

A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

2 Corinthians 1:12 - 2:4

Although things had improved greatly in the Corinthian situation, there were still those who criticized Paul: “If he’s so great, how come he changes his plans all the time? He’s irresponsible and untrustworthy! He says one thing and does another.” Have you ever had your character attacked, or your motives questioned? How did you/would you respond?

I. A clear conscience 1:12-14

III. Why the plans changed 1:12-2:4

II. I’m not wishy-washy, and neither is God 1:15-22

WHAT DOES IT SAY?



ow this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the

world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. ¹³ For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that, ¹⁴ as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁵ Because I was confident of this, I planned to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. ¹⁶ I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ When I planned this, did I do it lightly? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say,

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Here Paul is beginning to answer his critics. From verses 12-14 what do you think their accusations were?

What probable accusation is revealed here (verses 15-17)? What do you think they were saying about Paul behind his back?

What is Paul’s point in verse 17? How do the following passages relate? (see **Matthew 5:34-37** and **James 4:13-15**)

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

"Yes, yes" and "No, no"?

¹⁸ But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." ²⁰ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. ²¹ Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

²³ I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

¹ So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. ² For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? ³ I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. ⁴ For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Paul realizes that his own trustworthiness reflects upon the trustworthiness of the gospel. So he makes two points concerning God's promises. The first one is here in verses 19-20. What is it?

Verse 22. Look up "*seal*" or "*deposit*" in a Bible dictionary. What does it mean? What is Paul's point?

Why did Paul not make his planned trip to Corinth? (This would have been after the "painful visit.")

In verse 4, Paul reveals one reason why he wrote the "Severe letter." What is it?

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

In your own words, summarize the main point of this passage.



This is a long and difficult passage! Try to sum up the basic charges that Paul's critics must have made, and his answers to them:

LIFE RESPONSE

How is God asking you to put this into action in your life this week?



How do you tend to respond to criticism? Can you glean some principles from Paul's response to aid you in yours?

Knowing what to say, whether to speak, how much to say, etc. is difficult in situations where your character is being attacked. How do the following back-to-back Proverbs apply?

*"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.
Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes."*

Proverbs 26:4-5