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A1328 – July 14, 2013 – 2 Corinthians 1:12-14
Conducting Ourselves With Pure Motives

Alright, turn to 2 Corinthians 1. We're going to move into the next subset of the argument here today in 1:12-2:4 but before we do, what is the basic problem Paul is facing with the Corinthians? The majority of them had repented but a minority still doubted his apostleship. Why did they doubt his apostleship? There were several reasons they conjured up according to the flesh. The first reason we've found is in 1:3-11 and this is the fact that Paul suffered because of his ministry. How could a leader in church ministry suffer? From the worldly standpoint leaders don't suffer, leaders enjoy glory. So the minority at Corinth were still measuring leadership by worldly standards. So their argument was that Paul must not really be an apostle because he suffered in ministry. Paul turns that argument on its head by saying that suffering was an evidence of his apostleship. In 1:3-7 Paul says I suffered and was comforted by God as an apostle so that I would be qualified to minister to others when they suffered. Someone who hasn't suffered doesn't know how to comfort someone who is suffering. So in order to qualify Paul to comfort others in their afflictions Paul had to suffer immensely. In 1:8-11 Paul gives a specific instance of immense suffering and the purpose of the suffering was so that he wouldn't trust in himself but in God. We all have the tendency to trust in ourselves, our resources, our intellect, our money, our connections, etc...to solve our problems. Paul got stuck in a situation that was so bad it was certain death. There was no escape. He says at the end of verse 8 that it was "beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9indeed we had the sentence of death within ourselves." It was the equivalent of sitting in the electric chair just waiting for the guy to flip the switch. The entire purpose of that situation in Paul's life was to teach him not to trust in himself but, end of verse 9, "but in God who raises the dead." In other words, the deliverance took an act of God's power that was on par with the resurrection. Paul was as good as dead and had God not exercised

resurrection power to deliver him he would have died. But verse 10 says he was delivered, **who delivered us from so great a death, *peril of*** not in the original, **who delivered us from so great a death, and will deliver us**, he refers to future afflictions. Paul knew God was the one that delivers, He is the one who saves, He is the one who rescues us in suffering situations. I mean, c'mon, if He can raise the dead do you think He can take care of your problem? That's why Paul says next, **He is the one on whom we have set our hope**, not on our money, not on our connections, not on our intellect, He is the one on whom we set our **hope**. **Hope** being certainty in the NT text. Why do we set our hope on Him? Because He is reliable. He is 100% of the time reliable, we can count on Him.

End of verse 10, **And He will yet deliver us, 11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.** The doctrine of prayer, and in particular, intercessory prayer as a means of God's deliverance. God doesn't always work directly and zap! our problem is solved; He usually works indirectly through responsible actions of humans, in this case prayer. Think about it, how does God usually bring a person to Christ? Does He just zap them with a big voice coming out of heaven? No. Something like that may have happened with Paul but that's not the typical way He brings someone to Himself. Instead He works indirectly through means. Think of how Paul describes means elsewhere when he asks a series of questions regarding Israel; how will they believe if they don't hear? And how will they hear without a preacher? And how will the preacher preach unless he is sent? So you've got several means involved here; a preacher has to be sent, the preacher has to preach, the people have to hear, then the people can believe and be saved. God doesn't just zap them. There are means involved. And you see in verse 11 that one of the means God uses to deliver believers in times of suffering is what? Prayer. **You also joining in helping us through your prayers.** The Greek word **joining in helping** is one big long Greek word *sunupourgeo*, it's a compound word meaning "with" "under" "to work" and the picture is you're working with one another up underneath a heavy object, you're all working together to lift up this object. And if we all work together we can lift it. That's the picture of intercessory prayer. We are working together in prayer to lift this person up who is facing a tremendous suffering. That's one of the means that God uses to deliver believers from suffering situations; prayer. Don't ever downplay the

role of prayer. Prayer is a genuine means of God's deliverance. So genuine and necessary are the prayers that if they were not asked then the deliverance would not occur. God conditions some of His actions in history on human prayer.

I always find it fascinating that God involves us; He brings us in and makes us partakers of real events in history. He doesn't just directly do it all Himself. He could do that, but that's not really who He is, that's not what He's like. He's a personal God of involvement; He brings us into the equation. Isn't that remarkable, isn't that a joy to realize that God thinks enough of you to bring you into the plan. Don't slip into the error of fatalism. Fatalism will kill prayer. Fatalism is the false idea that God's sovereignty is like impersonal fate and whatever will be will be, *que sera sera*. In that scenario why pray? If God is going to do whatever God is going to do there's no sense praying for what's going to happen anyway.

At the same time don't slip into the equal and opposite error of free will. Free will also kills prayer because in this view man is in control of history not God and therefore why pray to a God who's not in control; it's up to me to solve the problem. The right balance is to understand that God is sovereign and therefore has a plan for history and part of the plan is that He conditions certain aspects of his plan on responsible acts of man. One of those responsible acts is mentioned right here; prayer. Genuine acts of prayer which are necessary means by which God accomplishes His purposes. Here it is in verses 10-11. **He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers.** There it is, divine sovereignty and human responsibility shown together in just a few words.

Now why? Why does God involve us in His plan through prayer? Middle of verse 11, **so that thanks may be given by many faces**, not persons but **faces**, the original text says **many faces**. The benefit ultimately returns to Him. We give thanks to Him because He's the one who gives the deliverance; prayer is the effectual means by which the deliverance is attained but He is the sole deliverer so He is the one to whom all thanks is given **by many faces!** The image is of many uplifted faces looking into heaven giving thanks to God for what? **For the grace bestowed on us through the prayers of many.** This is the proper response to answered prayer. We look up and we peer into heaven and give thanks to God. Why? Because God's deliverance of

our brethren in Christ is a fresh, new, revitalizing window into His **grace** deliverance. **Favor** here is “grace.” All deliverance is by His grace. He bestows His grace upon us. Through what? Again, **through the prayers of many**. It’s God’s indirect approach of accomplishing His sovereign grace plan. So is prayer important? You better believe it. Don’t sit around and say, well, God’s going to do whatever God wants to do; therefore I can just sit here like a bump on a log. That’s passivism, it’s the consequence of a mutant view of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, it leans too much on the divine sovereignty side of things. On the other hand don’t stand up and say, well, we’ve got to do something about it because it’s up to us to solve the problem. That’s activism, where you’re active and that too is a mutant view of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility; it leans too hard on the human responsibility side of it. The balance is that God, by His sovereignty, has initiated with us by revealing in the Scripture that we have certain responsibilities as His creatures, things like prayer, sending preachers, preaching the gospel, drawing near unto Him, confessing our sin, abiding and so forth, and those things are necessary in order to fulfill His sovereign plan.

We could spend a lot of time here but in summary of 2 Cor 1:3-11, Paul has successfully defended His claim to apostleship by arguing that an apostle suffered greatly in order to qualify to minister to others who are suffering. In some cases the suffering of the apostles was so great that it forced them to not trust in themselves but in God who raises the dead. This would put them in a situation where they could encourage and minister to anyone who was in a suffering situation. We get involved in the suffering situations of others as we join with them in praying for them so that ultimately when God answers the prayer we can with upturned faces give thanks to God for the deliverance.

Switching gears in 1:12-2:4 we now find a second argument leveled against Paul’s apostleship. The bulk of the section deals with Paul’s change in plans. The Corinthian’s reasoned that someone who changes their plans is a fickle person. And surely a fickle person doesn’t qualify to be an apostle. A real apostle would show integrity and never change their plans. The fact that Paul did was evidence he was not a real apostle. To answer this charge Paul begins with the issue of motives. Paul argues that his motives were founded in God’s grace. These motives are spelled out in 1:12-14 as the underlying cause for his change in plans. In the end his change in plans was not a mark against his apostleship but a mark in favor of it. Paul’s change in plans was

apostolic in that it was ultimately for their benefit and not his own deriving from the grace of God and his love for them.

Starting in verse 12 with Paul's motives, some of this is difficult to understand as translated in the NASB so I'm going to do some translation work to clarify the original intent. **For our proud confidence is this**, the Greek word translated **proud confidence** is *kauchesis* and should be translated, "our reason for boasting is this." Paul had reason to boast about his motives because they were founded not upon fleshly wisdom but the grace of God. Some of the Corinthians questioned his motives because they themselves ordered their lives after fleshly wisdom. So in a very real sense Paul has to train them what godly motives look like. Given Paul's criticisms of their carnality in 1 Corinthians this should be no surprise. There he says that when he first came to them they were infants and when he wrote the letter though they had time to grow they were still immature. So they probably wouldn't know a godly motive if one hit them upside the head. So he gives them some. **For our reason for boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience.** The motives he was about to boast in were testified to by his **conscience**. Paul had a clear conscience about his motives, he did not have mixed feelings about them, he was certain that his motives were pure.

Now he begins to reveal the content of his motives with the word **that, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.** There's a contrast here between Paul's motives of **holiness** and **godly sincerity** that stem from **the grace of God** and **fleshly wisdom**. Paul had all of the former and none of the latter. His conscience gave testimony to this fact. The ultimate root and ground of Paul's motives as it related to his change in travel plans was **the grace of God**. This was virtually a foreign principle to the Corinthians who still thought in terms of fleshly wisdom. The Greek for **fleshly** is *sarkikos*, the same word Paul used in 1 Cor 3:3 to refer to believers who have had time to grow up spiritually but they haven't. There's another word for fleshly and it's *sarkinos* and it refers to a new believer, an infant in Christ and a new believer is understandably immature, they haven't had time to grow up in the word yet so you put them on the pure milk of the word and over time they'll mature and become spiritual men. The problem at Corinth was that they had had time to become spiritual but they were still fleshly, that's a *sarkikos* believer,

a person who has been a believer for some time but they are still worldly, they still think, evaluate and live like mere men, like unbelievers. That's a tragedy when you see that and yet that was still the condition of the minority at Corinth. They wouldn't recognize a spiritual man if he bonked them in the head, which Paul did numerous times. He bonked them and bonked them but just like unbelievers they don't understand spiritual believers, it doesn't make sense to them the reasons you do what you do, it just seems like nonsense. Well, it seemed to these fleshly believers at Corinth that Paul's movements in ministry were nonsense even though they were not nonsense. Paul in fact had reason to boast about his movements and he had a clear conscience about it because it was rooted and grounded **in the grace of God**.

It was characterized, in verse 12 by Paul as **in holiness and godly sincerity**, which is the manner in which he **conducted himself in the world, and especially toward** them. However, the problem in the text here is the word **holiness**, *hagioteti* in the Greek, is not a Pauline word, doesn't make as much sense contextually and is not found in the majority of the manuscripts. The other very closely spelled word is *haploteti* and makes much more sense in context. The word means "purity of motives," a way of conducting oneself in the world that is truthful and upright. Paul was a spiritual believer who had purity of motives as he conducted himself in the world and especially toward the Corinthians. The second manner of conduct is **godly sincerity** which is a close synonym, it means "without mixture of motives," which, of course, is godly. A spiritual believer will not operate in the world with mixed motives but with pure motives untainted by the motives of the flesh. Paul insists this is the way he conducted himself in the world and especially toward them. His change in travel plans were not due to the world's way of doing things which is always according to the selfish ambitions of **fleshly wisdom** but rather according to **the grace of God** which is selfless. In this context **grace**, the Greek word *charis* refers to "an exceptional effect produced by generosity," in this case the generosity **of God**. Paul's change of travel plans was an exceptional effect produced by the generosity of God that ultimately worked together for the good of the Corinthians. This kind of conduct is befitting an apostle of Christ Jesus who is more concerned about others than self.

Verse 13, **For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end;** 14 **just as**

you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus. Some of this is difficult to expound again but Paul in verse 13 is evidently talking about what he had written to them in prior letters. Some at Corinth posited the idea that they had to read between the lines to understand Paul's writings and that it was not clear what Paul meant; that Paul had some kind of hidden message. Paul responds by saying, **we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand.** In other words, it's straightforward what I wrote, what I wrote is what I mean; there is no hidden or secret meaning. Paul meant what he said and said what he meant. That's the way the language of the Bible is designed to be interpreted, according to the normal principles of grammar and syntax that compose language. There are not secret messages in here. God doesn't speak in secret messages. That doesn't mean it's always easy to understand. Peter said that Paul wrote some things hard to understand and that the untaught and unstable distort what Paul wrote as they did the rest of the Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16). Those were believers that distorted the word of God. Of course we expect that of unbelievers but believers often to their own destruction distort the Scriptures too. Why? Peter says because they were untaught, the Greek means "incompetent interpreters" of the word of God and unstable, meaning "spiritually weak." That aptly summarizes some of the group at Corinth. In 1 Cor 5:9 we have evidence that they had misinterpreted something Paul wrote about not associating with immoral people because they didn't like what he had to say. They therefore re-interpreted Paul to mean they should not associate with immoral unbelievers. When Paul wrote back to correct this misinterpretation of what he said he chided them on the basis of how illogical their interpretation of what he said really was. If by immoral people Paul meant unbelievers then the only way to not associate with unbelievers would be to go out of this world. Obviously that is not what Paul meant. Paul obviously meant they should not associate with immoral believers but taking that stance was not comfortable for them so they re-interpreted it. And that my friend is 99% of the reason false interpretations arise. The person is simply untaught and unwilling to believe what the Bible teaches; they'd rather author their own set of beliefs and then impose their interpretation on the text. Over and over I hear it, well it could mean this. Not really, not if you really study it out, not if your honest with the text. Words mean what they say and say what they mean. Sure, we get as close to the original text in context to find out what the words are so we know what they mean, but once

we've done that and we understand it in context it pretty much nails you down. If you distort that and say, well, the word can have this meaning because I found it in a lexicon I'm going to say, "Yeah, there are often several meanings of words in a lexicon. The issue is not can it mean that but does it have the meaning you are applying in the context?" That's why earlier in verse 12 I pointed out the word "grace." Grace is *charis*. It has five meanings in the leading Greek lexicon. I chose the fourth meaning. Why did I choose the fourth meaning? Because of the context. Context is king, not whether a word can have a certain meaning or not. That's how you interpret words, in context. That's what Paul expected when he wrote a letter to someone, that they would understand from the context the meaning of what he wrote. He may write in the ordinary literal or the figurative literal but if you're an original speaker of the language you know when someone is speaking ordinary literal and you know when they are speaking figurative literal. You may not always know what they mean but if you wanted to know you could find out. And that's how we study the Bible. I want to know what the author intended me to understand.

Verse 13, the Corinthians did not need to read between the lines in order to know what Paul had written, they just needed to accept it at face value! It was not obscure. **we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand.** Middle of verse 13, **and I hope you will understand until the end, 14 just as you also partially did understand us.** Apparently what Paul means is that a part of the group at Corinth did understand because they accepted the straightforward meaning of what Paul said. They just took Paul's words at face value. But the group that claimed they didn't understand Paul now says I hope that you will understand and that **until the end.** Probably Paul means by these two timing words death or the rapture, whichever comes first. He wants him to understand what apparently some of them did not understand and that is in verse 14, **that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.** The mutual, reciprocal pride for one another that they should have for one another, **in the day of our Lord Jesus.** Apparently some of them did not understand that Paul was proud of them. 1 Corinthians was very disciplinary in tone and you can see how some of them might have come away not understanding that he was proud of them but there were portions where Paul indicated he was proud to be their spiritual father. For example, in 1 Cor 4:14 he says, "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my

beloved children. 15For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” Another example in 1 Cor 16:24 with his own hand he writes, “My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.” Paul loved them and Paul was proud of them. He wanted his spiritual children to grow to spiritual adulthood. Sometimes he sounded harsh but that’s a part of being a spiritual father, yet clearly there were times in his prior letter that he revealed openly his love. He wants them all to understand that he loves them and is proud of them and he wants them to hold on to that understanding until death or the rapture, whichever comes first.

Further they should be proud of him too. He was their spiritual father. One sect at Corinth certainly was proud of Paul as they chanted “I am of Paul.” This is not the kind of pride Paul was looking for. He was not in competition with Apollos or Peter or Christ. But they should be proud of having him as their spiritual father and as one who suffered on their behalf so he could be better equipped to minister to them. Paul had learned and grown a lot through his experiences with the Corinthians. They should be proud of him. It was mutual pride that should result when our lives are intertwined with one another’s and we minister one to another and vice versa.

This pride will reach its zenith Paul says, **in the day of our Lord Jesus.** Without getting into a big hairy deal there are around 20 similar expressions in the NT. “Day of God,” “day of Christ,” “day of the Lord,” “day of our Lord,” “day of the Lord Jesus,” “day of our Lord Jesus,” “day of our Lord Jesus Christ,” “day of man,” and so forth. A little flexibility needs to be kept in mind with some these expressions as they overlap or are used interchangeably whereas others are more firm. The one that has by far the most firm usage in the NT and grows out of the OT is “the day of the Lord.” This expression is always used of judgment upon Israel and the nations and in a few contexts it is elongated and used of the time period following judgment of blessing in the millennium. It’s a period Paul says begins in 2 Thess 2 after the rapture with the revelation of the anti-Christ’s identity which is being restrained now by the Holy Spirit and will last through the millennium.

This expression is different; it adds **Jesus** to the end showing a relationship between those who experience this day with Jesus whereas those who experience the day of the Lord do not have a relationship with Jesus. So this

day, **the day of our Lord Jesus** is a day the Church will have in heaven when we will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ while Israel and the nations on earth will be undergoing the day of the Lord! So I take it that the day of our Lord Jesus is the day when we are gathered in the rapture and taken to heaven to be rewarded at the judgment seat while the day of the Lord is the day when Israel and the nations are being judged upon the earth. We are in two different places at the same time, they on earth, and we in heaven. Paul says that **in the day of our Lord Jesus** there will be mutual pride for one another since we ministered to one another here and now. In some passages the very rewards we are given are the changed lives of the people we ministered to. The Corinthian's were the fruit of Paul's ministry and he had been ministered to by them. Therefore there would be mutual pride in that day. He hopes that they will maintain that outlook until that day and not doubt again his love and care for them as their spiritual father.

In conclusion, what lessons can we learn from 2 Cor 1:12-14? First, our conduct in the world, and especially toward other believers, should be rooted and grounded in the grace of God such that our motives are pure and unadulterated. That is how Paul conducted himself. Is that how we conduct ourselves? Are we more concerned with serving others than self or are we more concerned about self than others? Paul was more concerned about others. This seemed contrary to the wisdom of the world and it was, but it was totally befitting an apostle of Jesus Christ. Is our conduct befitting us as representatives of Jesus Christ? Second, when we interpret the Bible we should take it as is, what it says is what it means in its original context. We are not interested in what is between the lines we are interested in the lines. Peter said that the untaught and unstable distort the Scriptures to their own destruction. The Corinthians had done this. This implies that we must be taught the text by competent believers who know the text and are spiritually strong, not incompetent handlers of the text who are weak believers. Third, even though your pastor-teacher may have an overwhelmingly disciplinary tone does not mean that he doesn't have pride and love for you. Surely at the judgment seat of Christ the overwhelming thought will be one of me being proud of you and you being proud of me. We are in this together and you have ministered to me and me to you. Therefore we are the fruits of each other's labor. You grow through me and I grow through you. Together we grow in our preparation for that day. I hope you will understand that until that day as it will strengthen and encourage you.

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