

2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11 (NIV)

²³ I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.

²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

2 ¹ So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you.

² For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved?

³ I wrote as I did, so that when I came I would not be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy.

⁴ For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

⁵ If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely.

⁶ The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient.

⁷ Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

⁸ I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

⁹ Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything.

¹⁰ Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake,

¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends! I greet you this morning in the name of Jehovah Jireh. For if you were here any night last week you know that the Lord Provided. We had excellent participation from the FBCPF family, regular VBS attendees and guests. We created a new class and we had nine young men between the ages of 18 – 22 attend at least one night and a couple had perfect attendance. But not only was there participation there was a joy that could be felt through out the building. I thank God for the opportunity to be a witness to how He provides. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Patrice Robinson; for over 12 years she has lead the VBS program in her role as Director of Christian Education. At the end of this term Patrice has announced that she will be stepping down and Daphney Colinet has agreed to continue this ministry. Let the church thank Patrice for past service and also thank Daphney for the promise of service.

Our lesson for this morning requires a bit of background. This is Paul's 2nd letter to the church at Corinth and it is a letter written with a heavy heart:

⁴ For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

The source of Paul's distress and anguish is not detailed in the scripture passage before you. But if we read Paul's response carefully we might get an insight. Listen again as I read if from The Message:

⁵⁻⁸ Now, regarding the one who started all this—the person in question who caused all this pain—I want you to know that I am not the one injured in this as much as, with a few exceptions, all of you. So I don't want to come down too hard. What the majority of you agreed to as punishment is punishment enough. Now is the time to forgive this man and help him back on his feet. If all you do is pour on the guilt, you could very well drown him in it. My counsel now is to pour on the love.¹

¹<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+1%3A23%E2%80%9442%3A11&version=MSG>

I don't think it is a stretch to say that someone or maybe a group of folks had caused Paul great pain. The IVP (InterVarsity) New Testament Commentary states it this way:

*The Corinthians were complainers (as well) (1 Cor 10:10, "Do not grumble") and took the opportunity of Titus's visit with the severe letter to communicate a number of criticisms they had against Paul. **First**, they said that Paul's letters were hard to understand: "What is this fellow talking about?" (vv. 12-14). **Second**, they claimed that Paul was fickle. "He promises to visit us and then changes his mind without even consulting us" (1:15-23). **Third**, they thought that he had a domineering attitude toward them and wanted to show who had the upper hand (1:24—2:4).*

So Paul writes this letter in response to all that is going on in the form of a testimony. As it was the custom for there to be witnesses to a person's testimony Paul called on God as his witness, for no one else could know Paul's heart better than God.

²³ I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.

With that as background I want to move to the instructions Paul provided to the church at Corinth. Those instructions still apply today:

⁸ I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

and after the instruction Paul then tells them why they need to reaffirm their love:

*¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us.
For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

Paul tells the church at Corinth that they need to forgive so that Satan will not outwit them.

¹¹ To keep Satan from getting the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his wiles and intentions. (AMP)²

⁹⁻¹¹ The focus of my letter wasn't on punishing the offender but on getting you to take responsibility for the health of the church. So if you forgive him, I forgive him. Don't think I'm carrying around a list of personal grudges. The fact is that I'm joining in with your forgiveness, as Christ is with us, guiding us. After all, we don't want to unwittingly give Satan an opening for yet more mischief—we're not oblivious to his sly ways! (MSG)³

With that as background let us spend a few more minutes with this theme:

SATAN IS IN IT TO WIN IT!

SHALL WE PRAY!

God of heaven and earth I continue to be amazed at how you prepare for the needs of your people, even before we know we have a need. Thank you. I ask that you focus our wandering thoughts; open our some times closed minds and touch our hearts, this day. Let nothing and no one come between our hearing and heeding the Word from heaven. Abba, I ask that you use me, as you will. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

SATAN IS IN IT TO WIN IT!

In February 2014 I preached a sermon about our ISMS. Because I could not be sure of your ISMS the title was **MY ISMS NEED JESUS**. And I explained that an ISM was a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory - an oppressive and especially discriminatory attitude or belief.⁴ Does anybody remember what I am talking about?

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<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+1%3A23%E2%80%9411&version=AMP>

³ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%20%3A10-11&version=MSG>

⁴ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ism>

Well, just as we have might have some ISMS we also may have some "MENTS". "MENT" is a suffix and has three primary uses. In the word develop**ment** the "ment" describes the action or process of doing something. In entertain**ment** the "ment" describes the product or result of an action. And in amaz**ement** the "ment" describes the state or condition caused by an action.⁵ Let me repeat this for my note takers:

ACTION OR PROCESS OF DOING SOMETHING
PRODUCT OR RESULT OF AN ACTION
STATE OR CONDITION CAUSED BY AN ACTION

Because Satan is in it to win it! Satan has a lot of "ments" that he uses to **deceive God's children, defeat God's church, destroy God's work, and disparage God's Word.**⁶ That is actually the job description Satan has written for himself: deceive, defeat, destroy and disparage God's children, God's church, God's work and cause us to question God's word. This morning I am going to talk about three "ments" that seem to show up in God's church on a regular basis. They are **discouragement, disillusionment/disappointment, and discontentment.** Stay with and pray for me, because I am trying to take you somewhere.

Discouragement is a feeling of lost hope or confidence⁷

There are at least three places where Satan uses discouragement in the church. I think the **first** is the 20/80 rule – you know 20% of the people are doing 80% of the work and the 20% who are working get discouraged. Paul speaks to this in his letter to the church at Galatia:

⁵<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/-ment>

⁶ http://www.sermoncentral.com/print_friendly.asp?SermonID=59177

⁷ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discouragement>

⁹ *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*⁸

Discouragement can be the result of criticism. God gives the prophet Isaiah these words:

⁷ *Listen to me, you who know what is right,
you people who are aware of my law!
Don't be afraid of the insults of men;
don't be discouraged because of their abuse!
⁸ For a moth will eat away at them like clothes;
a clothes moth will devour them like wool.
But the vindication I provide will be permanent;
the deliverance I give will last.*⁹

The third place discouragement can be used by Satan is with regard to our children and youth. And Jesus speaks to this:

18:15 Now people were even bringing their babies to him for him to touch. But when the disciples saw it, they began to scold those who brought them. **18:16** But Jesus called for the children, saying, "Let the little children come to me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. **18:17** I tell you the truth, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it."

Over work, criticism, and not feeling valued can discourage anyone and it seems that God's people often use this as an opportunity to stay away from the church; church hop; or disengage from the work they were called to do. Every time that happens Satan wins. **And Satan is in it to win it.**

Disillusionment/Disappointment

Disillusionment is the state of being disenchanting or disappointed by unfulfilled expectations. Disillusionment/Disappointment are the opposite of

⁸ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+6&version=NIV>

⁹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+51&version=NET>

hope. When not if, but when disillusionment/disappointment come we need to seek the writings of Paul. In order for Paul to endure court trials, jails, abuse, criticism and persecution he had to retain his hope

... And we^[b] boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we^[c] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:2b-5)

Paul tells us in Romans 8 that it is our hope in the return of the Jesus that saves us.

The modern day Psalmist tells us "our hope is built on nothing else, but Jesus blood and righteous" or "our hope is in you Lord".

Discontentment is not being pleased or satisfied¹⁰
This is possibly the easiest "ment" to fix.

¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[d] have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, ^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because Satan is in it to win it, Satan will take our **discouragement, disillusionment/disappointment, and discontentment** and use it divide the church. Satan will turn our **discouragement** into narrow-mindedness; our **disillusionment/disappointment** into lack of fellowship and our **discontentment** into selfishness.

¹⁰ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discontentment>

This week I challenge you to work on your negative "MENTS" and turn them into positive "MENTS".

DISCOURAGEMENT INTO ENCOURAGEMENT

DISILLUSION/DISAPPOINTMENT INTO COMMITMENT

DISCONTENTMENT INTO IMPROVEMENT

SATAN IS IN IT TO WIN IT!

DO NOT LET SATAN USE YOU TO WIN IT!