

***International Bible Lessons Commentary***  
***2 Corinthians 1:21-2:11***

***International Bible Lessons***  
**Sunday, August 10, 2014**

**L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 10, 2014**, is from **2 Corinthians 1:21-2:11**. NOTE: Some churches will only study **2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is usually posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

**2 Corinthians 1:21-2:11**

**(2 Corinthians 1:21) But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us,**

Paul wrote about and for all Christians, and he identified Timothy and himself with the Christians in the church in

Corinth. God had established them in Christ. God had placed them on the same foundation, and the Church that God had established He would continue to build until it was built according to His plan. The Church includes all Christians everywhere, and God has anointed Christians with the Holy Spirit, as He anointed Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit when John baptized Jesus.

**(2 Corinthians 1:22) by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.**

God has anointed Christians to empower them to serve Him in the name of Jesus Christ. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is a seal or guarantee that God the Father and Christ the King have set apart the Christian for their service. The seal of the Holy Spirit can be seen as others see the character of Christ shining forth from the life of the Christian in their daily service of God (though some may never recognize the Spirit of Christ in a sincere believer). The Holy Spirit can be known, or He makes himself known, in the heart or in the commitment and experience of the believer in Jesus Christ. Paul compared the giving of the Holy Spirit by God to an earnest payment, or the first blessing with more blessings to follow, or the first fruit of many fruits that He will give to the believer, or the “down payment” that assures every Christian that God will pay the balance in full throughout all eternity. The first installment is given so a Christian can know with certainty that the good work God has begun within them He will bring to completion now and forever. The first installment

assures the Christian that he is a child of God and he will receive the inheritance God has planned for him.

**(2 Corinthians 1:23) But I call on God as witness against me: it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth.**

False apostles or others had accused Paul of dishonesty and lying for saying he would return again to Corinth when he had not returned as he said. After being delayed by an unnamed affliction and for other good reasons, Paul decided it would not be best to return at the time he had planned. His primary reason was to spare the church the harsh discipline and strong reprimands they deserved for disobeying the law of God. His love for them inspired him to withhold a little longer the discipline they needed so he would have extra time to pray that what he had already written them would be heeded and no further discipline would be needed. He had delayed his coming for their benefit, not because he made plans in ordinary human ways.

**(2 Corinthians 1:24) I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith; rather, we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in the faith.**

Jesus Christ is the only Lord, and the Christian recognizes Jesus Christ as his only Lord. No human being, not even an apostle or other church leader, can stand in the place of Jesus Christ over someone's faith in Jesus Christ. The

Corinthian Christians had been disobedient to Christ, but they stood firm in the faith with respect to believing the basic facts of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their problem was their disobeying Christ, not their disbelieving the “true facts” about Christ. As a church leader, Paul could bring discipline to the church according to the Word of God and according to the moral law of God as revealed in the Scriptures. But as a church leader, he would not do so as “the lord” over their lives and faith. He would not take the rightful place of Jesus Christ over them. As a church leader, Christ had appointed him to bring the joy of knowing Christ to those who placed their faith in Christ. His purpose was to help the Corinthian Christians find and maintain the joy that an obedient faith and the Holy Spirit should give them.

**(2 Corinthians 2:1) So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit.**

We do not know how many visits Paul made or how many letters Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He did write that in addition to his first visit (when he led many to faith in Jesus Christ) that he had later paid them a painful visit. Some teach that his painful visit was between his writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians. Others teach that his painful visit occurred before he wrote either letter. Paul did not receive the leading of the Holy Spirit or see the benefit of making another painful visit to them. At that time, he believed his prayers and letters would need to suffice instead of another painful visit in person.

**(2 Corinthians 2:2) For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained?**

Paul gave another reason for not wanting to make another painful visit: he did not want to cause them pain. If Paul visited them again, he would need to correct, reprimand, or discipline them for serious sins to move them to repent and return to obeying Jesus Christ as Lord. He prayed they would return to the Lord without needing further punishment or strong words of warning from him in person. Since they were Paul's spiritual children, he wanted to be glad about them and not cause them pain as a disciplinarian, so he prayed they would begin doing right before he visited them again. In his letter, Paul did not say what type of discipline he would give them or how he would punish them. If he did need to punish them, he would not punish them as their lord; rather, he would punish them because Christ was their Lord to be obeyed.

**(2 Corinthians 2:3) And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you.**

Some commentators have taught that Paul referred to 1 Corinthians as the letter he wrote that he described here. He wrote them using a proper method of church discipline: his letter would allow them time for prayerful reflection on what he wrote and discussion on what to do

in obedience to Christ. If they repented and reformed after reading his letter, he could rejoice with them when he visited again. He encouraged them by writing that he felt confident they would repent, do what was right, and he and they would find joy in their fellowship when they met again.

**(2 Corinthians 2:4) For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.**

Paul wrote them because he had an abundant love for them. He did not write as he did with the ultimate intention of causing them pain. Paul loved them so much that he wept as he wrote. He hoped they would see his tearful concern and love for them as they read his letter—the tearful concern of a parent for a prodigal child when they know how much their child is hurting themselves and others by their behavior.

**(2 Corinthians 2:5) But if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but to some extent--not to exaggerate it--to all of you.**

Paul showed great concern and respect for others by not gossiping; therefore, we do not know the person Paul referred to in these verses. Most early commentators suppose Paul referred to the person he described in 1 Corinthians 5. As a general principle, when someone sins in the church, they cause pain to some extent to everyone

in the church. It pained Paul to tell the church that they must discipline a member of the church. He knew it would pain the church to exercise discipline, but he also knew it would pain the church even more if they refused to exercise the proper discipline. Without discipline in the church, the church would eventually cease to be a church of Jesus Christ.

**(2 Corinthians 2:6) This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person;**

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians revealed how divided the church had become since he had founded the church. The majority, however, had agreed to discipline the offender, and without any discipline many church members might have followed the offender into even worse immoral behavior. It may be that a minority of the church members saw nothing wrong in the immoral behavior of their fellow church member or they saw no need to discipline the church member. Because the offender had responded rightly to church discipline and repented, he reformed his life with the help of the Holy Spirit. Paul then wrote that he had been disciplined enough and it was time for the church to restore him to fellowship in the church.

**(2 Corinthians 2:7) so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.**

Because the offender had repented sorrowfully, the proper response of the church should now be to help the offender lead a reformed life, to forgive him as Christ had forgiven him (and them) and to comfort him as the Holy Spirit comforted him (and them). The church needed to assure him that because he had come back to Jesus and had returned to obeying Jesus as his Lord and Savior that God had truly forgiven him and he could once again have loving fellowship with Jesus Christ and others in the church. Paul knew that if the church did not restore the repentant sinner after he had returned to obedience to Christ that it would bring great spiritual damage to the repentant sinner and to the church.

**(2 Corinthians 2:8) So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.**

Paul did not command them to restore the repentant offender, but he urged them to do so. He told them what they should do as a Christian church, and he urged and encouraged them to do the right thing. The word Paul used for love (agape) is the same word for love that the Bible uses to express the love God the Father and Jesus Christ have for us, the type of love that motivates all they have done for and continue to do for us, the type of sacrificial love that led Jesus Christ to die on the cross so our loving God could with justice and mercy restore our relationship with God and grant us eternal life, the selfless love that sometimes makes it necessary for God to discipline His children. Paul urged the church to show the repentant sinner the love of Christ in the way they treated him and

welcomed him back into church fellowship. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” and “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love” (John 15:9).

**(2 Corinthians 2:9) I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything.**

Paul gave yet another reason for writing a previous letter to them. He wanted to learn if they would obey the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord or not. Would they obey Jesus Christ as Lord and bring discipline to someone in the church who was breaking the moral law of God? Would they obey Jesus Christ and restore to fellowship someone in the church who had repented and returned to obedience to Jesus Christ?

**(2 Corinthians 2:10) Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ.**

The Corinthian church and the one who had sinned passed the test. Paul did not need to forgive the man for a sin that he had committed against him personally, but he wanted to forgive the man who had repented for his sins against the church, other Christians, his own family and himself. Through his prayers to Christ, Paul stood spiritually before Christ and forgave the man. Paul indicated tactfully that they had already forgiven the man first, and for their sake

he also forgave the man. Paul's letter would encourage them to forgive the man again if any spirit of unforgiveness remained in their hearts.

**(2 Corinthians 2:11) And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.**

Satan tempts people to disobey God and remain disobedient. He tempts people to distrust God and trust in him. He tempts people to trust in mere human ideas and plans instead of God's revealed Word, the Word made flesh and the Word written. Paul wrote that if anyone in the church failed to forgive the repentant sinner and restore fellowship that would open the door to Satan, who might try to convince someone that they did not need to obey Christ and forgive others when they repented and returned to faith. The spirit of unforgiveness can open the door for Satan to destroy a believer's relationship with God, his loving spirit, his inner peace, and his mental and physical health. Likewise, if the truly sorrowful repentant sinner seeks forgiveness and restoration in the church, and if he is not forgiven and restored, then Satan can find an open door in his heart and mind and perhaps lead him back into sin.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What are some of the reasons that Paul gave the Corinthian Christians for not going again to Corinth as he had planned?

2. What are some of the reasons that Paul gave for having written to them?
3. Why do you think Paul wrote to them and gave them reasons for the choices he had made?
4. What are some of the dangers of allowing a person to “lord it over your faith”?
5. What should a Christian church or a Christian do when someone tearfully or sorrowfully repents and returns to obeying Jesus Christ as Lord of their life?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

— © Copyright 2014 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.