

Forgive Our Debts

The Forgiveness Walk – Going the Extra Mile

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CENTRAL TRUTH

In practising Biblical forgiveness, Christians must exercise discipline with redemptive love.

MAIN TEXT

2 Corinthians 2:5-11, NLT

- v.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.
- v.6 — The punishment inflicted on him [by] the majority is *sufficient*.
- v.7 — [Now] instead,
you ought to forgive [him]
[and] comfort him,
[so that] he will [not] be overwhelmed by *excessive sorrow*.
- v.8 — I urge you, [therefore],
to reaffirm your love¹ for him.
- v.9 — [Another] reason I wrote you
[was] to see [if] you would stand the test
[and] be obedient in everything.
- v.10 — [Anyone] you forgive,
I also forgive.
[And] what I have forgiven—[if] there was anything to forgive—
I have forgiven in the sight of Christ [for] your sake,
- v.11 — [in order that]
Satan might not outwit us.
[For] we are [not] unaware of his schemes.

¹ “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44, etc.).

INTRODUCTION

The road to forgiveness and reconciliation is not simply doing the bare minimum but going the extra mile as Christ instructed us—this hurts, but it is Biblical. **The test is: will you be obedient in all things?**

- ❖ In 2Corinthians Christ is revealed as “Our Enough/Sufficiency”²
- ❖ It was enough and consistent with Biblical discipline that the offender in our text be disciplined, because of his actions and their effect on the Church. It was also enough when this punishment had accomplished its desired effect. Paul tells the Church, “Now, however, it is time to forgive”³
- ❖ One thing I love about the grace of God is that it does not lower God’s standards—it gives us “sufficient” strength to function at the level that God intended for us to operate originally. Therefore, there is no excuse that we cannot forgive if we are in Christ and the Spirit of Christ is in us. God has given us the tools/capacity, we need to forgive each other.
- ❖ This letter by Apostle Paul is highly intense and deeply personal. In it he discloses details about himself not elsewhere mentioned:⁴
 - I. Speaks about excessive suffering—2Corinthians 11:23-27
 - II. Mystical spiritual experiences—2Corinthians 12:1-4
 - III. Messenger of Satan sent to keep him humble [thorn in the flesh]—2Corinthians 12:7
- ❖ Paul’s first letter to the Church at Corinth has some strong rebukes [discipline] and he was concerned about the spirit in which they would receive them, so he sent Titus to assess the impact. ***Here is a lesson for us:*** when we are operating in the Spirit of Christ, not only do we recognize the importance of administering discipline, but we should also be concerned about the **IMPACT**. As members of the Body of Christ we are not operating in silos, our actions affect the overall health and wellbeing of the entire body.⁵
- ❖ Paul’s apostolic credentials, as well as his motives, were under attack by false apostles. This was among the reason he writes 2Corinthians, as an “apology” or defence of his apostleship and to express his satisfaction that his rebuke in the first letter was well received by the Church—he founded this Church: their faith in Christ was through Paul’s ministry.⁶

OFFENSE CAUSED

I. THE OFFENDER: What did he do [context/background]?

- ❖ Some Biblical Commentators believe that this could have been someone who offended Paul and the Church⁷ or the individual who was having an **incestuous relationship** with his stepmother (1Corinthians 5:1)—defiling his body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁸

² See Mears (1999) p.549: What the Bible is all about. Calif: Regal Books.

³ 2 Cor. 2:7, NLT

⁴Ibid. p.550

⁵ Rom. 12:5—“So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

1 Cor. 12:26—“ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”

⁶ Acts 18:1-18

⁷ See Constable’s Notes on 2 Corinthians 2: <https://netbible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+2>

⁸ 1 Cor. 6:18-20

His sinful actions caused grief:

- ❖ **Has caused grief:** *lelypēken*—to inflict sadness upon; to cause sorrow, sadness, and grief.⁹ This is next level pain [possibly physical, emotional, and relational], beyond ordinary and used in reference to birth pains. This is the grief that wounds emotions and can be caused by relational challenges—this pain can deeply impact people, causing much distress, and reluctance to be generous (i.e., relational impact can be devastating/catastrophic).¹⁰ The root of this word is similar to that used in Ephesians 4:30 when Paul instructed the Church not to “grieve” the Holy Spirit.

II. THE OFFENDED: Who were they?

- ❖ The members of the Church at Corinth and Paul, to some extent, were impacted by the sin of this offender.
- ❖ In v.5 we see the impact that the actions of one can have on many—**an ailment in one part of the body can affect the entire body.** *A little corrupting influence could adversely affect the entire body (fellowship of Believers) (1Corinthians 5:6)*

- III. **EXPECTATIONS**—*Paul expected that they would address the situation and obey his apostolic instructions to forgive and restore the offender (2Corinthians 2:9,11). Discipline is intended to deal with the sinful nature so that the spirit/soul could ultimately be saved (1Corinthians 5:5, NLT). He also expected them to walk-out that forgiveness by extending themselves.*

- ❖ **Forgiveness and restoration are not without consequences.**

CONSEQUENCES- DISCIPLINE

I. DISCIPLINE ADMINISTERED

- ❖ **We know that the Church administered discipline:** Most of them opposed the brother’s behaviour and administered discipline (v.6). This punishment was deemed adequate by Paul. Some commentators believe that there was a minority group that wanted harsher punishment for the offender, but Paul countered that by asserting his apostolic authority and **appealed** to the Church to forgive.¹¹ *Appeal vs. Command-language and tone are critical in reconciliation.*

Don’t let this situation get out of hand or to the point of irreparability [where it is next to impossible to reconcile]

II. THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

- ❖ **Punishment:** *epitimia*—This refers to a suitable response needed to steer someone on the right path. This word is used only in this verse (2Corinthians 2:6).¹² It is noteworthy that the response is both suitable and necessary. *Rather than being destructive this is the kind of punishment that is redemptive.*

⁹ See Strong’s G3076: <https://biblehub.com/greek/3076.htm>

¹⁰ See definition of *lypē*: ¹⁰ Mounce (2006) pp. 311-312: Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words [MCEDONT]. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

¹¹ See Constable’s Notes on 2 Corinthians 2: <https://netbible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+2>

¹² See Strong’s G2009: <https://biblehub.com/greek/2009.htm>

- “When the offender is made to feel that, while his sin is punished, he himself is loved; and that the end aimed at is not his suffering but his good, he is the more likely to be brought to repentance.”¹³
- ❖ Even God administers discipline, so it is necessary: “As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?” (Heb. 12:7, NLT).
- ❖ “No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way” (Hebrews 12:11, NLT).
- ❖ “Do not listen to an accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by two or three witnesses. Those who sin should be reprimanded in front of the whole church; this will serve as a strong warning to others” (1Timothy 5:19-20, NLT).

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: It's time to...GO THE EXTRA MILE

- ❖ In v.6 Paul indicated that the punishment was enough [sufficient - point proven]— **how do we know when enough is enough?** Do we continually punish people for their wrongdoings against us or is there a limit? What if God's approach was like ours? Enough is enough when there are genuine fruits of repentance.
 - *“So, [sic] watch yourselves! “If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive” (Luke 17:3-4, NLT).*
 - It is evident that Paul's assessment of the punishment that the Church had meted out to the offender was enough and/or that the desired effect was achieved—the individual has repented.¹⁴This then, is the likely indication that enough was enough.
 - He places no limits on their forgiveness but on their punishment, he says: enough is enough.
- ❖ **Paul writes to the Church to ask them essentially, to GO THE EXTRA MILE:**
 1. Cease from punishing the offender/reassess-know when it is time to change your strategy/approach (v.6)
 2. Forgive the offender (v.7)
 3. Comfort the offender (v.7)
 4. Confirm their love for the offender (v.8)
- ❖ In v.7 there is a turning point: [Now]—this seems like a “turning the other cheek” that Jesus spoke about in the Gospels.

Paul transitions from discipline to restoration. He says, “Now, however, it is time”¹⁵ There is a time to discipline and there is also a time to refrain from discipline.¹⁶ That time had come for the Corinthian Church. Paul instructs them to do a few practical things that we can emulate as we walk in forgiveness.

¹³ See Constable's Notes on 2 Corinthians 2. Hodge p.33: <https://netbible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+2>

¹⁴ See Barnes' Notes on the Bible [2 Corinthians 2:7]: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/2-7.htm

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 2:7, NLT

¹⁶ Eccl. 3:1

I. FORGIVENESS

- ❖ **Forgive:** *charisasthai*—To forgive or pardon willingly.¹⁷ It conveys the sense of unconditional favor bestowed upon someone.¹⁸ While trust is earned forgiveness is an act of grace for the Christian. It is not based on who is receiving it, or so much on, through whom it is given, but on the source of true forgiveness, which is God in Christ. Forgiveness does not mean the absence or suspension of discipline.
- ❖ “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32, NIV): We would think that something so basic would be unnecessary for the apostle to emphasize/remind/command.
- ❖ “Make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others” (Colossians 3:13, NLT). We tend to forget, so let’s not forget what God did and continues to do for us in Christ and what we should in turn do for others. Have you made allowance?
- ❖ “Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:1-2, NLT).

II. COMFORT

- ❖ **To comfort him:** *parakalesai*—to give strength and encouragement through consolation.¹⁹ The Church was asked to give comfort to the one who caused them grief because he was now experiencing grief as a result of the discipline he’d received for his transgressions. Some Commentators suggest that Paul’s use of the word comfort possibly signals this individual’s remorse for what he had done.²⁰ Comfort also carries with it a sense of reinstatement into the fellowship [Church] due to evidence of true repentance in the life of the offender.²¹
- ❖ Elsewhere, Paul speaks of the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort who: comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort others with the same comfort we have received from Him (2Corinthians 1:3-4). **The sufficiency of God’s grace is reflected in the strength of His comfort for those who are suffering (2Corinthians 1:5).**
- ❖ **The reason why Paul asked them to forgive and comfort the Offender was to prevent him from becoming overwhelmed by discouragement [discouragement can be deadly]: Should be overwhelmed:** *katapothē*—To be swallowed up or destroyed.²² Notice that Paul said “not be overwhelmed”—the negating force of “not” highlights the intent and purpose of the punishment, which was redemptive and rehabilitative as opposed to being destructive.

¹⁷ See Strong’s G5483: <https://biblehub.com/greek/5483.htm>

¹⁸ See Strong, J., & Vine, W. E. (1999) p. 145. The New Strong’s Concise Concordance & Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible [SCCVCD]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

¹⁹ See Strong’s G3870: <https://biblehub.com/greek/3870.htm>

²⁰ Barnes’ Notes on the Bible: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/2-7.htm; Benson’s Commentary: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/2-6.htm

²¹ Matthew Poole’s Commentary: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_corinthians/2-7.htm

²² See Strong’s G2666: <https://biblehub.com/greek/2666.htm>. Properly, “to drink down”.

III. REAFFIRMATION OF LOVE

- ❖ **Reaffirm [to confirm]:** *kyrōsai*—Publicly deciding to show love to an offender [transgressor] by pardoning the individual. *This is a true test of the forgiveness you have professed to have given. Can you publicly demonstrate the love of Christ to someone who has wounded you emotionally/relationally? It is one thing to profess secretly, but it is quite another to live out your profession in public, like nothing has ever happened. This requires a work of the grace of God in our hearts and a realization that God has extended this same grace to us. Wow! Same grace! Same grace!*
- ❖ **It also means to restore the repentant offender to the fellowship.**
- ❖ **Love:** *agape*—The love Christians demonstrate towards each other as influenced by their faith in Christ.
- ❖ “And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives” (Jude 1:22-23, NLT).

GOD HAS A VALID REASON

I. TEST OF TOTAL OBEDIENCE

- ❖ **God requires complete obedience from Christians:** This is to test, try and prove how authentic our character is, especially as it relates to submitting to authority of His Word—one of the reasons Paul wrote to the Church was to see if they would be obedient.

II. EXEMPLARY FORGIVENESS RECEIVES GOD’S APPROVAL:

It is this Godkind of forgiveness that receives His approval—redemptive discipline balanced with redemptive love and restoration [forgive, comfort, reaffirmation of love and obedience].

III. GOD IS ALWAYS AWARE THAT THE DEVIL IS ALWAYS AT WORK: We must never forget [WE MUST BE AWARE] that Satan is always at work looking for an opportunity to destroy our fellowship with God and each other:

- ❖ The adversary [Satan] can use grief [offensive] situations as a tool/strategy to attack and destroy the Church [the unity, love, and fellowship of the believers]. Our response to these situations can mount a defense against Satan’s devices—we can outwit him when we walk in love and forgiveness.
- ❖ ***Unforgiveness empowers the Devil’s offence***
- ❖ ***Forgiveness empowers the Believers defence: Forgiveness frustrates the Enemy’s attempt to create division and discord in the Church.***²³
- ❖ “But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent” (2Corinthians 11:3, NLT).
- ❖ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So, [sic] when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32, NLT).

²³ See Constable’s Notes on 2 Corinthians 2: <https://netbible.org/bible/2+Corinthians+2>

- ❖ “Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11, NLT).

ENDNOTES

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