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2 Corinthians

...(as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also *are* ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus. 2 Corinthians 1:14

This thought is the continuation of the previous verse. Taken together, they read -

"For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end ¹⁴ (as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also *are* ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus."

His words "in part" may be speaking of the Corinthian's knowledge concerning Paul (that it was limited), or it could be speaking of those in Corinth who agreed with Paul (being only a portion of them; the others still not accepting his apostleship). Either way, there was an understanding of him by the church at Corinth. And this understanding was "that we are your boast as you also *are* ours."

Paul is indicating first and foremost that his boasting is in those whom he has raised up to be Christians who are mature in their faith. When he stands before the Lord, he would be able to boast in a life which was served for His honor and glory, knowing that he had not frittered away his time or somehow done less than his very best for those under his care. This same sentiment is found in other epistles as well. Two examples are -

"For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy." 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20

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"Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain." Philippians 2:14-16

In his words concerning himself which say, "...that we are your boast" it is certainly speaking in the same context. It is a future boast when they stand before the Lord as well. As Ellicott states it - "I trust that you will one day recognise that you have as much reason to be proud of me as I have to be proud of you."

At that wondrous moment when believers are to stand before Christ, Paul looked forward to the Corinthians saying, "We were trained by a godly and Christ-centered man named Paul." This is certainly the case because Paul finishes with the thought, "...in the day of Christ Jesus." It is a future hope that Paul is writing about, one that each believer will face at the Bema Seat of Jesus Christ.

Life application: Will there be boasting by others of your work for the Lord? Will they say, "This person led me to Christ"? Will they say, "This person mentored me to become a strong and competent disciple"? And likewise, will those who ministered to you be able to boast over who you became as a believer in the Lord, or will they be embarrassed at how you wasted your few short years in Christ?

And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit— 2 Corinthians 1:15

The "confidence" that Paul is referring to is his statement in verse 13 which said, "I trust you will understand, even to the end." In other words, Paul had said

something in his previous letter to them which had not come to pass and he wanted them to know that he was not just saying one thing and arbitrarily doing another thing.

As he will explain, he had originally planned that he would leave Ephesus and travel directly to Corinth. After that, he would then head to Macedonia and return to Corinth, from which he would sail back to Jerusalem. However, in 1 Corinthians 16:5, 6 he had already changed those plans to instead go through Macedonia first. The "second benefit" that he speaks of was the original plan of having two visits.

The "benefit" in Greek is literally "grace." Paul wasn't just speaking about a happy occasion which would result from his visit, but instead a granting of divine grace. However, he was precluded from this by a change in his plans. He will continue to discuss this issue, giving a full explanation for why he didn't follow through with the original arrangement.

Life application: Sometimes we think we know the motives of why someone takes a particular action and we allow it to upset us, even to the point where we feel resentment and anger. And yet, there may have been completely innocent motives for the action, or there could have been unavoidable circumstances which arose and which necessitated the change. It is always good to review the whole situation carefully before letting our emotions take over and ruin the day.

...to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. 2 Corinthians 1:16

Paul's words continue the previous verse. They convey his original intentions, though these things never actually came to pass. It was at first his desire to "pass by way of you to Macedonia." In other words, it was his longing to go first to Corinth for a visit and then on to Macedonia after that.

After his visit to Macedonia, he intended to then turn around and go once again through Corinth to have that "second benefit" mentioned in the previous verse. He truly desired their company and their fellowship for that second time. And finally, after this second visit was coming to a close, he said he desired to "be helped by you on my way to Judea." This "help" meant conducting him to the ship from the city. It is a similar thought to that found in 1 Corinthians 16:6 -

"And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go."

In this, and in many other instances, we get clues to the fact that Paul had a disability, probably extremely poor eyesight, which necessitated that he be assisted in his travels. When leaving Corinth, he was hoping for an escort of any Corinthians that would like to see him off at the port. It is a touching note from his hand showing his sincerity in these original plans which were later amended.

Life application: Seeing off missionaries is a good way of honoring them. By giving them a grand send off, it is acknowledging to them that they are important people doing work which is necessary and appreciated. Should you have missionaries visiting your area, be sure to recognize them for their noble efforts.

Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?
2 Corinthians 1:17

In a round about way of explaining why he chose not to come to Corinth, as he originally planned and as he noted in the preceding verses, Paul asks rhetorically, "When I was planning this, did I do it lightly?" In other words, was he just saying, "I may come or I may not... it all depends on how I feel at the time." Were his words vacillating and unsure?

The Greek translated as "lightly" is *elaphria*. It is only used this one time in the New Testament and it means "levity," i.e. fickleness. It comes from another similar word which means light, as in not heavy or burdensome. And so, he is refuting the charges of those who claimed he was fickle or insincere in his dealings with them.

Continuing on he asks, "Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh...?" "According to the flesh" is probably referring to a person who easily makes promises and then easily reneges on those promises, showing that he lives in a carnal and self-centered manner. It could also have the second meaning of a person who is weak and unable to say what he really means out of fear of alienating others. Either way, his asking this as a question is intended to show that such is not the case.

And finishing up this verse, he asks whether they believe that with him "there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No." In this is a portion of the teaching of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5, he said this -

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne;³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."
Matthew 5:33-37

This same sentiment is cited by James in his letter (5:12). It thus was by this time a commonly taught and understood precept. Paul was asking if they felt he was failing to adhere to the words of Jesus and speaking out of both sides of his mouth at once. The rhetorical nature of these questions shows that none of this was the case. He will defend his actions to show this is so.

It should be understood that each phrase in this verse carries a bit of ambiguity and can be viewed from different ways. It is as if Paul is purposefully using such

ambiguous wording to cover any and all possibilities concerning accusations against him. In this the Pulpit Commentary says, "There is probably no clause in the New Testament of which the certain sense must be left so indeterminate as this."

Life application: The Bible asks us to be trustworthy, even to the simple promises we make. When others hear our words, they should be willing to accept them at face value. In this, if we don't follow through with them, we need to have a very good reason for it. We also have to be able to defend why we didn't live up to the words we have uttered.

But *as* God *is* faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. 2 Corinthians 1:18

Paul's words here have been construed in various ways. The two predominant views are

- 1) that this is an oath. "As God is faithful, so are my words to you," or
- 2) that God will vindicate him in his words to them. Either way, his words contain and relay the sense that what he has spoken and continues to speak to those at Corinth is in accord with the words of the Lord.

His "Yes" has meant "Yes" and his "No" has meant "No." They were not fickle or faltering, but firm and fixed. This note of God's faithfulness is not unique to this letter. It is a theme which he has transmitted often. Not only does he speak of God's faithfulness to the Corinthians on several occasions, but also to those in other areas. One example is in his first letter to the Thessalonians -

"He who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *it*." 1 Thessalonians 5:24

He also conveys this in his second letter to them as well -

"But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one." 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Paul wants those in Corinth to know that just as God is faithful, the words he has spoken are faithful. God is his witness to the integrity of his words.

Life application: Integrity is a dying attribute of people in the world today. But when one possesses it, they are remembered for it. As Christians, we are called to speak openly and honestly so that others may see in us truthful disciples of the Lord. We bear His name and therefore others will make value judgments concerning Him based on how we present ourselves.

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.

2 Corinthians 1:19

This verse shows us that Silas is the same as Silvanus mentioned elsewhere. With one name or another, he is mentioned in Acts and some of the epistles. But, along with this verse, the verse which ties the two as being the same person is Acts 18:5

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"When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ.*" Acts 18:5

Knowing who was with Paul at that time and then comparing it to the timing of this epistle, it is certain they are the same person. And so, using Silvanus and Timothy as support for his words to the Corinthians because they were both reputable souls, Paul continues with his defense concerning his actions.

He calls on an understanding of "the Son of God, Jesus Christ" by his audience. In this, he cannot be referring to a person who is an adopted son of God, but rather the true and only begotten Son of God. Hence, the highlighting of Him in this way - marking Him out as unique and distinct from all others. It was He "who was

preached among you by us." The truly begotten of the Father was the subject of their preaching. As this is so, their words are being tied into the truthfulness of their actions.

It would make no sense to preach the embodiment of truth, Jesus Christ, just to turn around and act in an untruthful manner. In essence, there is the "Proof of the unchangeableness of the doctrine from the unchangeableness of the subject of it, namely, Jesus Christ" (JFB Commentary).

The doctrine of those who preached was sure because of the One of whom they spoke. In Him what they communicated "was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes." The words "in Him was Yes" are literally, "Yes has come to pass in Him." Jesus is the embodiment of truth and He demonstrated this in His life and actions. For a few corresponding verses which confirm this, we can go to the following -

"I am the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6

"For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."
John 18:37

"These things says He who is holy, He who is true." Revelation 3:7

"And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." Revelation 19:11

As Jesus is so represented as the truth, and as Paul proclaimed the truth of Jesus, he himself, along with the others with him determined to always be as truthful as the One whom they proclaimed. There was no vacillating or wavering in a "Yes and No" but rather in Him was "Yes."

Life application: Because we bear the name of Jesus, we need to ensure that our words to others reflect His character as well. As He is the embodiment of truth, let us always be truthful in the words we convey to others.

For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 1:20

Speaking of Christ Jesus, Paul says that "all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes." However, the translation here with the inserted "are" makes "Yes" the predicate of the promises. That is not the intent. Rather, what Paul is saying is that Christ is the incarnate answer to the promises of God. Thus, it should be stated as a separate clause. "For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea." (ERV)

It is Christ who is the fulfillment of the promises. When we call on Him, those promises which were fulfilled in Him now belong to us. Going on it says "and in Him Amen." Vincent's Word Studies notes that "In giving this answer in His person and life, Christ puts the emphatic confirmation upon God's promises." God made promises and those promises are emphatically fulfilled in Jesus.

This is explained by Him when He spoke to the leaders of Israel in John 5 -

"And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. ³⁸ But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. ³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."
John 5:37-39

He is the fulfillment of Scripture and therefore the promises of God which were made to the people of God (to Abraham for example, explaining that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed) are realized in Him. Paul gives this thought in Romans 15 -

"Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the fathers,⁹ and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy..." Romans 15:8, 9

And in the book of Hebrews, we read this -

"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Hebrews 9:15

Every Messianic promise is realized in Him and in Him is the Amen. It means he is faithful and true. In Him is the confirmation and establishment of those promises. In Revelation 3:14 He is called the "Amen" to demonstrate this.

Life application: As you read the Bible and consider the promises of God, realize that God Himself fulfilled each of them in Christ. When we receive Him, those promises now belong to us because of Him. Let us be ever-thankful for the wonderful, tender mercies of God who promised and fulfilled for beings such as us.

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God.

2 Corinthians 1:21

Paul ties these words in with the "Amen" of the previous verse. There he said -

"For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."

In Christ is the Amen, the establishment of who we are in God because in Him is the fulfillment of all of God's promises. When we unite with Him, we participate in those things, thus we are established. Expanding on that, he says "Now He who

establishes us with you in Christ..." In other words, our position is externally granted and fixed. It is not something that we have done, but something that has been done for us. This "us" is probably referring to Paul and those whom he was with because he says "us with you."

Paul and those with him, along with the Corinthians (and any who have received Christ) have been established in Christ. Further, He "has anointed us." The word for "anointed" is chrio. It is used only five times in the New Testament. All other four instances are referring to Jesus - Luke 4:18, Acts 4:27, Acts 10:38, Hebrews 1:9. Jesus is the "Anointed," which is the meaning of Christ. And in Him we have received an anointing from God.

In the Greek of this verse, there is a change in the tense of the verbs. The word "establishes" is a present participle, but the "anoints" is an aorist. We are continually being established and upheld in Christ, but we are, at whatever moment we received Christ "anointed." Therefore, it should read "anointed" rather than "has anointed." It may seem trivial, but Paul's words were written 2000 years ago and yet they still apply today, 2000 years later. When a person calls on Christ, they are anointed in Christ. From that moment on they are established and continue to be established. "Now He who is continually establishing us with you in Christ and, who anointed us, is God." 2 Corinthians 1:21 (CGV - Charlie Garrett Version)

Life application: God has done everything necessary for us in Christ. He has done the work through Him, He has anointed us in Him, and He continues to establish us in Him. It is by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves. Rather, it is the gift of God. Let us not boast, but instead proclaim the greatness of God in Christ.

...who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.
2 Corinthians 1:22

In the previous verse, Paul noted that those who believe in Christ are anointed by God. Tied to this comes another benefit, an eternal one. Understanding what he is speaking of here should completely put at ease anyone who has been confused about the doctrine of "eternal salvation." In other words, can a person "lose" their salvation? The answer is "No!" God Himself has anointed us and God Himself has "sealed us."

The word for "sealed" is *sphragizó*. It means "properly to seal (affix) with a signet ring or other instrument; to stamp." It "signifies *ownership* and the full *security* carried by the backing (full authority) of the owner. 'Sealing' in the ancient world served as a 'legal signature' which guaranteed the promise (contents) of what was sealed." A change in ownership has taken place and that change, from the devil to God, bears His seal. As there is no higher authority in heaven or on earth, it must be an eternal salvation. God does not make mistakes.

Further, as evidence of this, Paul notes that He has "given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." The word "guarantee" is the Greek word *arrabón*. It properly means, "A pledge; an earnest, earnest-money, a large part of the payment, given in advance as a security that the whole will be paid afterwards." The sealing of the Spirit is "a guarantee." To say that a person who receives God's anointing, seal, and Spirit could then lose it is to accuse God of renegeing on a guarantee that He has made; it is an impossible situation to even consider.

As Paul says in Ephesians 1:13, 14 -

"In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

Paul notes there, using the same words *sphragizó* and *arrabón*, the certainty of eternal salvation. Any other verses which appear to contradict this doctrine have

either been misunderstood or they been taken out of their intended context. God is not in the business of making errors, especially with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

This Greek word, *arrabón* is a transliteration from the Hebrew word *erabon*. Both words are used only three times in Scripture. In the Old Testament, they are all found in Genesis 38, in a story which seems so peculiar that it is almost universally misunderstood. The three times it is found in the New Testament are in Paul's writings - 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5, and Ephesians 1:14. To obtain a fuller understanding of the significance of that beautiful Old Testament passage found in Genesis 38, please make time to watch this sermon on YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZrTF468Q_I

Life application: If you are like every other person on earth (and you are), then you will fail your Lord often after you call out to Him for salvation. However, He has received you and you have been sealed for the day of redemption. Don't allow others to make you feel you have "lost" your salvation. You could no more do so than God would reject His own Son Jesus. You have moved to Him and you are "in" Him. You are secure. Press on in His good graces with this surety. Pick up the pieces of your sin and rebellion, place them in the garbage can, and move on in His security.

Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. 2 Corinthians 1:23

After carefully building up his words thus far in Chapter 1, Paul now gives the reason for having not come directly to Corinth as he first proposed. In doing so, he calls out words unique in the New Testament writings by saying, "I call God as witness against my soul..." He had just a few verses earlier confirmed to those in Corinth the words of Jesus about letting your "Yes" be "Yes" and your "No" be "No." And yet, he now makes this added statement as a confirmation of his honesty and integrity.

This then is not a contradiction of the intent of Jesus' words. Instead, it shows clearly that he believed they were a general principle for always being truthful in speech to others, but at the same time they are not a "rigid exclusion of the right to appeal to God in solemn cases and for good reasons" (Pulpit Commentary). God has shown us, through His word, that we can in fact make such bold claims when the situation so demands it.

In the case of Paul here, he had a very good reason for not going through Corinth and it required this oath when giving it. In his words to them, he gives the reason as "...to spare you I came no more to Corinth." If he had come at the time he originally said he would come, it would not have been a visit filled with love and tenderness, but one filled with discipline and probably very hard feelings between both sides. He alluded to this in 1 Corinthians 4 -

"What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?" 1 Corinthians 4:21

Paul only had the best intent for the Corinthians and their mutual friendship in mind. It is this that he now conveys to them.

Life application: We are certainly implored by the Lord to fulfill the words that we speak, but there may be times when amending our actions are actually more necessary than fulfilling the original plans we have conveyed. If so, however, we should be careful to explain why we have made the changes, including what was involved in the decision. Paul has set a good example of this for us in 2 Corinthians 1.

Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand. 2 Corinthians 1:24

Paul's words here are given to explain his words of the previous verse. He just said, "...to spare you I came no more to Corinth." He is qualifying that statement

now so that his audience knows that neither he nor any of the apostles had "dominion over" their faith.

Each person comes to Christ in the same way, by grace through faith, and they have the right to grow in their own way. If they are "on-fire" for the Lord, or if they quietly follow Him in their hearts, they have dominion over their own faith. Although believers should be encouraged to attend Bible studies and worship services, it is not up to someone else to dictate to them whether they actually do. This is true even with Paul and the apostles, as he now notes.

Instead, they "are fellow workers for" their joy. They were to encourage, build up, correct in doctrine, etc. But they were not the lords over the faith of those they ministered to, and that same tradition carries on today between pastors and congregants within the church. This is explicitly noted by Peter in his first epistle -

"...nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." 1 Peter 5:3

Like Paul of the past, pastors are to be examples to the flock, not lords over them. Paul understood this and wanted those in Corinth to understand it as well. His cancelled visit to Corinth was to spare them from a loss of joy, not a loss of fellowship with Christ. And the reason for this is because for them, as with every true believer, it is "by faith that you stand." How can someone else control the faith of another? They cannot! And therefore, they have no right to exercise dominion over that same faith. This notion that we are *saved* by faith is stated by Paul many times. The idea that we also *stand* by faith is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15 -

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand." 1 Corinthians 15:1

Life application: If you are in a church where the pastor wields too much authority over your spiritual life, you should be extremely careful. This can be, and has many times, turned into a cult with terrible consequences. Jim Jones, the Branch Davidians, the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses and many other cults started with leaders that exercised dominion over their congregants. Many times in history it has ended badly for the lives of those people. And the eternal consequences of such a relationship lead in only one sad direction.