

The power of weakness

2 Corinthians 1:12-2:13

Introduction

- obsession with appearance
- concern about character

Straightforward, not slippery (1:12-14)

- straightforward

- slippery

Faithful, not fickle (1:15-22)

- fickle

- faithful

Caring, not cold (1:23-2:13)

- abundant love

- tough love

‘The basis on which Christians can speak to one another is that each knows the other as a sinner who, even given all one’s human renown, is forlorn and lost if not given help. This does not mean that the others are being disparaged or dishonoured. Rather, we are paying them the only real honour a human being has, namely, that as sinners they share in God’s grace and glory, that they are children of God. This realization gives our mutual speech the freedom and openness it needs. We talk to one another about the help we both need. We admonish one another to go the way Christ bids us to go. We warn one another against the disobedience that is our undoing. We are gentle and we are firm with one another, for we know both God’s kindness and God’s firmness. Why should we be afraid of one another since both of us have only God to fear?’

‘The more we learn to allow the other to speak the Word to us, to accept humbly and gratefully even severe reproaches and admonitions, the more free and to the point we ourselves will be in speaking. One who because of sensitivity and vanity rejects the serious words of another Christian cannot speak the truth in humility to others. Such a person is afraid of being rejected and feeling hurt by another’s words. Sensitive, irritable people will always become flatterers, and very soon they will come to despise and slander other Christians in their community. But humble people will cling to both truth and love. They will stick to the Word of God and let it lead them to others in their community. They can help others through the Word because they seek nothing for themselves and have no fears for themselves.’

‘Nothing can be more cruel than that leniency which abandons other to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than that severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one’s community back from the path of sin.’

(from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*)