

Characteristics of a Grace-Driven Ministry: Part 3 (2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4)

REVIEW

1:12-14 – God’s grace empowers genuine Christianity ministry.

1:15-22 – God’s grace empowers a ministry of Christian honesty.

BIG IDEA from 1:23-2:4—God’s grace empowers a ministry of Christian love.

Exposition

I. Paul states why he has not visited Corinth since his previous painful visit. (1:23-2:2)

- Paul makes a bold statement: “**But**” I call God to witness against me—”
- Paul desired to spare them from the having another painful visit due to their hardness of heart.
- However, Paul did not hold back and do the easy thing (i.e., abandon them or stop prodding them to repent of their sin and be spiritually healthy).

II. Paul states why he sent the Corinthians a severe letter and how he wrote such a strongly worded letter (2:3-4)

Timeline Review:

- Paul’s 1st visit to Corinth and the planting/establishing of the Corinthian Church (**Acts 18:1-17**)
- Paul leaves for Palestine via Ephesus (**Acts 18:18-22**)
- Paul returns to Ephesus on his 3rd Missionary Journey (**Acts 19**)
- Paul’s 1st letter to Corinth (**1 Cor. 1:11; 5:9—written from Ephesus**)
- The Corinthians write a letter to Paul with six questions (**1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12**)
- Paul’s 2nd letter to Corinth (“**1 Corinthians**”; **1 Cor. 16:3-10**)
- Paul’s 2nd visit to Corinth is a “**painful**” visit (2 Cor. 2:1, 8-11; 7:12; 10-11; Acts 20:1-2)
- Paul’s 3rd letter to Corinth (“**A Severe Letter**”; **2 Cor. 2:3-4, 12-13; 7:5-16**)
- Paul’s 4th letter to Corinth (“**2 Corinthians**”; **2 Cor. 7:7; 13:1-2**)
- Paul’s 3rd visit to Corinth was in the works and we believe took place (**2 Cor. 13:1-2**)

- **Why?** Paul wrote this severe letter to the Corinthians because he genuinely loved them.
- **How?** Paul wrote this severe letter to the Corinthians in a spirit of anguished, sorrowful, afflicted, faithful, and steadfast love.

Observations

1. Christian love never gives up on other Christians. (1 Cor. 13:1-7)
2. Christian love never condones, excuses, or ignores sin, especially within the Body of Christ.
3. Christian love will say (and write) the hard truth to others when needed—in love.
4. Christian love rests on and is compelled by the love of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 5:14)
5. While Christians are to show Christian love to one another, church leaders must set a good example of this necessary ministry of grace in their local churches.
6. While modeling Christian love through confrontation is entirely biblical, the sinning party will often initially (and sometimes completely) reject the process.
7. There is no shortcut to joy: Christian love labors hard for the advancement of individual and corporate joy. (2 Cor. 1:24; 2:3-4)

Questions/Application

1. To whom is God calling you to show Christian love?
2. To whom are you tempted to not show Christian love?
3. Think of the last time you confronted another Christian—was it done in biblical love?
4. Who has given you a faithful example of Christian love in action?
5. Ask God to help you grow in the ministry of Christian love by His grace.
6. Ask God to help you show Christian love to _____ this week.
7. Ask God to help you respond in Christian love when you are sinned against by other Christians.