CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

2 Corinthians Chapter 2 — Forgiveness, Triumph, and the Fragrance of Christ

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

2 Corinthians Chapter 2 continues Paul's explanation of why he did not come back to Corinth.

At the end of Chapter 1, Paul said he stayed away **"to spare you."**

Now he opens his heart even more.

His last visit had been painful.

He did not want another visit filled with sorrow.

So instead of coming, he wrote a letter.

It was a hard letter.

He wrote it with tears.

But he did not write to hurt them.

He wrote to show how much he loved them.

The letter worked.

The church took action against a man who had caused great harm.

But now Paul was worried about something else.

The church had disciplined the man.

He had repented.

And now they needed to forgive him.

Paul knew that discipline without restoration could crush a person.

And he knew that Satan would use unforgiveness to divide the church.

Then Paul tells how restless he was while waiting for news.

Even with an open door for the gospel in Troas, he could not rest.

But suddenly he bursts into praise.

"Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ."

Paul pictures a Roman victory parade.

God is the conquering King, and His servants march in His triumph.

Wherever they go, they spread the fragrance of Christ.

To some, it is the smell of death.

To others, it is the fragrance of life.

The chapter moves through four movements:

- Paul's Loving Restraint (verses 1–4).
- Forgiveness for the Offender (verses 5–11).
- Restlessness in Troas (verses 12–13).
- The Fragrance of Christ (verses 14–17).

The central truth of 2 Corinthians 2 is:

Godly correction must lead to forgiveness and restoration, and those who serve Christ are led by God in His triumph, spreading the fragrance of Christ that brings life to some and judgment to others.

I. NOT AGAIN IN SORROW

2 Corinthians 2:1 — Paul's Decision

“I determined within myself not to come to you again in sorrow.”

Paul explains his decision.

“I determined within myself.”

This was a deliberate choice.

“Not to come to you again in sorrow.”

The word **again** tells us something important.

Paul had already made one sorrowful visit.

It had been painful for everyone.

He did not want to repeat it.

So he chose to wait.

This was not avoidance.

It was wisdom and love.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 1:23

> I call God as my witness that it was to spare you that I did not come back to Corinth.

2 Corinthians 13:2

> I already warned you when I was with you the second time, and I warn you again now that I am away: When I come again, I will not spare those who sinned before or any of the others.

2 Corinthians 12:21

> I am afraid that when I come again, my God will humble me in front of you. I may have to grieve over many who sinned earlier and have not turned away from the impurity, sexual sin, and shameless living they took part in.

Spiritual Principle

Love sometimes chooses the timing of correction carefully.

II. WHO WILL BRING ME JOY?

2 Corinthians 2:2 — The Ones I Have Grieved

“For if I cause you grief, who then will bring me joy but the very ones I have grieved?”

Paul shows how closely his heart was tied to theirs.

“If I cause you grief.”

If Paul came and made them sad—

“Who then will bring me joy?”

The Corinthians were his source of joy.

If they were grieving, he would have no joy either.

Paul was not a cold leader handing out rebukes.

He was a spiritual father whose happiness was bound up with his children's.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 7:9

> Now I am glad, not because you were made sad, but because your sadness led you to turn away from sin. You became sad as God wanted, so you were not harmed by us in any way.

Philippians 2:2

> Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, and being one in spirit and purpose.

Galatians 4:19

> My dear children, I am again going through the pain of childbirth for you until Christ is formed in you.

Spiritual Principle

A true shepherd's joy is tied to the well-being of the flock.

III. MY JOY IS YOUR JOY

2 Corinthians 2:3 — Why Paul Wrote

“I wrote as I did so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice. I have confidence that my joy is the joy of you all.”

Paul explains why he wrote a letter instead of coming in person.

“I wrote as I did.”

He wrote to give them time to set things right.

“So that when I came, I would not have sorrow.”

He hoped that when he finally came, the problems would already be solved.

“I have confidence that my joy is the joy of you all.”

Paul believed that what made him glad would make them glad too.

He trusted that, deep down, they wanted the same thing he did.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 7:13

> This is why we are encouraged. And besides our own encouragement, we were especially glad to see how happy Titus was, because all of you refreshed his spirit.

Galatians 5:10

> I am confident in the Lord that you will not take a different view. But whoever is troubling you will pay the penalty, whoever he is.

Philippians 1:25

> Since I am sure of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.

Spiritual Principle

Wise correction gives people time and opportunity to make things right.

IV. WITH MANY TEARS

2 Corinthians 2:4 — The Depth of My Love

“Out of great distress and anguish of heart, with many tears, I wrote to you—not to grieve you but to show you the depth of my love for you.”

This verse shows Paul's heart.

“Out of great distress and anguish of heart.”

Writing that letter was painful for Paul.

“With many tears.”

He wept as he wrote.

Paul was not angry and cold.

He was heartbroken.

“Not to grieve you.”

His goal was not to hurt them.

“But to show you the depth of my love for you.”

Hard words, spoken with tears, are an act of love.

Paul loved them too much to let them stay in sin.

Cross References

Acts 20:31

> So be on guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

2 Corinthians 7:8

> Even if my letter made you sad, I do not regret it. I did regret it at first, because I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while.

Jeremiah 9:1

> Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the people of my nation who have been killed.

Spiritual Principle

Loving correction is given with tears, not with anger.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Hard words spoken with a broken heart are an act of love.

V. NOT ME ALONE

2 Corinthians 2:5 — Grieving the Whole Church

“If anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me alone but to some extent all of you.”

Paul now turns to the man who caused the trouble.

“If anyone has caused grief.”

Paul does not name him.

Bible students are not sure who he was.

Some believe he was the man living in sin in 1 Corinthians 5.

Many believe he was someone who openly opposed and insulted Paul during his painful visit.

“He has not grieved me alone.”

Paul does not make it about himself.

“But to some extent all of you.”

This man's sin hurt the whole church.

Sin is never only private.

It affects the whole body.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 5:1

> It is actually reported that there is sexual sin among you of a kind that even unbelievers do not tolerate: a man is living with his father's wife.

2 Corinthians 7:12

> So even though I wrote to you, it was not mainly because of the one who did wrong or the one who was wronged. It was so that you could see for yourselves, before God, how devoted to us you really are.

Galatians 6:1

> Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should gently help that person back on the right path. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Spiritual Principle

Sin in the church affects the whole body, not just one person.

Key Truth

Paul did not make the offense about his own hurt feelings.

VI. THE PUNISHMENT IS SUFFICIENT

2 Corinthians 2:6 — Enough

“The punishment inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man.”

The church had acted.

“The punishment inflicted by the majority.”

Most of the church had agreed to discipline the man.

Perhaps he had been removed from fellowship.

“Is sufficient for such a man.”

Paul says, **“That is enough.”**

The discipline had done its work.

The man had repented.

There was no need to keep punishing him.

Discipline has a purpose.

When that purpose is achieved, it must stop.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 5:5

> hand this man over to Satan so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 25:3

> The judge may sentence him to no more than forty lashes. If he is beaten more than that, your fellow Israelite will be disgraced in your sight.

Matthew 18:17

> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would an unbeliever or a tax collector.

Spiritual Principle

Church discipline has limits; when it has done its work, it must end.

VII. FORGIVE AND COMFORT HIM

2 Corinthians 2:7 — Lest He Be Overwhelmed

“Instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”

Now Paul tells them what to do next.

“You ought to forgive.”

Release him from the debt of his sin.

“And comfort him.”

Come alongside him and encourage him.

This is the same word Paul used so often in Chapter 1.

The comfort God gave Paul, the church must now give this man.

“So that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”

The man was so sorry for his sin that he was in danger of being crushed.

Too much sorrow can lead to despair.

He might give up on God and the church altogether.

Forgiveness keeps repentance from turning into hopelessness.

Cross References

Galatians 6:1

> Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should gently help that person back on the right path. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Ephesians 4:32

> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God forgave you in Christ.

Colossians 3:13

> Be patient with each other, and forgive anyone who has a complaint against you. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Spiritual Principle

When a sinner repents, the church must forgive and comfort, not keep punishing.

Application

Is there someone who has repented whom you have not yet fully forgiven?

VIII. REAFFIRM YOUR LOVE

2 Corinthians 2:8 — Make It Clear

“Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.”

Paul gives one more instruction.

“Reaffirm your love for him.”

The word means to confirm officially or publicly.

The church had publicly disciplined him.

Now it should publicly welcome him back.

Forgiveness should be clear.

He needed to know he was loved and accepted again.

Private forgiveness is good.

But public restoration heals the wound fully.

Cross References

1 John 4:7

> Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Colossians 3:14

> And over all these, put on love, which ties everything together in perfect unity.

Philemon 1:7

> Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of God's people.

Spiritual Principle

Restoration should be as clear as the discipline was.

IX. A TEST OF OBEDIENCE

2 Corinthians 2:9 — The Reason I Wrote

“The reason I wrote was to test you and see if you would be obedient in everything.”

Paul explains another purpose for his letter.

“To test you.”

He wanted to see their response.

“And see if you would be obedient in everything.”

Would they follow God's word even when it was hard?

They had passed the first test by disciplining the offender.

Now they faced a second test:

Would they obey by forgiving him?

Obedience includes both correction and forgiveness.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 4:19

> But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord wants me to. Then I will find out not only what these proud people are saying, but what power they really have.

2 Corinthians 10:6

> And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience once your own obedience is complete.

2 Corinthians 13:5

> Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Don't you realize that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you fail the test?

Spiritual Principle

Obedience to God includes both correcting sin and forgiving the repentant.

X. IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 2:10 — I Also Forgive

“If you forgive anyone, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the presence of Christ for your sake,”

Paul joins the church in forgiving.

“If you forgive anyone, I also forgive.”

Paul and the church stood together.

“If there was anything to forgive.”

Paul downplays his own hurt.

He does not want to make the matter about himself.

“I have forgiven in the presence of Christ.”

Paul forgave as one standing before Christ.

He remembered how much Christ had forgiven him.

“For your sake.”

His forgiveness was for the good of the church.

Cross References

Matthew 6:14

> For if you forgive others when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Ephesians 4:32

> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God forgave you in Christ.

Luke 17:3

> So watch yourselves. If your brother or sister sins, correct them. And if they repent, forgive them.

Spiritual Principle

We forgive others as people who stand in the presence of the Christ who forgave us.

Key Truth

Forgiveness is easier when we remember how much we have been forgiven.

XI. SATAN'S SCHEMES

2 Corinthians 2:11 — Not Unaware

“so that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

Paul gives one more reason for forgiveness.

“So that Satan might not outwit us.”

Satan is always looking for an advantage.

If the church refused to forgive, Satan could use it.

He could drive the repentant man into despair.

He could divide the church through bitterness.

He could damage the church's witness.

“For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

Satan has strategies.

One of his favorites is to use unforgiveness to destroy relationships.

Forgiveness takes that weapon out of his hands.

Cross References

Ephesians 6:11

> Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand firm against the devil's schemes.

1 Peter 5:8

> Be alert and clear-minded. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

Job 1:7

> The LORD asked Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”

Spiritual Principle

Unforgiveness gives Satan an opportunity; forgiveness takes it away.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Satan loves a church that will not forgive.

Application

Is unforgiveness giving the enemy a foothold in your life or relationships?

XII. AN OPEN DOOR IN TROAS

2 Corinthians 2:12 — To Preach the Gospel

“When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, the Lord opened a door for me,”

Paul now goes back to his story.

“When I came to Troas.”

Troas was a port city on the coast of Asia.

“To preach the gospel of Christ.”

Paul's purpose was always the gospel.

“The Lord opened a door for me.”

There was a real opportunity to reach people.

This was exactly what Paul usually longed for.

Cross References

Acts 20:5

> These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas.

Colossians 4:3

> At the same time, pray for us too, that God will open a door for our message, so that we can tell the secret truth about Christ, for which I am in chains.

1 Corinthians 16:9

> because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

Spiritual Principle

God opens doors for the gospel, even in difficult seasons.

XIII. NO PEACE OF MIND

2 Corinthians 2:13 — Looking for Titus

“but I had no peace of mind because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.”

Even with an open door, Paul could not rest.

“I had no peace of mind.”

Paul was deeply anxious.

“Because I did not find my brother Titus there.”

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth with his sorrowful letter.

He was waiting for Titus to bring news of how the Corinthians had responded.

When Titus did not arrive, Paul's worry grew.

“So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.”

Paul left Troas to go and find Titus.

This shows how much Paul loved the Corinthians.

He could not focus on anything else until he knew they were all right.

It also shows that even great servants of God feel anxiety.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 7:5

> When we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest. We faced trouble on every side—conflicts outside and fears inside.

Acts 20:1

> When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and encouraged them. Then he said goodbye and set out for Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 8:16

> Thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you.

Spiritual Principle

Deep love for others can bring deep concern for them.

Key Truth

Paul was honest about his anxiety.

God's servants are not machines; they have hearts.

XIV. LED IN TRIUMPH

2 Corinthians 2:14 — Thanks Be to God

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him."

Suddenly Paul breaks into praise.

In Chapter 7, he will finish the story and tell how Titus finally arrived with good news.

But here he cannot wait to give thanks.

"Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ."

Paul pictures a Roman **triumph.**

When a Roman general won a great victory, he led a grand parade through the city.

His soldiers marched behind him.

Captured enemies were led in the procession.

Incense was burned along the way, filling the streets with fragrance.

Paul says God is the victorious general.

And His servants are led in His triumphal procession.

Even when Paul felt anxious and weak, God was leading him in victory.

“And through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him.”

Like incense filling the air, the knowledge of Christ spreads wherever God's servants go.

Cross References

Colossians 2:15

> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public show of them, leading them in a victory parade by the cross.

1 Corinthians 15:57

> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:2

> Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Spiritual Principle

God leads His servants in Christ's triumph, even when they feel weak.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Our feelings may say defeat, but God says triumph in Christ.

XV. THE SWEET FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 2:15 — To God

“For we are to God the sweet fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.”

Paul continues the picture.

“For we are to God the sweet fragrance of Christ.”

When believers live for Christ and share the gospel, it is like a pleasing aroma to God.

Our lives and witness bring Him delight.

“Among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.”

The fragrance spreads to everyone.

Some are being saved.

Some are perishing.

But to God, the fragrance is always pleasing.

Our faithfulness pleases God whether or not people respond.

Cross References

Ephesians 5:2

> Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Philippians 4:18

> I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, a sacrifice that God accepts and that pleases Him.

John 12:3

> Then Mary took about a pint of very expensive perfume made from pure nard. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. The whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful witness is pleasing to God, no matter how people respond.

Application

Does your life carry the fragrance of Christ?

XVI. DEATH AND LIFE

2 Corinthians 2:16 — Who Is Sufficient?

“To the one we are the smell of death leading to death; to the other, the fragrance of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?”

The same fragrance has two opposite effects.

“To the one we are the smell of death leading to death.”

In a Roman triumph, the incense meant victory for the soldiers.

But for the captives, it meant defeat and death.

To those who reject Christ, the gospel is a message of judgment.

“To the other, the fragrance of life leading to life.”

To those who believe, the gospel is the sweet smell of eternal life.

“And who is sufficient for these things?”

Paul feels the weight of this.

Who is adequate to carry a message with eternal consequences?

No one, in their own strength.

In the next chapter, Paul will answer:

“Our sufficiency comes from God.”

Cross References

2 Corinthians 3:5

> It is not that we are able to claim anything as coming from ourselves. Our ability comes from God.

John 5:24

> I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes the One who sent Me has eternal life. He will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

Luke 2:34

> Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, His mother: “This child is set to cause the fall and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed,”

Spiritual Principle

The gospel brings life to those who believe and judgment to those who reject it.

Key Truth

No one is neutral toward the gospel.

It always leads somewhere.

XVII. NOT PEDDLERS OF GOD'S WORD

2 Corinthians 2:17 — With Sincerity

“Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.”

Paul contrasts himself with false teachers.

“Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit.”

The word **peddle** was used for dishonest merchants.

Some sellers watered down their wine to make more money.

Some teachers did the same with God's word.

They changed it, softened it, or sold it for personal gain.

Paul refused to do that.

“In Christ we speak before God with sincerity.”

Paul spoke honestly, with pure motives.

“As those sent from God.”

He knew he was God's messenger.

And he knew God was watching.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 2:5

> As you know, we never used flattery, and we never put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.

2 Corinthians 4:2

> Instead, we have refused to use secret and shameful methods. We do not use tricks, and we do not twist God's word. Instead, by plainly telling the truth, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

Titus 1:11

> They must be silenced, because they are upsetting whole families by teaching things they should not teach, and they do it for dishonest gain.

Spiritual Principle

God's word must be shared honestly, without watering it down or using it for personal gain.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Those who speak for God must speak as those who stand before God.

XVIII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 2

1. Correction Must Lead to Restoration

“You ought to forgive and comfort him.”

Principle:

Discipline in the church is necessary, but forgiveness and love must follow to prevent overwhelming sorrow.

2. Satan Exploits Division

“So that Satan might not outwit us.”

Principle:

Unforgiveness gives Satan a foothold, but unity and grace disarm his schemes.

3. Ministry Is Partnership with God

“The Lord opened a door for me.”

Principle:

Even when Paul faced restlessness and discouragement, God opened doors for the gospel.

4. Christ Makes Us Victorious

“Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”

Principle:

Believers are led in triumph, not by their own power, but by Christ's work through them.

5. The Gospel Has a Dual Effect

“The smell of death leading to death... the fragrance of life leading to life.”

Principle:

To those who reject it, the gospel is a message of judgment; to those who believe, it is life eternal.

6. Authenticity Matters

“We do not peddle the word of God for profit.”

Principle:

True ministers of Christ do not corrupt God's word but speak with sincerity, knowing they stand before God.

XIX. DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION

2 Corinthians 2 completes the picture of church discipline.

1 Corinthians 5 — The Call to Discipline

The church must not ignore open, unrepentant sin.

2 Corinthians 2 — The Call to Restore

When the sinner repents, the church must forgive and welcome him back.

Five Steps of Restoration

- **Recognize** that the discipline has done its work.
- **Forgive** the repentant person.
- **Comfort** him so he is not crushed by sorrow.
- **Reaffirm** your love clearly and publicly.

- **Guard** against Satan's schemes of bitterness and division.

The Danger of Too Little Discipline

Sin spreads, and the church loses its holiness.

The Danger of Too Much Discipline

The repentant person is crushed, and Satan gains a foothold.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Discipline without restoration is cruelty; restoration without discipline is carelessness; God calls His church to both.

XX. THE ROMAN TRIUMPH

Paul's picture in verses 14–16 comes from a Roman victory parade.

The Victorious General

He rode in a chariot at the front of the procession.

In Paul's picture, God is the conqueror and Christ's victory is being celebrated.

The Procession

Soldiers and captives followed behind.

Paul sees God's servants as part of Christ's triumphal procession.

The Incense

Incense was burned along the way, filling the streets with fragrance.

The knowledge of Christ spreads like that fragrance.

Two Meanings of the Same Smell

For the victors, the incense meant life and celebration.

For the condemned captives, it meant death.

The gospel likewise brings life to some and judgment to others.

Key Truth

God's servants march in Christ's victory, spreading the fragrance of the gospel wherever they go.

XXI. WHAT 2 CORINTHIANS 2 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

We Forgive in His Presence

“I have forgiven in the presence of Christ.”

He Leads Us in Triumph

“Who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”

His Fragrance Spreads Through Us

“We are to God the sweet fragrance of Christ.”

The Gospel Is About Him

“To preach the gospel of Christ.”

We Speak in Him

“In Christ we speak before God with sincerity.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Christ's victory gives us triumph, His forgiveness teaches us to forgive, and His fragrance fills our witness.

XXII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did Paul decide not to visit Corinth again right away?

His last visit had been painful.

He did not want to come again in sorrow, so he gave them time to make things right.

Question 2

How did Paul feel when he wrote his sorrowful letter?

He wrote with great distress, anguish, and many tears.

He wrote not to hurt them, but to show his love.

Question 3

Who was the man who caused grief?

Paul does not name him.

Some believe he was the man from 1 Corinthians 5.

Many believe he was someone who openly opposed Paul during his painful visit.

Question 4

Why did Paul say the punishment was sufficient?

The discipline had done its work.

The man had repented, so there was no need to keep punishing him.

Question 5

What did Paul ask the church to do for the man?

Forgive him, comfort him, and reaffirm their love for him.

Question 6

Why is it dangerous not to forgive a repentant person?

He could be overwhelmed by sorrow and fall into despair.

And Satan could use unforgiveness to divide the church.

Question 7

What are Satan's schemes in this situation?

To use bitterness and unforgiveness to destroy the repentant person and divide the church.

Question 8

Why did Paul leave Troas even though the Lord had opened a door?

He had no peace because he had not found Titus.

He was anxious to hear how the Corinthians had responded to his letter.

Question 9

What picture does Paul use in verse 14?

A Roman victory parade, where incense filled the streets.

God leads His servants in Christ's triumph, spreading the fragrance of the gospel.

Question 10

How can the same gospel be both life and death?

To those who believe, it brings eternal life.

To those who reject it, it confirms their judgment.

Question 11

What does it mean to “peddle” the word of God?

To change it, water it down, or use it for personal profit.

Paul refused to do this.

Question 12

What should 2 Corinthians 2 change about the way Christians live today?

2 Corinthians 2 should cause believers to live:

- Correcting others with tears, not anger.
- Forgiving those who repent.
- Comforting those crushed by sorrow.
- Making forgiveness clear and complete.
- Watching for Satan's schemes of bitterness.
- Trusting that God leads them in triumph.
- Spreading the fragrance of Christ.
- Sharing God's word honestly and sincerely.

XXIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians 2 asks several important questions.

How Do I Correct Others?

With anger, or with tears and love?

Is There Someone I Need to Forgive?

Someone who has repented, but I am still holding back?

Do I Make My Forgiveness Clear?

Or do I leave people unsure of where they stand?

Am I Giving Satan a Foothold?

Is bitterness or unforgiveness opening a door for him?

How Do I Handle Anxiety?

Do I bring my worries to God?

Do I Believe God Leads Me in Triumph?

Even when I feel weak?

Does My Life Carry the Fragrance of Christ?

What do people sense when they are around me?

Am I Honest with God's Word?

Do I share it faithfully, without watering it down?

XXIV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Forgiveness Closes the Door on Satan”

Satan cannot undo the cross.

He cannot take away a believer's salvation.

But he can try to destroy relationships.

And one of his favorite tools is unforgiveness.

When a church refuses to forgive, the repentant person is crushed.

When believers hold grudges, bitterness spreads.

When resentment grows, unity breaks.

And Satan gets what he wants.

But when believers forgive, something powerful happens.

The repentant are restored.

Relationships are healed.

Unity returns.

And Satan loses his foothold.

This creates a powerful principle.

Forgiveness is not only an act of love.

It is an act of spiritual warfare.

Principle:

Every time you forgive, you close a door that Satan wanted to open.

XXV. FINAL APPLICATION

2 Corinthians Chapter 2 shows us a pastor's heart.

Paul corrected with tears.

He waited with patience.

He forgave freely.

He worried deeply.

And then he praised God for leading him in triumph.

The Corinthians had obeyed his call to discipline.

Now they needed to obey his call to forgive.

2 Corinthians 2 therefore reminds us:

Never correct without love.

Never discipline without hope of restoration.

Never withhold forgiveness from the repentant.

Never forget that Satan schemes to divide.

Never doubt that God leads His people in triumph.

The church does not need harsh judges or careless friends.

It needs:

Loving correction.

Generous forgiveness.

Watchful hearts.

And lives that carry the fragrance of Christ.

The same gospel still spreads:

Tell people that Christ has won the victory.

Tell people that God forgives the repentant.

Tell people that the gospel is the fragrance of life.

Tell people the truth, without watering it down.

And wherever you go:

Forgive freely.

Comfort the broken.

Walk in Christ's triumph.

Spread His fragrance.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for leaders who correct with love and tears.

Thank You for the gift of forgiveness.

Thank You that You forgive the repentant and comfort the broken.

Thank You that we are not unaware of Satan's schemes.

Thank You that You open doors for the gospel.

Thank You that You always lead us in triumph in Christ.

Thank You that through us You spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ.

Forgive us when we have corrected others without love.

Forgive us when we have held back forgiveness from those who have repented.

Forgive us when we have given Satan a foothold through bitterness.

Forgive us when we have doubted Your victory because we felt weak.

Help us forgive as You have forgiven us.

Help us comfort those who are overwhelmed by sorrow.

Help us make our love clear to those who need it.

Protect Your church from division and bitterness.

Fill our lives with the fragrance of Christ.

Make us honest and sincere with Your word.

And lead us in Christ's triumph wherever we go.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him.” — 2 Corinthians 2:14

Central Truth

Godly correction must lead to forgiveness and restoration, and those who serve Christ are led by God in His triumph, spreading the fragrance of Christ that brings life to some and judgment to others.

2 Corinthians 2 in One Sentence

Paul explains that he wrote a tearful letter out of love, urges the church to forgive and restore the repentant offender so Satan cannot gain an advantage, and praises God who leads His servants in Christ's triumph, spreading the fragrance of the gospel through sincere and faithful ministry.