

# OpenTheo

## July 19th: 1 Samuel 10 & 2 Corinthians 1:1—2:11

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Saul's signs of the kingdom. Paul's painful relations with the Corinthians.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

1 Samuel 10. Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him, and said, Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord, and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.

When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzer, and they will say to you, The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys, and is anxious about you, saying, What shall I do about my son? Then you shall go on from there, father, and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young oats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine, and they will greet you and give you two loaves of

bread, which you shall accept from their hand. After that you shall come to Gibeath Elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines, and there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place, with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them prophesying.

Then the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them, and be turned into another man. Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. Then go down before me to Gilgal, and behold I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings.

Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do. When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart, and all these signs came to pass that day. When they came to Gibeah, behold a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them.

And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? And a man of the place answered, And who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets? When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place. Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant, Where did you go? And he said, To seek the donkeys, and when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel. And Saul's uncle said, Please tell me what Samuel said to you.

And Saul said to his uncle, He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found. But about the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything. Now Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah, and he said to the people of Israel, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I deliver you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.

But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses. And you have said to him, Set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands.

Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by Lot. He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by Lot, and Saul the son of Kish was taken by Lot. But when they sought him, he could not be found.

So they inquired again of the Lord, Is there a man still to come? And the Lord said, Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage. Then they ran and took him from there. And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

And Samuel said to all the people, Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people. And all the people shouted, Long live the king! Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home.

Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched. But some worthless fellows said, How can this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

First Samuel chapter 10 is the second half of a there and back again narrative. It begins with Saul setting off in search of his father's donkey in chapter 9, and then he returns when he discovers that they have been found. Of course, rather a lot happens between these two events.

In the previous chapter, Saul had met Samuel and had experienced a series of ascensions, going up to the city, going up to the high place, going up to the head of the table, and then going up to the top of the house. He has been given the priestly portion of the sacrifice, the portion belonging to Samuel himself. Saul has been treated as if Samuel's new son.

He has been set apart as the one to judge Israel after Samuel. He is taking the place of the unfaithful sons of Samuel, Joel and Abijah. The last chapter ended with Samuel waking Saul up at the break of dawn and sending him on his way.

Saul's servant was then sent on ahead, while Samuel remained with Saul to speak with him in private. That's where we take up the narrative again in this chapter. Samuel now anoints Saul with a flask of oil and kisses him, as he had been instructed to do in chapter 9 verse 16.

Saul is anointed as the prince. This isn't the coronation, it's a designation of Saul as the future king. He is now the prince over the Lord's heritage.

The land and the people are the Lord's and Saul must rule over them under the Lord. In order to assure Saul that he will be the prince, the Lord gives him three signs. We might again be reminded of the signs that the Lord gave to Gideon before his victory over the Midianites.

The signs take the form of predictions of things that will happen to Saul as he goes along his way, and they show, among other things, God's providential oversight over the actions of men, animals and creation more generally. This has been an important and recurring theme in 1 Samuel to this point. We might recall the cows bearing the ark back to Israel from the land of Philistia.

This demonstrated God's providential power to the Philistines. The various chance

occurrences leading to Saul and Samuel meeting are another example of this. God is overseeing this entire process and by giving these signs to Saul, it's a further manifestation that it is God behind this, not just Samuel.

There are three stages to the sign. In the first stage of the sign, there are two men by Rachel's tomb, with news of the donkeys. Rachel had died giving birth to Benjamin.

Saul was a Benjaminite. That had happened back in Genesis chapter 35, and it was there that God had first promised that Israel would have kings. This happened on the road to Bethlehem.

The question of where exactly is a matter of some debate. They were some way from Bethlehem, but it's not entirely clear whether it was just outside Bethlehem or whether the road was the Bethlehem road and they were some further distance from their destination. If the latter is the case, then maybe it was near Ramah.

In Jeremiah chapter 31 verse 15, Rachel is described as weeping in Ramah for her children. In this location, Saul is told about the donkeys. The donkeys have been found, which confirms the message of Samuel, but also, given the connection between donkeys and rule, maybe suggests something about the kingdom.

Hearing about the finding of the donkeys near the tomb of his ancestress is probably a significant event. From there he will proceed and see three men going up to God at Bethel, presumably to worship. One carries three young goats, another carries three loaves of bread, and the third carries a skin of wine, and they will give Saul two loaves of bread.

This occurs near the Oak of Tabor, which some have speculated is the same oak as the oak beneath which Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, was buried in Genesis chapter 35 verse 8. That might be important to notice because the death of Deborah and the death of Rachel sandwiched the first promise of the kings. The gift of the bread to Saul again suggests some sort of priestly status that he will enjoy. David enjoyed something similar when he was given the showbread by the priests at Nob.

In Numbers chapter 18 verse 11 we're told, This also is yours, speaking to the priests, the contribution of their gift, all the wave offerings of the people of Israel. I have given them to you and to your sons and daughters with you as a perpetual Jew. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

Finally Saul will arrive at Gibeath Elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines. This gives us a sense of the way in which the Philistines were an occupying force in many respects at this time. At that point he will meet prophets playing musical instruments as they come down from the high place.

A connection between prophecy and music can also be seen in such places as 2nd Kings

chapter 3 verse 15 where Elisha instructs a musician to be brought so that he will prophesy with the music, the spirit of the Lord coming upon him as the music plays. While the spirit does come upon Saul suddenly, it is not necessarily ecstatic or trance-like. This seems to occur at Gibeah.

These locations seem to be significant. They were important places in the life of Israel and particularly of the tribe of Benjamin. The tomb of Rachel was associated with the death of the ancestress.

The oak of Tabor was possibly associated with the death of Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, which with the death of Rachel sandwiched the promise of kings. And Gibeah of course was the site of the tragic events of Judges chapter 19, events that almost led to the complete destruction of Benjamin. Benjamin's mother Rachel had died in childbirth, giving birth to Benjamin, and then Benjamin himself had almost been extinguished because of the sin concerning the concubine at Gibeah.

Perhaps in the background of these three locations we're supposed to see three women. We're supposed to see Rachel, Deborah and the unnamed concubine of the Levite. In making the sites of the deaths of these three women, sites where the signs of the promised kingdom are given, something of God's gracious redemption of Israel's history is being shown.

Where sin and death abounded, God's grace will abound much more. We have a reminder of these three signs in 1 Samuel chapter 16 verses 19 to 23 when David is sent to Saul, with elements of these three signs bound up with him. Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, and a young goat, and sent them by David his son to Saul.

And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.

And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him. A donkey, bread, wine, a goat, a musical instrument, and changing the spirit of the king.

David comes with all the signs of the kingdom that Saul receives in this chapter. We might also think of the New Testament, where in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus gives three sets of instructions to his disciples, telling them things that will befall them as they follow them. First of all, they will find the cult and bring it to him.

The donkeys have been found. Then they will go into the city and see a man with a water pitcher going up to the upper room and he will show them where they will eat the meal, the meal where they will be given bread by Christ. Then they are told to wait in

Jerusalem, and they will be clothed with power from on high.

They will become new people, just as Saul became a new person. Once these things happen, Saul is told that he should do what his hand finds to do. He should confidently undertake his calling, knowing that God is with him.

Samuel instructs Saul to go to Gilgal and wait there for seven days. This is a perplexing detail, especially given the events of chapter 13 that seem to reference just such an instruction, an instruction that Saul fails to keep. Yet this is many years beforehand.

The kingdom is renewed at Gilgal in chapter 11 verses 14-15. Perhaps what is in view here is that Saul was expected to prepare himself for entry into kingly office, as the priests had to wait for seven days before their installation into priestly office, and then on the eighth day Samuel would officially install him into his new position. Saul receives a new heart.

The spirit rushes upon Saul as he came upon the judges in the book of Judges, and he rushed upon Samson in particular. Saul begins to prophesy and people who know him, he's in Gibeah, which is his hometown, start to question, is Saul also among the prophets? And who is their father? Saul doesn't seem to have any prophetic pedigree. But yet, as he has been adopted, as it were, by Samuel, he is now among the prophets.

He's now also one who enjoys some priestly status. Arriving back, Saul is questioned by his uncle, possibly Abner, as we see in chapter 14 verse 50, Abner the son of Ner was Saul's uncle. Saul tells him about the message that he had received from Samuel concerning the donkeys, but does not divulge the secret of the kingdom.

Samuel now summons all of the people of Israel to Mizpah. Mizpah is a site of assembly as we saw in chapter 7. At this point, only Saul and Samuel know that Saul has been designated as the one who will be king. For the rest of the nation, all of the other events since chapter 8 are unknown to them.

Samuel declares the indictment of the Lord upon their choice, that they have rejected the Lord who delivered them, and chosen a human king in his place. While the Lord will establish Saul as his vicegerent, the people's desire for a king was very much a rejection, an idolatrous rejection of the Lord as king over them. They wanted a human king in the place of the Lord, someone who was far easier to relate to, someone who made them more like the other nations.

The tribes are presented before the Lord, and they are chosen by lot, the Lord selecting the tribe of Benjamin, and then the clan of the Matrites, and then finally Saul, the son of Kish. Yet Saul is nowhere to be found, just as David will not initially be found when Samuel seeks to anoint one of the sons of Jesse. Saul is in fact hiding among the baggage, seemingly reluctant to enter into his new role, which is probably a good sign.

People who are hungry for power are usually not the best people to trust with it. When the people see Saul, they recognise he is head and shoulders above everyone else, he's someone who has the fitting appearance of a king, he's not someone who's hungry for power, he seems a gracious man as well, when people oppose him, he does not seek vengeance over them. The people generally recognise and welcome him as king.

God has given them a good king, a king that is far better than they ever deserved, a king who will rule under him, despite the people's idolatrous intent, God gives them a king that will not be an idol, protecting them from the full force of their decision. At this point Samuel also writes out a document with the rights and duties of the kingship, and the relationship between the people and the king. The kingdom of Israel is a constitutional one, it's governed by the law.

In addition to Samuel's document, the constitution for the kingdom, Saul would probably also have had to write out the document of Deuteronomy chapter 17 verses 18 to 20. A question to consider, in this chapter and the one preceding, Saul enjoys some priestly privileges, he is also given the sign of some prophetic gift. How can we understand the relationship between the king and the offices of priest and prophet? What sort of overlap or analogy is there between the roles, and what differences exist? We know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia, for we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.

On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. 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 our 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.

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. For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you, for if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice.

For I felt sure of all of you that my joy would be the joy of you all. For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure, not to put it too severely, to all of you.

For such a one this punishment by the majority is enough. So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Paul introduces the second epistle to the Corinthians in a manner typical of his letters. He identifies himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. The letter is also from Timothy, who from verses such as verse 19 of this chapter is clearly not Paul's co-author, but more likely a fellow minister of Paul known to the Corinthian Church.

It is addressed to the Corinthian Church in particular, but also to the wider body of Christians in the region. Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. It also seems to have been the most significant church within that region.

Paul had received much less of a response in Athens in Acts chapter 17 than he later did in Corinth in Acts chapter 18. Paul gives them his customary greeting and then moves into an expression of thanksgiving. This opening formula is common to many of Paul's letters.

Paul's thanksgiving begins by focusing upon the theme of God's comfort. God is the God who communicates comfort and communicates comfort in order that we might be able to share it with others in turn. God's gifts conscript their recipients into the task of giving in turn.



When God gives to us, he gives us the capacity to give to others. For the sharing of comfort, there is a prior sharing in affliction. The people of God share in the afflictions of Christ himself.

Paul particularly has in view here what we suffer for the sake of Christ's name. Just as Christ was at odds with the world and its powers, so faithful Christians will be. The sufferings of the Messiah were the birth pangs through which the new age would dawn.

And in the story of the Gospels, the period running up to Christ's death is a time of testing and tribulation, followed by the great sufferings undergone by Christ in the crucifixion. This same pattern is one that plays itself out in the life of his people. However, while they participate in the sufferings and the tribulations of the Messiah by which the new age will dawn, they also participate in the comfort of the victory that Christ has already accomplished.

Like Christ's sufferings for his people, the Apostles' suffering has a vicarious character to it. They are suffering for the salvation and the comfort of the people to whom they have been sent. However, the Corinthians in their turn will share in the sufferings of the Apostles, as the Apostles share in the sufferings of the Messiah, so that they too might enjoy comfort with them.

This vision of sharing in the sufferings of the Messiah and finding true comfort in the very place that might seem least promising is one that contrasts with the sort of super-spirituality that had been popular among the Corinthians. The close entanglement of comfort and affliction that Paul describes here also fits with his attention to the paradoxical character of life in Christ, where poverty and wealth, weakness and power, folly and wisdom are also radically reshaped by the way that Christ undermines the structures and the values of the world. Paul then proceeds to describe a particular trial that he and his fellow missionaries had undergone while in Asia.

They had, at this time, despaired of life itself and been tested beyond their very limits, feeling that they were as good as condemned to death. However, through it they had depended upon God rather than upon their own strength and, as a result, had discovered God's power in their situation, the very power by which he raises the dead. This deliverance had left them with greater confidence of future deliverance.

It was precisely in being brought to the utter end of their own resources that they discovered the sufficiency of God's strength in their situation. This is a theme to which Paul will return later in the Epistle, in chapter 12 verses 9-10 for instance. But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul charges the Corinthians to help them in prayer, interceding for them in their trials and joining with them in thanks for their deliverance. Paul began this section by blessing and praising God for his comforting of them in their afflictions, and now he concludes it by calling the Corinthians to a companionship of intercession and thanksgiving in his ministry, so that God's goodness to them, Paul and his fellow missionaries, will lead to an outpouring of gratitude from many, glorifying God. The sufferings of Paul and his companions are an opportunity for other Christians to join them in knowing and giving thanks for the blessing of answered intercession when the Lord brings deliverance.

Paul speaks of his boast in his gospel ministry. This is not a boast that rests upon his own strength, superiority or self-sufficiency, but in the call and the empowerment of God that equips him and enables him to fulfil his commission. Paul can make a very bold claim about his integrity here.

He has acted in consistency, purity and sincerity. This wasn't by some earthly wisdom of Paul's own, but by the grace of God that was at work through him. Paul has written to the Corinthians with frankness and with clarity, not hiding anything from them or dissembling his motives.

His hope is that they will come fully to understand, not just in the more immediate future, but on the final day, when Paul's desire is that the missionaries' boast in the Corinthians will be reciprocated and answered by the Corinthians' boast in them, as both praise God for each other. Paul's expression of his confidence before God in the integrity of his ministry and the dependability of his word needs to be understood in the light of what comes next. Paul has seemingly opened himself up to an accusation that this is not the case.

He has expressed his desire previously to visit the Corinthians, but as things transpired he didn't visit them, but sent them a painful letter of rebuke instead. The original plan had involved two visits to Corinth, one on the way to Macedonia and another on the return journey, with the Corinthians sending him on his way to Judea. However Paul hadn't done this.

Since writing 1 Corinthians, Paul had sent Timothy, his close fellow worker, to the Corinthians. Presumably Paul had been informed by Timothy that the situation in Corinth had badly deteriorated and that it required his personal presence and attention. Paul had then paid a visit to the Corinthians, to which he refers in 2.1. This was a painful visit, and after this he had written another letter to them, a letter that was also described as painful.

He had done this instead of visiting them in person, as he had originally intended. And this had all left Paul open to the accusation that he was unreliable, not a man of his word, inconsistent, someone who ran hot and cold. This accusation for Paul is an incredibly serious one, and he is very concerned to answer it.

A challenge to the reliability of his word and testimony cuts to the heart of his apostolic witness. Paul does not try to firewall the question of his integrity in communicating his travel plans from the gospel testimony that he bears, as if the latter really matters but the former can be brushed off as a realm where white lies and unreliability and wishy-washiness are legitimate, or at least matters of little consequence. Paul's message of God's faithfulness and trustworthiness is fundamental, and it is incredibly important that his behaviour comports with this.

And Paul makes clear that he has been faithful in this respect. God doesn't speak with inclarity or inconsistency in Christ. Rather, God's word in Christ is a resounding yes to all of his promises, to which the bold Amen of the Church must answer.

It is this faithful and trustworthy God that established the Corinthians with Paul in Christ. He has anointed them for their ministry, he has placed a seal upon them, perhaps Paul has baptism in mind here, and has given them the guarantee of the Spirit, a down payment assuring them of the coming fullness of their redemption. Paul calls God as his witness to his integrity.

Paul's decision not to visit Corinth, as he had originally intended, was not vacillation on Paul's part. It wasn't Paul running hot and cold in his relationship with the Corinthians. Rather, Paul decided against a visit precisely on account of his care and love for the Corinthians.

Had he gone, his visit would have been difficult and painful for them. Paul was, as it were, the Corinthians' father in the Gospel. He had sown the seed of the word by which they had first come to faith.

However, as a good father, his desire was to avoid being overbearing and authoritarian with them. He did not want to lord it over the Corinthians' faith, as if he was the master of it. Rather, his desire is to play the part of a faithful father, whose wish is the joy and well-being of his children, and whose rebukes are kept as gentle as they can possibly be, without losing their effect.

He wants to have the joy of seeing his children grow, and that requires not dominating over them. A painful letter was a softer and gentler correction than a painful visit. So out of love for the Corinthians, Paul spared them a harsher and potentially more authoritarian approach.

Paul does not want to boss the Corinthians around and lord it over them, but to assist them in their growth. What he hopes for from the Corinthians is a sharing of joy. However, had he visited in a way that brought them pain, he would be looking for gladness from the very people to whom he had brought grief.

The appropriate relationship between the Corinthians and Paul was one of rich

reciprocity. They should be comforted in Paul's comfort. Paul and the Corinthians should be praying for and giving thanks for God's deliverances of each other.

They should be boasting in each other. Paul wrote to them out of a deep pain, yet communicating his love precisely because this longed-for reciprocity and mutuality was broken. And he really did not want to visit them in a situation where this lack of mutual joy would be painfully and clearly absent, unless it were absolutely necessary.

We don't know exactly what happened in Corinth, but we can get some hints of it. Chapter 7, verse 12 might give us some vague sense. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God.

It seems as though one member of the church had wronged another person, and the fallout had been considerable for the congregation, with much grief caused to many. The wrong did not seem to be doctrinal, but personal. It's unlikely that the person in question was the man described in 1 Corinthians 5. Chapter 7, verse 11 suggests that the Corinthian congregation had proven themselves innocent of the wrong themselves.

The wrongdoer had been subjected to church discipline, which now seems to have been proven successful. He too was now grieving for the wrong that he had done, and now the church is encouraged to restore him to fellowship. Exclusion from church fellowship and excommunication, which is likely what was involved here, is a very serious sanction.

But the desired end is repentance and restoration, which Paul calls for here. Paul's desire was not punitive, but restorative. It seems most likely that Paul himself was the directly wronged party, the offence causing great pain between Paul and the Corinthians, perhaps leading some of the Corinthians to question whether, as a result of being hurt, Paul must have abandoned his love for them when he didn't visit them again.

Paul however, speaks of the matter delicately. He doesn't want to open up the wound. He now charges the Corinthians to forgive and restore the offender.

He forgives those that they forgive. He does not want to lord it over them, but affirms them in their decision in the matter. The Corinthians had reaffirmed their love to Paul, and Paul's desire was reconciliation of all parties.

The alternative to forgiveness in such a situation was the triumph of Satan's designs. Satan's wish is to produce discord that festers into lasting bitterness, unforgiveness and breaches between people. Ready forgiveness and joyful reconciliation is the way that the designs of Satan can be resisted in such matters.

A question to consider. What lessons can we learn from the way that Paul conceives of and exercises his apostolic authority in this chapter? How can we apply these lessons to

the ways that we treat others who are under our authority?