

“Most of you opposed him, and that was punishment enough. Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement. So I urge you now to reaffirm your love for him....When you forgive this man, I forgive him, too. And when I forgive whatever needs to be forgiven, I do so with Christ’s authority for your benefit, so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes.”

lectio // 1 Corinthians 2:1-10

Whoa! What is going on here? This isn’t a great place to dig and discover what Paul is talking about. A couple of thoughts though. One: we know Paul wrote at least three letters to the churches in Corinth - THREE long, brutally honest letters. Paul said he decided NOT to visit and bring more grief! Two: some guy in the church caused a lot of problems and possibly divisions. He caused far more grief than Paul’s truth (Paul writes). What did he do? “Most” opposed him and that hurt him. Three: Paul writes to tell them it’s not time to practice reconciliation and restore him - so that “Satan will not outsmart us.” Wow, that’s heavy! Can one guy do damage in a local church? Absolutely. Can it cause hurt, stir hate? Yep. Does that person HAVE to be kicked out? Sometimes, yes. In this case no. How does the church respond to this guy after all the fireworks ? There had better be forgiveness and restoration so that he isn’t overcome by discouragement and Satan then takes advantage of the man and local body by sowing more seeds of dissension and discord. Yeah, I want onto know what he did to! Maybe it doesn’t matter as much as how the leader (Paul) and how the local body (Corinth) handles this man and the people who were directly involved.

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Dad,

These are the things that make the church so REAL and so vulnerable to criticism. We are frail and extremely faulty, but you have taught us how to deal with our own sin as well as the problems (maybe not even sin) that we cause in the local body of Christ. There is LOVE to forgive and LOVE to restore. You have shown us this! There is HOPE after the messiness of anger, hurt feelings and even righteous indignation! There is humility to restore, to give second, third or fourth chances. There is much beauty to be seen in the entire process if we could just follow your lead and stay together.

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root