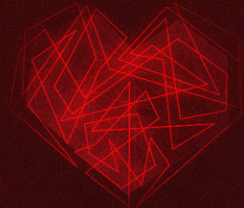


Paul knew that his words would wound those he loved, and this brought pain to his heart. But he also knew (as every loving parent knows) that there is a big difference between *hurting* someone and *harming* him.

**Sometimes those who love us must
hurt us to keep us from harming
ourselves.**

Paul could have exercised his apostolic authority and commanded the people to respect him and obey him, but he preferred to minister with patience and love.

God knew that Paul's change in plans had as its motive the sparing of the church from further pain.



2 CORINTHIANS 1:23 – 24 (NKJV)

²³ Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.

²⁴ Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

Love always considers the feelings of others and seeks to put their good ahead of everything else.

LOVE SEEKS TO HELP OTHERS GROW (VV. 5 – 6)

- It is worth noting that Paul did not mention the man's name who had opposed him and divided the church family; However, Paul did tell the church to discipline this man *for his good*.
- If the person referred to is the fornicator mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5, then these verses indicate that the church held a meeting and disciplined the man, and he repented of his sins and was restored.

TRUE DISCIPLINE IS EVIDENCE OF LOVE

(see Hebrews 12)

- Some young parents with "modern views" of how to raise children refuse to discipline their disobedient offspring because these parents claim they love their children too much.
- But if they loved their children, they would chasten them.

Church discipline is not a popular subject or a widespread practice.

Too many churches sweep such things "under the rug" instead of obeying the Scriptures and confronting the situation boldly by "speaking the truth in love".

EPHESIANS 4:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

"Peace at any price" is not a biblical principle, for there cannot be true spiritual peace without purity.

(James 3:13 – 18)

JAMES 3:13 – 18 (NKJV)

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Problems that are "swept under the rug" have a way of multiplying and creating even worse problems later on.

- This kind of loving attention helped Paul confront those the church disciplined.
- When we were children, we didn't always appreciate the discipline our parents gave us, though we must confess that we deserved far more than we received.
- But now that we look back, we can thank God that they loved us enough to hurt us and hinder us from harming ourselves.

LOVE FORGIVES AND ENCOURAGES (VV. 7 – 11)

- Paul urged the church family to forgive the man, and he gave solid reasons to back up this admonition.
- To begin with, they were to forgive him *for his own sake*, "lest [he] be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Cor. 2:7–8).

2 CORINTHIANS 2:7 – 8 (NKJV)

⁷ so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

⁸ Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

Forgiveness is the medicine that helps
to heal broken hearts. The church
needed to assure this repentant member
of their love.

- When a church family assures a forgiven brother or sister that the sin is forgotten and the fellowship restored, there is a sense of the Lord's presence that is wonderful to experience.
- Every parent who disciplines a child must follow that discipline with the assurance of love and forgiveness, or the discipline will do more harm than good.

They should confirm their love to the forgiven brother *for the Lord's sake* (2 Cor. 2:9 – 10).

- Discipline is as much a matter of obedience to the Lord as it is an obligation to a brother.
- The problem was not simply between a sinning brother and a grieving apostle: it was also between a sinning brother and a grieving Savior.

The man had sinned against Paul and the church, but he had sinned against the Lord most of all.

When timid church leaders try to "whitewash" situations instead of facing them honestly, they are grieving the heart of the Lord.

Paul gave another reason: they must forgive the offender *for the church's sake* (2 Cor. 2:11)


- An unforgiving spirit in a congregation because sin has not been dealt with biblically gives Satan a "victory" from which he can operate in the congregation.
- We grieve the Holy Spirit and "give place to the devil" when we harbor an unforgiving spirit.

EPHESIANS 4:27 – 32 (NKJV)

²⁷ nor give place to the devil.

²⁸ Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

²⁹ Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.



³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

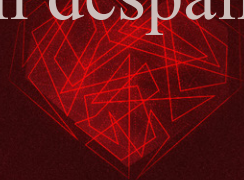
³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.



SATAN VS. THE HOLY SPIRIT

- One of Satan's "devices" is to accuse believers who have sinned so that they feel their case is hopeless.
- The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin to confess it and turn to Christ for cleansing, but Satan accuses us of sin, so we will live in despair and give up.



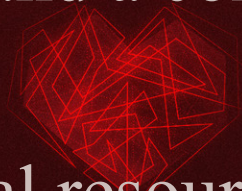
FORGET ABOUT IT

When an offending brother or sister is **disciplined** according to the Bible **and repents**, then the church family must forgive and restore the member.

The matter must be forgotten and never brought up again.



- If the church family—or any person in the family—carries an unforgiving spirit, then Satan will use that attitude as a victory for new assaults against the church.
- Paul overcame the problems that he faced because he had a clear conscience and a compassionate heart.
- Forgiveness is a spiritual resource that gave him victory.



“A COMPASSIONATE HEART”

2 CORINTHIANS 2:1 – 11

