



02/26/2017 Service
2 Corinthians 2:11 – 19

We come to the last, actually the second to last chapter, in the book of 2 Corinthians. We've been in this book a couple of years and we've probably got one more message to look at when we walk through chapter 13. It's a very, very difficult book. It's not logically sequential. It's a book of passion. It's amazing how we find some great truths in it. He talks about our eternal destiny, there are a lot of different things in it, but for example, he has one place where he starts talking about his own relationship with them. Then he stops in the middle of it as says, "Listen, you can't marry an unbeliever." Walks through a little section there. And then comes right back to his relationship with them. It's a book of passion. It's not a book of logic. I mean, it's logical but it's not contextual. So it's difficult to walk through. It's difficult to follow where he's going.

Now nearly all the scholars will say that what Paul's doing is, he's defending his ministry. And it is true that the entire book is a defense of who he is against certain men. But I think it's shallow to say that it's a defense of his ministry. That's not what it's about at all. It's a defense of truth. Now here's the issue. OK. I realize that it's not intellectually brilliant to say that there's a Satan. But the fact is that when you read the New Testament Jesus interacted with Satan on a personal level. He does exist. And the Bible indicates that his job is to wreck us. Now there are two things he's going to try to do. One is he's going to try to wreck us eternally. That is when the Holy Spirit comes to us, brings us the truth about Jesus Christ, he's going to do everything he can to twist that or denigrate that or make us believe it's not true so that we do not surrender so that he can basically wreck us for eternity. If, though, you accept what the Holy Spirit tells you about Christ and you believe and accept the blood of Jesus, his payment for you sin, then you're set for eternity, but now he changes his goal. His goal is to wreck you temporally. His goal is to bust you here and he does that by getting you to remove truth from your life. It's the same thing he did with Adam and Eve. Basically he simply comes to them and says, "Look. God said this. He's a liar. What he said is not true, you don't have to believe it, you don't have to yield to it. As a matter of fact if you step away from it, it will actually bless

you.” And so they make the decision they make because they’ve changed their belief. His agenda in your life is to remove belief from you and to change what you believe about Jesus Christ.

Now he’s going to do that in one of two ways. Number one; he will whisper to you that that book and what it says isn’t true. So you’re going to have moments where you hear inside your head, “Well this isn’t right. I’m not going to believe this.” And so he will whisper to you. But the second strategy he has to remove the truth from you is what we find in this book. He sends a group of false preachers, false apostles, into the church who are able to begin to shift this church away from the truth. And here’s the problem. They don’t have the New Testament. They only have Paul’s teaching which is really partial New Testament, but if they leave what Paul’s teaching they’re moving away from God’s truth. And that’s where his passion’s killing him. This whole letter is written, not to defend his ministry, but to keep them locked into the truth that he’s bringing out of the gospel that these false teachers are not bringing. That they are decimating and the church is obviously moving with them. And we live in a day, we talked about this, where you don’t just have to bring false teachers into a church anymore, you’ve got the internet, you can pull up anybody you want, male/female who look good and are gifted. And that’s exactly what Satan does. He pulls up gifted people, sharp people, which is what he does today. You hear them on the internet. You think, “Yeah, I think that’s more true than what this is.” And so he’s still using that strategy. He’s either going to whisper to you or he’s going to bring people into your life that are going to pull you away from the truth of the scripture. And so he writes this book out of this intense passion. Not because he’s trying to defend his ministry. But because he doesn’t want this church stepping away from the truth because if they do, they won’t lose their eternality with Christ, but their walk here will be damaged. And so he is passionate in this book over and over and over. That’s why he talks about all the things and he’s so passionate about them believing truth.

Now he’s so passionate about it that he comes to chapters 11 and 12, which we finished, at least most of it, and he even admits that he’s crazy. Look at what he says in verse 11 of 2 Corinthians 12.

¹¹I’ve been a fool! You forced me to it, I ought to have been commended by you. I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I’m a nothing.

Listen, he makes the statement; you have put me in a place because you were shifting to believe what they’re telling you and I’m telling you they’re wrong. It’s made him in 2 Corinthians 11, obviously they’ve done two things to establish their credentials. They’ve come in and said, “Look we’ve been persecuted, man, we’ve gone through some trials, some insults, and we’ve really been persecuted.” And Paul has to spend chapter 11 saying, “Look I’ve been persecuted way more than they

have. I've gotten busted way more than they have. I've gone through a whole lot more trials, more than they have." And then he comes to chapter 12 because the other thing obviously they were saying was, "You know not only were we persecute, but we've got a special knowledge that Paul doesn't have and you don't have and we're the only ones that have it and you really need to pay attention to it because we're the only ones that can give it to you and we're the only ones that can really set you free in Jesus Christ." And that's why Paul goes through that long, crazy, statement about the fact that, "Look I went to heaven. I saw things no man can utter. And I'm telling you I have way more knowledge than they have." And then he says, "I can't believe I'm talking like this." Because he is so passionate that they not step away from the truth. Because that's the entire game. Now listen to what he writes. He says:

¹²The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs, wonders, mighty works.

He says, "I proved my apostleship. God anointed me in a way he hasn't anointed anyone that's not really an apostle."

¹³In what were you less favored than the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

He says, "Remember I didn't take any money from you. They did. They're at the Four Seasons. I'm not.

¹⁴Here for the third time I'm ready to come to you. I will not be a burden, I will seek not what is yours but you. Children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

I'm your parent. I don't expect you to take care of me. I'm coming to take care of you. Look at this.

¹⁵I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, and I to be loved less?

It's killing him. Even on a personal level how their reacting to him. And he says, "Look I'm going to tell you something. I would be spent emotionally, physically, and spiritually if it meant that you stayed in truth and you did not fall back on what these guys are telling you."

¹⁶Granted that I myself didn't burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you. ¹⁷Did I take advantage of you through any of this? ¹⁸Did I urge Titus to go, sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you?

Remember Titus has come and raised money for the church at Jerusalem. He said, "Did we lie about anything? Did we cheat you? No! Everything we've done has been above board." And then look at this.

¹⁹Have you been thinking all along that we've been defending ourselves to you?

That's what everybody says, but here's what he says.

It's in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved.

Now 20's going go with chapter 13. But here's what he says. We're not defending ourselves. It's in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. He has gone crazy in this book. It's a passion. It's driving him. It's killing him. It's breaking his heart where they are. And he says, "Look I'm not defending my ministry. What I am doing, I'm doing what God's OK with, I'm doing it to deepen Christ in your life, and I'm doing it to make sure that you are uplifted and you stand where you need to stand. Now listen. The key to where you go in Jesus Christ, the absolute key, is what you believe about this book. This is fundamental. And the truth in here, part of it, is what Paul wrote. And that's what he's afraid they're moving away from. And what the enemy's going to do is move you away from this book. Now listen. Let's be clear. This book really says about itself, Jesus had the best line about the Bible, He said, "The scripture cannot be broken." Is there any simpler way to say that? You can't break this. You can't change this. You can't alter this. When Jesus was arguing about the Sadducees, with the Sadducees, about the eternal life that we possess, he said, "I am the Father, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He said, "I, not used to be, I am." He based His doctrine of eternity on a verb tense in the Old Testament. This thing is right. Andy Stanley's wrong. I don't believe in the Bible because of Jesus. I believe in the Jesus because of the Bible and the confirmation from the Holy Spirit in my soul. That is the only thing I know about Jesus is what's in this book. And here's the deal. You've got to take the whole thing. And that's our problem today. Satan wins in our lives when we don't do what that says or believe what that says and he's conquered in our lives when we believe and do what that says. It really is that simple.

When Jesus said in John 10, the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy; I've come that men might have life abundantly. It is rooted on what you believe about what this says. It's that simple. And that's our problem today. You know why our marriages are being wrecked by the enemy? I mean we've got all these things, you go to these conferences, let me tell you why you're being wrecked. Because we think we can ignore scripture. Ephesians 5 says that the men are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might present her without

blemish or spot. So, gentlemen, we have two responsibilities according to scripture. Just right there; two responsibilities. Your wife, let me back up. When I do pre-marital counseling, I make them meet with me the first year and the fifth year because pre-maritals are worthless. Until you live together you have no idea the joy that's coming. So I make them meet with me on the first and the fifth. And on the first anniversary I make the husband ask the wife a question. And he has to ask her, "Has my being in your life this year as your husband made you love Jesus more and understand Him better?" And if the answer to that is no, all you do, gentlemen, is drive your wife to this church and you sit in this room, then you're not the one deepening her in Christ and you've already failed Ephesians 5. Gentlemen, this is the bad news. Good news is we have the final say, according to Ephesians 5. You're the head of the home. It's good news sort of until you read the fine print of the text. Because it says I give myself up for my wife. Which means I do have the final say but it's based on her heart not mine. So we've got so many men that don't do anything for their wife spiritually and they live for themselves and then they wonder why their marriage is shot. And then we have you women, I'm going to be nice here, don't shoot the messenger, it says you're to submit to your husband as to Christ. You say, "Well I'm not going to do that preacher because I'm not inferior to my man." I get that. Most men, probably 99%, married someone way superior. I get that. I did that. I understand that. But I rather she have the pain than me. So I get that. I married superior, most of us did. But it has nothing to do with that because 1 Corinthians 11 says that God the Father is head of God the Son; equal over equal. You're not inferior because you submit. You're honoring a calling of God on your life. So ladies you can't remove from that any more than a man can step away from that. So we have this simple little truth in the scripture and yet our homes are being ravaged because we simply don't live it. Gentlemen you think you can be mad at your wife and hacked at your wife and it's OK. 1 Peter says if you do that, your prayers are hindered. You cannot trash your wife, ignore her, not love her, not take care of her, and then come and pray to Jesus. He won't hear you. I didn't say that. That's what the Bible says. You cannot ignore that truth. So our marriages are being ravaged.

Our churches are being wrecked. When you're born you've got certain talents. When you're reborn you're given certain spiritual gifts. Now generally your talents are going to hit your career, but your gifts are going to hit what you're supposed to do in this church. People are not joining churches today because of where their spiritual gifting leads them in a sacrificial act of service. People are joining churches today because of a consumer index. I go this church because I like this preacher. I like this style of worship. Well I can't go here, they sing too many hymns. I can't go here, they have an organ on the stage. I can't go here because they have drums here. I can't go here, they're wearing skinny jeans. A preacher had skinny jeans. You have no fear of that here. Amen. That's cold. It always amazes me the "amens" I get on what part of the sermon I do. You don't join a church because of the style of worship or what they have for your kids, or what they have for you. You find a church where the gifting that God has placed in your soul are best used for His glory

in that building. But that's not how we do it today. Because no matter what the scripture says about our calling, we're going where we want to go because, again, and that's why our churches are flailing. We've got churches that can be doing great stuff, but nobody will join because it's not what they want. It doesn't fit their consumer index.

And then we twist it. We add to it or take away. Now I got to live with the fact that this is what I used to preach. But the big phraseology for us is that we all need to have a quiet time. Now first of all that's not in the Bible. The closest thing you have to it is Jesus saying, "Go into your closet when you pray." So obviously there's certain principles there, but if you read any of the quiet time material, it will tell you, it will give you all these rules; you need to pray acts: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. You need to pray a certain amount of time. You read a certain amount of Bible scriptures. You need to walk through the Bible like this. You need to do this. You need to pray this way. You need to discipline yourself. You need to get up every morning. You need pray early in the morning. Jesus prayed morning and night. As a matter of fact he, couple times, he prayed all night long. I've never said a devotion material that said that. All the material talks about discipline and duty and work and effort and you need to do it every day and you need to do it at the same time. And none of that's in the word of God. You know what is in there though. Is motivational pictures. There's not much motivation to you and me because we're not Jewish. But if you're a Jew in the first century and you spent your entire existence worshipping at the temple and you know that there's a room in the temple where the Ark of the Covenant used to be and where the Holy of Holies is, and the priest only goes in one day a year, and he's got a rope tied to him and he lays out the blood, and all of a sudden you realize when Jesus dies and his blood is shed, that that thing is ripped open and now anybody can walk in there any time they wanted to, buddy that has no motivation for us, but it was powerful to a Jew because it said to him a holy God now opened himself any day of the week, any time of the day, to a personal relationship and fellowship any time he chose it.

And there's the other motivational truth. That you and I have been adopted. We weren't part of the family. We had no chance to be part of the family because we're too dirty to be part of the family. So the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, not a cherub, not a seraph, not an angel, the King of Kings, the Creator, the One that really runs the supreme court, He came, put His son on a cross, His blood was shed, and now because of Him I am adopted into His family as a son. If you really, now listen to me, if you really believe those two truths, you won't stay away from Jesus Christ. God wanted us motivated out of love and relationship, not duty and rules. I have two kids that live in Hurst. I love my kids. But you know I'd hate to think that they came down here out of duty and out of discipline and looked at each other and said, "Well I don't want to see dad but we got to go. It's been a week." I don't want my kids coming to me out of duty and out of discipline. I want them coming home

to me because they love me and I love them and our relationship drives our fellowship. That is why the Bible paints the pictures it does of who you are in Jesus Christ. And we've got all these people that have come along and added all these rules and we bought into the rules and missed the truth of a relationship driving who we are in Jesus. We've lost the truth. We've just; it's been twisted. And now it's even being twisted by preachers of renown. John Piper, here's a tweet he made, "Preaching aims: Not 20 minutes, twice that." Glad you're here aren't you. "Not immediately practical, eternally helpful. Not relaxed or relaxing, passionate and provoking." Here's a guy that every young pastor in the country reveres. So many. And now these kids that have been struggling to write a 20 minute sermon or a thirty minute sermon because they haven't learned the trick, you can summarize something without droning on, on, on and on. But now they're going to be compelled because they revere this guy to try to extend their sermon. Where in the Bible does it tell you how long to preach? I've read that thing cover to cover and it's nowhere in there. Sermon on the Mount, there's some question about whether or not it's intact, I think it's completely intact, because the Beatitudes are a perfect summation of being dead to self. They're this perfect prelude to the sermon on the mount. So I think the Sermon on the Mount is intact. You know how long, if you preach that, how long it takes to preach the Sermon on the Mount? 18 and a half minutes. Apparently Jesus missed John Piper's tweet. But now we're going to have all sorts of young men, instead of preaching out of the passion and the direction of the Holy Spirit in the freedom of their church, they're going to feel compelled that if they preach 20 minutes, with a passion and a fury, the gospel of Jesus Christ that it's not honoring unless they add another 20 on it. You don't drive your life by anything but what's in this book.

I shared once or twice, and this is internal and mystical and ineffable, and I get that, but I'm just going to tell you my heart today. I was accepted to Alabama, filling out my fraternity letters, because they had the best team in the country, even today. So. Roll tide. See! Another amen at a bad point in the sermon. So, but God called me to preach. And the call was, I mean it was dramatic, it was hard, it was powerful, it was quick, but it was dynamic because I wasn't where I was supposed to be in Christ. So I surrendered to the call. Went to a Baptist school in Mississippi. My freshman year I had three Bible professors and they were all very conservative. But then two guys retired and they brought two guys in, back in that day, from Southern Seminary which in that day was horribly liberal. And they brought these two guys in and they began to teach us in the Bible department. Now they said that they believed the scripture. But then they would make you doubt it on every level. We'd go through a passage. They'd give us eight interpretations and we'd sit in class and go, "Which one do you think is right?" "Well you can't know that. You can't know which interpretation's right. You can't really know what he says. You can only guess." And you're not sure so you do the best you can. And then there were outright passages that they simply denied. I remember my Old Testament professor said that that God never really told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. He just thought God

said that because he'd seen other nations sacrificing their kids to Molech and so he thought he should do that. And luckily God stopped him in the end. But the narrative's not really true. _____ All these different things that sort of denigrated it: Jonah in the belly of a fish, no, but the message of the story is still valid. So I began to really struggle in my life. And I couldn't get passed that this book wasn't true anymore. And now I didn't know what to do. And so I'm confused and I'm struggling and I remember I'm in the library. I'm looking out the window at the campus and I'm praying and I'm just, what's the word, I'm vexed in my spirit, I don't know the phraseology, but I'm just, I'm dying emotionally, spiritually. And so I came to this place where I thought God would be honored by this commitment on my heart. And so I said to God in the library, I said, "Lord here's the deal. I know you've called me to preach, but I know your book isn't true. But because I love you and because I know I'm called to preach, I'm still going to preach even though I know your book's not valid anymore." Now I really thought there would be this overwhelming peace, that God would come down and say, "Oh I'm so proud of you. That even though my book's wrong you're still going to fulfill your calling." But then it just got worse for me. And I was just, now I don't have any idea what to do. So I decided to get in my car. There was a place I used to go pray in the woods near Vicksburg, Mississippi and so I get in my car and I'm driving down the campus and I get to right next to my dorm and then my dorm parking lot is here. And as I'm driving by, in Mississippi you didn't have to have the double license tag in Mississippi, you only had to have it on the back, and so on the front was a license tag that said, quote from scripture, "God is love". And I all of a sudden started laughing at the statement. And I remember thinking to myself, "Why are you laughing at that?" And I don't have many of these, so don't misunderstand me, but there was this piercing from the Holy Spirit who said to me, "If you don't believe it the only thing left to do is laugh at it." Pierced me. Pulled into the parking lot, wept for a while, finally said, "Alright. I'm going to believe you and I'm going to do things with my life. I'm going to surrender to your call and I'm going to line up with this book." And I have never looked back since. Now I understand, understand, that's all of us. It's the reason behind the writing of 2 Corinthians. Everything he's done is to pull them back to the truth. Not what anybody else teaches you, not what anybody else says to you, including me. It's what this book says because everything it says, I've learned one thing in all my years, everything it says always works.

Let's pray.

Father the enemy's really good. He's smarter than we are, knows your word better than we do, he's more clever than we are. We're just going to have to trust that what your word says is straight from your mouth. Honor us when we do that. In Jesus Christ name.