

Series: 2 Corinthians

“The Seven Characteristics of a Forgiving Christian”

(Sunday Morning September 27th, 2026)

Passage: 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

O.S. As Many of Us Know, the Early Church Experienced the Worst Persecutions in All of World History, and These Continued Into the Third Century

- > **The Worst of These Persecutions Was the Tenth and the Last Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian Which Began in 303 a.d.**
- > **Diocletian Was Intent on Wiping Our Christianity Entirely; and So, He Made the Following Demands: Give a Sacrifice to the Roman god Terminus, Offer Incense to a Bust of Caesar and Hand Over the Scriptures to be Burned**
- > **Those Who Did so Were Given a Certificate Called “*A Libellus*” Which Indicated That They Had Done This, and They Suffered No Further Consequences**
- > **Those Who Refused Were Either Crucified, or Roasted to Death, or Skinned Alive While Their Family Members Were Forced to Watch**
- > **During These Horrible Persecutions and Afterwards, Christian Churches Faced What Became a Very Divisive Issue at the Time**
- > **Many Who Had Capitulated During These Horrible Persecutions Were Asking for Forgiveness, and They Wanted to be Accepted Back Into the Church**
- > **These Were Referred to as “*The Lapsi*” in Latin Which Literally Means “*The Fallen Ones*”**
- > **Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, Taught That They Should be Given a Path to Forgiveness and to Being Accepted Back Into the Church**
- > **Novatian, a Popular Theologian at the Time, Taught That They Should Not be Accepted Back Into the Church Under Any Circumstances**
- > **Cyprian Won the Day by Dividing “*The Lapsi*” Into Five Categories, and I Will Spare You the Latin: 1) Those Who Had Given a Sacrifice to a Roman god 2) Those Who Had Burned Incense to Caesar 3) Those Who Had Obtained “*A Libellus*” by Bribery 4) Those Who Had Lied in Order to Avoid Persecution AND 5) Those Who Had Given Over the Holy Scriptures**

St = Those in the First Group Were Not Accepted Back Into the Church, But They Were Told That They Could be Forgiven on Their Deathbed (According to Cyprian)

- > **The Others Were Required to Exhibit Sorrow and Repentance and to do Acts of Penance for a Minimum of Two Years**
- > **Before We are Too Critical, We Need to Understand That Some of These People Had Revealed the Whereabouts of Christians; and So, Those in the Early Church Were Still Quite Wary of Them**

Q.n = What do You Think Would Have Been the Right Way for Those Early Christians to Deal With “*The Lapsi*” “*The Fallen Ones*?” (Discussion Topic)

Ans = I am of the Opinion That They Should Have Simply Been Forgiven and Accepted Back Into the Church With Open Arms

- > **To Begin With, Penance is Not Biblical; It is Tantamount to a Works Based System of Religion, and This is Why the Protestant Reformers Rejected It**
- > **In Addition to This, We Know That Jesus Forgave Simon Peter Even Though Simon Peter Had Denied Him Three Times, and He Even Restored Peter to His Position as One of the Apostles**
- > **And Perhaps, the Greatest Picture We Have of Our Heavenly Father’s Willingness to Forgive Comes From the Parable of the Prodigal Son**
- > **In *Luke 15:20*, We Read “*So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*”**

Q.n = Did the Father in This Parable, Who Represents Our Heavenly Father, Require His Son to Grovel and Weep for Two Years and to do Acts of Penance?

Ans = No, on the Contrary, He Welcomed Him With Open Arms; He Gave Him Back His Status as a Son, and He Celebrated His Return

- > **I Believe This is What Our Heavenly Father is Like; He Longs to Forgive; He Waits for Repentance, and He Desires to Restore**

T.S. In This Passage, We are Told About a Person Who Committed a Very Serious Sin; in Fact, It Was Serious Enough That He Was Disciplined by the Church

- > **But Then, He Repented; and So, the Apostle Paul Encouraged These Corinthians to Forgive Him and to Welcome Him Back With Open Arms** (E...Characteristics)

I. A Forgiving Christian Will Exhibit Humility

Verse 5 (Read)

- > There is Some Debate Over What This Man Did That Required Him to be Disciplined by the Church
- > Some Say That This Was the Same Man Who Was Involved in an Incestuous Relationship Who is Mentioned in *1 Corinthians 5*, and That is a Possibility
- > It is More Likely That This is a Man Who Had Believed What These “*False Apostles*” Were Saying About the Apostle Paul, and That He Had Confronted and Tried to Shame the Apostle Paul Publicly
- > This Would Have Happened When Paul Made What is Called “*The Painful Visit*” Which Was Right Before He Wrote This 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians

Q.n = Was This a Serious Sin?

Ans = Absolutely

- > God Used the Apostles to Bring Us the Scriptures; the Word of God Had Not Been Completed Yet, and So, to Try to Shame and Discredit an Apostle in Public Was a Very Serious Transgression Indeed
 - > In Fact, I Think It is Important to Point Out in Our Day and Time That Attacking Any Man of God Should Never be Taken Lightly (Some People Think Nothing of It)
-

III: A Man Named Korah, for Example, Led a Rebellion Against Moses and Aaron, and He Managed to Amass a Following of 250 People

- > Moses Confronted Him in *Num 16:28-20*, and This is What Moses Said; He Said,

“28.... ‘By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing. 29 ‘If these men die the death of all men or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. 30 ‘But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD.”

- > And Listen, That is Exactly What Happened; the Ground Immediately Opened Up and Swallowed Korah Along With All of His Followers (Reminder = Ps 105:15)

St = Now, It is Interesting That Paul Did Not Confront This Man Himself, But He Did Encourage the Corinthians to Discipline Him

- > He Tells Us in *Verse 9* That He Did This to “*Test Them*” to See Whether They Would be Obedient in All Things
- > Well, They Passed the Test; the Majority Supported Paul; They Put This Man Through the Church Discipline Process; and Then, He Repented
- > But Apparently, Some Wanted to Inflict a More Severe Punishment Upon This Man, and They Were Probably the Ones Who Loved Paul the Most (Of Paul)
- > So, Paul Decided to Tell Them That He Did Not Have Any Animosity Towards This Man; He Treated This, in Other Words, Like Water Off a Ducks Back
- > This Tells Us That Paul Refused to Take This Personally, and He Did Not Allow His Own Ego or Pride to Get in the Way

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

- > This Teaches Us That Humility Will go a Long Way When It Comes to Overcoming Disunity in the Church
- > *Prov 13:10* in the King James Version Says “*Only by pride cometh contention:...*”
- > And This is True, I Have Said It Before, and I Will Say It Again “*When There is Strife, You Can Count on the Fact That Someone Has a Pride Problem*”
- > And the Good News is That the Opposite is Also True, if a Person is Humble, He is Far More Likely to be a Part of the Solution and Not the Problem
- > In *Prov 19:11*, Solomon Said, “*A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.*” (How Many are Willing to do That?)
- > And Listen, This is Exactly the Way Paul Responded to This Man’s Foolish and Public Attack of His Character, and We are Being Told Here That This is One Characteristic of a Forgiving Christian
- > Paul Was Saying, in Essence, “*You Don’t Need to Prolong His Pain on My Account, Because I’ve Already Gotten Past This*”
- > A Lesser Man With an Ego Problem Would Have Wanted the Man to Grovel and Squirm But Not Paul, Because Paul Was a Humble and Forgiving Christian.

II. A Forgiving Christian Will Offer Mercy

Verse 6 (Read)

- > The Greek Word for “*Punishment*” That Appears in This Verse is the Word

“Epitimia,” and This is the Only Place We Find It in the New Testament

-> **It is Found, However, in Many of the Secular Writings of the Day, and It Referred to a Legal Penalty Enacted by a Law Court**

-> **It is the Opposite of Vigilante Justice; It Refers to Staying Within the Confines of Justice and Not Going Beyond That**

-> **This Tells Us That “The Majority” in Corinth Had Disciplined This Man in the Appropriate Way, and They Had Not Gone Beyond That**

a. Church Discipline Begins With a Desire for Privacy

-> **In *Matthew 18:15*, Jesus Said, “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”**

b. Church Discipline Progresses to a Withdrawal of Intimacy

-> **In *1 Cor 5:11*, Paul Said, “But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”**

-> **Now, It is Interesting That Paul Was Careful to Say That We are Not to Avoid Being Around Unbelievers for This Reason, Because They Can’t Help It**

c. Church Discipline Concludes With a Formal Excommunication

-> **And Jesus Comforted Us by Saying in *Matt 18:18* “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”**

-> **This is the Point: They Had Done the Binding, and It Had Been Effective; And So Now, It Was Time for Them to do the Loosing**

-> **Paul Did Not Tell Them to Keep Him Locked Out of the Church, and to Require Him to do Penance for a Minimum of Two Years, or to Take Cold Showers, or to Sleep on a Hard Floor (BTW = I Looked Up Some Modern Examples of Penance)**

St = I Want to Spend a Little Extra Time on This Second Point, Because I Believe This is Something We All Need to be Reminded Of

-> **For You See, We All Want God to Pour Out His Mercy and Grace Towards Us When We Have Sinned, and Have Then, Repented**

- > But We Tend to be Stingy When It Comes Time for Us to Offer Mercy and Grace to Those Who Have Sinned Against Us and Have Repented
- > In *Eph 4:32*, Paul Said, “*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*”

Q.n = Now, This is the Question I Want Us All to Meditate on Today?

Ans = It is This One: How Has God in Christ Forgiven Us

- > God Waited Just Like That Father in *Luke 15* Waited for That Prodigal; God Had a Longing in His Heart to Forgive Us, and He Restore Us and Blesses Us
- > We Didn’t Have to go Looking for His Mercy and Forgiveness; God is Rich in Mercy, the Bible Says
- > And Just Like the Father in *Luke 15*, God Ran to Us, and God Embraced Us
- > And God’s Forgiveness Represents a Promise, It Represents a Promise for Him to Forget Our Sins in the Sense That He Never Brings Them Up Again
- > The Psalmist Says That God Separates Our Sin as Far as the East is From the West, and East and West Never Meet; That is Found in *Psalms 103:12*
- > In *Micah 7:19*, We Told That He Casts All of Our Sin in the Depths of the Sea, and Dr. Charles Swindoll Says That He Puts Up a Sign That Says “*No Fishing*”
- > This is Why a Forgiving Christian Will Offer Mercy, Because a Forgiving Christian Understands That God Has Offered Us His Mercy
- > And This Also Applies, Listen to This Now, This Also Applies When Someone Has Sinned Against Someone That We Love
- > You See, This is One of the Things That Complicated This Matter for These Corinthians; Some of Them Loved the Apostle Paul Very Deeply
- > And So, They Were Even More Reluctant When It Came to Being Merciful for That Reason (E... What if Someone Has Done Something to Hurt Someone You Love)

III. A Forgiving Christian Will Restore Joy

Verse 7 (Read)

Q.n = Do Any of You Recall What David Pleaded for After He Had Confessed His Sin of Murder and Adultery?

Ans = In *Psalm 51:12*, He Said, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation ...”

Ans = And Then, in Verse 14, David Said “*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness*”

- > David Was Asking God to Put a Song Back in His Heart, and This Was the Same Desire That Paul Had in His Heart for This Man After He Had Repented**
 - > Paul Was Christlike in That He Wanted This Man, Not Only to Experience God’s Forgiveness But Also the Joy That Comes From Knowing That You are Forgiven**
 - > Paul Was Christlike in That He Wanted This Man to be Comforted and Made Spiritually and Emotionally Whole Again**
 - > In Matt 12:20, Jesus Quoted the Prophet Isaiah When He Said, “*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, ...*”**
 - > There is Some Beautiful Imagery in That, Because Shepherds in That Day and Time Would Pass Their Time by Making Little Flutes Out of Reeds**
 - > But After a Short Time, That Flute Would Need to be Cleaned Out (E..Harmonica), But Instead of Cleaning Out This Reed, Most Shepherds Would Just Discard It**
 - > The Idea is That, Instead of Discarding This Little Flute, God Cleans It so That It Can be Used to Make Beautiful Music Again**
 - > Likewise, in Those Oil Lamps of Those Days, the Wick Would Sometimes Become Burned and Harder to Light so the Tendency Was Just to Discard It and Start Over**
 - > So, God Was Saying Through the Prophet “*No, I am Not Going to Discard This Wick; I am Going to Trim It so That It Can be Useful Again.*” (Beautiful Picture)**
- Pt = A Forgiving Christian is Not Like the Elder Brother in Luke 15, Not at All, the Forgiving Christian Wants the Joy in the Heart of the Penitent Man to be Fully Restored**

IV. A Forgiving Christian Will Affirm Love

Verse 8 (Read)

- > The Greek Word for “*Reaffirm*” Here is the Word “*Kryosai*”, and It Actually Refers to “*A Legal Declaration*”**

- > And So, This Probably Means That Paul Wanted These Corinthians to Affirm Their Love for This Man in a Public Way
 - > This Caused Me to Think About the Way in Which Jesus Restored Simon Peter After He Had Denied Him Three Times
 - > Peter's Sin, of Course, Was a Public Sin; and So, Jesus Required Peter to Express His Love in Public
 - > In John 21:15, We Read, *"So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? ' He *said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.'" He *said to him, 'Tend My lambs'."* (E...Agape vs Phileo)
 - > In John 21:16, We Read *"He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He *said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.'" He *said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.'"* (E...Agape vs Phileo)
 - > In John 21:17, We Read *"He *said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus *said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'"* (E...Phileo and Phileo)
 - > As This Process Was Taking Place, as Jesus Was Asking Peter to Affirm His Love for Him, He Was Also Affirming His Love for Peter in a Public Way
 - > Now, I Trust That You Will All Agree With Me When I Say That *"If Jesus Has Affirmed His Love for You and Restored You Publicly, No One Has a Reason to Object"*
 - > And Likewise, if the Offended Man (Who Was Paul) Publicly Affirmed His Love for This Man, and the Leaders of the Church Did So as Well, No One Else in the Church Had Any Reason to Object
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V. A Forgiving Christian Will Practice Obedience

Verse 9 (Read)

- > This Tells Us That These Christians Were Being Tested When They Were Given the Task of Confronting This Man With His Sin as I Stated Earlier

-> **AND They Were Tested Again When They Were Given the Task of Forgiving This Man**

-> **God, Just in Case You are Unaware of It, Puts His People Through Various Tests Quite Often** (Ex = Abraham = The Familiarity Test, the Famine Test, the Fellowship Test, the Fortitude Test, the Fortune Test, the Finality Test)

Deut 13:1-3 (Turn and Read)

-> **I Want You to Notice First of All That Scriptural Truth and Doctrinal Truth Takes Precedence Over Signs and Wonders** (Pr.m With the Charismatic Movement)

-> **The Second Thing I Want You to Notice is That Little Word “Testing”;** Moses Said That God Was “Testing” Them to See if They Would be Obedient

-> **Now, in Relation to Church Discipline, I Believe That There are Many in Our Day and Time Who Have Failed This Test and are Still Failing This Test**

Q.n = How do You Respond When You See a Brother or Sister in Christ Obviously Drifting Away From the Lord and Getting Involved in Habitual Sin? (C...)

Q.n = How to You Respond When You See a Brother in Christ at a Restaurant Somewhere and He is Holding a Woman’s Hand Who is Not His Wife? (C...)

Q.n = How do You Respond When You Discover That Your Employer, Who Professes to be a Christian, is Involved in Some Very Dishonest Business Practices? (C...)

Q.n = How do You Respond When You Hear a Brother or Sister in Christ Spreading Slander and Attempting to Cause Division in the Church? (C...)

Q.n = How do You Respond When You are Called Upon to Forgive and to Love a Brother or Sister in Christ Who Has Treated You Very Rudely in the Past?

-> **You See, Obedience in Some Areas are Much Easier Than Others: Not Forsaking the Assembling of Ourselves Together for Example, Singing Praises to the Lord, Sharing Our Faith Evangelism, Even Tithing are Easy by Way of Comparison**

VI. Forgiving Christians Will Seek Reconciliation

Verse 10 (Read)

-> **Paul is Exhibiting His Humility Again by Reminding These Church Leaders in Corinth That He Had No Animosity in His Heart Towards This Man**

- > And So, He Did Not Want Them to Have Any Animosity in Their Hearts Towards Him Either and What He Was Longing for Was Reconciliation and Unity
- > Paul Adds the Phrase *“in the presence of Christ”* Which Reminds Us of the Fact That He Lived His Life With a Constant Sense of Accountability to the Lord
- > And I Would Like to Take This Opportunity to Remind You of the Fact That Our Lord Wants Unity in His Church
- > Jesus, in His High Priestly Prayer, Asked the Father for This; He Said, *“that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”* (John 17:21)
- > Jesus Wasn’t Asking for Ecumenicism, and Jesus Wasn’t Asking for Unanimity; Jesus Was Asking for Unity
- > Jesus Was Not Saying That We All Need to be Carbon Copies of One Another, But He Was Saying That He Wants Us to Love One Another and Cooperate With One Another and to Love One Another
- > And if We Will do That, I Want You to Notice What Jesus Said *“...so that the world may believe that You sent Me”* That’s the Effect
- > In John 13:35, Jesus Said, *“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
- > I Have Said It Before, and I Will Say It Again *“This is the Best Advertisement Any Church Could Possibly Have”*
- > And I am Convinced That Visitors Can Recognize This Just as Soon as They Come in the Front Door or Even When They See Us Interacting in the Public Square
- > And Sometimes, We Have to Work for This; Sometimes, We Have to Work Diligently to Preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace (Eph 4:3)

VII. Forgiving Christians Will Thwart Satan

Verse 12 (Read)

- > The Word That is Translated as *“Schemes”* Here is the Word *“Noemata”*, and It Literally Means *“His Designs”* or *“His Plots”* or *“His Wiles”*
- > I Suppose It is Possible to be Ignorant of Satan’s Schemes, But No Christian Who Reads His Bible Regularly Should be

- > We Should Know, for Example, That Liberalism Can Destroy and Church and Legalism Can as Well; and So, We Should Try to Avoid Either of These Extremes
 - > We Should Know That Satan Can Use the Sin of Pride to Destroy Someone; Because, After All, That is What Destroyed Him
 - > In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul Told Us That We Should Not Ordain a Man Too Soon, Especially a New Convert *"...so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil."*
 - > We Should Also Know That Satan Can do the Opposite; He Can Use Guilt and Sorrow and Discouragement to Destroy Someone
-

Ill: As I Was Reading About *"The Lapsi"* or *"The Fallen Ones"* That I Mentioned in My Introduction, I Learned That There Were Many Who Never Tried to Seek Forgiveness, Because They Assumed That This Was Impossible

- > When I Read That, It Made Me Sad, Because It Tells Me That They Had Believed a Lie That Had Come Straight From the Devil
 - > For You See, the Truth is That There is No Sin Apart From the Sin of Wilfull Unbelief That Cannot be Forgiven (Repeat)
 - > Another Way I Can Say That is Like This; There is an Unpardonable Sin and if You are Concerned About Having Committed That Sin You Haven't
 - > The Truth is That, as Long as There is Breath in a Person's Lungs and They are Willing to Repent and Place Their Faith and Trust in Jesus Christ, They Can be Forgiven
-

Ill: Sonja and I Have Been Watching a Series on Amazon Prime Called *"The Presidents"*, and This Week We Watched One About Richard Nixon

- > This Particular Biographer Said That Richard Nixon Was a Very Egotistical and Controlling Man Who Was Obsessed With Trying to Destroy His Political Enemies
- > In Fact, It Was Well-Known That Nixon Kept a List of All of His Enemies
- > His Paranoia and His Desire to Destroy His Enemies Prompted Him to Encourage Some of His Cabinet Members to Get Involved in Wire Tapping

- > And as Some of Us Older Folks and Young Historians Know, This Led to the Watergate Scandal and Nixon's Impeachment and Resignation
 - > And They Say That He Regretted the Fact That He Had Handed to His Enemies All of the Ammunition That They Needed to Destroy Him
-

App: I Think This Gives Us an Example of How the Devil Works; for You See, the Devil Used President Nixon's Vindictive Nature Against Him

- > Nixon Was Obsessed With Destroying His Enemies, and This is What Ultimately Caused Him to Destroy Himself
 - > And What James, the Half Brother of Our Lord, Wrote in *James 2:13* Was Proven to be True *"For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; ..."*
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Invitation:

- > And So, in Closing, I Want to Say This: I Can't Speak for You But I Can Speak for Myself, and I Say *"If I am Going to Err, I Would Rather That It be on the Side of Mercy and Forgiveness"* (Can I Get a Witness?)
- > And One Reason I Say This is Because I Know That a Person is Never More Like Our Heavenly Father Than When They Choose to Forgive
- > In Fact, This is Why God Sent His Son Jesus Christ to This Earth in Order to Die on a Cross to Make and Atonement for Our Sins
- > In *John 3:17*, the Bible Says, *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* (NIV)