



MONDAY 15 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:11-15 & Philippians 2:5-13

Plug In...

Paul asks for forgiveness from the Corinthians for “the wrong” of not burdening them (v.13). Some of the Corinthians had offered him a gift – probably financial – (12:14) and he had refused it. Remember, the context for the Corinthians was they chased after the so-called ‘super-apostles’, and were willing to pay for the ‘show’ (11:5-7). We know from elsewhere that Paul is not considering poverty a virtue and therefore rejects anything to do with wealth. Paul knocks back the gift because he loves the Corinthians. Given their stumbling block involves paying for the superstars, he will encourage that further nor get caught in any system where they would perceive of him as their ‘client’.

Chew It Over...

Our culture is big on ‘rights’. Paul is big on ‘obligations’. Paul understands that love for the Corinthians obligates him to do whatever is necessary to move them towards Christ. If that means not standing on a right (i.e., the right for a pastor to get paid) or doing something counter-cultural (i.e., accepting a fee to validate your credentials) *in order* to best place someone in Christ, then it is the right thing to do – it is the loving thing to do.

Watch some of the discussions in the news this week, watch the way people around you talk (maybe how you talk). Notice how the default position is to stand on one's rights. Imagine what you would do differently if you stood more for the obligations you have to love another with the gospel. Think into a situation this week where you forgo rights in order to fulfil an obligation of love to another.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for wisdom to know the loving thing to do in this week's situations. May God let us know the obligations of love we have towards those around us.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 16 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:14-15 & 1 Corinthians 9:3-18

Plug In...

Paul is visiting the Corinthians again and still he will not accept money from them. Money would be helpful; elsewhere he states a pastor deserves a wage to survive. Yet, Paul doesn't conceive of his relationship with the Corinthians as a 'contractor', or as 'client' or 'employee'. The metaphor used is parent and child. As the parent, he will spend everything in order to give his children a stable and strong start in the gospel.

Remember, when Paul did take money he did so in order to take the gospel to other regions at no cost to his hearers. The Philippians got this (Philippians 4:15-17). The Corinthians had not yet got this (*cf.* 2 Corinthians 11:7-10).

Chew It Over...

We all (especially young people starting careers) face choices (today and tomorrow) that will either increase or decrease our ability to promote and preach the gospel free of charge. For example, many young people in Australia, despite their talents laying elsewhere, aim for the finance industry to make money. What if you look more closely at your God-given talents and choose to enter a field where the way God has shaped you will maximise your ability to preach the gospel free of charge. Many career choices, many mortgages,

many lifestyle choices drastically reduce your capacity to have genuine time and space with colleagues, friends, family, and your church to show love and speak of Jesus. The challenge is to trace out the path that comes with a choice before the fact and decide *now* if you are happy with that end. What choices can you make today that are centred on building your capacity to be more and more free-of-charge for people.

Prayer Suggestion

Lord Jesus, by your Spirit, we beg that you will unhinge us from our attraction to the idols of our society. Lord may we spend more of our time, money, resources, efforts on genuine kingdom-building. Make us do that Lord Jesus; please bear fruit within our lives.



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WEDNESDAY 17 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:16-18

Plug In...

In these verses Paul addresses another criticism. This time that he has taken money from them through trickery. Paul is, proverbially, “damned if he does; damned if he doesn’t”. We’ve seen Paul accused for not charging a fee. Now he’s accused for having taken money (presumably the offering that Paul encouraged Titus to collect – see: 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9). Paul’s defends by pointing to the facts of his lifestyle, look how I’ve self-supported myself; plus look at Titus – he’s done the same thing (vv.17-18).

Chew It Over...

Paul seems to be caught in a *gotcha* moment! Some are saying, ‘*So Paul doesn’t take a fee hey? Well, ain’t he a clever one, got you hoodwinked, watch how he takes a fee indirectly through Titus!*’ The early church reveals cynicism can occur within a church, even the first churches. Notice how Paul combats the cynic. With the facts. But not just fact that whack over the head. The first fact he points to is the fact that he loves them (vv.14-15). Then, the facts which prove his love (vv.16-17). The key to correcting perceptions is to make sure all facts are out on the table. Paul isn’t doing his own *gotcha* (*right-back-at-ya!*). We will see in v.19, Paul puts the facts on the table only to strengthen them in Christ. We are challenged by Paul to look at the person who is out to get us with the same compassion and love.

Are you able to pray like Jesus when you are wrongfully accused? "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do".

Prayer Suggestion

"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:24).



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THURSDAY 18 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:19

Plug In...

Paul's question in this verse shows he realises the tone and defence of his letter may be interpreted as though he is commending himself. Paul carefully, almost invoking an oath, says that before the sight of God and in Christ what he writes, what he corrects, what he rebukes them over, has all been for their "strengthening" (literally "up-building").

Chew It Over...

When sinned against, when slandered, when accused, it is so easy to want to just go back with guns-a-blazing to defend your honour. Clearly the Bible tells us there are times when we need to absorb the damage for the sake of reconciliation. Here with Paul, there seems to be a case where defending one's integrity is a right response (maybe because larger things than just our own reputation is at stake). As we find ourselves maligned, we must be captured like Paul to address concerns in a way that builds-up the other person. This is much easier said than done. Review some relationship breakdowns (large and small). Where have you engaged in tit-for-tat? How can you go about rebuilding the relationship so that it is a safe place for everyone; a safe place where people are pointed back towards Christ?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask the Lord to help us not be 'defensive', but to be proactive in strengthening into Christ even the people who hurt us deeply.



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FRIDAY 19 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:20-21

Plug In...

Paul shares his fears. That when he comes he will find the Corinthians caught up in all sorts of sin. He's worried that when he comes, yet again, he will have to use direct words. He's worried that such direct talk will mean they will reject him again. Paul fears that when he arrives there will be unrepentant people. He's worried that the Corinthians' consistent sinful behaviour will reveal they have not understood repentance, therefore the gospel.

Chew It Over...

This is a reminder that the gospel, correctly understood, involves both faith and *repentance*. Repentance is not just another word for 'faith'. It is the dynamic that occurs with true faith. The call is to repent and believe, but the ability to do both is the gift of God. God's work is to generate faith (trust in Jesus) and repentance (a Holy Spirit powered-heart that turns from sin). It is a big deal if you see someone calling themselves a "Christian" on the one hand, but living a sin-laced life. Mercifully, God's gift is to give us the Holy Spirit and His Word. The word warns us to stop certain behaviours, but the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to respond to the warning.

Don't ever think someone is a lost cause. How can you help that person become more stable in their walk? How can you keep calling them daily to repent and believe like Paul continues to do? How can you pray for them and also bring them before God's word?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God that humanly speaking we are all lost causes, yet by His grace we have repented and believed. Ask God to help us keep these two things together as we teach and share the good news with others. Praise God for giving us a life that has turned away from the dead end of sin. Ask God to help us in the most loving way be direct with our Christian brothers and sisters we fear are living unrepentant lives.



The Lakes

WEEKEND 20-21 AUGUST 2016

SERIES: SECOND CORINTHIANS

Read: Isaiah 55

Plug In...

In 2 Corinthians 12, we've read of Paul's fear that repentance does not exist among some of the Corinthians. Isaiah 55 is a wonderful Old Testament passage where God calls for both faith and repentance. God calls out for us to come to His waters (faith), but also says come by leaving wicked ways (repentance).

Faith & repentance are two sides of the same coin.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to make your faith and repentance stronger. That you just don't know stuff about the gospel, but have a life that is radically turned around. May we be encouraged at The Lakes as we see this emerge in one another. May God encourage us as we see the unrepentant turn.