

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

I. Paul's Relationship With The Church, 2 Corinthians 1-7

D. The Traits Of A Godly Ministry In A Crisis (2 Corinthians 2:12-17)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and tried to promote their own views while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. 2 Corinthians chapters 1-7 deal with Paul's relationship with the church, and 2 Corinthians 2:12-17 gives the traits of Paul's godly ministry in a local church crisis. We view the passage for our insight and application:

II. The Traits Of A Godly Ministry In A Crisis, 2 Corinthians 2:12-17.

- A. Paul himself had faced great unrest over the crisis that occurred in the Church at Corinth, 2 Cor. 2:12-13:
 - 1. The Apostle Paul had sent his coworker Titus to Corinth with Paul's severe letter directing the people at the Church to discipline a sinful troublemaker in their body (2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:6-7; *Ibid.*, p. 559)
 - 2. Paul's plan had been to "rendezvous with Titus at Troas . . . and be apprised of the Corinthian situation" and the Church's response to his severe letter, *Ibid.*
 - 3. When Paul arrived at Troas and a door of ministry opportunity was open to him by the Lord, Paul had no rest in spirit as Titus did not meet him there, 2 Cor. 2:12-13a. "In addition to his apprehension about the church in Corinth, Paul was now also concerned about Titus' safety," for "Titus might have been carrying with him a portion of the proposed Corinthian collection (cf. 2 Cor. 8:6) and fallen prey to bandits," *Ibid.*
- B. Thus, Paul had found no "relief in spirit" (*anesin to pneumati*), and "(d)espairing of his own ability to concentrate on the great potential for ministry in Troas (cf. 7:5-6), Paul had said good-bye to the church there and pushed on to Macedonia . . . (F)or the moment Paul departed, unable to rise to the occasion," *Ibid.*
- C. We know from 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 that when Titus later met Paul in Macedonia with the good news of the positive response of the Corinthian believers to his severe letter, Paul was greatly consoled in the Lord.
- D. However, considering this crisis after it had been resolved, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 by which he testified that the Lord always caused him and his ministry team spiritually to triumph in their ministry trials because of the godly ministry they conducted, and which the Lord consequently blessed (as follows):
 - 1. Paul thanked God that He always caused him and his ministry team to triumph in the ministry crises they faced and figuratively manifested the aroma of His knowledge in them wherever they ministered, 2 Cor. 2:14-15. This figurative expression alluded to a Roman victory parade "awarded a conquering general in which enemy prisoners were forced to march," *Ibid.* At this procession, incense was burned, what became an odor of relief to those prisoners who were later allowed to live and what also became an odor of death to those prisoners in the procession who were executed by the general after the parade!
 - 2. Thus some of the hearers of Paul's team came to view Paul's team as an aroma of death since they would reject the team's gospel of Christ and suffer eternal damnation where those hearers who believed the gospel and received eternal life came to view Paul and his team as an aroma of life, 2 Corinthians 2:16a.
 - 3. Paul then asked, "Who is 'competent' (*hikanos*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 626; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 374-375) for these things?" or "equal to such a task?" (v. 16b NIV)
 - 4. Paul answered this question by stating the qualities of their ministry that God honored with success:
 - a. False teachers "hawked, peddled" (*kupeleuontes*, *Ibid.*, B. K. C., N. T., p. 560) the Word of God for financial profit where Paul and his team did not serve their own interests in a lust for money, 2 Cor. 2:17a.
 - b. Paul's ministry team ministered "out of sincerity, pure motives" (*ex eilikrineias*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 221) in God's estimation, 2 Corinthians 2:17b.

Lesson: *God caused the ministry of Paul and his team always to succeed even if the crises they faced exceeded their own human capacity to handle them, for in contrast to the false teachers, Paul's team did not serve with selfish, lustful motives, but proved to be sincere in pure motives in God's estimation, so God made them successful.*

Application: *May we discern a godly ministry even in a crisis to be marked by God's obvious sustainment of it and its success due to the selflessness and sincerity of those ministering in the estimation of the Lord Himself.*