

2 Corinthians 1:15-22

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Paul gives reason for his change of travel plans to return to Corinth. He defends his integrity and character as his basis for what he does to follow Christ. His foundation is Christ, Who is the Amen and the Yes of God. All believers can share in this by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

One of the charges against Paul from some in the church at Corinth appears to be that he changed his travel plans and did not fulfill his intention to return to Corinth: *In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing* (v 15).

The phrase *in this confidence* refers to the same confidence Paul has explained in the preceding verses, primarily the “testimony of our conscience” (v 12) and the resulting reward from Jesus for faithful service with good intentions (v 14). Paul states his unfulfilled travel intentions: *I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing* (v 15).

Apparently Paul’s failure to return to Corinth as he intended was a source of antagonism. But Paul asserts that he has a clean conscience about this, because he genuinely intended to return to them. His objective in returning to Corinth is that *you might twice receive a blessing*. The *blessing* being referred to is explained in the following verse which begins with *that is* (in other words), *to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea* (v 16).

The *twice receive a blessing* is to *by you be helped on my journey to Judea*. The additional blessing then is that the Corinthians would have another opportunity to participate with Paul in ministering to Judea. We have a good idea of what Paul has in mind here, because in Chapters 8 and 9 Paul reveals that he had gained a commitment from the Corinthians to begin setting aside an offering to provide financial relief to the Jewish believers in Judea. Therefore the authors assert here that to *twice receive a blessing* is to have a second opportunity to give a financial gift to help others.

We don’t usually think of it as a “blessing” for someone to come ask us for money. However, if it is a worthy cause, it is absolutely a blessing. As will be asserted in Chapter 9:

“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”
(2 Corinthians 9:6)

Blessing as used here can also carry with it a connotation of “grace/favor” or “benefit.” It is possible that Paul had a double-meaning in a “second blessing” or “second grace” as he explains in verse 16, *that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea*. First, he would bless them by coming to Corinth both on his way to Macedonia and his way from Macedonia.

But it seems the greater emphasis is that they could *receive a blessing* by participating in a financial contribution for his journey to Jerusalem and supporting the work there. As he goes on

to explain in Chapter 2, this is no longer his plan, but he is basing his changing of his plan on “the testimony of our conscience”:

Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time? (v 17).

The pronoun has now switched to “I” so we can presume this is primarily dealing with Paul.

Perhaps a charge had been made that Paul was first planning to come through Corinth for his own financial gain. This could also be inferred from 2 Corinthians 8:19-20 where a man described as a “brother whose fame in the things of the gospel” was sent along to collect the money to make it clear that neither Paul nor Timothy were gaining any benefit, and that all would be delivered to Judah to help those in distress there.

Paul makes it clear that his decision not to come as he had first planned was not *according to the flesh*. This carries the same meaning as his defense in verse 12, “not in fleshly wisdom.” This decision by Paul was not about his own desires or even his needs, but was based on concern, love, and compassion for the church at Corinth.

Paul appears to ask and answer a question that is an accusation, namely whether *So that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?* (v 17). Paul is raising the accusation that he is disingenuous. Whether he follows a pattern of saying one thing but doing another.

While this may sound a bit strange to us, it was not unusual in the time of Paul to use *yes, yes*, for an adamant affirmation *and no, no* for an adamant denial. The question raised is whether Paul says “absolutely for certain yes” and “absolutely certain no” at the same time, presumably depending on who he is talking to.

Basically, Paul is defending his integrity. He asserts that his *yes* means *yes*, and his *no* means *no*. He makes the assertion that he is operating in integrity by saying his word is an extension of God’s faithfulness: *But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no* (v 18). Paul is appealing to the Corinthians that just as God and His word are faithful, so is his own word. There was no duplicity in what he told them originally of his plans, for he was sincere when he said he would come to Corinth. Any change is based on the purpose and plan of God for him and for the church at Corinth:

For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him (v 19).

Paul had written previously that when he was at Corinth, “we preach Christ crucified.” (1 Corinthians 1:23) For him there was no equivocating: Christ Jesus is the Son of God, crucified and resurrected, the living Christ. Just as there was no “yes” and “no” in their preaching of Christ, there is no “yes” and “no” in Paul’s word to the Corinthians.

Paul’s word *is yes in Him. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes* (v 20). All of the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ Jesus; they are *yes*. He is elevating his defense of his character and integrity to show that he is a man of God and his words and decisions are

truths and promises that the Corinthians can rely on. His “yes” is “yes” and his “no” is “no.” *Therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us* (v 20).

The word *Amen* is a transliteration of the Greek word “amen” and the Hebrew word “amen.” It generally expresses the sentiment of “so be it” or “this is true.” Here Paul says God is our Amen, so it likely refers to God as the One who is true and faithful. Paul asserts that just as God is true and faithful, so are Paul and his companions true and faithful because God is working *through us*. Paul’s integrity is *through Him*, and God’s faithfulness and glory flows *through us*.

When Jesus places an *Amen* before his own sayings, the point is to stress the truth and validity of the sayings by his own acknowledgement of them. Paul’s use of *Amen* is to put an exclamation point to the validity and faithfulness of God’s Word and that God’s *Amen* is pronounced through Paul and his colleagues *to the glory of God through us*.

The word *glory* translates the Greek word “doxa” and means something or someone’s essence is being observed truly ([1 Corinthians 15:40-41](#)). When God’s *glory* is shown *through us*, it means that we are living out and demonstrating His attributes to others. Jesus stated in the Gospel of John that when believers abide in Jesus and walk in His ways, they glorify the Father:

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” (John 15:7-8)

This means believers have the immense privilege of showing God to others through their actions. It is a high and lofty calling. But in order to exercise that, we must abide in following Jesus’s example.

It is good for the church today, as it was for the church in Corinth, to be reminded that Christ Jesus is who He says He is, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6) He is the Yes and the Amen to all of the promises of God.

Paul continues, *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ* (v 21). *Establishes*, as used in the New Testament, implies something that is legally guaranteed. This is the same word Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, when he says, “who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

For Paul, this not just something in the past, but a continuing experience with the living Christ. For him, it is what it means to be “in Christ.” He goes on to describe how God *establishes us with you in Christ. And anointed us*. The word *anointed* has its background in the Old Testament where it was used in the sense of anointing kings and rulers with oil to officially designate their power and jurisdiction. In the New Testament, the word for the Messiah, or Christ, is literally the “anointed one.”

Now, as believers and “new creations in Christ Jesus” we have an anointing in and through the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John writes,

“the anointing which you received from Him [Christ] abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him”

(1 John 2:27)

This seems to be the context that Paul uses here in verse 21. We are *anointed* by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit and this confirms and *establishes us* in Christ *who also sealed us* (v 22). The word *sealed* often referred to marks of legal validation, identity, or security, and points toward Revelation, where *sealed* shows someone who is marked with a seal of ownership. The word can also refer to baptism, where believers signify the inner establishment and anointing by an outward expression of immersing in water.

Not only did God seal us, He *gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge* (v. 22). The act by God of giving the Holy Spirit to believers encompasses the experiences of being *anointed* and *sealed*. The *pledge* is a deposit of the fullness of God and the reality of His presence in our lives. Peter describes this in Acts 2:38, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Paul had written in his first letter to the church at Corinth, “You were bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 7:23). Now Paul reminds the church at Corinth and the church of today that God has given us the *pledge*, the deposit, the down payment in the Holy Spirit and this is an “anointing” and “sealing” of the full promise of God. He has firmly “established” Paul and the Corinthian believers in Christ.

Biblical Text

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