

## “THE INTEGRITY OF A PASTOR”

### 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

**Theme:** Spiritual leaders must honestly demonstrate God’s own heart as they serve God’s people.

#### I. Trustworthiness – 1:12-14

##### A. The Trustworthiness of Conscience – v. 12

1. As the Apostle addresses the accusations made against him, he demonstrates that the most important priority of a spiritual leader is God’s view of him.
2. Paul consistently repudiates boasting of himself or any of his accomplishments – but only those of Jesus Christ – cp. Jeremiah 9:23-24; 2 Corinthians 10:17-18.
3. Here, he declares that his boasting is in God’s grace, **“For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God ...”**
4. Again, the Christian life is not one of works, human achievement, or self-sanctification but is one that is able to be lived solely by God’s active grace – cp. 1 Corinthians 15:10.
5. Because of how God’s grace had empowered him, **“the testimony of our conscience”** – speaks to how God’s grace had enabled him to be trustworthy as a leader – 1 Peter 3:15-16.
  - a) A conscience can be seared – 1 Timothy 4:2.
  - b) A conscience can be defiled – Titus 1:15.
  - c) A conscience can be evil – Hebrews 10:22.
  - d) A conscience must be cleansed by Christ – Hebrews 9:14.
  - e) A conscience must be instructed – 1 Timothy 1:19.
  - f) A conscience must be heeded – Romans 13:5.
  - g) A conscience must be protected – 1 Timothy 3:9.
  - h) A conscience is used by God’s Spirit – Romans 9:1.
6. Paul’s **“conscience”** was obviously not a product of his own making but was a by-product of his submission to God’s Spirit, producing **“... holiness and godly sincerity ...”** so as to avoid **“... fleshly wisdom ...”** that results in indulgences, defilements, and duplicity.

## B. The Trustworthiness of Consistency – vv. 13-14

1. Paul's life lived out in front of them, was not one with ulterior motivation and manipulations.
2. He declares that he defrauded no one, nor was there a hidden agenda in his ministry.
3. He declares, *“For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end ...”*
4. There is a play on words in this verse in the terms *“read”* [ἀναγινώσκω] and *“understand”* [ἐπιγινώσκω] meaning to ascertain by observation, that is, what Paul wrote, he modeled in life.
5. The things he writes to them, He himself obeys so that their mutual submission to the Word would testify to its veracity – *“... just as you also partially did understand us, that we are you reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.”*
6. A spiritual leader who calls people to live one way and then lives a different way is a hireling and not a shepherd.
7. Paul refers to *“the day of our Lord Jesus”* as a reminder of the significant accountabilities that exist for all of us.

## II. Teachability – 1:15-18, 23-24

### A. The Confidence in Plans – v. 15-16

1. However, we must not think that spiritual leaders fully comprehend all that there is to know.
2. Paul made plans on the basis of what he thought was God's will – just like every other decision he made – *“In this confidence I intended at first to come to you so that you might twice receive a blessing; that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by your to be helped on my journey to Judea.”*
3. He truly thought this was the best plan – but he was being faulted for failing to follow through, as we will see in vv. 23-24.

### B. The Commitment in Plans – vv. 17-18

1. Paul states that he meant it when he said he intended to come – *“Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I?”*

2. He was committed to his plan, unlike the accusations that he lied to them, or had intentionally misled them.
3. He asks, *“Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?”*
4. Basically, he is asking whether they had ever known him to practice “double-speak” or deception.
5. If he told them he intended to come, he did.
6. However, sometimes, we must change our plans and do something other than what we originally intended.

C. **The Conformity in Plans – vv. 23-24**

1. As God’s Spirit worked, Paul decided that he had to do something different – *“But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.”*
2. He further says, *“Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.”*
3. Because of their response to his **“long letter,”** Paul had to change his mind about his plans with reference to Corinth.
4. He did not want to exceed propriety of influence over control – even though he was an Apostle – he reiterated, *“not that we lord it over your faith.”*
5. He refers to the “painful visit” when there had been a confrontation, and Paul decided to simply leave the city and then write them the **“lamented letter.”**
6. He did not want to have another visit like that – he wanted *“to spare you,”* and therefore, he said, *“I did not come again to Corinth.”*
7. As he calls on **“God as witness,”** he clearly sought the will of God through prayer about this decision.
8. Despite his original plans, Paul was teachable and yielded to the Spirit of God to direct him differently than how he originally had felt led.

III. **Truthfulness – 1:18-22**

A. **The Soundness of Our Message – vv. 18-20**

1. Moving back in the text a few verses, Paul's truthfulness is shown to be of significant importance to him.
2. He states that duplicity in his speech, having yes and no, would erode not only their confidence in him but in God whose Word Paul proclaimed.
3. He states: ***"But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no."***
4. Paul's message was the Word of God, and it can be considered truth – ***"For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us – by me and Silvanus and Timothy – was not yea and no, but is yes in Him."***
5. There is no deceit in what they were taught – it was indeed the Word of God – ***"For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us."***
6. ***"Amen"*** is a strong affirmation – it is ridiculous for the Corinthians to believe the Gospel as true but consider those who proclaimed it to them as liars.
7. It is inappropriate for a man to carefully and meticulously tell the truth when preaching and then become unreliable and dishonest when not preaching – such duplicity is contemptible.

**B. The Source of Our Message – vv. 21-22**

1. Paul then points to the source of his message – ***"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God."***
2. You were persuaded of the truth of the Gospel, which saved your soul and transformed your lives by God Himself – ***"who sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge"*** – cp. ***Ephesians 1:13-14***.
3. Salvation is God's Work – not the work of men:
  - a) It is God ***"who establishes us"*** [βεβαιόω] – to settle something beyond doubt, to confirm or strengthen.
  - b) It is God who ***"anointed us"*** [χρίω] – to "anoint" in the sense of setting someone apart – and is in this sense equated with "sanctifying us."
  - c) It is God who ***"sealed us"*** [σφραγίζω] – to provide a mark to verify and identify one's possession – God secured us when He ***"gave us the Spirit in our hearts."***
  - d) It is God who identifies the ***"Spirit in our hearts as a***

**pledge” [ἄρραβών]** – a down payment or nonrefundable deposit of all to what He has committed Himself.

4. When God had trusted Paul with so significant a message, could they not trust him with reference to minor travel plans?

#### IV. Tenderness – **1:23-2:4**

##### A. The Desire for Peace – **vv. 23-2:1**

1. Spiritual leaders cannot simply pride themselves in their willingness to confront.
2. Although confrontation is certainly necessary at times, so is the desire for peace – **“But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.”**
3. We’ve already discussed these verses, but we must emphasize that spiritual leadership is not a lord/vassal relationship but a collegial striving together for the glory of Christ – **“Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.”**
4. He refused to repeat that previous visit where there was a confrontation away from which Paul left defeated – **“But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again.”**

##### B. The Demonstration of Poise – **vv. 2-4**

1. Paul demonstrated that he had been willing to confront – even when it caused sorrow – **“For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful.”**
2. His great comfort in confrontation is when a person who is confronted repents – this is the point of the confrontation.
3. He was praying that the sinful issues confronted by him in the lamented letter had been dealt with and repentance had occurred – **“This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice.”**
4. His desire is that they will have repented and not stubbornly cling to their sinful practices, hence giving him joy.
5. He then indicates his confidence is in God’s Spirit to bring repentance – **“having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all.”**

6. Again, this is what caused him to write – *“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”*
7. This lamented letter was sent as an act of devotion and love to them – cp. *Proverbs 27:6*.