

**TITLE: CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY**

**TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-24**

**INTRO:** Consistency is valued in most areas of life; we like to know what we're going to get. In my 1<sup>st</sup> accounting class I learned the importance of the concept of consistency in accounting (a business must maintain its same methods of accounting). *Inconsistency* is never a positive word (it's worse than consistently bad)! In **Rev 3**, the Laodiceans were inconsistent (lukewarm; not hot or cold) & Jesus threatened to spit them out! Paul addresses this topic of consistency in **2 Cor 1:12-24**.

**I. THEIR EVIDENCE OF CONSISTENCY – BEHAVIOR (v. 12-14):**

- A. (v. 12)** *“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony (evidence) of our conscience, that in simplicity & godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward you.”* Walk the talk!
1. **What we did:** We rejoice/boast (& our conscience is clear) because we behaved in **simplicity** (consistency, not hypocritical, singleness—**Mt 6:22**—if your eye is single, your whole body is full of light) & **godly sincerity** (purity —by *God's* definition) in the world, but especially among you. We were **consistent** in our teaching & actions; we practiced what we preached!
  2. **Why we did it:** Our teaching & actions weren't the result of “fleshly (earthly) wisdom” (**1 Cor 2**). Everything we say is from God. When we live as God commands us to, people should notice it – but it's *God* that gets the glory!
- B. (v. 13)** *“For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end.”* Not only have you seen our consistency in our teaching & behavior, but also in our writings (he wrote clearly in 1 Cor).
- C. (v. 14)** *“As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord...”*
1. “In part” – *part* of you have acknowledged us – that we are your rejoicing. Paul received this info from Titus (**7:6-7**).
  2. “Ye are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.” **1 Thess 2:19**—*“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?”* This is the ultimate joy – to help someone go to Heaven!

**II. THEIR EXAMPLE OF CONSISTENCY (& OURS) – CHRIST (v. 15-22):**

- A. (v. 15-16)** *“And in this confidence (that you are faithful—v.14) I was minded (intended) to come unto you before, that ye might have a 2<sup>nd</sup> benefit (grace, blessing). And to pass by you into Macedonia, & to come again out of Macedonia unto you, & of you to be brought on my way toward Judea.”*
1. Paul met them on MJ2. On MJ3 he went to Ephesus (**Acts 19**), wrote **1 Cor**, and from there went up through Macedonia (**Ac 20:1**). Now we find that he *intended* to sail straight from Ephesus to Corinth, based on his confidence that they were still faithful (after his 1½ years there —**Ac 18:11**).
  2. His intended visit was to: **1)** give them a 2<sup>nd</sup> blessing – i.e., his teaching & comfort, & **2)** have them assist him on his trip.
- B. (v. 17-20)** *“When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, & nay nay? But as God is true, our word toward you was **not** yea & nay....”*
1. **(v. 17-18)** When I decided this, did I use lightness (light weight; fickle, easy)? In the context, this word is opposite of “simplicity.” Was I not serious about what I was doing? Was I irresponsible or inconsistent (as seems to be the accusation)?
  2. **NO (v. 18)!** It seems some of them (the “part” that *didn't* acknowledge him) were using his “indecisiveness” regarding his travel plans as an attack against him & his doctrine (as if one would prove the other)! So Paul says **1)** *I wasn't inconsistent in my travel plans* (he'll explain why he didn't come in v. 23-24), & **2)** *my doctrine is definitely **not** inconsistent (v. 19-22)!*
  3. **(v. 19-20)** *“For the Son of God (i.e., His doctrine)... was not yea & nay but in him was [is] yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea... “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”*
    - a. Jesus Christ was 100% consistent & faithful at all times! He didn't alter His doctrine for anyone (He was no respecter of persons; made no difference between Jew & Gentile). Truth doesn't change, and He *is* truth (**Jn 14:6**). His promises are sure! Heaven is promised to His faithful, obedient followers (**Heb 5:9**), and the Corinthians could be sure of this & not doubt (same for us)! **Heb 13:8**—*“He is the same yesterday, today, & forever.”* **Nothing** has changed!
      - His **plan of salvation** is the same today as it was 2000 years ago, and it will be the same 2000 years from now.
      - The same can be said for the **commitment** He expects from His followers (**Lk 9:23**—*“if any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**, take up his cross daily, and follow me”*)— **this has not changed one bit, nor will it ever!**
    - b. Since Jesus & His doctrine never change, how can we change it? If Paul, Silas, & Timothy didn't change Christ's doctrine, why do the majority of those professing to be His followers? This verse is another of several that teach us to do things **ONLY** by His authority (e.g., **Col 3:17**).
- C. God is the source of consistency (v. 21-22)** *“Now he which establishes us (makes us firm) with you in Christ, and hath anointed (choose, consecrate to an office) us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”*
1. **God** establishes us with you *in Christ*. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (**Eph 1:3**), and true unity & fellowship is only to be found in those who are in Him. Paul shows the connection they have as being in Christ, & ultimately coming from God.
  2. **God** has anointed us (chosen us for a specific mission). This is important considering the accusations against Paul.
  3. **God** has also sealed (‘marked’) us, and given the earnest (down payment) of the Spirit in our hearts. This can be seen as miraculous regarding Paul & the Corinthians (**1 Cor 12-14**). Today we know that the Spirit influences us through the Word.
  4. The common denominator is **God** – He is the source of truth, consistency, & stability in this life & in eternity (**1 Jn 1:5**).

**III. THEIR EXPLANATION OF CONSISTENCY – LOVE (v. 23-24): (The reason we didn't come)**

*“Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.”* With God as my witness, the reason I didn't come was because I wanted to spare you (forbear, treat leniently). Paul was giving them a chance to repent & work things out by themselves first (before he came & “helped” – **12:20-21**)! He is not trying to be their master but their helper. God is their master and his.

**CONCLUSION:** God is 100% consistent! Christ was consistent in His life & teaching. Paul was consistent in his life & teaching of Christ. So many people feel they have the right to be inconsistent in their teaching (not consistent with the Bible), and in their life (living opposed to what the Bible says). We must be consistent in our teaching of God's Word, but just as important is to be consistent in our behavior (**Jam 4:8**).