

✠ 2 Corinthians 1:1-22 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

One thing's for sure, the apostle Paul and the church in Corinth took church discipline a lot more seriously than we do. Paul writes this letter, in part, to tell the Corinthians that he is not coming to see them, or at least he had not yet been to see them, because such a visit would result in him being the disciplinarian. Something neither he nor they wanted. One wonders what would happen if such a situation occurred today?

Surely those who received the letter would take great offense. After all, who is a man that he has authority over other men? Who was Paul that he could assume the role of spiritual father and guide to a church he had not visited in many years? Shouldn't he have given up any role of authority and passed it on to the local congregation? Paul addresses this point sharply at the end of this second epistle to the Corinthian church, proving his authority in Christ. But it begs the question of how we might respond. Who is he who has authority over us?

"No one," we easily shout out, but that is just not true. "We're autonomous," is the quick answer to why we do what we do. But again, that is simply not true. Jesus is our Lord, as St. Paul addresses his letter, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." For though God is indeed our Father, we are still servants of Jesus Christ. We do not call Him "brother" but Lord. For He is the only-begotten Son by nature, not by adoption, and is Lord of all those who have been made children of God.

So we are ruled and governed by the Word of God. Easily said, not so easily accomplished. It is not that we don't want to be governed by the Word of God, just as it was not that the church in Corinth didn't want to be Christian. It's that the Word of God takes no prisoners and respects no one. The Word of God kills sinners and sin, putting to death those who profane the name of God. This is clearly evident in Jesus' own words concerning those who fail to call upon the name of the Lord: "Depart from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23).

God is a jealous God, not sharing His glory with anyone. Thus, those who seek their own glory are chastised and rebuked by the Word of the Lord. This offends us because we think our lives are worthy of glory and honor. Face it, you don't mind so much the general rebuke of sin and self-worship, but you take great offense when you are accused of sinning and your specific sins are brought out in the open to be killed by God's Word.

But you should not be so offended, but rather rejoice when you confess your sins for it is God who kills and makes alive (Deuteronomy 32:39). Thus the apostle rightly says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." For when you are exposed in your sin, whether it is in thought, word, or deed, God is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. For our Lord says, "Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Luke 9:24). Whoever drowns the old Adam by confessing his sin will be raised anew by Christ Jesus.

This is the promise of God in Christ. And all the promises of God find their Yes in Him. Yes, your sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Yes, you do have eternal life in Christ. Yes, He does

comfort you with His death and resurrection. Yes, you are a child of God; the Father having placed upon you His seal, establishing you in Christ, and having anointed you with His Spirit.

Such comfort comes from the One who Himself was comforted by God's Word. Jesus Himself took comfort in the promises of His Father, for it is written that God would not let Him be overtaken by death or let His Holy One see decay (Psalm 16:10). And so Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem, scorning the shame of the cross, and willingly submitted Himself to the will of God. In like manner of comfort and grace, it is also written, "whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

This, too, is Yes in Christ Jesus. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His Glory (2 Corinthians 1:20). And that is why we don't seek our salvation in the words of man. Man's yes and no are flimsy and fleeting, not dependable. But God's Word is sure and true. It is God who establishes you in Christ. Therefore seek consolation in hearing the absolution of God spoken over you; that you may let that stand as your sure defense whenever the devil and the world come at you with their traps and lies, their fear and doubt. God's Word stands firm to save you and bring you to everlasting peace and life.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠