LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

2 Corinthians 1 (Part 2) :12 24

You stand firm in your faith

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · November 08, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

2 Corinthians chapter 1, we're picking it up in verse 12 and we're going to read down through the end of the chapter and then we're going to pray and then we're going to see what the Lord has for us here tonight. So follow along with me as I read beginning in verse 12, for our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom, but by the grace of God and supremely so toward you. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand, and I hope you will fully understand just as you did partially understand us, that on the day of the Lord Jesus, you will boast of us as we will boast of you. Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first so that you might have a second experience of grace. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea.

Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say yes, yes, and no, no at the same time? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been yes and no, for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not yes and no, but in Him it is always yes. For all the promises of God find their yes in Him, and that is why it is through Him that we utter our amen to God for His glory, and it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, and who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. But I call God to witness against me.

It was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith. Let's pray together. Holy Father, as we take time tonight to look at these verses in a little more depth and to unpack their meaning, we are dependent wholly on You through Your Holy Spirit to bring enlightening wisdom and clarity to our hearts. We trust in You, Father, to speak to us and to nourish us through Your Word and to remind us of these truths that are laid out.

Be with us, we pray. Speak to us, Lord. Minister to hearts. We give You this time, and we ask You to use it powerfully in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

As we read through these verses that we're looking at here tonight, I think it becomes rather obvious that the Apostle Paul is responding to some pretty serious criticism that he got from the church. Yeah, you know, church leaders sometimes get criticized. And here's essentially, let me give you kind of a little synopsis of what kind of happened. Paul had told the Corinthians previously that he would return at a time, you know, to come and visit them. As he mentioned here in these verses, I want to come and visit you on my way to Macedonia, and then as I return from Macedonia, I want to visit you again.

And he did actually come the first time, but he didn't show up after. He just bypassed them. And some of those people in Corinth began to criticize Paul because he didn't show up when he said he was going to show up. And they began to essentially accuse him of being a man who vacillated on his decision-making and that he was somewhat, you know, worldly in his thought processes and his behavior. And I don't know, they were just kind of thinking up any reason they could to kind of find fault with Paul because of, you know, the fact that he didn't show up when he said he was going to.

And so that's why Paul is responding to this criticism. And you can tell that this is a personal letter. I sometimes wonder if Paul had any expectation that 2,000 years later, we would be reading, you know, this letter because he's kind of pouring out his heart to these people. And he begins again in verse 12 by saying that our boast is this, that the testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not with earthly wisdom, but by the grace of God, and he says, and supremely toward you. And this is kind of interesting.

What Paul is saying here is that his conscience testifies about the propriety of his actions. Have you ever had someone say to you, like when they're being accused or something, and they say, well, hey, listen, my conscience is clear. That's kind of what Paul is saying. And he says, my conscience actually testifies to the fact that I really haven't done you any wrong. But here's the deal.

Nobody can say my conscience is clear. And you know, the Apostle Paul tells us elsewhere that it is very possible to have our consciences seared or that word literally means like branded, to become encrusted so that we no longer really have a sense or feeling about our actions. And so our consciences are not a perfect barometer of right and wrong all the time. They can be messed up. They can be messed with, okay?

So when Paul says this, when he says, you know, my conscience testifies to the fact that I've done this well and so forth, he knows. He knows that really that's nothing that he can prove to anybody. And that's why he said what he did in the following two verses. And that's in 13 and 14. So look at these carefully with me, because this tells you why he said what he said about his conscience.

Verse 13, he says, for we're not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand. And I hope you will fully understand just as you did partially understand us. And here's the important part, that on the day of the Lord Jesus, you will boast of us as we will boast of you. And I got to tell you, these verses can be challenging to understand because Paul is kind of employing an argument that we wouldn't, well, let's just say we wouldn't word it this way. We wouldn't say it this way.

But the key to understanding these verses is found in Paul's reference to the day of the Lord. Did you catch that at the very end of that? He talks about the day of the Lord. And he's basically saying on the day of the Lord, when God will judge the hearts and attitudes of men, right, he says, I trust that it will be clearly seen that we behaved toward you and frankly in the world in a way that was holy and sincere. That's what he's saying.

So he's kind of putting it out there, you know, and this is a way of saying, listen, I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid to have my thoughts and attitudes one day exposed by the Lord. And I trust that when that happens, you're going to see that I had a good heart toward you and that what I, the decisions that I made were made for important and godly reasons and so forth. So he goes on then in verse 15, look with me in your Bible. He says, because I was sure of this, I'm sure that in the last day, you know, I'm going to be shown to have been sincere.

He says, I wanted to come to you first so that you might have a second experience of grace. That sounds interesting, doesn't it? What in the world is a second experience of grace? It sounds kind of mysterious. Really it's not mysterious at all.

And by simply reading this very statement in other Bible translations, it really becomes clear. Let me put these on the screen for you so we can see them together. Notice the NIV renders this simply so that you might benefit twice. The New American Standard Bible says that you might twice receive a blessing. And the New King James says that you might have a second benefit.

And so all he's saying is, I wanted to come and then come again so that we would have a second opportunity to minister to one another and to bless one another. And he wanted more than anything to bring a blessing to every church that he visited. And that was his goal. But he goes on to speak about why

he made the changes that he did, right? And notice in verse 16, he says, I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea.

So again, Paul did make the first trip to Corinth, but here's the deal. That trip ended up being a very painful one because when Paul got there, he saw a ton of things that were out of order. He saw a church that was just absolutely crazed with things, you know, spiritual gifts that were going on. And Paul never, ever denounced spiritual gifts. He never said you shouldn't be doing this.

He never said spiritual gifts aren't for today. He never said that. never said, you know, anything. In fact, he encouraged them in spiritual gifts, but what they were doing in the practice of spiritual gifts was just simply out of order. They weren't loving one another, they weren't abiding by any sort of a sense of decorum and order and peace, and things were chaotic.

I don't know if you've ever been to a church that was chaotic, but that's what Paul found when he got to Corinth, and so he ended up, and there were many other things, by the way, that's just part of it. So when he got there for his first visit, he had to do a lot of confronting, and a lot of correcting. And you know, can I just tell you, as a pastor, that's never fun. Most people avoid confrontation like the plague. In fact, I heard a statistic at one point that said there's a fair amount of the population that would rather die than confront people and deal with God.

I hear some of you kind of going, you know, but you know, because it's hard. It is, it's hard to sit people down and go, and kind of spank them, because that's kind of what it comes to, and Paul, when he came to Corinth for that visit, he had to spank them, and it was not fun, it was painful, and when we get to chapter two, Paul is gonna have more to say about the painful visit that he made with them, and the fact that he wanted to avoid another painful visit. That's why he didn't come the second time. He wanted to give them kind of some time to heal, and just process, and deal with the things that they'd been hearing about, and so forth. So because the visit was so painful, you know, nobody wants to hang around when there's drama in the air, and so, hey, let's just let this settle down, sort of a thing, you know?

And, but from what we can gather from this letter, and you know, when we read the letters of Paul, and he talks about what's going on in the churches, we're really only hearing one side of a conversation, and I'm sure you've done that. You've been listening to someone talking on the phone, and they're having maybe a dramatic, tense-filled conversation, but you're only getting half of it, you can't hear what's going on on the other side, unless you have bionic ears, like my wife, she hears everything, even when I'm talking on the phone. But you have to kind of piece it together, you know, to kind of find out exactly what's going on, and as we piece together from Paul's letter, it becomes pretty clear that because of the

changes that he made in his plans, there was a group in the church there at Corinth that didn't like Paul very much, and they decided that they were gonna start criticizing him openly to the rest of the body of Christ. And so, this is what's going on. So he's had this painful visit, he decides not to go back to start another painful visit, you know, so quickly, and because of that, he's being criticized as a man who is worldly, maybe even fearful of coming back, who knows what all they were accusing him of.

And so he decides, you know, not to do it, and by the way, Bible students believe that it was Titus who brought a letter from Paul to the Corinthians, and I don't know if you knew this, but we think that Paul wrote actually four letters to the Corinthians, two of which have been lost. One of those is, we believe, is the letter he gave to Titus to take to the Corinthians and to kind of talk to them, and then to find out how they were doing. And Paul's gonna talk about that as we get deeper into this letter. He's gonna talk about Titus and how Titus brought word back to him and so forth of how the Corinthians were doing. But, you know, he had no idea, Paul had no idea how the church was really doing.

He had this difficult confrontational visit, he then sent them, apparently, this other letter through Titus that was pretty stern and pretty corrective, and then he just had to kind of just go on his way, and he, you know, this was Paul, this is the Apostle Paul. He cared so much about the churches. He talks about it elsewhere, and he links it with his sufferings, like being scourged and shipwrecked. He links his love and care for the churches with those kinds of sufferings. We would see, I would seem to kind of, in my mind, separate them.

I would think, you know, getting beaten with rods, whipped, you know, and shipwrecked is over here, and then my concern for the church is over here. He put them all together, he labored, he was so burdened about how these people were responding. But for now, Paul's gonna continue to respond about the criticisms that have been kind of leveled against him, so look with me in your Bible at verse 17. Paul goes on to say, was I vacillating when I, you know, wanted to do this? In other words, when I wanted to make this plan change to my trip, and then he went on to ask the question, do I make my plans according to the flesh, right?

And that would be making a plan by fear or anger or whatever, ready to say yes and no at the same time. And what he's saying there is essentially, do you guys know me to be a double-minded man? You know, you've gotten to know me for a period of time. Is that what you think of me? He says, do I strike you as the kind of man who says yes in one breath and no in the other, you know?

Or the opposite, yes one minute and no the next. And then Paul makes an important connection toward the implications of these accusations. In verse 18, he says, as surely as God is faithful, our word to you has

not been yes and no. In other words, he's saying, we haven't been talking to you guys out of both sides of our mouth. When we say something, we have good reason for saying it.

And when we make decisions, we have good reason for making those decisions. There are reasons that you may not be aware of. Do you guys understand that in a church environment, there are decisions made that you may not be aware of? There are things going on that you may not be completely aware of. And some of you might be thinking, well, we should be aware of everything.

Well, it is the heart of pastors to sometimes protect the flock. There are things at times that, you know, that a pastor may choose to withhold because he's protecting, here's the deal. A pastor has to kind of walk a tightrope. He wants to bless the collective body, but he also needs to protect everybody individually as well. And sometimes that means we don't just blurt everything out that's absolutely going on.

And some of the details are personal. And some of it would be harmful to share with the people who are involved. And so, but Paul is appealing to these people now and say, there are reasons why I made decisions that you guys aren't aware of. You might have understood partially, but I trust that you're gonna come to understand fully at some particular point. He says in verse 19, and this is important too, you guys.

For the son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus, that's Silas, Timothy, and I, he said, it wasn't yes and no, but in him it's always yes. For all the promises of God find their yes in him, Jesus. And that is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory. And I want you to see what he's saying in these verses because this is important. Paul is saying here that the Jesus whom we preach to you is entirely faithful and worthy of your trust.

And with these statements, Paul is responding to the deeper implications of all of this criticism that was swirling around about him because here's the deal. When a Bible teacher or a church leader pastor is accused, whether falsely or accurately, what they have preached and taught is often considered suspect as well. And you know, we've had many sad examples over the years of church leaders who have become known far and wide for their teaching and then something happens and we discover that they were leading a double life and something was going on. There was some kind of sin that was going on behind closed doors. And what happens to the message that they preached at that point?

It is tainted by association. I've heard of situations where a pastor fell in some sort of immorality and later on, the people whose weddings he did began to wonder if they were truly married. And now you and I might kind of, our eyes might get a little bit and go, whoa, that's an interesting conclusion to reach just

because somebody made a moral choice that wasn't good. But that's what happens. That's what happens in people's minds.

When a pastor, leader, in this case, apostle is accused, their message now becomes tainted by association. And Paul knew that. And honestly, this was the deeper implication for him. He wasn't nearly as concerned with his own sort of reputation as he was with his reputation as a servant of God because he had very plainly and clearly told people, I am an apostle by Jesus Christ. He's the one that chose me.

So you see, when you make a statement like that, and it's a bold statement, now, if I'm under some sort of accusation of behavior that might be unbecoming a Christian, suddenly all of my claims are suspect as well, including my claim that I've been called by God and even the things that I have said from the pulpit as it relates to the truth of God's word. And again, I think this was Paul's biggest concern. He knew that his message could still be discredited, and that's why he reminds them here. He says, whatever we told you about concerning the promises of God, they're all yes in Jesus. And whatever you might think of me, that I say yes one minute and no the next, it's always yes with God.

And of course, the point he's making here is that when God makes a promise, when God makes a statement, when God declares a truth, he sticks to it. And there's no vacillation. There's no going back. There's no, well, I'm not so sure sort of a thing. And this is a lesson that Israel as a nation had to learn because they had received a lot of promises from God, and yet there were a lot of challenging circumstances that brought them to a place of questioning those promises.

And you remember that. God had told them, remember when they got to the promised land? They're literally on the other, they're at Kadesh Barnea, and they're ready to go in. And God promised them that they could take the land. And then these yahoos come back with a report about giants in the land.

There's no way we can get in there and do anything. These guys are gonna crush us. Boom, just like that. They all wig out and end up spending the next 38 years in the wilderness. Why?

Because they lost hold of the promises of God, right? But what did Israel have to learn? Let me show you a passage from Joshua 21 up on the screen. Check this out. Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed.

All came to pass. That was the lesson Israel had to learn about the promises of God, that God doesn't go back on his promises. God holds to his promises. He gives a word, he keeps his word. And that's an important thing for you and me because there's a lot of promises under the new covenant that we hold on to.

There's a lot of prophetic promises concerning the future that we hold on to, not the least of which is that Jesus is coming back. And he's gonna hold on to that one too. Verses 21 and 22 are incredible. Look in your Bible. Beginning at 21, he says, and it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us and has also put his seal on us and given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Sometimes when I'm studying out a passage to bring to you on a Wednesday night, I read it in different translations because it just gives a greater sense of dimension and understanding. So we're gonna do that together. Let me show you this very same couple of verses in the NIV up on the screen. Here's how the NIV renders it. And by the way, this is the 1984 revision of the NIV.

It says, now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit, or if you will, a down payment, guaranteeing what is to come. And the reason I love these verses is because you can pull four very important key points out of them, and we're gonna put them up on the screen so you can see them together. Here are the four points out of these two verses. First of all, he says, we stand firm because of God.

Did you know that? If you stand firm in Christ, it's because of him. But secondly, it says, we have all been anointed. We're gonna talk about what that means. And it says, God has set his seal of ownership on us.

That has some interesting implications. And then finally, God has given us his spirit as a guarantee of what is to come. I wanna go through all four of these because they're all very important, and they figure prominently into your life, and how you live your Christian life. And the first one that you see up on the screen there is that we stand firm because of God. And what that means is, it is God who enables you and me to stand firm in Christ, all right?

Now, I could leave it there, and I could say, that's it. It's all there is to it. It is God who enables us to stand firm. And I could take you completely out of the equation, but that would be something our Reformed brothers would do. But we're not Reformed from the standpoint of our doctrinal particular leanings.

We believe that there's an element, that the Bible says there's an element that you play in this area of standing firm. And we wouldn't believe it unless God's word had said it. And I'll show it to you on the screen from 1 Peter. And I want you to see this. This is a few verses here, but Peter says, "'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"'According to his great mercy, "'he has caused us to be born again to a living hope "'through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, "'to an inheritance that is imperishable, "'undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.'" Look at this. "'Who by God's power are being guarded,' through what? "'Through faith for a salvation "'ready to be revealed in the last time.'" So does God, is it through God's power that you are kept and able to stand? Yes. What's your part?

Faith. That's what Peter says. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith. That means as you continue to put your faith in Jesus Christ and believe and trust. Guys, I've said this to you in our study of Romans.

I'll say it no matter what book I'm teaching. It's all about faith as it relates to you. "'You, the righteous, shall live by faith.' "'It is from faith from first to last.'" Everything is by faith. We even talked in Romans how obedience is through faith. Paul brought that up two times in the book of Romans.

He talked about in the very beginning chapter and then later on in chapter six, he talked about how our obedience to God is predicated on faith in his power to deliver us from the dominion of sin. And that was an important lesson that we learned there. And now Peter is giving us a sense of even how we are kept and guarded. Hey, God's gonna give you all the power you need. Here's your part of the equation.

Just keep trusting. Keep trusting the Lord. And that's one of the reasons why when Paul wrote his letters to the churches, he was constantly concerned about their faith. He kept saying to them, I was concerned about your faith. But then I heard from Titus, and then we'll get to this in 2 Corinthians 7, and then I found out, oh, your faith is good.

It was all about faith to Paul. That's what he cared about most about the churches. How are you doing? How's your faith? He says, your faith is known all over the land, he would say.

It was all about his concern for their faith. Now, the second of the four points that we brought up here is that we've all been anointed. You might be looking at that and going, gee, I don't remember ever being anointed. Well, this is interesting. It's an Old Testament word, and it was used to describe the Holy Spirit coming upon someone or the choice of God on someone.

For example, when David was revealed to be the new king of Israel, they anointed him. Samuel actually anointed him. Anointing was kind of a messy deal because they'd pour oil over your head, but that was a picture of the Holy Spirit coming upon someone, okay? But now we're under the new covenant. We're not under the old covenant, and now Paul is saying, we've all been anointed.

Well, what's interesting about this is that the only other place in the New Testament where it talks about being anointed is actually in the Apostle John's first letter, and I wanna show you two passages from chapter two. First on the screen, from 1 John 2.20, it says, but you have been anointed by the Holy One and you all have knowledge. Now you can see what John is doing there. He's connecting anointing with knowledge. In other words, he's saying, and this is a simple thing, he's saying, since you received the Holy Spirit, you have the knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit, right?

And then if you skip down to verse 27, the next one on the screen, it says, but the anointing that you received from him abides in you. Okay, it's not gonna leave you and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him. So you can see that this whole idea of anointing is really just a way of talking about the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and some of the dynamics that come along with it. John's mentioning here knowledge and how the Holy Spirit teaches.

And you know, that never ceases to amaze me, how the Holy Spirit teaches. I get notes sometimes from new believers and they don't know their Bible. I mean, they've read just a little fraction of the Bible and yet they'll write to me and they'll say, I was in church and the pastor said this and it just seemed off, but I need to, what about this? Is this in the Bible? And he said, or he's doing this.

And I'm thinking to myself, yeah, see, that's the Holy Spirit. Even in a brand new believer, the Holy Spirit can speak to that person and just go, yeah, that's not good, right there, what that person just said. And he'll do that because the Holy Spirit not only quickens us to that which is true, he quickens us to that which is false. And that's how we understand and know the spirit of truth. So this is this knowledge and understanding that John is talking about that Paul is referencing here when he says you've all been anointed.

So by the way, the word anointing, you might be interested to find out in the Greek is charisma and it was basically used, I mean, the word literally meant being anointed with oil. That's what it meant. But in this particular case, it carries that connotation of being anointed by the Holy Spirit. In other words, as oil was poured out upon the person, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on you. You've received the Holy Spirit, right?

And then we're gonna take the last two together here where he says on the screen, God has set his seal of ownership on us. And this is also very, very closely related. God has given us his spirit as a guarantee of what is to come. And the reason I'm taking these both together is because there's one passage from the book of Ephesians that sums them both up. Let me show you on the screen from Ephesians one.

It says, in him, and that's in Christ, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory. Isn't that incredible? He says, first of all, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Have you ever thought about the fact that the spirit is a seal? It's a seal.

You know, this is gonna be counterfeited during the tribulation. When the Antichrist, the beast, takes over, he's gonna seal his followers and he's gonna put a threat behind it and say, if you don't have my seal, you can't buy and sell. God gives his seal to all those who willingly choose him. But yet we are sealed in Christ. And don't think that Satan doesn't know the seal of God on you.

He knows exactly to whom you belong. Why? Because you've been sealed. You have that beautiful seal. But you notice there in Ephesians that Paul also goes on to talk about that the spirit who sealed you is also the guarantee or the down payment of our inheritance.

You do know that we haven't received our inheritance yet, right? I mean, if we have, we're in trouble. Because things still go majorly wrong. Our bodies still die, get sick, you know, whatever. This isn't it.

And I'm almost glad to say that. He says here, your inheritance is yet to come. But he's given you a down payment, just like when you bought a house, if you've ever bought a house. You put down an earnest agreement. And the Holy Spirit was given to you as an earnest agreement to show that God is going to be true to his word and there's more to come.

And that is good news. But you know, there's something else that Paul said in those points. And that is that he has set his seal of ownership. He used the word ownership. This is interesting, right?

Check out 1 Corinthians on the screen. I love this. Chapter six, verses 19 to 20. Paul says, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? Don't you know that?

But look what he goes on to say. What are the implications of that? You're not your own. For you were bought with a price. And so he goes on to say, so hey, so glorify God.

So this is interesting. You know, one of the cries of the world is, it's my body, it's my life. We hear that all the time. It's my body. I can do with it what I want.

It's my life. Hey, it's my life. If I'm not hurting anybody, it's my life. You know what? Christian can't say either of those.

You can't say it's your body. You can't say it's your life. Belongs to him. He bought it. Guess what the purchase price was?

His blood. You have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And now he owns you. Now, it's not a slavery, master-slave relationship. In fact, he is our master.

And Paul even referred to himself as a slave. But here's the deal. And we actually talked about this in our study of Romans. When Jesus is your master, that's when you become free, right? Because God, think about this for a moment, God is the only being in the universe who's truly free.

The only one. There's only one. And it's God. And him whom the sun sets free is also free, and free indeed, right? How you get free is by becoming a slave of the only one who is truly free.

And that's an important understanding. So, and I know the world looks at you and me, and they think we're just bound up, and we're slaves of this God, and we have to do everything he says, and you know, we're actually the free ones. But don't ever mistake the fact that your body is not your own, and your life is not your own. You've been bought with a price. And that's one of the reasons why James tells us, hey, listen, you know, don't go around talking like you belong to yourself.

Don't say, well, we're gonna move to this or that city, and we're gonna set up business, and live there for a few years, and make some money, and then we'll see what we do after that. He says, no. He says, instead, you should say, if the Lord wills, we will do this and that. He says, as it is, you boast and brag. But he says, that's not appropriate for a believer.

Why? Because you're under new ownership. You've been bought with a price, and you are not your own. And so we come to the Lord, and we say, Father, according to your will, if it is your will, we pray about our decisions, you know, and so forth. So, yeah.

The last two verses that we're gonna be covering this evening before I talk just a little bit about what happened yesterday is verse 23 and 24, it says, but I call God to witness against me. It was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. And this is where Paul lays it on the line. He said, I didn't come back and do that second visit because I wanted to spare you the pain, the heartache. I mean, my first visit to you guys was hard.

And it was hard for me, and it was hard for you. And I didn't wanna repeat that again. So I want you to know it wasn't because of some worldly vacillation that I decided, oh, I guess I'm not gonna go after all. No, I care and love you guys. Verse 24, not that we lorded over your faith.

Instead, he says, we work with you. And our desire, he says, is for your joy. For you stand firm in what? Your faith. There it comes back to it again.

You stand firm in your faith. He reminds them that the role of an apostle is not to exercise lordship. In fact, none of us are, no church leader is to exercise lordship. You know, that was something the apostles had a hard time learning when Jesus was with them. They kept wanting to, you know, tell people what to do, and this and that, and the other thing.

And they were completely freaked out when Jesus got up after the, the last Passover that he enjoyed with them and took off his outer robe, wrapped it around his waist, got down on his knees and started washing their feet. They were like, dude, what in the world? In fact, you know, Peter even objected. He says, you will not wash my feet. But Jesus had to make a point.

He says, you guys know how the Gentiles like to lord it over people. And their officials like to exercise their authority. I have authority over you. I tell you, jump, you say, how high. It makes you feel good, you know.

You can tell people what to do. But then he went on to say, not so with you. For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. And you know, that's the example that every church leader, I mean, it's an example every Christian needs to embrace, but particularly church leaders. Because they are given a gifting and a call to a leadership role, but it's not a lordship role.

It's not an authoritarian sort of a thing. It's a service. It's really very similar to the relationship of a husband and wife in marriage. You know, I had a guy write to me recently who was all up in arms because of all the words that are given to the husband in a marriage situation. And he's like, that's weird because the Bible also says that we're joint heirs with our wives.

We're, you know, co-heirs with them of the grace of God. And yeah, that's absolutely true, we are. But that doesn't negate the fact that the man has been given a position of headship. But here's the deal. It's not a position of authority.

It's a position of ministry. The husband has been given a position of ministry in the home. And that ministry is to be played out with love that just oozes. He says, husbands, Ephesians chapter five, love your wives as Christ loved the church. How did Jesus love the church?

Sacrificed himself. That's how husbands are supposed to treat their wives. Sacrificially, you know? So, it's not an authoritarian sort of a deal. And that's why Paul says, listen, yeah, God called me to be an apostle, all right?

I accept that, I know you accept that. But it's not a thing that gives me the right to exercise authority over you, crack the whip and so forth. I'm here to serve you. I'm here to serve you as you stand firm in your faith. And that's my heart, and that's what I want to do.

You can kind of tell, can't you, the personal element of this letter. This is a very personal letter because it was a very personal round of accusations that had come against Paul. And Paul took it personally, not because he himself was wounded necessarily, but because he wanted his message to be heard loud and clear and without any issues. Yeah, so that's chapter one. This letter, I mean, he's gonna continue to be very, very personal in this letter.

And I think it'll be an encouragement to you. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for the opportunity tonight to get into your word. You know, your word is true. It is a double-edged sword, and we thank you for it.

We thank you, Lord, for the nourishment that comes our way just from getting into the word and talking about it and embracing it. And Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus that you would enable us by the power of your spirit to walk out these things, even with fear and trembling, to walk out the reality of what it means to be a child of God in a dark and destructive world. And there are many, Lord, who need yet to hear. And I pray, my Father God, that we would be ready with the message of life in Jesus Christ. And I thank you for that, Father.

And I pray your blessing upon all here as we go from this place. Keep us, protect us, and guide us as we put our faith in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior, we pray. And all God's people said together, amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your Wednesday evening.