

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition
Part II: Relying On God To Stay Effectively Simple And Sincere When Opposed
(2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11)

I. Introduction

- A. Facing opposition from others to God's will for him is always difficult for a believer, all the more so in light of the fact that the wrestling experienced involves a struggle with Satanic forces, Ephesians 6:10-12.
- B. However, we have victory in such trials by depending on the Lord for all we need, especially in the realm of relying on Him to stay **effective** by being **disarmingly simple** and **sincere** if **misrepresented** by **foes!**
- C. Paul exemplified this action in 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11 in its context, and we view it for our instruction:

II. Relying On God To Stay Effectively Simple And Sincere When Opposed, 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11.

- A. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to "defend the authenticity" of his "apostleship and his message" to believers influenced by false teachers to question these issues, Bible Knowledge Commentary, N. T., p. 552.
- B. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11, Paul addressed one such charge, and we view its setting (as follows):
 - 1. In 1 Corinthians 16:5-7, Paul had claimed he would stop by Corinth "by way of Macedonia and spend the winter" with his readers, "a course . . . he eventually followed (cf. Acts 20:1-3)." (Ibid., p. 556)
 - 2. He had planned to make **two** stops in Corinth, the **first** "from Ephesus to Corinth and then on to Macedonia" and the **second** "as he retraced" this route on his return trip, Ibid. (2 Corinthians 1:16)
 - 3. However, Paul had changed his "itinerary (cf. 2:1)" to visit them just once, so his foes had claimed such "vacillating" revealed "unreliability, affecting not only where he went but what he said", Ibid.
- C. Hence, 2 Corinthians 1:12-2:4 exposed Paul's godly **simplicity** and **sincerity** that **countered** this **charge**:
 - 1. First, Paul denied the charge that he was vacillating and unreliable, noting that **in God's grace**, and hence in His power, he had dealt well with his readers in godly **simplicity** and **sincerity**, 2 Cor. 1:12-22:
 - a. Paul explained that his ministry team had relied on **God's grace**, on His **power** (Gal. 5:16-23) to exhibit godly **simplicity** and **sincerity** especially with his Corinthian readers, 2 Cor. 1:12. [Some Greek manuscripts read "holiness" (*hagiotati*) versus "simplicity" (*haplotati*); yet, (1) Paul never uses *hagiotati* elsewhere in the New Testament, and (2) since the other two [lesser] manuscript readings of *praotati* and *splagchnois* "are secondary variations that presuppose *haplotati*," i.e., that show scribes tried to explain *haplotati*, we agree with the KJV and ESV that "simplicity" must be the original reading. (Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek N. T., 1971, p. 575)]
 - b. Paul added that this simple sincerity had been behind his initial claim to visit his readers twice that they might have a double blessing of his ministry unto them, 2 Corinthians 1:13-16.
 - c. Thus, Paul added that his decision to alter his initial itinerary did not mean that he had an unreliable character (2 Corinthians 1:17), but that his word to them had always been true, as had been his ministry of God's Word about the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 1:18-19.
 - d. For this reason, the Corinthians had been moved by the Holy Spirit to believe Paul's Gospel, so they had given the "Amen" response to that ministry of God's Word, 2 Corinthians 1:20.
 - e. God had thus saved and sealed these believers with the Holy Spirit of promise, 2 Cor. 1:21-22.
 - 2. Second, Paul explained his reason for changing his itinerary had risen out of his love for them, that he made the change to spare them grief over a disciplinary act he initiated among them, 2 Cor. 1:23-2:11:
 - a. Paul asserted that his change in plan had arisen from his consistent love for his readers, that to spare them needless pain, he had stayed away from them, but not as a lord over their faith, but as one who worked to edify and nurture the Corinthians out of his godly love for them, 2 Corinthians 1:23-24.
 - b. To explain, Paul mentioned a disciplinary act he had directed they take in a letter he wrote to them, showing he had stayed away from them until they had obeyed him lest he would have to punish them severely in his authority when he arrived and found the issue unsettled, 2 Cor. 2:1-11; 13:1-2.

Lesson: *In facing slander from his foes, Paul relied on God's grace, and so on His power, to minister in simplicity and sincerity, qualities that worked by their very innate force to counter the slander itself.*

Application: *If misrepresented by foes in doing God's will, may we (1) rely on the Holy Spirit to exhibit (2) simple sincerity to (3) remain disarmingly effective for Christ! (cf. Ephesians 6:10-12, 13-14a)*