

Through 2 Corinthians we can learn about the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians, and this can apply to the relationship between our church and its leaders. Last time we learned that those who serve the church should do so with integrity and godly sincerity. They should be open, genuine, and transparent. The members of a church should trust its leadership. If some don't, then effort should be made to fix the relationship. And if it isn't possible, then they should seek a church where they can have a trusting relationship with the leaders. We also learned that rather than teaching worldly wisdom, church leaders are charged with teaching the word of God through His grace.

In today's passage, we see Paul's relationship with the Corinthians is strained. He said he would visit them on the way to and from Macedonia, but for some reason he didn't make it. Because of this, some of the Corinthians were accusing Paul of being fickle and wishy washy, of having selfish motives, and of saying things just to please people. They questioned his consistency, reliability, and faithfulness. This kind of distrust is similar to how many of us view politicians who say different things to different audiences for their own benefit. The Corinthians were more than just disappointed with Paul. They were upset and questioned his intentions, which damaged their relationship with him. In v. 17 we see that they suspected Paul of making plans in a worldly manner. This worldly way of thinking is described in 2 Timothy 4:3, which speaks of false teachers who say enticing things to amass followers rather than to preach the gospel of Jesus. But Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:18 that he preaches the message Jesus Christ. There were good reasons why he didn't visit the Corinthians. Paul is not like those who say anything to please others, and he is not just being untrustworthy or undependable.

To have integrity and godly sincerity also means being dependable. If you say something, you should be faithful in carrying it out. In the past there were times when I was late to pick up Cindy and my sister from the airport, and since then I have strived to be on time so that nobody would have to wait for me anymore. The members of a church should likewise be able to depend on their leaders. But this dependability is not because of the leader's own strength of character, but because of God's faithfulness. In vv. 19-20 Paul says that they can depend on him not

because of His faithfulness, but because of the faithfulness of God demonstrated by the work of His Son, whom Paul preaches. Paul strived by God's grace to preach the gospel of Jesus, the One on whom we can all depend. This message was not a message of false promises meant merely to please people for personal gain. It is a message about the only One we can depend on to fulfill all God's promises. In our struggles we have assurance of all of God's promises because of Jesus. How do we know God is faithful? How do we know that God will fix everything in the end? The answer is Jesus.

Finally in v. 20 Paul says that through Jesus the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. The word "Amen" is from the Hebrew word meaning "surely." When any of us prays aloud, we are all praying together. And if we agree with the prayer, we should all say "Amen," just as many in the Chinese congregation do. And this agreement spoken by us is to the glory of God. We lift up one voice to bring Him glory. Only in the church community do we bring God glory as one body. We glorify Him because He is faithful and dependable, and we can rely on Him to bring His goodness to our lives. And we can be assured of this because of Jesus Christ, His Son, whom He sent because of His great love for us. Throughout all trials and tribulations, we can surely rely on God's promise that He will provide for us and make things right in the end. When we reflect on His faithfulness, let the "Amen" be spoken by us for His glory.