

Introduction

- Retrospective on the whole book of 2 Corinthians:
 - what are its priorities and features: ministering the new covenant, in all its glory; the frailty of the "jars of clay" who are called on to minister that new covenant; the encouragement to live all out for the Lord in all we do; the need to defend the gospel, to stand up for the Lord....
 - what speaks to us today?

Laying Foundations

- Paul has been establishing his credibility, building his trust:
 - not in this instance so he can say something to them in the letter
 - but because he is about to visit...
 - and he wants to be able to get on with the work of the visit, and not just establish his credibility
- *Do we work at establishing on-going good relations with one another, at understanding where others are coming from and helping others understand where we are coming from?*
 - (much more than just "being friendly" with people, but understanding where they are coming from and them understanding where we are coming from?)
 - particularly if we are in leadership, and have the pastoral responsibility for others, do we lay good foundations of relationship and trust and credibility, so that when harder times come people are ready to hear from us?
- Takes time, questions, vulnerability, intentionality...

Priority for his visit

- Their spiritual well-being
 - see for example 12:15, 12:19, 13:7, 13:9, 13:11...
- He loves them, he is concerned for them, his priority is their spiritual well-being, and he will work at that:
 - he will set up the foundations before he comes so he can focus on their spiritual well-being when he arrives...
 - and when he comes not shirking the difficult conversations (13:2) that he suspects will be necessary
- *Do we have that concern and priority for one another?*
 - and what would it look like to have that concern...
 - in what we ask other people to do, or get involved in?
 - in how we pray for them?
 - in how we set an example before them, in speech, in actions, in priorities?
 - in having those difficult conversations to sort out things - behaviours, hurts, assumptions, sins...

Particular issue for his visit

- Dealing with sin:
 - it needs dealt with
 - sometimes it needs dealt with by others
- What kinds of things did Paul suspect might need dealt with:
 - quarreling
 - jealousy
 - outbursts of anger
 - factions
 - slander
 - gossip
 - arrogance
 - disorder

- impurity, sexual sin and debauchery
- (Intrigued that the "biggies" of the last set are down the list!!)
- Things need to be properly established (13:1)
- How did Paul deal with things?
 - he came and spoke, he got alongside people, he challenged behaviour, he invited change, he was himself vulnerable about his own failures, he was a struggling sinner himself...
 - would we welcome that happening amongst us? Fear, I suspect, of what other people would say if we dared to do such a thing? Open the door by inviting people into our lives?

Conclusion

- What is tolerated amongst us?
- Is our priority our growth in Christian living? (which flows from knowing Christ)