

Series: 2 Corinthians

“A Change in the Apostle Paul’s Itinerary”

(Sunday Morning September 13th, 2026)

Passage: 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4

O.S. I Want to Begin This Sermon by Bringing Us Back Into the Context of This Epistle, Because I Think This is Necessary to Understand This Passage

- > **During His Second Missionary Journey, Paul Founded This Church in Corinth, and He Remained There for Eighteen Months**
 - > **Some Time After Paul Left, We are Told in *1 Cor 1:11* That Some Family Members of a Woman Named Chloe Informed Paul About Several Problems That Were Going on in the Church, and This is Why He Wrote the Bk of *1 Cor***
 - > **A Short Time After He Had Finished Writing *1 Corinthians*, He Learned That the Corinthians Had Allowed Some False Teachers to Infiltrate the Church**
 - > **He Responded, or Perhaps, I Should Say That He Reacted, by Sending What is Known as “*The Severe Letter*” to Them**
 - > **It Was Not a Divinely Inspired Letter; and So, He Tells Us in *2 Cor 7:8* That He Regretted Sending It**
 - > **He Also Admitted That He Was an Emotional Mess Until Titus, Who Had Delivered the Letter, Met Him in Macedonia and Told Him That His Letter Had Been Well-Received, and That the Corinthians Had Repented**
 - > **We are Told in *2 Cor 2:1* That Paul Made a “*Painful Visit*” Some Time Before He Wrote This Second Epistle and What Took Place Then is Not Clarified**
 - > **It Seems Likely to Me That Paul Directly Confronted Some of These False Teachers as Well as Those Who Were Aligning Themselves With Them**
 - > **Unfortunately, These False Teachers, Who Paul Referred to as “*False Apostles*” in *1 Cor 11:13*, Were Still Hanging Around After He Had Left and a Minority of Those in Corinth Were Still Being Influenced by Them**
 - > **And These “*False Apostles*” Were Doing Everything That They Possibly Could to Discredit Paul, BECAUSE They Knew That the Teacher of Truth Would Have to be Removed in Order for Them to be Able to Take Control of the Church**
- St = I Want to Share Just a Few of These Accusations With You This Morning so That You Can See How Mean and Nasty These False Teachers Were**

- > In 2 Cor 4:2, Paul Said *“but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, ...”*
- > Paul Was Directly Confronting Something That These *“False Apostles”* Were Accusing Him of There, Which BTW Was the Right Way to Respond to It (E..)
- > In 2 Cor 7:2, Paul Said, *“Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.”*
- > That Verse Tells Us That They Were Accusing Paul of Embezzling Money Which Was Absolutely False, in Fact, He Had Even Set Up Some Safeguards in Order to Insure That This Could Not Happen (BTW – Probably Their Goal)
- > In 2 Cor 10:10, Paul Said, *“For they say (These False Teachers), ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.’”*
- > When We Pull Back the Onion Skin on That, We Discover That They Were Saying That *“He is Ugly and He Can’t Preach Very Well”* ; Now, That’s Just Flat Mean
- > They Would Stop at Nothing and We See That in This Passage, Because They Decided to Criticize, of All Things, His Itinerary
- > For You See, Paul Had Promised These Corinthians Back in 1 Cor 16:5-6 That He Would Come Back and Possibly Stay There Throughout the Entire Winter
- > These *“False Apostles”* Were Saying That the Fact That Paul Did Not Come as He Had Promised Proves That He is Unreliable and Self-Serving
- > Now, When We Reason This Out, It Really Seems Petty, Especially in a Day and Time When Any Kind of Coorespondence Could Take Weeks or Months
- > Paul Couldn’t Send Them a Text, or Type Out an Email, or Even Make a Phone Call and Stuff Can Happen Especially to a Man Like Paul
- > For All They Knew, He Could Have Been Sitting in a Jail, or a Prison, Right?
- > Nevertheless, Because This Change in His Itinerary Had Become a Big Issue for Them, Paul Decided That He Need to Address It; and So, He Did That Here

I. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Conscionable

Verse 12 (Read)

- > Now, This Word Simply Means That This Decision Did Not Violate Paul's Conscience
- > And the Conscience Was Something That Was Very Important to the Apostle Paul
- > In Fact, He Points Out in *Romans 2:15* That Even Unbelievers Have a Conscience Which Helps Them to Discern Between What is Right and Wrong
- > And in Regards to Christian Liberty, He Tells Us That We Should Never Put Another Person in a Position Where They Will be Encouraged to Violate Their Conscience
- > In *1 Cor 8:12*, Paul Said, *"And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ."*
- > And When Our Conscience is Clear This Enables Us to be Strong and Courageous Because We are at Peace With Ourselves
- > This is Why Solomon Could Say in *Prov 28:1* That *"...the righteous are (as) bold as a lion"*
- > On the Other Hand, the Person Who Violates His Conscience Will Become Crippled With Guilt and Ineffective for the Cause of Christ
- > A Puritan Writer by the Name of Richard Sibbes Said, *"Better that everybody should know about your sin than your own conscience know it. Because everybody is not always around but your conscience is"*

Q.n = Isn't That the Truth?

- > No One Spends More Time With Me Than Me; and if I am Walking Around With a Guilty Conscience, I'm Going to Spend a Lot of My Time Being Miserable
- > Now, the Conscience is a Very Valuable Thing in That It is a Lot Like the Gift of Pain; for You See, Pain Isn't Pleasant, But It Protects Us From Further Injury
- > This is One of the Problems With Diabetes; a Person Can Lose Feeling in Some of Their Extremities, and This Can Lead to Further Injury (E...Rita Evacuation)

III: Back in November of 1983, an Avianca Plane Crashed in Spain, and 181 People Were Tragically Killed

- > When They Uncovered the Black Box, They Learned That the Pilots Chose to Ignore the Airplanes Automatic Warning System
- > The Warning System Said *"Pull Up, Pull Up, Pull Up!"*, But One of the Pilot's Last Words Were *"Shut Up Gringo,"* and He Turned the Warning System Off

-> A Few Minutes Later, the Airplane Crashed Into the Side of a Mountain and Everyone on Board Died Instantly

Q.n = Now, Listen to Me, are You Listening?

-> Our Conscience is a Warning System; and if We Fail to Listen to Our Conscience, if We Choose to Turn It Off, the Consequences are Always Going to be Tragic (E)

-> Our Conscience, However, is Not Infallible; and Unfortunately, Our Conscience Can be Retrained Even to the Point of Calling Good Evil and Evil Good

-> In 1 Tim 4:2, for Example, Paul Called Some False Teachers "... *hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*"

-> This is Why It is Important, Listen to This, to Train Our Conscience by Making It Subordinate the Truth of the Word of God

-> And One Thing This Will do for Us is That It Will Prevent the Devil From Harrassing Us With False Guilt

-> To Begin With, Our Conscience is Cleansed at the Time of Our Conversion

-> In *Hebrews 10:22*, the Writer Said, "*let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*" (E...Christianity is Not a Guilt Trip)

-> After This, We Have the Privilege of Being Able to Confess Our Sins and to Find Forgiveness, and This Protects Us From Experiencing False Guilt (1 John 1:9)

-> You See, Paul Wasn't Perfect, But He Kept Short Accounts With God; and So, When These False Teachers Brought This Up, It Did Not Effect Him in the Least

-> BECAUSE Paul Knew in His Heart of Hearts That He Was Right With God, and That is Really All That Matters

St = The Change in Paul's Itinerary Was Perfectly Acceptable to Him, and It Should Have Been for Them (The Corinthians) as Well for Two Reasons

a. First, They Should Have Known That Paul Was Pursuing Holiness

-> Paul Used the Greek Word "*Hagiotes*" Which Refers to the Sanctifying Work of the Holy Spirit

-> Paul Had Lived Among Them for Eighteen Months, and He is Saying Here, in Essence, That This Was Enough Time for Them to Witness His Moral Purity

b. They Should Have Known That Paul Had Not Been Hypocritical

- > The Word for “Sincere” That He Uses Here Comes From Two Latin Words “Sine” and “Cera” Which Literally Means “Without Wax”
- > This Came From the Pottery Trade; for You See, Sometimes When They Placed a Piece of Pottery in the Kiln, It Would Form Some Cracks
- > If a Potter Was Honest About This, He Would Inform Any Potential Buyer About This Critical Flaw and Sell It at a Greatly Reduced Price
- > But if He Was Dishonest, He Would Place Some Wax in These Cracks; and Then, He Would Try to Sell It Right Along With the Other Pots
- > But a Wise Buyer Would Hold It Up to the Sunlight, Because This Would Reveal if It Had Any Wax in It

Pt = Paul’s Conscience Was Clear, Because He Knew That He Had Not Been Hypocritical, and They Should Have Known This About Him

- > And Paul is Doing Something Here That is Very Wise and Skillful When It Comes to Responding His Critics; He is Encouraging These Corinthians to Make Their Own Evaluation of Him Without Succumbing to This Hearsay
- > He is Saying, in Essence, “*What Have You Witnessed in My Life? And What Have You Come to Know About Me? And Here are a Couple of Things to Consider*”
- > And I Honestly Wish More People Would do the Same When It Comes to Any Criticism That They Hear About a Man of God (E...BTW Requires Two Witnesses)

T.S. I. This Change is Paul’s Itinerary Was Conscionable

II. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Eschatological

- > I Want to Apologize for Using Such a Big Word, But I Happen to Know That This is the Right Word
- > For You See, the Word “*Eshaton*” Refers to End Times, and I Want You to Notice That Paul Specifically Mentions the Day of Our Lord’s Return

Verse 13:14 (Read)

- > Paul Was Reminding These Corinthians of the Fact That He Was Looking Forward to the Day When They Would All Stand Before the Lord

- > He Was Confident That He Will Have Some Good Reasons to be Proud of Them, on That Day, and They Will Have Some Good Reason to be Proud of Him
- > You See, One Thing That Motivated the Apostle Paul is That He Was Constantly Looking Forward to the Return of Jesus
- > And We Have Evidence Throughout His Epistles Which Indicates That He Fully Believed That This Was so Imminent That It Would Happen in His Lifetime
- > After Describing the Rapture, for Example, and the Fact That Our Loved Ones in Christ Will Rise First; Paul Said, *“Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord”* (1 Thes 4:17)
- > I Hope You Noticed That Little Pronoun *“We”*, Because It Tells Us That Paul Expected the Rapture to Happen in His Lifetime
- > And He Envisioned Himself Being Able to Present This Body of Believers as Well as Many Others to the Lord as His Life’s Work
- > In 1 Thes 2:19, Paul Said to the Believers in Thessalonica *“For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?”* (That’s Essentially the Same Thing He Was Saying Here)

Pt = This is the Point: When You Live With This Goal in Mind, This Causes You to Desire to Live a Morally Pure Life and a Very Genuine and Sincere Life

- > In 1 John 3:3, for Example, the Apostle John Said, *“And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

St = You Know, One of the Good Things About My Vocation as a Minister is That I Don’t Have to Punch a Clock

- > And You Know, One of the Bad Things About My Vocation as a Minister is That I Don’t Punch a Clock.
- > I Have to be Here on Sunday Morning, of Course, and on Wednesday Night, and We Have Church Visitation and Special Events as Most of You Know
- > But Other Than That, I Have a Lot of Flexibility in My Day to Day Schedule

Q.n = And So, It is Imperative for Me to be Self-Motivated, and What is It That is Going to Cause Me to be Self-Motivated?

- > The Answer is Simple: I Know That I am Accountable to Others in This Church, and Most of All, I Know That I am Accountable to the Lord

- > **And This is Why My Prayer Time Every Morning Concludes With Me Asking the Lord to Help Me Set My Agenda for That Day**
 - > **Now, My Work Schedule May Not be Acceptable to You; I Hope That It is, But That is Really a Secondary Issue**
 - > **And as Long as I Have Worked Hard, and I Have Remained Morally Pure, and I Have Reached for This Goal to Hear My Lord Say *“Well Done My Good and Faithful Servant”* ; My Conscience Should be Perfectly Clear**
 - > **And Then, I Should be Able to Lay My Head on My Pillow at Night and to Sleep Like a Baby (Can I Get a Witness?)**
 - > **Martin Luther, Who is the One Responsible for Starting the Protestant Reformation Used to Say *“I Have Two Days on My Calendar; This Day and That Day”* (I Think That is Some Really Good Advice)**
 - > **And the Takeway, of Course, is This: the Same Thing That Was True for Paul and for Martin Luther and for Me is Also True for You**
 - > **And So, I Want to Encourage You to Set Your Schedule Every Day in the Same Way That the Apostle Paul Set His and Simply Honor and Glorify the Lord**
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T.S. I. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Conscionable
II. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Eschatological

III. This Change in Paul’s Schedule Was Unavoidable

Verse 15-17 (Read)

- > **Now, Paul is Just Plainly Stating What His Original Intention Was; He Originally Intended to Make Two Trips to Corinth**
- > **And by the Way, He Had Only Stated This as His Intention When He Said It; in *1 Cor 16:6*, We Can See Exactly What He Said; He Said,**
“and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.” (Perhaps = Did You Notice That Word?)
- > **Paul Knew That He Could Not Predict the Future; and So, He Only Stated That This Was His Original Intention Barring All Other Calamities or Contingencies**
- > **He is Again Directly Contradicting His Critics, and I Will Say Again That This is an Excellent Approach When We Have to Contend With These Kinds of People**

-> And I Will Add That No One Really Has a Right to Bring Our Motives Into Question Anyway, and This is What They Were Doing

-> Some of You May Recall What Paul Said in *1 Cor 4:5*; He Said, *“Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.”*

-> We are All Ultimately Going to be Judged on the Basis of Our Motives, But Only God Knows Our Motives

-> & Therefore, It is O.K. for You to Judge Me or for Me to Judge You on the Basis of Our Actions But Not Our Motives

-> In *Matt 7:16*, Jesus Said in Regards to the False Prophets *“You will know them by their fruits...”*

Q.n = Well Quess What? You Have to Judge the False Prophets in Order to do That

-> We Can Judge What They Say by Comparing It to Scripture, and I Certainly Wish More People Would, and We Can Judge Their Standards of Morality, But None of Us Has the Right to Judge Any Other Person's Motives

Verse 18-20 (Read)

-> I Think Paul is Doing Two Things Here; First, I Think Paul Was Stating That His Goal is Always to Keep His Promises, Because This Emulates Our Lord

-> I Can't Speak for You But I Can Speak for Myself, and I Can Say That It is My Hope and My Prayer That Everyone Will Know That I am a Man of My Word

-> But This is Why I Say That All of This Was Unavoidable, for You See, You and I are Only Mortal; and So, We Can't Predict the Future

-> Therefore, Our Failure at Times to Meet Our Obligations is an Inevitable Reality

-> In *James 3:2*, the Half-Brother of Our Lord Said This; He Said, *“For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”*

Q.n = And Now, Let Me Ask You a Question That Most of You Should Already Know: What Does the Word “All” Mean?

Ans = All Means All and That's All That All Means

- > We All Stumble From Time to Time in Our Speech, and So, It is Important for All of Us to Give Each Other a Little Slack in This Area
- > Second, I Think Paul is Reminding Us of the Fact That the One We Endeavor to Emulate Never Has This Problem
- > Every Promise That the Lord Makes He is Able to Fulfill Because He Knows the Future, and Our God is Even Immutable Which Means That He Cannot Lie

Quote = I Learned This Week That There are 750 Promises Stated in the N.T, and There are 7957 Verses; So, That Adds Up to 1/10th of the N.T.

- > I am Glad to be Able to Say That Our Lord Always Keeps His Promises, and One of My Favorites is This One: *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)
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T.S. I. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Acceptable

II. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Presentable

III. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Unavoidable

IV. This Change in Paul’s Itinerary Was Intentional

Verses 23-2:3 (Read)

- > Now, Paul Plainly Tells Them Why He Chose Not to Make This Second Visit; It Was Because He Didn’t Want to Cause Them Any More Sorrow
- > And I Think I Know Something of What He Was Referring to, Because I Have Learned That It is Often Times Best to Give People Some Time to Repent
- > Paul Had Been to Corinth for What He Called *“The Painful Visit”*, and We Can Assume That This Involved Confronting Some People About Their Sin
- > Paul Knew That These Corinthians Had the Same Holy Spirit Living in Them That He Had Living in Him, and That the Holy Spirit Would Work on Them
- > In *John 16:8*, Jesus Said, *“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”*
- > Everyone Has the Voice of Conscience as I Pointed Out Earlier, and as Christians, We Also Have the Presence of the Holy Spirit Who Convicts Us of Sin

- > The Next Step in God's Discipline Involves Some Verbal Intervention, and It Doesn't Always Have to Involve the Church Leaders
- > In *Proverbs 27:6*, Solomon Said, "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy*"
- > And Listen, if You Have a Friend Who is Willing to do This for You, You Have a Treasure, and You Should Never Resent Him or Her for It
- > In Addition to This, God Has a Myriad of Ways to Get Our Attention; and if We are His Child, He Most Certainly Will
- > In *Hebrews 12:6*, the Writer Said "*FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.*"

Pt = Paul Did Not Make This Next Visit, Because He Was Hoping That They Would Self-Correct; and Then, He Would Ultimately be Able to Greet Them With a Joyful Hug Instead of a Whip (I Only Have Time for a Summary)

V. This Change in Paul's Itinerary Was Regrettable

Ch 2:4 (Read)

- > Finally, Paul Wanted Them to Know That All of His Actions Were Based on Love, and He Was in Anguish Because He Really Had a Strong Desire to be With Them
- > And I Hope You Understand That Paul's Great Love for These People is the Reason That He Even Bothered to Take the Time to Respond to These Critics in the First Place (Don't You Agree That This Was a Petty Accusation?)
- > Paul Could Have Just Abandoned Them, and He Could Have Just Allowed These False Prophets Have Their Way With Them
- > The Only Reason Paul Confronted These False Prophets and Defended His Apostleship Was Because He Loved These Christians in Corinth Too Much to Let Them Go
- > If Paul Had Been in This for the Money, as His Critics Accused Him of, He Would Not Have Bothered With Any of This, and I Can Prove That
- > For You See, Jesus Said This in *John 10:12*; He Said, "*He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.*"

Q.n = And BTW What Did Jesus Call the False Prophets in *Matthew 7:15*?

Ans = He Called Them “*Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing*” (That’s an Abbreviation)

- > **The Hireling Sees the Wolves Coming and All He Cares About is Saving His Own Skin**
 - > **Not Paul, Paul Gave It Everything He Had so That He Could Preserve This Church and Stand With Them FULL OF JOY When Our Lord Returns**
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Ill: We Hear a Lot About Ministerial Burnout in Our Day, and I Just Want to Say That I Believe That We Would Have a Lot Less of It if Pastors Would Just Fall in Love With Their People All Over Again

- > **Jonah, for Example, is an Excellent Case Study for Ministerial Burnout Even Though He Really Didn’t do Much Except Complain (E...Happy About the Plant)**
- > **Jonah Was a Suicidal Emotional Wreck; And So, God Gave Him This Counsel That is Found in *Jonah 4:9-11 (Turn and Read)* (E...do You Care About Others?)**

Invitation:

- > **To What Extent Should a Pastor or Any Church Leader be Willing to go to Save His Flock; Well, the Lord is Our Model, and He Gave It All**
 - > ***“14 I am the good shepherd,...” Jesus Said in John 10:14-15 “... and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 ...and I lay down My life for the sheep.”***
 - > **Jesus, of Course, Went to the Cross and Bled and Died There in Order to Provide an Atonement for Our Sins**
 - > **And Listen, I Believe He Would Have Done That for Any One of Us Even if We Were the Only Person Left on This Earth**
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- > **I Came Across a Poem This Week That Expresses That Sentiment; And So, I Hope You Enjoy It; It is Entitled “U” the Capital Letter “U”**

“Before U Were Thought of or Time Had Begun, God Stuck U in the Name of His Son

And Each Time You Pray, You’ll See It is True, You Can’t Spell Out JesUs and Not Include U

You’re a Pretty Big Part of His Wonderful Name. For U, He Was Born; That’s Why He Came

And His Great Love for U is the Reason He Died; It Takes U to Spell CrUcified.

Isn't It Thrilling and Splendidly Grand – He Rose From the Grave With U in His Plan?

The Stones Split Away, the Gold Trumpet Blew, and This Word ResUrrection is Spelled With a U.

When Jesus Left Earth at His Upward Ascension, He Felt There Was One Thing He Just Had to Mention

Go Into the World and Tell Them It's True...I Love Them All Just Like I Love U"

-> **In Heb 12:2, the Writer of Hebrews Tells Us What Was on Jesus Mind as He Was Dying on the Cross; He Said, "...for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."**

It was the beginning of a Marvelous Relationship

Conscionable
Eschatalogical
Unavoidable
Intentional
Regrettable