

**Men's Sunday Night**  
**The Book of 2 Corinthians**  
**"Finding Strength in Weakness"**  
**Lesson 2 – 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:17**  
**"Always Yes in Christ"**

In his book, Profiles in Courage, John F. Kennedy wrote, "Great crises produce great men and great deeds of courage." While it is true that a crisis helps to make a person, it is also true that a crisis helps to reveal what a person is made of. Pilate faced a great crisis, but his handling of it did not give him either courage or greatness.

In this very personal letter, Paul opened his heart to the Corinthians (and to us) and revealed the trials he had experienced. To begin with, he had been severely criticized by some of the people in Corinth because he had changed his plans and apparently not kept his promise. When Christians misunderstand each other, the wounds can go very deep. Then, there was the problem of opposition to his apostolic authority in the church. One of the members had to be disciplined, and this gave Paul great sorrow. Finally, there were the difficult circumstances Paul had to endure in Asia (2 Cor. 1:8-11), a trial so severe that he despaired of life. What kept Paul from failing? Other people, facing these same crises, would have collapsed! Yet Paul not only triumphed over the circumstances, but out of them produced a great letter that even today is helping God's people experience victory.

In chapter 1, Paul's theme was abundant comfort; here in chapter 2 it's abundant love. "*Love never fails*" (1 Cor. 13:8). Where there is love, there is always the burden to see others enjoy the very best. How many times pastors weep over disobedient Christians. Yet God honored Paul's tears and worked in the church so that sin was put away.

Chapter 2 also takes us back to 1 Cor. 5, where Paul had admonished the church to discipline the man who was living in open sin. Here Paul states that the offender did not cause Paul alone trouble and sorrow: he had brought trouble to the whole church! He had instructed them to call the church together and dismiss this man from the fellowship. This act of discipline would then bring him to a place of sorrow and repentance. Well, they had done this, but then they went to the opposite extreme! The man had evidenced sorrow for sin, but the church was not willing to receive him back after his confession! If Satan can accuse us of sin and discourage us with our past failures, he will rob us of our joy and usefulness to Christ. If God forgives a person of sin, we also must forgive that person. (Eph. 4:32; Rom. 8:31-39)

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-14. Pray and answer the following questions:**

1. What accusations does Paul seem to be answering in verses 12-14?
2. What does he want the Corinthians to understand about his motives, his actions and his letters?
3. In light of Paul's experience, how should you seek to discern God's will for your daily plans?

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:15-24. Pray and answer the following questions:**

Often our attempts to affirm each other backfire. Such was Paul's experience with the Corinthians. They regarded his change in travel plans and his tough love as a mixed signal, a yes and no. Paul had already made two visits to Corinth, the first to found the church and another painful visit to deal with a serious discipline problem. The latter visit, combined with a difficult letter, resulted in an almost complete breakdown in Paul's relationship with the Corinthians. Paul had promised to visit them again, twice in fact, first as he made his way back. But he changed his plans, delaying his visit and deciding to visit only once. Paul points the Corinthians to the ultimate ground of our affirmation: the eternal "Yes" spoken to us by God's Word.

4. Paul's change of travel plans has aroused criticism from the Corinthians. What warning may this be to us about our tendency to question the motives of fellow Christians?
5. In verses 18-22 what does Paul want them to understand about God, about His promises, and about what God does for Christian believers?

6. In what sense has Christ been the “Yes” of God’s promise to you?

7. Both the Corinthian believers and Paul share God’s gift of the Holy Spirit. (See vs. 21, 22). How does his description “*anointed us is God,*” and “*sealed us and given us the Spirit*” help you understand this gift?

**Read 2 Corinthians 2:1-17. Pray and answer the following questions:**

In this study, Paul continues to defend his ministry and claim a special relationship with these young Christians. With illustrations of fragrance, letters and freedom, he contrasts the fading glory of God’s old covenant with Israel and the lasting splendor of the new covenant in Christ.

8. In vs. 5-11 Paul refers to the discipline of a member of the church, possibly because of a gross sexual sin. How does Paul’s handling of this problem affirm his love not only for the Corinthians but also for the man who had sinned?

9. What does Paul’s example tell us about the role older Christians should play in the lives of younger believers?

10. What do you think Paul means in saying we are “*The aroma of death*” to some and “*The fragrance of Christ*” to others?

11. How could you better represent Christ to the unbelievers you know?

12. How did some people of Paul’s day misuse the Word of God?

## Life Application

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts) Write your insights down for review and group discussion.

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## “YES IN CHRIST”

**Look up the following scriptures of promise God has given His people. These promises are those that find their way in your life as you follow Christ.**

- To be with us forever (Genesis 28:15; Matthew 28:20)
- To accept us on the basis of faith rather than performance (Galatians 2:15-16; 1 Timothy 1:5)
- To bless all the nations and to include all peoples in the family of God (Genesis 18:18, 22:18; Galatians 3:8-9; Revelation 7:9)
- To give a place on earth and ultimately to renew all creation (Genesis 15:18; Revelation 21:5)
- To make a new covenant that will institute a universal every-member ministry (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- To turn adversity into victory (Jeremiah 29:11-14; Romans 8:28)
- To deal finally with evil (Revelation 19:11-21)

**Make these promises your own and thank God for them!**