

"The Dangers of Unresolved Conflict" - 2 Corinthians 2:1-11 – August 14th, 2016

- The title I've chosen for today's teaching is, "The Dangers of Unresolved Conflict."
- Here in our text the Apostle Paul points out specific situations involving unresolved conflict with, and amongst, the Corinthians.
- In so doing he provides us with much needed warnings about the danger of not resolving those conflicts amongst other Christians.

1. It can irreparably damage relationships (Verses 1-4)

- v1-2 Paul continues explaining that he didn't visit them because it would be painful and he didn't want to cause any further grief.
- v3 He says he wrote a letter instead so when he did visit them it would be full of joy instead of it being full of stress and conflict.
- v4 He wrote this letter in great distress, anguish of heart, and tears, not to grieve them more but let them know of his deep love.

- What Paul is saying here is really a continuation of the previous chapter, such that, he's giving further reasons for not coming.
- It's interesting to note he refers to a letter he wrote instead of visiting on his way from Macedonia as he had originally planned.
- The reason it's interesting is because we do not have any record of this letter, as it must not have been inspired as scripture.

One commentator wrote, "Not every letter that Paul wrote was inspired Scripture for all God's people in all ages. We can trust that what Paul wrote in the missing letter was perfect for the Corinthian Christians at that time, but not perfect for us; otherwise, God would have preserved it. We shouldn't think that everything Paul or the other Bible writers wrote was necessarily Scripture."

- Be that as it may, we still have a problem of sorts as it relates to the Apostle Paul deeming necessary to defend himself again.
- This because, there were some in Corinth who had falsely accused him of not being a man of his word, not doing what he said.
- Namely, that of visiting the Corinthians a second time, which he didn't do opting instead to write them the aforementioned letter.
- The question becomes one of why he made this decision to change his plans, which is what Paul answers here in these verses.
- Simply put, Paul knew that were he to visit them, it would have had the potential of causing further damage to their relationship.
- It's for this reason he wanted to spare them and himself of that happening, by sending the letter instead to resolve the conflict.

Adam Clarke of this said, "Because of the scandals that were among them he could not see them comfortably; and therefore he determined not to see them at all till he had reason to believe that those evils were put away."

2. It can deprive people of restoration (Verses 5-7)

- v5 He says if one has caused grief, not so much that he was grieved, but because they're grieved they shouldn't be too severe.
- v6 Paul goes on to say that the punishment they have inflicted on this unnamed man by the majority of them, is now sufficient.
- v7 He tells them they ought to not only forgive him, but comfort him as well, lest he become overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

- In order to better understand what Paul is saying here we need to draw upon Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in chapter five.
- In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul sharply rebukes them for tolerating, even embracing a man who was in open sin within their fellowship.
- To their credit, the Corinthians took heed to Paul's rebuke, and did what he told them to do by removing him from the church.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 — 1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? 3 For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. 4 So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

- While this was the right thing and the hard thing to do they did it none-the-less, and thankfully it was effective in his repentance.
- As such, it was now time or the Corinthian church to restore this man to their fellowship by forgiving, comforting and loving him.
- Sadly, there has been many a church who has deprived people of the grand and glorious restoration that God desires to bring.

G. Campbell Morgan had some interesting insight into this, "There may be a judicial forgiveness which is hard, and leaves the soul always conscious of the past. Comfort takes the soul to heart, and forgets. That is how God forgives, and so should we who are His children." ... "If discipline is largely lacking in the Church of today, so also is the grace of forgiving and comforting those who, having done wrong, are truly repentant. How often, alas! souls have been indeed swallowed up with overmuch sorrow because of the harshness and suspicion of Christian people toward them in view of some wrong which they have done ... Love never slights holiness; but holiness never slays love."

3. It can lead to bitter un-forgiveness (Verses 8-11)

- v8-9 Paul urges them to reaffirm their love for him saying that another reason he wrote was to test their obedience to do this.
- v10 He goes on to say if anyone forgives, he also forgives, and what he's forgiven if anything is in sight of Christ for their sake.
- v11 He then says that this was in order that Satan might not outwit us because we are not unaware or ignorant of his schemes.

- If you were to ask me what I thought was the most destructive dangers of unresolved conflict, bitter un-forgiveness would be it.
- The reason I believe this is because, once bitterness takes root, germinates and grows, it will destroy us from the inside out.
- You'll forgive the comparison, but I see bitter un-forgiveness as a cancer that can spread throughout the life of a Christian.

Hebrews 12:15b ...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;