

2 Corinthians 2:10-11

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/2cor/2cor-2/2-corinthians-210-11/>

A troublemaking believer, after being rebuked and disciplined, should be restored back to fellowship with the body of believers. Otherwise Satan can take advantage of us, if we do not forgive and love one another.

In the previous section, Paul exhorted the believers in Corinth to prove their obedience in the faith of Jesus Christ by now offering forgiveness in love to the person who upset the church. This person apparently attacked Paul and his teaching and created a lot of sorrow. Paul has now exhorted them to forgive him and affirm their love for him.

Paul now adds, *But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ* (v 10).

It appears here that Paul is leaving it to the discretion of the Corinthians, who are there on the ground, to determine whether the offending party has repented sufficiently to restore fellowship with him. Whatever they decide, he will accept as sufficient for himself. Paul will *forgive also* any matter which the Corinthian church has forgiven.

The forgiveness Paul speaks of deals with restoration of fellowship rather than a judicial nature of forgiveness. In God's sight, all sins were nailed to the cross with Christ (Colossians 2:14). So all sins have already been judicially dealt with as it pertains to our relationship in God's sight. All that is required to gain the full benefit of this amazing grace is to receive it in faith (John 3:14-15).

But fellowship is a different matter. As John asserts, in order for our joy to be full we must walk in fellowship with God, confessing our sins (1 John 1:3-4, 9). Jesus asserted in His teaching of "The Lord's Prayer" that our fellowship with God, and Him forgiving us, depends on our willingness to forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15).

Paul here says that he has expressed such forgiveness *in the presence of Christ*. In saying this, it appears he is exercising the same sort of spiritual confession in prayer we see the Apostle John teach in 1 John 1. Paul did this *for your sakes*. His thought here is for their welfare. This again supports the biblical teaching that our fullness of joy comes through exercising forgiveness toward one another.

This has a number of practical applications. We are prone as humans to attempt to control the past with regret. This is of course an illusion, no amount of sorrow will change the past. We are also prone to attempt to control the future with anxiety—again no amount of worry will control eventual outcomes. We are also prone to attempt to punish or control others through bitterness, anger, or hate. Sadly, this only poisons us.

Notwithstanding the apparent logic that shows us the futility of chasing such illusions of control, we are still prone to do so. Part of the reason is because of the works of *Satan*. Paul's assertion is

that forgiveness protects us from Satan, saying it is in our best interest to forgive *so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes* (v 11).

The Greek word translated *schemes* is elsewhere translated as:

- “Minds” (2 Corinthians 3:14, 4:4, 11:3, Philippians 4:7), and
- “Thought” (2 Corinthians 10:5)

It would seem here that Paul has in mind a mental model that Satan is perpetually whispering offenses to our minds, seeking to get us to see ourselves as victims and others as enemies in need of punishment from us. If we allow him to succeed in such a temptation it will cause us to obsess on self and move us away from love.

In obsessing on self and insisting on being the judge (in God’s place), we will be robbed of joy and fellowship with others.

But Paul is on to Satan, he is *not ignorant of his schemes*. And apparently Paul has taught the Corinthians this lesson as well because he says *we*, not just him, but *we are not ignorant of his schemes*. The way to thwart Satan and his *schemes* is to forgive. Forgiveness simply turns the offense over to God, to let Him be the judge. As Paul asserted in his first letter:

“...do not go on passing judgment before the time [of judgment], 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.”
(1 Corinthians 4:5)

It is our nature to “climb into God’s chair” and pronounce judgment upon others. But God knows all. He sees thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). He will judge rightly. Our focus should be on having a clean heart before Him, examining ourselves and confessing our sins before Him that we might have a clean heart and walk in the purity of faith. This is the path to our greatest fulfillment, both in this life as well as in the next.

This joy is something that Satan apparently seeks to steer us away from through his *schemes*. The Apostle Peter describes Satan as being like a “roaring lion” who is on the prowl, seeking those whom he can “devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Peter urges his followers to “resist him.” James promises that if we resist the devil, submitting to God, then the devil will flee from us (James 4:7). We can take from this that when we follow in God’s ways, forgiving others as He has forgiven us, we escape the snares of the devil, we escape the traps he sets which are meant to rob us of joy, peace, and fulfillment.

Biblical Text

¹⁰ But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, ¹¹ so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.