



2 Corinthians: Triumph in Trials

Week 3: Costly Reconciliation

2 Corinthians 2:1-11

Feedback from last week: Stand Firm!

Has last week's passage and session changed you in any way this week? Have you been aware of God's comfort in trials? Have you had a chance to offer God's comfort to anyone else this week?

Share your stories

Read 2 Corinthians 2:1-11 (twice preferably!)

Background: The issue of 'The Offender'

A bit of background is needed for today's passage which is speaking about 'the offender' (one 'who did the wrong' 2 Cor 7:12). We can only speculate about who this person was, as they were probably written about in Paul's 'lost letter' in between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. It is likely that this 'offender' is either one of the 'Super Apostles' (who had been discrediting Paul and causing him grief) or the incestuous man (see 1 Corinthians 5). We can't be sure, but what is clear is that this person had done wrong and had caused much pain. He was then 'disciplined by the church' and excluded from fellowship, but had now been penitent and Paul is arguing that the church need to be reconciled to him and draw him back lovingly into the fellowship.

For more information on this, see <https://johnmarkhicks.com/2021/10/09/2-corinthians-25-11-forgiveness/>

Questions (choose some from):

- 1) Have you ever been hurt by someone badly so that the relationship has completely broken down? What happened? How did you feel?
- 2) What emotions had this wrongdoing caused in both Paul and the church in Corinth?
- 3) How has the 'offender' responded to his discipline and exclusion (v7 and see 2 Cor 7:10)?
- 4) So what is Paul calling the Corinthian church to do now that the 'offender' has shown repentance (v8, 10)? What do you think this might have looked like for the church?
- 5) Why does Paul call them to forgive and restore relationship (v11)? How do you see this playing out in real life?
- 6) How is the behaviour that Paul is calling them to, 'model the gospel message' (2 Corinthians 5:18-19, Ephesians 4:32, Romans 5:10-11)? How should what God has done for us affect how we treat others?
- 7) Would Paul have said the same if the 'offender' had not been penitent? Discuss!
- 8) What key principles can we learn from this passage?

Respond and Encounter:

Some suggestions:

- 1) Take some time (10 mins?) to allow everyone to reflect on a situation from the past where someone has hurt them and caused them pain. It may be recent, it may be some time ago. In the silence, encourage everyone to bring that person and situation to God and ask a) What this passage say to this situation? b) How is God calling me to respond? Encourage people to share their reflections in 2's and 3's and pray for each other that they would have the strength to respond as Jesus calls them to.
- 2) If there is one particular person in the group who this really resonates with, you may like to reflect prayerfully on their situation together.
 - a) Ask the person to briefly explain the situation to the group
 - b) Take a couple of minutes to pray for God's wisdom and revelation about the situation
 - c) Reflect together 'What principles does this passage show us about how we should respond in such situations?'
 - d) Then discuss 'how can these principles be applied to the real situation?' What would the 'Jesus response' be?
 - e) Then pray for the person that they will have the steps to respond that way.

[Note this is a basic form of what might be called 'theological reflection' – taking a current situation, asking what Biblical principles we are called to follow, and then seeking to apply it to the situation to direct you as to what action you should take]

The Pastoral Cycle

Theological reflection in ministry is the process of bringing to bear in the practical decisions of ministry the resources of Christian faith (Whitehead 1980 pix)



- 3) Pray for people you know who are struggling with broken relationships and pray for God's restoration and reconciliation.

Key verses to meditate on this week:

'Now instead you ought to forgive and comfort him so that he will not be overwhelmed with excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him' (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)