

Grieving-Pain/Loving-Joy

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[0 : 0 0] If you take your Bibles, please, and turn to the book of 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, chapter 1, if you're visiting with us, the Bible, the chair in front of you, and there underneath where the hymn of the books are, there's Bibles there, you pull out that black Bible and go towards the back, find page 140, page 140, 2 Corinthians chapter 1, I'll actually start reading verse 23, we'll go into chapter 2 verse 11, because it kind of goes together, this section, chapter 1 verse 23 to chapter 2 verse 11.

Chapter 1 verse 23 of 2 Corinthians, Paul says, but I call God as witness to my soul that to spare you, I came no more to Corinth, not to be lorded over your faith, but our workers, co-workers with you for your joy, for in your faith you stand firm.

But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?

And this is the very thing I wrote you, lest when I came, I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice, having confidence in you all, that my joy would be of you all.

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.

[1 : 4 5] Verse 5, but if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but to some degree in order not to say too much to all of you.

Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was by the majority. So that, on the contrary, you should now forgive and comfort, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

Wherefore, I urge you to reaffirm love for him. For to this end, also I wrote that I may know your character, whether you are obedient in all things.

Verse 10, but whom you forgive anything, I also. For yes, indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven because of you in the presence of Christ in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan.

For we're not ignorant of his purposes. Pain as pleasure.

[2 : 5 4] Pain as pleasure. How do you figure that? Endorphins that are released in painful experiences are often perceived as pleasurable.

Stress and pain can also stimulate the serotonin and melatonin production in the brain, which transforms painful experiences into pleasure. Interesting. The release of epiphine, am I saying that right?

And norepinephrine in pain, am I saying that right? Can also cause a pleasurable, quote unquote, rush. This is according to Google.

So it's got to be true, right? I mean, everybody knows that. Right. Right. Okay, maybe so, Google.

But it may be a little different when it comes to an emotional pain, grief, sorrow. When it comes to hurt feelings, that can be a game changer.

- [4 : 07] When it comes to doing something wrong, pain is not pleasurable. Grief is not desired. No. Or is it?
- Could there be joy and pain? When you look at the theme of 2 Corinthians, they seem to contradict each other.
- Boasting in our weakness, boasting in the Lord. But they actually go together. And that's done on purpose. Because that's how Paul presents it in 2 Corinthians. We're called to boast in our weakness.
- And as we boast in our weakness, we'll boast in the Lord. And here, in chapter 1, verse 23 to chapter 2, verse 11, we're going to see also this other kind of a contrast, but it really is not.
- It actually goes together. Grieving pain, loving joy. Grieving pain slash loving joy.
- [5 : 10] And I don't mean or. I don't even necessarily mean and. They seem to contradict, to conflict with each other. But as we come to this part of Paul's, actually, fourth letter to the Corinthian church, the church he's had the most problems with, he will show that these actually don't contradict, they go together.
- As I've mentioned from, by way of the theme of 2 Corinthians, the focus is that God's great strength is seen in our great weakness.
- We walk by faith, not by sight. God will always put us in hard positions and hard places, so that he can give himself glory by having us cry out to him in total dependence, because he loves to show his great strength in our great weakness.
- He will intentionally do that. He will deliberately do that in your life. He will put us in hard positions.
- He will put us in hard places. Because he wants us to cry out to him. So that we will see that when we're weak, that's when we're strong.
- [6 : 34] I mean, this is the essence of the gospel, right? He showed his glorious strength by the glorious weakness of the cross, Jesus suffering and dying for us. That's the great paradox of Christianity.
- We've talked about this. It looked like God failed. It looked like God was saying no. It looked like God was saying, what an idiot, what a fool by Jesus hanging on the cross.
- And yet that's the wisdom of the world. To them that's foolishness. To us it's the power of God. The wisdom of God. Because that's how God saves sinners.
- What you would think would be a conflict. It's actually power. God's grace or power is seen most clearly, not in the best, but in what seems to be the worst of times and circumstances.
- When things are going well in your life, that's when you're not necessarily looking to Him. But when things are kind of going pfft in your life, that's a game changer.
- [7 : 53] The gospel is seen gloriously in weakness, poverty, feebleness, and affliction. That's why the people of Mozambique are those young people.
- That's why they're so open. Because they got nothing. And they have parents who've died from HIV and AIDS.
- I mean, 50% are under 18. That's, I think there's 26 million people there in Mozambique. That's huge. They're open to the gospel.
- Because they have nothing. Paul sought to show his apostolic authority was based on weakness. A concept that a church, a concept a church could not fathom because they were enamored with power and charismatic appearance.
- And? The super apostle. You'll see a thing up on the screen coming pretty soon here. Somebody drew me a picture of a super apostle.

[8 : 57] I'll put it up on the screen for you. They, the Corinthian church, would not grasp the gospel without first grasping as given through a weak, suffering apostle.

Elisa is what he was. Paul, a weak messenger of the weak, weak, but now risen Jesus Christ. And as they embraced him as their apostle, they would really be embracing the gospel.

So now we come to this part in the letter. Remember Paul had said he wasn't going to visit and he was explaining to them last week why he didn't come and visit. And then he went into a whole entourage of saying this versus he's a bogus guy, but he really was sincere.

Well now we start to unpack kind of what's going on, really the motivation behind this. He tells the Corinthians his motive for not visiting as well as the conflict between them that helped shape his decision not to visit them.

What happened? So Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, which actually was a second letter. And then he had a painful emergency visit to make.

[10 : 14] He came and at that visit, a leader in the church challenged Paul's apostolic authority. And the church did nothing, which kind of showed their support of him, of this guy.

No action was done by the church. Well then he writes a painful letter telling them what they should do about this guy. And so they actually went through the process and did something about it.

So that's what we have before us now in this section of his letter. So see, this was actually a personal issue with the Corinthians, or I should say with Paul and the Corinthians. And yet there was a theological issue here.

The very gospel was at stake because to challenge the apostle Paul was to challenge the gospel. Unfortunately, Paul's failure to visit the Corinthians, which created hurt feelings, and the letter he sent in place of the visit, which created more hurt feelings, though they actually obeyed and did what he said, it created tension.

It created conflict between the two, the congregation and Paul. And yet in these instances, it was his intense love and concern that drove him to say and do the things that he did, or not do.

[11 : 40] And it's this love that sprung from the gospel itself. For Paul, it wasn't about hurt feelings. For Paul, it was about Christ's love and obedience.

For Paul, it was about their joy. Though it could cause them grief, sorrow, pain. So let's go into this.

I told you, grieving pain slash loving joy between the leader and the church. Chapter 1, verse 23 to chapter 2, verse 4. Notice what he does, starting in verse 23.

He calls on God as witness to my soul that to spare you, I came no more to Corinth. He gives an oath before God, this is the truth, I truly love you.

That's why I didn't come. I'm truly of concern about you, weaknesses and all, all the doubts you have about me being your apostle. I love you.

[12 : 39] I spared you. Spare them of what? Of more sorrow. More grief. More pain.

Remember, he didn't come. So that caused sorrow. He wrote this letter. So that caused more sorrow. So he's like, I'm not gonna come. I'm not gonna come. Because I don't wanna cause you pain.

I'm gonna spare you. But notice what he does in verse 24. Not that we lord it over your faith. So why does he say this?

Because the automatic knee-jerk reaction, the automatic knee-jerk reaction from the church would be that Paul was making it all about him. And he called on them to toe the line or just do things my way or Paul's just being a tyrannical overlord to dominate us in our faith and behavior.

That's what Paul's all about. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. He says, no, no, no. Not to be lord over your faith. We're co-workers with you for your joy. One writer put it like this.

[13 : 46] His authority ended where their faith began. We don't lord it over your faith. We're co-workers of your joy. In other words, everything that he did as a leader was for their joy in order to bring him joy.

Although right now, they had none. Because they're mad at him. He wants to benefit them.

He wants them to benefit. He wants them to have loving joy. That's what drove him. He was a co-worker of the church, co-worker of the joy of the church, which was why he avoided bringing them sorrow by visiting.

This is the interwoven joy that Paul has with the church. Their joy is his joy. His joy is their joy. He wanted to promote their highest good, oops, sorry, their highest good and greatest joy in Christ.

That's what he was all about. Yet it came in grieving pain. And that's why he says this next part in verse 24.

[15 : 02] For in your faith, you stand firm. Remain in this salvation which you've received from me in the gospel. Stand in this faith.

Not by your own gifts. Not by your own powers. Not by your own performances. They must stand. This is what I was going to put up. They must stand or walk in faith.

Oh, that kind of sounds familiar. This is what Paul's about.

He's trying to help them to see this is what motivates me to do the things that I do or why I did not do the things that I did or I should have done or what you think I should have done. Because that's what he goes into.

Notice in chapter 2, verse 1. But I determined this. This is what I decided. For my own sake. That I would not come to you in sorrow again.

[16 : 01] Paul had made this emergency visit earlier. And it was really bad. He came to them in sorrow, grief, pain. That word sorrow, it means grief or pain.

Sorrow, grief, pain. I'm going to be using those words interchangeably throughout the message. And he's given, I don't know, maybe 10, 12 times in this small little section.

The visit didn't end well. Which is why he didn't think it would be helpful for him or encouraging to them to come to them in sorrow and pain.

I'm not going to do that. Because verse 2, For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful?

Paul did not want to grieve the church. I mean, think about it. Let's just put it in our day.

[17 : 02] What pastor wants to bring pain to the church in which he ministers? What pastor wants the people to face sorrow or grief? Isn't that the church the very ones that bring a pastor joy?

Right? Right? So he's saying, if I grieve you, then I'm going to grieve. If I bring you sorrow, I'm going to be sorrowful.

A church is bound to her leaders or leader, and her leader is bound to her. That's what he's trying to get them to see. We're bonded together.

We're in this together. Oh, how good it is when the family of God, I'm not as dumb as I look, huh? There's a reason why we sang that song. You were all thinking that, weren't you?

It would be like a pastor committing suicide to grieve the church. Notice what he says in verse 3, and this is the very thing I wrote you.

[18 : 09] In place of that visit, remember, he wrote a letter to the Corinthians. That's now lost. We don't have that letter. He says, I wrote this to you, lest when I came, if I were to come instead, I should have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice.

If I would have come, he would end up having grief from those over whom he should have joy. For Paul, this was true fear. I mean, he's expressing fear here.

He would experience pain when he would rather experience joy. Or it would have been necessary for him to rejoice. See, this motivated him not to come, even though he knew, it would cause them sorrow.

It would cause them pain. But remember, everything that Paul does, he wanted to benefit the church. That's why he did the things that he did.

Notice what he says in the next part of verse 3. Having confidence. Or being certain. What is he certain of? Of what is he confident?

[19 : 29] I'm confident in you all that my joy would be of you all. What's his confidence? What's he certain of? My joy is the joy of all of you.

My joy is the joy of all of you. As you experience joy, I have joy. As I have joy, you have joy. We're in this together. That's what he's trying to tell them. This does not rest in the fickle Corinthians, though.

No, it rests in God who works in the hearts of his people through the gospel and the spirit. So what brings the most joy to a pastor?

When God's people are so full of joy in the gospel. When God's people are excited and driven by the Lord Jesus Christ, it causes pastors, leaders, to experience great joy.

As one writer put it, quote, in his love for them, their grief is his grief and their joy is his joy. And the reason why Paul has great trust is because God is faithful to work.

[20 : 44] Remember chapter 1, verse 18? But as God is faithful, he knew God was faithful. He's not gonna, it's not gonna rest in him. It's not gonna rest in the Corinthians.

It's gonna rest in God. God is the one who works in people's hearts. Right? And yet he says this part here in verse 4.

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears. So remember he didn't, he made this emergency visit and then it blew up.

That guy challenged his episodic authority so he had to go. It was painful. And then he wrote this letter instead and this is the letter he's talking about. This letter brought such sorrow and as I wrote this letter, I did it with tears.

He didn't write to grieve them, to pain them, but that's what ended up happening. He'll bring that up in chapter 7. Unfortunately, because the church had responded this way towards Paul, they did have grief, pain, sorrow, sorrow.

[21 : 56] But he's saying here, I didn't write thoughtlessly, I didn't just go, oh yeah, send it. Right? You know the email? Okay, I won't send it.

I'm sure you've never done that. He said, I didn't write thoughtlessly or carelessly. Being insensitive? No, no, no. I wrote to benefit you because I love you.

Real love confronts a difficult situation even if there's pain and much affliction with many tears.

You know what he's doing here, right? You know what he's saying here? I wrote to you with many tears. He's kind of saying indirectly, you guys are a pain to me.

You guys are a pain in my rear end. He's kind of saying that indirectly. Now, he didn't, he didn't come out and say that because that would be vindictive and even retaliatory.

[23 : 08] He didn't want to do that. It would create even more conflict. But notice that next part of verse four.

He says, I wrote to you with many tears. Then, not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I especially have for you.

His tough love was not so that he could bring them pain or sorrow. No. His tough love was out of love for them.

Paul was ready to love them more though they loved him less. What a challenge. What a challenge.

It looked as though he was after them. No, he loved them dearly. And this is for us to be mindful of. Maybe that member truly loves you.

[24 : 14] Maybe that member has your best interest in mind. You ever thought about that? You know, that's where that passage, Philippians chapter four verse eight comes into play. Whatever's true, whatever's honorable, whatever's lovely.

Yes, yes, yes, yes. We're weak. We sin against each other, but that's why Jesus had to die, right? At the end of the day, maybe their motive was love for you.

Let's go farther. Maybe your pastor is doing things out of love for you. Maybe his motives are not trying to come after you.

Maybe your leader truly loves you though he's got everything to lose. maybe.

Maybe. Grieving pain slash loving joy. So you saw between the church and the leader.

[25 : 25] But now, Paul kind of transitioned here but he then kind of doesn't. Because now, he's going to bring up this loving joy, grieving pain between the offender and the church but then also the leader.

Because here, he moves into this whole aspect with this guy who challenged his apostolic authority. But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow.

So on Paul's second visit, again, it was a sorrowful visit. Some leader in the church challenged his apostolic authority. Initially, the church took no action. They did nothing. They supported this guy. Oh yeah, maybe he is right.

Which gave this guy support. Now, I take the view, so we will take the view at this time that it's a different person from 1 Corinthians chapter 5. Some people think this guy is the same guy from 1 Corinthians chapter 5, the immoral man who was with his stepmother.

We don't take that view. We think it's a different person. So obviously, this caused division in the church. Division with Paul.

[26 : 37] Well, this should not surprise us given the division problems already in Corinth. Remember chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians? And the fact that Satan wants to destroy Jesus' church through non-reconciliation and a lack of forgiveness.

We'll look at that in a few moments. So what happened was, he wrote this painful letter. He put some things in there about how to deal with this guy.

And so they did. And so they did. The members did something about it. They affirmed his authority, relatively speaking, and rebuked this person.

Initially, they didn't respond this way. Well, now they're in danger of the pendulum swinging the other way. So first, they did nothing. And then they went, oh, let's do something about it.

Now, they're in danger of overreacting and being way too harsh on the guy. Okay. Notice what Paul does though here. Verse five, once again, but if it has caused sorrow, he's caused sorrow.

[27 : 43] Not to me. Paul is deflecting attention off himself because it wasn't about him but about Christ and his body. This person did damage to the relationship between Jesus' church and Paul.

That's why he says this next part, but in some degree, in order not to say too much to all of you, that phrase, in order not to say too much and actually, you can translate it like this, so that I might be overbearing.

Overbearing with what? Overbearing is authority. He's saying, look, I have the authority. I know I have the authority, but I'm not here to overstep this. It's not about me. About a personal injury to me and it's all, no, it's not about me.

It's about the church and about my relationship between the two of us, that's what Paul's saying. Verse 6, sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was by the majority.

So, apparently, in Paul's tearful letter, he told the Corinthians how to deal with this man. It was painful, sorrowful, and hard, but they listened and they responded and this guy received a rebuke from the many or the members by exclusion from the church.

[28 : 58] Now, we take the view with exclusion or some people call it excommunication.

I don't like that. I don't like that term. I like the term better, disfellowshipping. We take the view that one is removed from membership but is not ostracized. In other words, they're welcome to come.

For example, if we had somebody who was in church discipline and we had the discipline, they would be removed from membership but they'd be welcome to come here, it wouldn't be that they can't come to the church gathering, it wouldn't be that we couldn't be talking to them, it wouldn't be that we couldn't interact with them, no, no, no, no.

We would want them to be here. We would want us to talk to them. We would want to interact with them but now, the conversation's changed. It's not just so much, hey, how are those Arizona Cardinals going to be doing this year?

Now it's going to be more of, are you ready to repent, brother? Sister, are you ready to repent? So it's more deliberate than intentional.

[30 : 06] And this is what the membership did, they did this, which by the way, this tells us two reasons why membership is important. This guy.

I'll give you your 20 bucks later. First, we know who is a part of us and who's not a part of us. That's why you have membership.

For lack of better terms, you know who's in, you know who's out. Second though, the members act in regards to other members.

Not for those who are not a part of them. I'll put it a different way. Members voted as a majority to act upon this. That's why he says this. Sufficient for such a one is its punishment, which was the majority.

I think that's added there in your New American Standards. If you have a New American Standard, inflicted by, that's not in the original. It's just, was the majority. So people who were a part of this church, the majority of them excluded this guy.

[31 : 10] They brought this punishment, this discipline upon him. They voted. They acted as a congregation. Verse 7, what's the purpose?

So that, on the contrary, you should rather, now that you guys did this, you brought this discipline, yes, okay, so now, on the contrary, you should now forgive and comfort.

Now that they have rebuked this man, Paul urged them to forgive and comfort him. Remember the word comfort from chapter 1, earlier in chapter 1?

Same word. Rebuke was the way for them to forgive and comfort him. Yet, they were, you might not be so hip on this illustration, but they were acting like drunk people.

Going over here to this side, and then flipping way over here to that side, totally unstable. At one moment, they're totally against Paul and all this.

[32 : 16] Now, they're totally rebuking this guy and being so harsh on him. That's the way they were acting. And Paul's like, you guys, whoa. You guys gotta, I'm glad you guys are doing this.

You should be doing this. This is good. But now you gotta reaffirm your love for him. I'll say that in the next verse. You're in danger of being too harsh.

Notice what he says, the next part of verse 7. Lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So they ran the risk of this one being consumed with grief, pain, sorrow.

Yes, we should have church discipline. Yes, it should be done in private. Then you have one or two to go with the first person. Then you take it to the last step that goes to the church.

If they still don't repent, you exclude them, you remove them from membership. Yes, you should do that. For more open public sins like this one, the first and second steps were bypassed and went directly to the church.

[33 : 21] Regardless though, once the rebuke takes place and there's repentance, forgive. One writer says this about the world.

The world and how they think. This is the world and how they think. Everything is permitted, nothing is forgiven. Isn't that true? Everything is permitted in the world and yet nothing is forgiven.

That is so true. That is such the definition of the world. But not like us. Christians should not be like this. That's why it's so important that discipline aims at restoration and comfort.

From judgment to restoration. From condemnation to love. They must act in the very same way Paul acted towards them.

Oh. Now we're seeing the connection. One writer puts it like this. Quote, The Corinthians must be to the offender what Christ and Christ's apostle has been to them.

[34 : 41] The grief meant for joy. And that's why he says here in verse 8 notice, wherefore I urge you to reaffirm love for him.

Confirm your love for him. Show it openly as God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Welcome him back into the membership. To affirm their love is to affirm God's love for him in grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has forgiven us of all our sins in Christ. We deserve his wrath. What we looked at in the first hour, the wrath of God. God should pour his wrath upon us and yet he poured it out as a substitute upon Jesus instead.

For all those that repent and put their trust in Jesus, he's saying live out the gospel with this guy. He's repented, bring forgiveness. That's why if you're here and you're not a Christian, you need to have forgiveness.

You need to be restored because you're under judgment in God's disciplining hand right now. notice what he says in verse nine.

[35 : 51] For to this end also I wrote that I might know your character. Paul wrote that tearful letter to know their character, to see if they were going to be obedient in all things.

I translated that differently. I think your Bible might say put you to the test. It's really to test their character, to see if they're really going to listen to him. But it wasn't about being loyal to Paul.

It was about being loyal to the gospel, to Christ. It's not about bringing them pain, but to know how much he loved them and that they need to show that same love for this guy.

And this obedience directed them down the road of recovering their relationship with Paul. this church was a huge burden to Paul.

Now it's going to be more than just this moment of repentance and love with this guy. It's going to take more than that. But yet still, Paul trusted the trajectory upon which they were going.

[36 : 58] That's why he says there at the end of verse 9, whether you are obedient in all things, whether you will really embrace me as your apostle.

as your pastor. Notice what he says in verse 10, his reaffirmation, I forgive this guy but whom you forgive anything, I also.

Interesting, the word forgive here is not *aphiemi* from the Greek. It's a different Greek word which means the act of giving. You give him forgiveness, you give this guy love.

they are bound to Christ, bound together in Christ so that their action was God, Jesus' action because Jesus was with them and thus this is God's church.

So whomever they forgave, Paul had forgiven this guy too because we're interwoven together, we're in Christ together. we're bound together.

[38 : 08] That's why it's so important that people understand this is not my church, this is Jesus' church. You do not stand under my authority, we stand together as one in Christ in his body.

And that's why he says the next part of verse 10, if I have forgiven anything, again the gospel is at stake, the church bore Jesus' authority, if I've forgiven anything, if there's something to forgive and I do, I forgive this guy, he says I have forgiven because of you.

In the presence of Christ, because of you, because it wasn't about personal injury to Paul. Remember, this guy went against Paul's authority, challenged it before the church, so Paul could have easily said, yo, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah, that guy.

He doesn't because he's saying it's not about me, it's about the gospel and I'm going to do it for you guys. I want to do things to benefit you.

Disobedience to the gospel will only inflict grief, sorrow, or pain upon his church, whether it be not doing anything at all or inflicting something too hard.

[39 : 24] The pendulum's like, whoosh, whoosh, right? Right? And this is so vital for them to get this. It's so important for them to get this, because notice what he says in verse 11.

In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan. So here is God's church. We are the body of Christ.

We are Jesus on earth. Guess who wants to destroy that? Guess who wants to bring disunity in that?

Guess who wants to bring division to that love? Guess who wants to break the bonds? Oh, how good it is when the family of God, what are the other words?

I got here. To embrace his command, to prefer one another, forgive as he forgives. When we live as one, we all share in the love of the son with the father and the spirit. You were singing that, remember?

[40 : 28] So was I. that's what that means. Who wants to destroy that? In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his plans.

So vital to respond this way, reconcile, restore, comfort, forgive, let it go, because if not, we're in danger of being used as pawns of Satan subject to his schemes.

if they did not forgive this offender, but treated him harshly, they would do nothing but forward the very purposes of Satan.

Let's put it another way. In other words, if we as a church cannot reconcile and forgive, then Satan wins. Clear and simple. And it's not just an issue of ignoring the situation.

Oh, I'm just going to ignore that. one could not ignore the offense of this man, nor the doubting of Paul's apostleship by this church. You just can't ignore that. Well, we just won't let it happen.

[41 : 38] You don't just ignore things like that. Reconciliation moves forward, but bitterness keeps God's church from moving forward in love.

We will not move forward as a church if this is happening. one writer puts it like this, quote, Satan wishes to rob us of the gift of forgiveness and thereby to further factions in the church, end quote.

May I be candid? If you have something against someone and cannot or rather will not let it go, then you're furthering the purposes and plans of Satan.

Do you realize that? Reconcile. Grudges among us are exploited by Satan to undermine our spiritual health.

That's what he's saying. Satan will capitalize on hurt feelings, insults, sins, failures, and weaknesses to keep things unresolved.

[42 : 52] he deludes us, he deludes us, fostering animosity, ill will, distrust, in order to divide us, to destroy.

that's why, when it's all said and done, the gospel's at stake. That's why we must boast in our weaknesses, because that's the one thing that the devil hates.

Because once you start boasting in your weakness, once you start boasting in your grieving pain and sorrow, so that there will be loving joy, so there will be a boasting in the Lord, that's the one thing that the evil one hates.

He wants us to be disunified, to doubt each other, to doubt leadership, to be despairing. He takes pleasure in pain. He takes pleasure in pain.

Remember the beginning of the message? Pain as pleasurable? You want to know someone who takes pleasure in pain? to watch us suffer?

[44 : 09] It's him. The one who presents himself as an angel of light. But when we deal with the pain, and we embrace the sorrow and the pain, that's when we get loving joy.

You see how it kind of contradicts, and yet they go together? may we boast in our weakness, may we boast in the Lord, because the gospel's at stake for us, brethren.

The gospel's at stake. Lord, thank you. Thank you that we sang this song. Oh, how good it is to embrace your command, to prefer one another, forgive as you've forgiven us.

May we live as one. May we share in the love of the Son, of you Father, and your Spirit. With one voice we sing to you, with one heart, we want to live out your word.

Because we want the whole world to see that you, Jesus, have come because you dwell with us. The presence of Christ is here among us as we are gathered here together.

[45 : 38] Help us to take this seriously because we know that our enemy, he takes it seriously. God's God's word.

I want to encourage you to take this time, a few moments to let yourself think and ponder what we've seen from God's word here in 2nd Corinthians. After a few moments, after we've worshipped and praying and meditating upon God's word, we'll also worship in our giving.

We'll worship by singing two more songs. And we'll pray for Karen and Travis. But this time, ponder, think. Allow the word of God to penetrate your heart and to encourage us to be a people that are one.

One in Christ, with Jesus as our head.