

“CHANGE OF PLANS”

And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit-- to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? (2 Corinthians 1:15-17 NKJV)

A change of plans is always upsetting, even if the change is for the better. A change of plans causes anxiety at any age but it is more distressing the older we become. As we progress in age we are more comfortable when things are the same and predictable.

When plans are changed, there are many details that have to be cancelled or rearranged. Sometimes apologies or excuses have to be made to other people. The change can cost us extra time and money.

The reason for a change of plans can be an unavoidable illness or accident or even by a death in the family. Other times the change may be made to avoid having to associate with people we don't like or to keep from what would surely be an embarrassing situation.

My father asked me to preach his funeral. When I got the call that he was dead, I wrote the sermon, prepared the bulletin, put together the prayers for the service and the graveside committal service. Then I called the funeral director and the local Presbyterian Church. I made reservations for the airline, a rental car, motels. I was going to leave from Little Rock on Sunday. The funeral was on Tuesday. Just as I was going out to the car to go to Little Rock, there was a phone call for me. There was a snow storm and all flights into Baltimore and Washington were cancelled. I tried the next day to get a flight, but there were none. I cancelled the motel and rental car reservations. I had planned to preach my father's funeral but my plans were changed.

1.) For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus. (2 Corinthians 1:12-14 NKJV)

You can tell in this paragraph that Paul is on the defensive. He had changed his plans several times. There were people in the church who were telling others that Paul was fickle, that he had reasons that he was concealing that caused him to keep changing his plans.

Paul's original plan was to go from Ephesus to Macedonia and from there to travel to Corinth. From Corinth he might go to Jerusalem. This plan was changed to Ephesus to Macedonia, then to Corinth, and definitely on to Judea from there. What then transpired was a definite change of plans. He traveled from Ephesus directly to Corinth for a "painful" visit caused by a number of issues of immorality, false doctrine, and dissension in that church. These required that he administer church discipline to various members. For one man, who had taken his father's wife as a mistress, Paul "delivered his body to Satan, that his soul might be saved."

If you read the first epistle to the Corinthians you will see all the problems, abuses, discord, false doctrine, and irregularities in worship which caused Paul to leave Ephesus and go directly to Corinth to deal with these problems with his apostolic authority since many of the church leaders were among the guilty parties. All those who were disciplined had reasons to try to discredit Paul. In the paragraph above Paul appeals to all those who have known him as a man of godly integrity. He said there is no reason to read between the lines with him.

2.) Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. (2 Corinthians 1:17-18 NKJV)

It is a normal human reaction for some persons who are rebuked or corrected to lash out or try to impugn the abilities or the character of the person who has corrected them.

A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, Nor will he go to the wise. (Proverbs 15:12)
A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing his own heart. (Proverbs 18:2)

The purpose of church discipline is to bring the sinners to repenting of their sins and going to Jesus Christ praying for forgiveness. Some of those who were disciplined sought to turn the congregation's attention from their sins and resume their standing in the church by discrediting Paul. Two of the ways they did this are in this first chapter.

One way was to accuse Paul of arriving at his decisions to change his plans by worldly wisdom instead of spiritual wisdom. This was throwing Paul's teaching back in his teeth. In his first epistle he dealt with Corinthians' pride of their heritage of Greek philosophy.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:12-13 NKJV)

Another way was to mock Paul and accuse him of being fickle.

"First, he said Yes, then it was No, again it was Yes, now it is No. Yes, No, Yes, Yes, No, No. Who can depend on anything that he says?"

Paul reminds them the message of salvation was never Yes and No.

But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us--by me, Silvanus, and Timothy--was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. (2 Corinthians 1:18-22 NKJV)

3.) And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit-- to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea...Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. (2 Corinthians 1:15-16,23 NKJV) But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow...For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you. (2 Corinthians 2:1,4 NKJV)

After Paul's short, sudden and unexpected visit to Corinth, in which he administered discipline and correction, he returned to Ephesus. He assured the Corinthians that after he went from Ephesus to Macedonia, he would return to Corinth on his way to Jerusalem. He told them that would give them a double blessing of grace.

Upon reflection, Paul realized that he was emotionally distraught by the discipline he had administered to people whom he loved. He was disappointed that a church to which he had devoted so much time, effort, and personal sacrifice had been damaged by false teachers, by leaders and members of the church who had given their own greed and fleshly lusts precedence over their commitment to Jesus Christ.

Paul knew that if he returned to Corinth the visit would be painful for both him and the Corinthians. They were the very ones who he was looking to for joy. He had suffered much by way of persecution from the world. Those who were fellow disciples of Jesus Christ were the ones who could bring some happiness and joy to his life.

Paul decided to write to them a letter in which he could communicate what he would have told them in person. This second epistle to the Corinthians is probably that letter.

This is the letter Paul wrote out of much affliction and anguish of heart that they might know the love which he had for them.