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Father, we thank you for this day that you have given us. We thank you, Lord, for. For your mercy and your goodness and the grace that you bestow upon us. We thank you, Lord, that we can be here today.

Lord, we pray that as we go through your word and through this new book, that you will bless us, Lord, as you conform us to the image of your son and cause us to walk like him and be in his likeness. Father, I pray that you will be glorified in this. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Good evening, everyone. Welcome back to Church of the Bible. As we begin today, I just have two announcements. First announcement, we're still praying for Mary. Last week we announced that she fell after getting stung by some wasps and she fractured her neck.

So we're still praying for her as she goes through this recovery. And then also on Wednesdays, we've been praying for a gal named Becca. She's the daughter of one of my friends with cancer. And tomorrow will be her first surgery to correct this. So I think they said she's going in around 4 or 5am their time, which is 3 to 4 my time.

So for wherever anyone else is, you can do the conversions. But but so early in the morning and they just asked that we be mindful of her and pray for her. So I'm just announcing that for everyone. Okay? With that said, we are going to start a new book and we're just going to continue with the epistles of Paul to Corinth and move into 2 Corinthians.

Now, as we move into 2nd Corinthians, we finished 1st Corinthians last week. Week. I want to mention the circumstances behind the writing. First and Second Corinthians are unrelated in their nature and their purpose. Where First Corinthians was a letter of rebuke, right?

There was a lot of rebuke, a lot of correction with everything ranging from boasting in their wisdom to sexual immaturity and immorality to Christian immaturity and lawsuits and a lack of love, misappropriating the Lord's Supper. This letter addresses issues between Paul and Corinth, and we'll talk about that more in a minute. I also want to point out that First Corinthians was not the first letter Paul wrote to Corinthians. Corinth, right. In First Corinthians, he mentions a letter he earlier wrote.

And Second Corinthians is actually not the second or third, but the fourth letter written to Corinth. It is only the second one that we have. It takes place after First Corinthians. And if you remember, when we ended First Corinthians last week, Paul had told them that he wanted to go and see them and promised to make a visit if the occasion, you know, when he was able to. So between first and Second Corinthians, Paul did make a visit to Corinth, and this visit ended terribly, which actually provides the basis for the letter we have today.

So let's get into this letter and we'll see this letter unfold as we go through it. Today. We'll just have his introduction as well as he will discuss a little bit of defending his side of the confrontation that happened. So we'll see that a little bit. So verses one and two, it says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy, our brother to the church of God at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout a king, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Normally, I don't talk about these introductions very much. I gloss over them. But there's a few things in this introduction that stand out from his other introductions.

First, he identifies himself as Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. And that is actually typical for Paul. He does that in almost every letter that he writes. What is atypical for him, though, is the addition of by God's will. He does

not normally include by God's will, but it's critical for this letter, and it will be critical for our understanding of this letter, that Paul was not an apostle because he chose to be an apostle.

He was not an apostle because a group of men in Jerusalem or Judea sat down and said, we will make Paul an apostle. He was not an apostle because the Church made him an apostle, but he was an apostle because God chose to make him an apostle. And it was God's will. And that is critical to understanding the basis of this letter. And then he says, timothy, our brother.

This is not the first letter where Paul includes the addition of somebody else as a co author. However, the circumstances behind Timothy being a co author are foggy at best. Is Timothy actually writing this letter with Paul, or is Timothy merely given his approval for this letter? Letter in context of what it's about, Remember, this letter is in response to a confrontation between Paul and somebody in Corinth or the entire church of Corinth. So it may be that Timothy is listed in this letter not as an author, but as an approver, saying that he approves.

And we see that where testimony requires two or three witnesses.

Also, he says to the church of God at Corinth, so he recognizes, just like he did in First Corinthians, that this church belongs to God. But he adds something else. He says, with all the saints who are throughout Achaia. The addition of this is unique right now because he's greeting in the entire region, even though he specifically addressing Corinth. And the question is why?

I do not think that we can ever truly know why until we're there and we meet God and we meet Paul. However, there's speculation and the most compelling theory to me that I have found is because Corinth has been so boasted up with their prophet. We talked about that in First Corinthians, that they believe that the world and the church center around them, and Paul is reminding them that it does not, that there are other churches of God in that region. And then he finishes his greeting with the standard, grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ. Now, as we jump into the next verses here, we're going to see Paul continue to act in a.

Throughout this chapter, really in an atypical fashion of Paul, after the introduction, Paul usually begins by praising the Church in almost every letter, even the ones of correction. Like if we look at First Corinthians 1, which was the whole letter was a letter of rebuke. You see that before he rebukes them, he at least gives thanks for them. In verse four, he says, I thank God always for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in him in every way, in all speech and in all knowledge. And in this way the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you.

That's chapter one. Compare this to chapter two. He does not give thanks for them, he does not praise them, he does not say anything good about them, but instead he focuses on himself and a little bit on God. So let's look at that real quick with verses three through seven. He says, blessed be God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercy, mercies and the God of all comfort.

He comforts us in all of our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through Christ, our comfort overflows. If we are afflicted, it's for your comfort and salvation. If we are comfortable, it is for your comfort which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer. And our hope for you is firm because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will also share in comfort.

So he begins his address first by proclaiming, blessings to God. The word blessed here can also mean praise, right? He is praising God, worshiping God for the mercy and comfort that he provides, right? So he says, praise be to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is something unique to Christianity to see God as a

father in such an intimate way, not only of Jesus Christ, but he's described to those who are saved as his, as their Father as well.

We can describe God as our Father. And this intimacy of God being seen as a father is very unique. I won't say to Christianity, but to the Judaism religions, right? So to Jews, to Christianity and to religions based on that. This is a very unique aspect of our religion.

So he's the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see God the Father in the sense of the fact that Jesus took on the role of the Son by coming down to earth and submitting to the Will of God, but he's also the Father of mercies. He's the Father of mercy. In that justice requires that there is a penalty for sin. It requires it.

It demands it. And the Father of mercies mercifully paid that penalty himself by sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross. So he's the Father of mercies. He's given us that which we do not deserve. And then look at this.

The God of all comfort. I've struggled with this. The God of all comfort. There are verses in the Bible that it says that God will comfort you. He will send the comforter.

He'll comfort you through trials and tribulation. In fact, in verse four, it says it here, he comforts us in our affliction. And I've struggled with this because I've gone through trials and I've not felt comfort. I've gone through pain and not felt comfortable comfort. I've gone through times of stress or anxiety and not felt comfort.

And I believe that is because today we have weakened the word comfort and we've turned it into what it's not. Today. We deem comfort as more of a feeling. Right. When I'm laying in bed, I may or may not be comfortable.

I might sit on one bench that's uncomfortable and another that is I might be comfortable in a movie theater, but uncomfortable performing for the audience. We see comfort as a feeling, and that is not how the Bible uses the word comfort. Comfort is not a feeling or state of being. However, this word specifically means to encourage. In fact, when I look up, when I looked at the Word in Greek, the Word does not mean to comfort at all.

It means to encourage, to exhort, to prompt into action. So it says here that our God is the God of all encouragement, and he encourages us. It says he comforts us, us in all of our affliction. But let's translate it to its meaning. He encourages us in all affliction.

So he gives us encouragement, the drive to continue on, the ability to push through the desire to keep our eyes on Him. And we have that encouragement through his promises. Right? We know what he has promised us. He promised us we'll go through trials and afflictions and sufferings, but he also promised us that he will wipe away every tear.

He also promised us he will be with us. He also promised us that he will never abandon us. He also promised us a resurrection and a day where we will be perfect and away from sin. Sin. He encourages us through our afflictions.

And the reason he encourages us, he says it so that we can comfort others who are in affliction, so that we can encourage others. I cannot very well encourage you if I am discouraged, if I am beat down and feeling feeling pitied and out of luck and like there is no hope for tomorrow, how can I give you encouragement for tomorrow?

So through the encouragement that God gives us in our affliction, we are able to encourage others in theirs. Now, Paul, he ignores the question that a lot of us ask. And the question a lot of us ask is, why do bad things happen? Why do we have affliction? Why do we have trials?

And the obvious answer is sin. But often we want to know more why. I know there's sin in the world, but why?

Why does God allow kids to have cancer? Why does he allow us to go through trials?

And Paul ignores the question altogether. Because Paul does not see it as a question of why. Why. He understands that it'll happen. But so instead of focusing on the why it happens, he focuses on God in these trials and tribulations.

And his emphasis isn't that it happens, but that God encourages us through it. And then we encourage others. He says, just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also do the comforts of Christ overflow. Now, this is a unique way to say this. The sufferings of Christ overflow to us.

What does that mean? Before we can understand the comfort, the encouragement we need to understand the suffering. He's not talking about every type of suffering in general, although there are sufferings unrelated to Christianity, unrelated to theism and to being a believer. But specifically, he's talking about the fact that as believers, we will have suffering, we will have persecution and tribulation for the sake of Christ. Remember two Wednesdays ago we talked about that in Bible study during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, blessed are you who are persecuted and hated and excluded because of me.

Right? So we know as Christians that we will suffer for the sake of Christ and because of Him. So his sufferings overflow to us, but he can also identify us with our sufferings. But not only does his sufferings overflow to us, his encouragement, his comfort, overflows to us as well, right? His comfort, his encouragement is not only enough to meet the needs of our suffering, but it's also enough to overflow and meet the needs of other people's suffering.

So Paul transitions. He says, if we are afflicted, if Paul and Timothy and Silvanus, if they are afflicted, they are afflicted for the encouragement and the salvation of those in Corinth and others. And he means this in that their suffering and their afflictions are on behalf of Christ. Right? They are carriers of the gospel.

They're messengers, ambassadors for Christ. And if they are going to be ambassadors for Christ, they are going to be afflicted. But their affliction comes so that they can receive the gospel, so that they can know Christ and so that they can be encouraged. And he also says, if we are encouraged, it's for your encouragement. So not only is the affliction of the apostles for the encouragement of the saints, but they're encouragement when they are encouraged.

It's also for their encouragement. And here's what it says about this encouragement, this comfort, this encouragement will produce patient endurance by the same sufferings. So as we see other people go through it and see their encouragement, we can become encouraged to know, okay, when we go through this, it's not unique to us and God will get us through it. But also going through it and relying on God to get through it and seeing that God will bring us through it. And we've seen in Romans, Paul talks about the fact that trials bring patience through the act of seeing patience and hope through the act of seeing God work.

We will have patient endurance as we see God work through these things. It's not something we're going to have right away, but it'll produce it as we experience God. Now, verse seven, he says, our hope for you is firm because we know that you that as you share in the sufferings, you will also share in the comfort. This is important because remember the last letter that we read to Corinth? It was a letter of rebuke.

Everything in that letter was rebuke. In fact, Paul even told them at some times he's like, I'm saying this to shame you. So it was a letter of rebuke. And then he had a visit that we've not yet talked about. Really, that visit ended badly.

Then he wrote another letter we'll talk about in a few minutes. And tensions seem high with that them. So this

verse is critical, especially for Corinth, but also for us. Paul essentially says, look, the situation is dire. You guys have been in sin.

You guys have been in moral trouble. You guys have been at odds with me. But he does not say that you are a lost cause. He says, we have hope for you. We have hope despite everything.

We have hope for you because we know that as you go through this, as you share in the sufferings, you will get a share in encouragement. Paul believes that they can overcome not just their sin, but the issue between him and them as well. Let's finish this passage here. We're going to do verses 8, 8, 11. Paul says, we do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of our affliction that took place in Asia.

We were completely overwhelmed beyond our strength, so that we even despaired of life itself. Indeed, we thought that we have received the sentence of death so that we will not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a terrible death, and he will deliver us. We have put our hope in him that he will deliver us again. While you join in helping us by your prayers, then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gift that came to us through the prayers of many.

So remember, I told you, he focuses on himself in this introduction rather than giving thanks or praise for them like as usual. And the reason for that, it's unique to this letter, and we'll see something else unique in this letter we'll talk about in a moment, is to set himself up, to defend himself, right? To bring tensions down. So he just talked about God is the father of mercy and of comfort, of encouragement, and that this encouragement can overflow from us to others. And we can say, well, it's easy to say it, but it's hard to do it right?

So Paul shows that he's not only talking the talk, but he's walking the walk. And here is how he does it. He says, look, understand that we have gone through severe affliction in Asia. He says, in. In fact, it was so severe, we were completely overwhelmed beyond our strength to the point that we despaired of life itself.

What do you think of when you hear someone say that I despair life? I think of someone who wants to die, who wants to go to sleep and never wake up, who no longer wants to be here. The things that they went through in Asia overwhelmed them beyond what they could bear, what they could stand, and even brought them to a point of no longer desiring life.

What I want us to understand about this verse isn't what they went through. In fact, you'll notice in this whole passage we read, read it this passage here through its end, he does not say what the afflictions were. He does not say in detail what he went through. He only described the feelings through it. So I want us to focus on that.

Beyond our strength, he says, beyond our strength. I see a lot of memes around the Internet, Facebook, Reddit, on Google, just all over the place. Place that always say, God will never give you more than you can bear, than you can stand. And that is a biblical untruth, right? That is unbiblical.

That is not true. It is not right. The idea that God will never allow you to bear more than you can stand is an idea that promotes self reliance. Well, if he will never give me more than I can bear, then in my strength I can bear it. But God will give you more than you can bear.

He will give you more than you can stand. He will allow more things to overcome you than what you in your own strength are able to do. He will. And the reason is so that we will rely in Him. In fact, look at verse nine.

He says we even felt that we received the sentence of death. Now before I move on to the next part, I just want to say. He does not say that they received a death sentence, but he says they felt they did. So maybe they did. We know reading his other letters, reading the Book of Acts, he's been arrested several times, he's been tried, he's been thrown over walls, he's been stoned.

He's been. So he may have had a death sentence or that he may even have felt in a certain situation. I'm not going to make it out of this. He might have felt that when he was thrown over the wall. Or stoned, right?

Or snake bitten or shipwrecked. So he was shipwrecked three times. He was snake bitten, he was stoned to the point they thought he was actually dead and left him in the street. He was thrown over a high city wall off a cliff. Right.

So he does not describe in what way he felt he received a death sentence. But he does tell us why God allowed them to be that overwhelmed. He says, so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. Right? So God allowed them to be overwhelmed, in affliction, in despair, to the point of despising life, to the point of feeling like they were going to die or have a death sentence in some way we don't know, so that they would understand and learn to not trust in their own power and strength, but in the strength of God.

So when you are feeling overwhelmed, it's okay to feel like you cannot handle it, because you probably can't. But God can. And we need. I say this and I know there's people listening to this tonight who I'll probably talk to after, who will tell me to listen to what I'm saying tonight, who will tell me that I need to learn this and I need I do. I need to learn this.

This. So I won't sit here tonight and tell you that it's easy to learn that or it's easy to do it.

I can't tell you that because I'm learning to do it right now. But I can tell you that it's okay to not be able to do it in your strength. And it's okay to give it to God. And God wants us to give it to. To him.

And he wants us to rely on Him. He says that God has delivered us from this terrible death and he will deliver us, right? We've put our hope in him that he will deliver us again. So whatever terrible affliction and situation they were in that made them despise life, made them feel like they were going to die or have death sentence, God delivered them. It's a mystery to us in just what way God delivers delivered them from as it is, what it was they were delivered from.

And Paul did that intentionally. Paul is not focusing on what he went through as much as he is focusing on the fact that God Himself will get us through it. And he says, we have hope. He will continue to deliver us, whether from. And he says it twice.

And where he says it twice, I see this as twofold. He has hope in other life situations and other persecutions, other distressing moments, other afflictions that God will deliver Him. But he says, ultimately we put our trust in God that He will deliver us again, our hope. And this is talking about ultimate deliverance. Even Paul has not received the ultimate deliverance yet.

And that is our resurrected bodies that will never die, never get sick, never be corrupted, never sin, never feel pain. We have hope that he will deliver us, that now he is going to break again from his normal way of doing things. And he will do it a couple of times. But here he asked them, he said, pray for us, right? You can help us by praying.

And many will give thanks. Normally, Paul will ask for prayers all the way at the end, right? The very last chapter. In his closing statements, he will ask for prayer. But he does that here because he wants them to be able to pray for him.

And their ability to pray for him will be a sign that they are able to reconcile. Let's look at the next passage. It'll be verses 12 through 14. He says, indeed, this is our boast. The testimony of our conscience is that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, with godly sincerity and purity.

Not by human wisdom, but by God's grace. Grace. For we are writing Nothing to you other than what you can read and also understand. I hope you will understand completely, just as you have partially understood us, that we are your reason for pride, just as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The two things I want to focus on here real quick is first, he defends before. He defends his position in the confrontation that happened between him and them during his visit. He first defends his moral conduct. He defends. He says, I have conducted myself in front of the world and toward you with sincerity and purity.

So he has not conducted himself toward them with selfish. Selfishness. Right. He's not been selfish. He's not been greedy.

He's not been looking after himself. Right. But it's been with purity. It's been with good intent, with godly sincerity. It's been for their well being.

He says we have not done it by human wisdom. Right. He's learned to become a fool, to become wise. He talked about that in First Corinthians. It's why he's bringing it up here.

He's learned that true wisdom lies in God and his wisdom and not in our minds and our way of thinking. And then second, he says, I'm not right in anything that you cannot understand. This is super, super important. And the reason this is super important is there are Christian denominations in the world today that will tell you that God's word is not understandable for the common man. And you require a prophet or an apostle or a bishop to interpret that word for you.

That makes no sense to me.

But there are people who will say that, religions and denominations who will say that. But the word of God was not written. This is important. It was not written to prophets and priests and apostles, but it was written to people. That's important.

It was written for the average person to understand. Now I will say in today's world, there are things more difficult to understand because of the translation process and culture and the words that we use and our understanding and the fact that there's events that the Bible talks about relevant to those cultures or those people that informs it, but they don't talk about the events themselves. And so we have to do some different digging. But the word of God was written to be understood by the average person. So that's important.

You do not require a prophet to interpret for you. You do not require an apostle or a bishop to interpret for you. You can interpret the word of God. You can understand it with the Holy Spirit. Now, what Paul tells them in the same verse is that they have partially understood him, and he hopes that they will fully understand him.

So it's not that they cannot fully understand him, but that in their stubbornness and their sinful ways that they have only partially understood him. A great example that will come up again later today even. Remember in First Corinthians, I believe it was chapter five, there was a guy committing incest, sleeping with either his mother or his stepmother. And he talked about the fact that he had written an earlier letter addressing the fact that they should not associate with people who are committing sexual immorality. And then he had to clarify that when he said that, he meant people within the church who claim to be believers in the that way, not people out of the church.

Right. So just an example of things. So they do not fully understand him because of their stubbornness and sinful ways. So it's not that they can't understand, but they have just have not understood. They can.

Let's continue. We're going to look at verse, verses 15 through 22. He says, because of this confidence, I plan

to come to you first so that you could have a second benefit and to visit you on my way to Macedonia and then come to you again from Macedonia and be helped by you on my journey to Judea. Now when I planned this was I have two minds or what I plan, do I plan in a purely human way so that I can say yes, yes and no. No at the same time.

Time as God is faithful, our message to you is not yes and no for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, did not become yes and no. On the contrary, in him it is always yes. For every one of God's promises is yes in him. Therefore, through him we also say amen to the glory of God. Now it is God who strengthens us together with you in Christ, Christ, and who has anointed us.

He has also put his seal on us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment for the sake of time. I won't comment on every verse as a verse by verse, but I want us to understand the major issue going on here. So first, Paul tells us he wanted to visit them twice. Now remember, in the last chapter in chapter 16 of First Corinthians, he told them that he was going to come to them and collect a gift offering, financial offering to bring to Jerusalem, and he asked them to have it ready and prepared. And he intended on bringing delegates from Corinth to Jerusalem with him.

Also remember that between 1st Corinthians and 2nd Corinthians he did make that visit. And I told you this visit ended badly. It did not end well. In fact, it ended so badly that no delegates went with him to Jerusalem and he did not come back to them. So he outlines, he wanted to visit them twice and he had promised them to come back, back on his way when he left Macedonia and went back to Judea.

Now, he asked a question here because he did not keep his promise. He says, was I of two minds, right? He says, was I planning two separate agendas and only told you I'd be back so that you would be encouraged or not be mad at me with no intent on actually coming back? And that is. That's the charge against him at this point in time.

There are people in Corinth accusing him of intentionally not keeping his word. They are accusing him of lying to them and being double minded. The problem, though, is not this accusation. The problem is that they can call into question his integrity. If they can call into question his apostleship, his honesty, then they can also call into question the gospel that he has brought them.

And that is why Paul is so worried about it.

So he. He doesn't even talk about at this moment the fact that he did not come back. Other than mentioning their accusation that he's double minded. He addresses the doctrinal issue first. So even if Paul had changed his mind and did not keep the promise, can we call into question the gospel that he proclaimed?

Here is what he says. Even if man can be double minded and say yes and no at the same time, he says this. God is faithful, right? God, when he makes a promise, he keeps a promise. He is faithful.

He says God is faithful and he did not become yes and no. He says, the Son of God, Jesus, who we proclaim to you, did not become yes and no, right? Jesus is not double minded. For every one of God's promises is yes and no. Him.

Every single promise that God makes, he will keep. The promise that God makes to you, he will keep regardless of my success or failure as your pastor. He will keep regardless of your success and failures as a human. Because God's promises are always yes. He says, therefore God strengthens us.

Us with Christ. This is important. Paul does not strengthen them. Paul does not strengthen us. And I don't strengthen you.

But it is God who strengthens us together in Christ. Because the only reason every promising God can be yes is because of Christ. Because of the cross, the death, the burial, and the resurrection. The fact that Jesus did those things allow for every promise of God to always be yes. And he also says this.

He has put his seal on us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment. Both of these terms, a seal and down payment, are legal terms. The seal is actually a mark of ownership, right? If we go back to ancient times, to seal something is to put you're a mark of ownership on something. To say, this identifies this item or a document or house or whatever is belonging to me.

So God has put his seal in the form of the Holy Spirit on us, meaning he's marking us as his and setting us apart. So we are owned by God. And that's important. The fact that we are gods is what seals for us the promise of the resurrection to life. But then also he says the Spirit's given to us as a down payment.

Well, what's a down payment do even today? And today a down payment is less binding as it was back then. But a down payment obligates you to continue something. If I put a \$50,000 down payment on a \$250,000 house, I am obligated myself to that house and to finish paying it off to buy it. So the fact that God has given us His Holy Spirit as a down payment in regards to our salvation is what guarantees to us that he will finish it.

He's already paid such a heavy penalty for it. He will finish it.

And we're going to finish this chapter is actually going to go a little over because the next sentence does not end in chapter one, but in chapter two. So we're going to read. We're going to read through one more thing real quick, and then we'll come to our end. So starting in verse 23, and we're going to go through verse four in chapter two, he says, I call on God as a witness on my life. Life.

But it was to spare you that I did not come to Corinth. I do not mean that we lord it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in your faith. In fact, I made up my mind about this. I would not come to you on another painful visit. For if I cause you pain, then who will cheer me other than the one being hurt by me?

I wrote this very thing so that when I came, I wouldn't have pain from those who ought to give me joy. Because I am confident about all of you that my joy will also be yours. For I wrote to you with many tears out of an extremely troubled and anguished heart, not to cause you pain, but that you should know the abundant love I have for you.

So after all of this, we finally get to the reason that Paul broke his promise. I'm going to mention the snail because Paul waits like another seven chapters to mention this himself. He mentions that God ultimately dictated whether or not he went to Corinth the second time or not. Right? Even though there seemed to be human circumstances involved, it was dictated by God.

Paul made a promise that was not kept. And ultimately that was under the purview of. Of God. But he tells us why. He says, I did not come to you in order to spare you.

First Corinthians was a letter of chastisement. Then he came and visited them and chastised them in person. In fact, remember, it was either in chapter one or two of first Corinthians. He asked them, do you want me to come to you lovingly, you know, with love and peace, or do you want me to come to you with a rod? So he went to them and he went to them and he chastised them.

And this chastisement led to such a disagreement that we will read in other places. He had to quickly retreat out of Corinth. And Corinth and him were both deeply hurt. So he says, I did not come to you the second time like I promised to spare you. I do not want to come and chastise you.

And I do not want to come at a time where there is so much strife between us. In fact, he says this. We do not lord our authority over your faith. This is important to understand. Paul was not a dictator.

Paul did not lord his authority over anyone. Paul would rather persuade you into obligations, obedience of Christ, then demand and force you into obedience in Christ. Which is the reason why he wrote these letters was persuasion. Rather than going and dictating, he chose to persuade. But your faith is your own.

I cannot lord over you and control your faith. As a pastor. Pastor, I cannot tell you how to feel. I can tell you what the Bible says. I can tell you what is biblical and not biblical.

I can tell you what is sin and not sin. But I cannot dictate your faith.

So he says. He says, we don't lord it over you, but we are workers with you, right? Every Christian, we are workers together. We are running the same race. We have the same.

And so he says this, I would not come to you on a painful visit. I will not come to cause pain again. I don't want that for you. And this is important for us, right? We're reading about a historical fight, argument, division between Christians that took place and he says, I will not do that again.

I will not come and cause pain. He says, I want you to have joy and I want to have joy. And if I hurt you, then the ones who I'm hurt in are the ones who got to give me joy. And he says, I can't have joy if I'm hurting you. And we cannot have joy if we are hurting each other.

We can't have joy if there's division between each other. That does not mean, I mean this is Paul and a church. Paul the Apostle. Apostle. And there's a division between him and Christians where he is unable to see them right now.

And thank God, this division actually will end, right? They'll come back together.

And there's broken promises, there's issues of sin and disobedience. But Paul valued then where he says, we need to talk about this and we need to get over this so that we can all have joy. Next week he'll talk more about there's more than one reason to forgive people. One reason to forgive people, an important reason is because God's forgiven us. And if God has forgiven me of what I've done to him, I can forgive you of what you've done to me.

But another reason to forgive is so that the devil cannot take opportunity of our problem to and we'll read about this next week, but so that the devil cannot use our problems to make Christ into a bad guy. And the devil will do that if we're having problems. He'll use problems between us to tell non believers or people of other denominations that look, they're not really Christians, or God isn't really real, or Christ isn't really loving because if he was, they wouldn't be fighting, right? So Paul, he says this. He says, for I wrote to you now in verse four.

And he says, I wrote to you with many tears. He's not talking about this letter here. He's talking about the letter between First Corinthians and Second Corinthians that we do not have today. He wrote this letter with tears. He says he was troubled and anguished in his heart, right?

The division, the strife between him and them, the fact that they had this argument or whatever it was, it troubled him and anguished him. And I want to point something out. He never mentions, not in this chapter, not in any chapter. You will not read it in Second Corinthians. He never mentions what the conflict was.

He never mentions who was engaged in the conflict. He never mentioned the specifics. And he does that

intentionally. It happened, it's done and over. But he does not want to reopen wounds.

Instead, he wants to move on. So he defends himself in terms of telling them, look, this is why I broke my promise, why I did not come back to you. I did not come back to you because I did not want to come and have to cause more pain.

And that's his defense. But he also wants reconciliation. And he'll talk about reconciliation later. And he never brings it up. But he says he was troubled, he was anguished, and the previous letter he wrote was not to trouble them, not to cause them pain, but that they would know how much he loved them.

As we ended tonight, we need to know that amongst ourselves we're going to have issues. Amongst ourselves we're going to have broken promises. Even I am going to break a promise or do something stupid. We're going to have issues. But we also need to know what it looks like to reconcile.

How to reconcile that. We need to reconcile. Reconcile. We need to be able to love each other through all of that for our sakes and most importantly, for the sake of God and his glory. And we need to do it in a loving way.

We also need to remember that every promise of God is always yes. If God has promised something, he will keep the promise.

He will keep the promise of resurrection. He will keep the promise of life. He'll keep the promise to be with us. He will even keep his promises to encourage us, to comfort us through our trials and tribulations as we come to an end tonight, I just want to remind everyone who is here that we will have the Lord's Supper immediately after service. And I invite everyone who would like to participate in that to stick around briefly.

And then we'll meet together again on Wednesday at 6:30. We'll continue our Bible study through Luke. We're going to be in chapter six starting in verse one this week. Oh, I just pushed my desk for those who are reading ahead. With that said, let's pray and I will see you all next week.

Part Father we thank you Lord, that even though we break promises and even though we make mistakes and we falter and we're not perfect, that you are. And we thank you Lord, that in our failures you are faithful. In our successes you are faithful. In our tribulations you are faithful. We thank you that regardless of what's going on here, that every promise you've made to us, you will be faithful to keep and to complete.

We thank you Father, that in our tribulations, in our trials, our sufferings, our the various things that we go through, Lord, that you give us the encouragement to get through it and you deliver us from it. And Father, we thank you that through you we are able to get through trials amongst each other. And I ask Father that as we have trials amongst each other end issues, that your grace will reign between us, that forgiveness and reconciliation will happen. But also ask Father, that you will be glorified at the end of those situations. We look forward to your promise of life and resurrection, and we ask you to give us the encouragement to endure and to continue looking forward to that.

In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.