



Lesson 21: *Paul's Change of Plans* 2 Corinthians 1:12–2:11

2 Corinthians 1:12 Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. 13 For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, 14 as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1:15 Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. 16 I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. 17 When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

1:18 But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." 20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. 21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

1:23 I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. 24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

2:1 So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. 2 For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? 3 I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. 4 For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

2:5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. 9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Our conscience is clear

- ▲ *Our conduct is sincere*
2 Corinthians 1:12 Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.
- ▲ *Our communications are simple*
2 Corinthians 1:13 For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand.
- ▲ *Our common confidence is strong, supposedly*
2 Corinthians 1:13 And I hope that, 14 as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus. 15 Because I was confident of this,

Our agenda is adjustable

- ▲ *Paul's first travel plan*
1 Corinthians 16:5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.
- ▲ *Paul's further travel plans*
2 Corinthians 1:15 Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. 16 I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea.
- ▲ *Paul's final travel plan*
2 Corinthians 1:23 I did not return to Corinth.

Our message isn't modifiable

- ▲ *Our planning is sincere*
2 Corinthians 1:17 When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say, "Yes, yes" and "No, no"?
- ▲ *Our preaching is settled*
2 Corinthians 1:18 But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes."
- ▲ *Our promises are sure*
2 Corinthians 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.
- ▲ *Our Promisor is sovereign*
2 Corinthians 1:21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Our detour is defensible

- ▲ *My last trip was traumatic*
2 Corinthians 1:23 I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. 24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. 2:1 So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. 2 For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved?
- ▲ *My last letter was lashing*
2 Corinthians 2:3 I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. 4 For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.
- ▲ *My last correction was constructive*
 - ▼ *The offender has repented (Could this be the immoral brother of 1 Corinthians 5?)*
2 Corinthians 1:5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.
 - ▼ *The offender should be reaffirmed and restored*
2 Corinthians 1:8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. 9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Life lessons

- 1. Responsible spiritual leadership includes encouragement and rebuke, so don't shoot the messenger if the message is right.
- 2. When spiritual leaders disappoint you, that doesn't mean God has failed; keep your eyes on Jesus and your nose in the Word.
- 3. Ministry plans and situations change and only God knows the future, so leave room for the unexpected and for God's redirection.
- 4. Satan's schemes often involve conflict and unforgiveness and bitterness within the body of Christ, so be wise and warned.

Paul's ministry among the Corinthians

► First visit	50-52 AD	the founding visit	Acts 18:1-18
► First letter	52-55 AD	the previous letter*	1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (written from Ephesus)
► Second letter	52-55 AD	1 Corinthians*	1 Corinthians 1:1 (written from Ephesus)
► Second visit	52-55 AD	the painful visit	2 Corinthians 2:1
► Third letter	52-55 AD	the severe letter*	2 Corinthians 7:8 (written from Ephesus)
► Fourth letter	55-56 AD	2 Corinthians**	2 Corinthians 1:1 (written from Macedonia)
► Third visit	57 AD	the last visit	2 Corinthians 12:14; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Acts 20:2-3

*written from Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8) — **written from Macedonia (2 Corinthians 1:16; 2:13; 7:5)

Paul's change of travel plans

1. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:5 that he planned to visit Corinth on his return from Macedonia ("if the Lord permits").
2. Somewhere between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, Paul informed them that he planned instead to make two visits:
 - one visit on the way to Macedonia;
 - another visit on the return from Macedonia.
3. When was this plan announced to the Corinthians?
 - while Paul was with them during the brief painful visit?
 - in the severe letter?
 - sometime after the severe letter but before Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia?
4. Before leaving Ephesus, Paul changed his plans again and decided to bypass Corinth on the way to Macedonia.
5. The Corinthians were critical of Paul's change in plans.

Remember the immoral brother of 1 Corinthians 5

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? 3 Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. 4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

5:6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

5:9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. 12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

