Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – July 8, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s Second letter to the Corinthians

how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:12-22 “The Cross creates promise keepers.”

The Background: What kind of book is this?

We’ve seen that Second Corinthians is Paul’s attempt at explaining himself to a local church. The mistake we often make in interpreting him, is our failure to see that the entire book is about this. He begins with a plea, and ends with a plea, and makes many pleas (written and assumed) throughout. The “genre” (type of literature) is similar to an attorney’s brief, complete with evidence and witnesses. The first witness is Paul’s own conscience, the second, God Himself. He then goes to the various pieces of evidence, all of which show that his life and ministry grow out of Jesus pattern of laying down His life for others. He is showing how the Cross changes everything.

Our Integrity: The Cross creates promise keepers.

When you are trying to clarify a misunderstanding, one appeal is, “Why would I lie to you?” That is basically what Paul is doing in this section, explaining that He is following God’s lead: When God makes a promise, He keeps it, and keeps it in Jesus. The promises are not “yes or no,” but “Yes and Amen! in Him. Paul is saying, essentially, “Look, I’m not that difficult to read. You don’t have to wonder about my motives because my actions vouch for me, I do what I say, and because of that, my conscience is clear.”

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not- so -hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(12)Although this is not a formal defense (not that I need one), my first witness would be my own conscience, because my motives and actions have had you alone in mind in my service by God’s grace. But I do want to explain events as you know them, that you may be as proud of us as we are of you.

(15) I was so confident of our relationship that my original plans were to visit you twice, once as I went to Macedonia and once on my return. But then, because I chose another path, do you think my failure to appear reflects a fickle spirit, and that I do things like the world, on a whim?

(18) No! I’m not like that, not one to say “Yes” and “No” in the same breath. Just as we preached Christ among you as God’s ultimate “Yes!” we also act that way. Why? Because He makes us and you stand firm in Christ–by promise-keeping. And His promise is assured by His Spirit who anoints us, indwells us, owns us, and is an earnest payment of all that is to come when God finally makes good on all His promises.

The Challenge: Do we grasp how God’s promises are fulfilled in Jesus?

***Memory Verse: Hebrews 10:23***

1. Paul’s promise-keeping is based upon God, who is true to His word. Psalm 138:2. The greatest insult we can give God is to doubt Him, making Him a liar. 1 John 5:9-12 God backs His promise with an oath. Heb. 6:13-20 Do I trust God to keep His Word?

But God’s promises must be believed for them to have the desired effect upon us. Hebrews 4:1-11 Do I keep my promises?

2. God’s promises are distilled and fulfilled in His Son. There are no promises made to anyone outside of Jesus. Notice in both New Testament passages above, the fulfillment comes through Jesus as having died and rose again for us. Hebrews 1:1-3; Ephesians 1:19-23 Is my hope in Christ alone?