

The Book of Second Corinthians

The Ministry of Reconciliation

What It's All About—2 Cor 12:19

“Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved” (ESV).

1. Paul is offering a defense, of sorts, to the Corinthians.
2. Paul ultimately seeks the approval of God, but he knows if they reject him, the Corinthians reject God.
3. Paul “defends” himself to strengthen the Corinthians.

Why Paul Writes—Reconciliation

- Salutation (1:1–11)
- Defense of Apostleship (1:12–7:16) [Paul and Corinthians]
 - Explanation of Personal Conduct (1:12–2:13)
 - Nature of True Apostleship (2:14–7:16)
- Exhortation to Give (8:1–9:15) [Gentiles and Jews]
- Affirmation of Authority (10:1–13:10) [Paul and Corinthians]
- Closing Remarks (13:11–14)

Defend What Must Be Defended

- Though some seem to have been questioning his integrity, Paul affirms that his conduct had been honorable (1:12; cf. vv. 15–20).
- Paul gave the Corinthians opportunity to respond favorably to his previous exhortations (v. 23; 2:3–4, 9; cf. 7:8–12; 1 Cor 5:1–5).
- Many had repented, but some (i.e., bitter or jealous persons) were casting doubt on Paul's right to make demands (2 Cor 3:1).
- These attacks were not just personal but also doctrinal (3:2–6; 4:1–2, 5, 7–12; 5:11–12, 16, 18–21; 6:1–13; cf. vv. 14–18; 7:2–4).

Reconciliation Application #1: We must defend the truth without taking attacks personally.

Sacrifice for the Good of Others

- The Corinthians had promised to contribute to the needs of the Jewish Christians, and Paul had provided instructions on how to do so in his first letter (1 Cor 16:1–4; cf. Rom 15:25–28)
- Yet, they seem to have grown lax in their zeal for this benevolent and unifying work (2 Cor 8:6–8, 10–11, 24; 9:1–5, 12).
- Paul offered the following motivations for completing the work:
 - The poor Macedonian Christians had done so (8:1–5; cf. 9:4).
 - Jesus had given up everything for the Corinthians (8:9; 9:15)

Reconciliation Application #2: **We must impartially and happily give to God and his people.**

Multiplication by Subtraction

- Paul changes his tone and perhaps his primary audience in the final major section of Second Corinthians (10:1–13:10; e.g., 10:1).
- The false apostles who were troubling the Corinthians needed to be defeated (10:2–6, 12; 11:12–15; cf. vv. 18–20).
 - Paul was not inferior to the false apostles though he did not use sophistry or accept wages (11:4–9; 12:11–13).
 - The boast of Paul was his weakness (11:21–33; 12:1–10).
- To reject Paul was to reject Christ (10:7–8, 13–18; 11:2, 5–6).

Reconciliation Application #3: **We must stand up against error lest it draw others away from God.**

Where It All Leads

“Finally, brothers, rejoice, be restored, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (13:11–14 LSB).

1. The proper response to scriptural admonition is joy, restoration, comfort, unity, peace; the end, divine presence.
2. God offers grace, love, and fellowship to the faithful.

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