

A failure to follow through on plans which Paul had made to visit Corinth gave rise to accusations from some that Paul was untrustworthy. Although he will eventually explain the reason that his plans changed, he responds to this as an attack on his character and his message. The integrity of which he wrote in verses 12-14 applied as well to his planning and his communication of those plans.

We all are involved in making plans and sometimes those plans must change. The reaction of others to those changes are not always pleasant. Plans can change and not arise out of a faulty character. But to change plans with integrity requires that we begin planning with integrity. Paul’s defense here shows us three ways in which he planned with integrity.

1. **Paul planned in light of a high regard for the Corinthians. (2 Cor 1:15-16)**

- a. Paul made his plans with a confidence in their appreciation of him (v 15a). As they were Paul’s joy, so also he was confident that he would be their joy. To plan with a confidence of God’s work in other believers is to plan with integrity. It is consistent with what we say we believe.
- b. Paul planned with respect to their benefit (v 15b). He planned a double trip via Corinth for the sake of the Corinthians, to give them the benefit of him being twice with them. Paul followed his own instructions in Philippians 2:3-4 and thought more highly of others. When we make plans, we must practice what we say we believe, and think more highly of others than ourselves, when we plan.

To plan with integrity is to plan with a high regard for others. If plans must change, it must be consistent with this character quality which we claim we should have, that is, we were thinking of others above ourselves.

2. **Paul showed integrity by earnestly planning and communicating those plans with God’s character in mind. (2 Cor 1:17-20)** Paul, as God’s messenger, represented God’s character. It was not reasonable that the Corinthians would believe the message that Paul brought, but then claim that he was an untrustworthy messenger.

- a. The wisdom of God was reflected in Paul’s planning (v 17). He did not plan lightly nor in a worldly (“fleshly”) manner. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1-3 where the “fleshly” is contrasted to God’s wisdom. He was not the fool who acted quickly or promised rashly or spoke things he didn’t mean.
- b. The faithfulness of God was reflected in Paul’s planning (v 18). Paul compared the faithfulness of God with how he, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy faithfully communicated the gospel message. The OT promises of God were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, whom they preached. This also was the message that the Corinthians had believed. Paul recognized that his life gave credence to his message. Paul did not want to say one thing about God (He is faithful), but then live another way (untrustworthy).
- c. The truthfulness of God was reflected in Paul’s communication of his plans. We can trust that what God says is true. The Corinthians believed Paul when he said this, why would they now question that he was not truthful in his plans or the communication of them?

It can be overwhelming to realize that the way we live (including our planning) can either taint or adorn our message. This is especially true in close relationships such as husband and wives (cf. 1 Peter 3:1f) and parents and children. Our manner of living will either deny our message or affirm it. Which do we want our family to hear?

3. **Paul planned and communicated his plans in light of God’s work among believers. (2 Cor 1:21-22)** Paul describes a four-fold work of God which he uses to defend himself against the charge of being untrustworthy.

- a. Paul’s integrity was not a personal achievement but a work of God which he shared with the Corinthians. This does not appear to be a polite reference to just himself, but an experience of all true believers which Paul then uses in his defense.
- b. Salvation, in its broadest sense, is not merely the promise of future blessing but includes both past and present action. What God has done and is doing makes it the natural tendency of every true believer to be growing more like Christ. Although we sin, sin is not natural to the new nature which the believer has.
- c. When we question if a professing believer is trustworthy (or is failing in any other area of spiritual life), we question as well the work of God in his or her life. Although Paul had confidence in the Corinthians, he will still challenge them later in the letter (13:5) to examine themselves, to see whether they were in the faith.

Recognizing God’s working in our lives is a source of assurance. Knowing that God works in true believers motivates to exhort and correct others who are sinning. It should also make us cautious about too quickly judging the motives and actions of others. Paul probably had this in mind here. As we plan, and communicate our plans, we need to remember that these things portray our character. It shows how God is working in our lives.

It is not wrong to plan as long as we do so recognizing our dependency upon God. When plans change, the reasons like the planning itself, should be right. The foundation of godly planning must have already been laid. That foundation includes a higher regard for others than for ourselves, a reflection of God’s own character (wisdom, faithfulness and truthfulness), and a recognition that God is at work in all true believers. In that way we honor God, strengthen His message, and establish a reference point that allows changes in plans.

May even our planning display a godly integrity.