

RISKING ALL FOR LOVE**Paul's "Boast"****2 Corinthians 1:12—2:4**

"Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." 2 Cor. 1:12

Background Information: Paul has made some changes in his plans to visit the church at Corinth. It seems that these changes have caused some of the Corinthians to question Paul's character and leading by the Holy Spirit. (Note that Paul writes using the editorial or apostolic plural in much of this section of his letter; thus, "our" and "we" often refer to Paul alone.)

Day 1: Read 2 Corinthians 1:12—2:4.

1. Look at the surprising first words of verse 12. In a number of places Paul writes that boasting is off-limits (Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 2:8–9), but in 1 Cor. 1:31 Paul quotes Jeremiah: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." What is the difference between "boasting in the Lord" and showing off? Which is Paul doing? (Consider where Paul says the "holiness and sincerity" of his conduct come from and what is behind this blameless conduct. [vs. 12b])
2. What are you able to boast of in the Lord? Encourage your sisters by sharing your boast.

Day 2: Read 2 Corinthians 1:12–17.

3. Paul contrasts "worldly wisdom" with "holiness" and "sincerity" (vs. 12). What is the difference? (1 Cor. 2:1–5)
4. In verse 14 Paul makes it clear that he is weighing his conduct in view of "the day of the Lord Jesus." What is this day? (5:10) How would your own life be different if you acted consistently with that great day in mind?
5. What do you think the "this" in verse 15 refers to?
6. Paul is defending his actions against the criticism of some in the Corinthian church. Describe a time when you have judged someone without knowing all the circumstances. Now look at what Jesus says in Matthew 7:1–5. Pray that you would become quicker to extend grace toward others.

Day 3: Read 2 Corinthians 1:15–22.

7. Look at Acts 18:1–11. What is the "message" that Paul preached and the Corinthians believed (vss. 18–19)? How long did he stay in Corinth on that first visit? What do the truth of the message and Paul's conduct while in Corinth say about the character of the messenger?

8. What does it mean that all God's promises are " 'Yes' in Christ" (vs. 20)? (Lk. 24:44–47) Write down some examples.
9. How do believers respond to this past faithfulness? (vs. 20) What does this response mean?
10. How does God show his faithfulness in the present? (vs. 21a) How does this encourage you?

Day 4: Read 2 Corinthians 1:20–22.

11. In these verses we see each of the three persons of the Trinity at work. List the roles that Paul mentions.
 God (the Father):
 Christ (Jesus, the Son):
 Spirit:
12. Throughout this paragraph, Jesus is referred to as "Christ," which means "The Anointed One." What is this anointing? (Lk. 4:18–19; Acts 10:38; cf. Mt. 3:16–17) What anointing do we who are "in Christ" receive (vs. 21)? (vss. 21–22; cf. 1 Jn. 2:20)
13. Who is the seal whom God has set on us? (Eph. 1:13) What is the implication of this sealing? (1 Cor. 6:19–20)
14. The Holy Spirit is also "a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (vs. 22). What is to come? (4:14; Eph 1:13–14; 1 Cor. 15:51–54)

Day 5: Read 2 Corinthians 1:23–2:4.

15. Paul now returns to the subject of his travel plans, and he is emphatic about his reason for changing them. What reason does he give? (vs. 23. Compare this with the way he describes his intended third visit in 13:2–3a.)
16. What is Paul's goal for the Corinthians? (vs. 24)
17. It can be difficult to maintain relationships over a great distance. For Paul and the Corinthians this difficulty was great because of the limited ability to communicate over distance and the

interference of false apostles in Corinth who sought to turn the people against Paul. With what earnest language does Paul seek to reassure the flock in Corinth?