

2 Corinthians 2

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon on 2 Corinthians 2 emphasizes the importance of restoration, forgiveness, and spiritual unity within the church community.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 2:3

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Restoration"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the importance of restoration and forgiveness within the church, as Paul instructs the Corinthians to comfort and restore a man who has caused grief. He highlights the need for spiritual unity and love among believers, noting that true restoration can only occur when individuals recognize their own shortcomings and act with compassion. Darby points out that the church must collectively bear the burdens of its members, reflecting Christ's love and grace. He also discusses the necessity of divine guidance in ministry, urging believers to remain close to the Lord for direction in their work. Ultimately, he illustrates that the gospel is a sweet savor to God, and the church must faithfully represent this truth in their actions.

Transcript

To return to our chapter: now Paul tells them to restore the poor man dealt with in the first epistle. He says, "I determined this with myself that I would not come again to you in heaviness; for if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?" and so on. He takes the greatest pains in linking up the Corinthians with his own heart (v. 3-5). "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part all of you, that I may not overcharge you": because if he had said, You are all bad, this would overcharge them, for he saw that they were grieved as well as himself. In not having dominion over their faith, he wanted them, with himself, to act in restoration; "Forgive him and comfort him, lest such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."

313 "I wrote," in verse 3, refers to the first epistle, and so in verse 9, I have no doubt. I do not believe much of what they say in these modern times about aorists. I think it is nonsense the way they have attempted to connect the English and Greek tenses. Verse 6 does not imply that they were not unanimous, it should read "the many." He was afraid about some at the end of the epistle, that they had not repented properly themselves; those that did not repent he would have treated as the man himself. If all are not agreed in matters of discipline, they must wait, not as allowing evil; but if they wait, their way will be made clear, or else there is not power enough to set things right. The effect of spiritual power is to make all those who are

spiritual act together against the evil. The Greek word for many in verse 6 does not give countenance to a majority acting. The effect of the Spirit of God there is to give God's view of the case, and to put out the disobedient with those who go with the disobedience. He tells them lower down, "Ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

There is little power among us to restore, because there is want of spirituality and of that love which cares for the members of Christ. There is righteousness, and evil is not allowed. I have not observed any particular defect as to that, but I think the failure is the want of love to the members of Christ and looking after such. The effect at Corinth is given in chapter 7:11: "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." And when that was so, then he is anxious they should care for this man. He has been down himself, but he was a member of Christ and washed in His blood, and they are to take care of him. If the body of Christ and the love of Christ were there, the person, if a Christian, would be miserable until he were received in again.

In this case it was a man broken down with overmuch sorrow. There is no restoration properly, and they were in no state to restore until they hated themselves for their own part in all this. And it is so with us all as principle, though we may have a clearer judgment than another as to how to act. I have no gift myself, I avow, in discipline. I see another thing, that where the general state of any gathering is weak, a person may be left out as a proof of their weakness; for if there were more spiritual power, he would be humbled and brought in. At Corinth Paul had no occasion to write this, until the man were broken down about it himself; nor is it any good to attempt to restore a man until his own soul is really restored. And as to putting out, that may be done as mere bold righteousness. This man, when Paul writes this, was grieving over his sin, and you may say restored in soul, but he was not officially restored. To know when a soul is restored requires spiritual power. Peter bows to the rebuke of the Lord, but he does not say, "I love thee more than anybody else."

314 What we need to do is to take the sin of another upon ourselves (like the priest eating the sin-offering). If there were power, though we cannot always hinder sins, yet they would be checked. The Corinthians would not act as priests until Paul forced them to it. The assembly should make the sin their own before God; and that is where I have seen a real pastor: wherever there was an evil, he would lay it on himself, because he had not looked after such an one enough, or else not rightly. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us" means that Satan was trying to make a division between the Corinthians and the apostle. Paul himself had been sorry he had written his first letter, and that though it was an inspired one; his own heart had got below its level. It is beautiful to see him urging both righteousness and grace; and in the end Satan did not get an advantage - they were of one mind in the Lord. "In the person of Christ" means as if He were there to do it with authority. It is not limited merely to "in the sight of Christ."

We see what exercise of heart it had been to Paul: he came to Troas, and was so full of care for them, that when he did not find Titus there from them, he could not stay, but goes on to Macedonia to meet him. And another thing, he is able to thank God for it all, "which always leadeth us about in triumph in Christ." He might have said, "If I had had but a little more faith, I might have stayed at Troas, and preached the gospel there," but he comforts himself that he is led about in triumph everywhere. It is the thought of captives led in a triumphal procession; He was Christ's prisoner. He was feeling about the saints, having left Troas when an open door was there. "Well, God leads me about in triumph wherever I go." We see a heart that has been beaten about, and it is over-full here. It is deeply instructive, and beautiful too. "A sweet-savour

in them that perish" is an allusion to an old practice after victories, of burning incense to the gods, and then sometimes they killed some of the people. The gospel was a sweet savour anyway, but it was for death if it were rejected.

315 If a person preaches, and sees no results, it may be the Lord exercising his faith and patience, especially if he thinks he has a kind of right to convert everybody. Sometimes a person may have a gift, but he does not go to the right place - goes where the door is shut, instead of open. When the Moravians first went out to Greenland, they were there thirteen years without a soul; they were arranging to go away, but thought they would try one year more, and then, as they were reading the account of Christ's sufferings, some one came and listened, and said, "Read those words again," and it resulted in his conversion, the truth burst out, and numbers were brought in. You do have to look for guidance in work; you may be forbidden to preach in Asia, and be sent to Macedonia instead, and if you follow the leading, and go to Macedonia, you will get the working of God directly. Paul says God makes manifest the savour of His knowledge by us, for we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ. He did not distinguish between saints and others, but "God led me about in triumph, because I do not know what best to do." Of course, his was not simply evangelical work and gift, but he was an apostle and teacher. If a person is an evangelist, he will be saying, These poor souls are all perishing; he must not blame another labourer, or undertake another's work - he will take up the work before him in love to souls. Paul had been at Troas before, going down to Ephesus. Originally he had the dream there, and was called over to Macedonia. I do not know if he preached there, but he had been there. He had stayed at Ephesus, and now he was going back.

The only way to obtain guidance in work is by living close to the Lord. We shall not have, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul" now, but the Lord will send by laying it on one's heart to go, and then that may be by circumstances, or otherwise. I may be led to preach, and find the way opened up by a circumstance of some kind; led by an outward thing, like a horse or a mule, that has no understanding. That is what people call providences, but it is a bit or a bridle. To what degree we have the guidance definitely is another question, but there is such a thing as an entrance here, and a dream to go there; of course, there was nothing in the word of God directly telling me to come to Belfast. In the absence of guidance, do nothing, but be a testimony where you are. "Preach the gospel to every creature" is a general truth, only we get guidance in doing it; an open door is guidance in itself, in a certain sense. If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light; and if I do not find my whole body full of light, well, I say to myself, "Your eye is not single," it is no use to say it is, for it is not. I may find that out as one effect of my doubt.

316 There may be direct guidance, I cannot call it into question: when it is given, it is not fanaticism. We get right impressions by living with Christ. John did not go and get a place near Christ in order to know His secrets; but he had a place near Christ, and then the secrets were given to him. Only you cannot go properly to Christ, as John, to ask, unless you are living near Him. Only "trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." You must live near the Lord, or you cannot reckon rightly on being guided. God's mercy may come in at any time, but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." I should be filled with the knowledge of His will, and all spiritual understanding.

In verse 17 Paul turns back to himself: "We are not as the many which corrupt the word of God" (that is, adulterate it, or make a trade of it), it is but to suit yourself to your customers. Paul might say, "I come now from God, and I speak in God's behalf, in the sight of God." You cannot have a more simple statement of what carrying the word of God is. The gospel of God is the good news God has sent, but the gospel of Christ is more the subject of the good news. The gospel of the kingdom is the subject again; it is not the

source of the kingdom. To me it is a very solemn statement about the gospel here.

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