

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

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

G. The Eternal Perspective For Godly Ministries (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and they had 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 4:16-5:10 gives the eternal perspective for godly Christian ministries. We view it for our insight and application (as follows):

II. The Eternal Perspective For Godly Ministries, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10.

- A. Having described the sufferings that his ministry team faced in their discipling work in 2 Corinthians 3:8-15, Paul described the glorious eternal results of that suffering in the spirits of the team, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18:
 - 1. Paul and his coworkers did not "lose heart, despair" (*egkakeo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 214) over their sufferings in discipling his readers (2 Corinthians 4:16a), for not only was that suffering worthwhile in terms of the discipling production it produced for God's glory (2 Corinthians 4:15), but it produced enormous glory within the ministry team members themselves, 2 Corinthians 4:16b.
 - 2. The apostle explained that the relatively light affliction that was rather short in view of eternity was working for the ministry team to produce a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the inner man of the team members, which glory will become evident in eternity, 2 Cor. 4:17 with Daniel 12:3.
 - 3. The focus of Paul and his ministry team was thus set on the unseen spiritual realm of the inner man as opposed to the outward, seen realm of the temporal body, for the things which were seen were temporal, but the things which were not seen were eternal, and would stay with them forever, 2 Corinthians 4:18.
- B. With his focus on the eternal view, Paul launched into his longing for the eternal state, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8:
 - 1. Paul claimed that we believers know (by divine revelation) that if our earthly house of this "tent, tabernacle" (*skene*, Ibid., p. 762), the temporary dwelling of this mortal body, be destroyed, we have an eternal building from God in heaven that is not built with human hands, the glorified body, 2 Cor. 5:1.
 - 2. For in our current state, we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling that what is mortal might be swallowed up with eternal life in the physical realm, 2 Corinthians 5:2-4.
 - 3. Wonderfully, the One Who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God Himself, and He has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit as the *arrabon*, the "first instalment, deposit, down payment, pledge" that "secures a legal claim to the article in question," Ibid., p. 109; 2 Corinthians 5:5. In other words, God's gift of the Holy Spirit to us lays God's claim to our earthly bodies, that Christ's salvation that has been applied to our spirits will at the rapture be applied to the salvation and hence to the glorification of our physical bodies!
 - 4. We are thus always confident that though we are at home in our earthly bodies, we are away from the Lord Who has laid full claim to both our spirits and our bodies, 2 Corinthians 5:6. We thus "walk" or live the Christian life by faith and not by sight, waiting for the redemption of our bodies, 2 Cor. 5:7; cf. Rom. 8:23.
 - 5. We are thus confident and willing rather to be absent from this earthly body and to be present with the Lord should death precede the rapture for us. [This means that when a believer dies, he does not go to a purgatory of suffering, but he is immediately taken into the heavenly presence of God, 2 Corinthians 5:8!]
- C. Having introduced the idea of meeting the Lord at the end of this life, Paul noted that his ministry team labored to be found accepted of God whether He left them on earth or called them to heaven, 2 Cor. 5:9. After all, we believers must all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive from Him rewards or a lack of rewards for what we have done in these mortal bodies in our Christian lives, be it good or bad, 2 Cor. 5:10.

Lesson: *God uses the ministry sufferings we believers face to produce not only discipling blessings, but great glory in our spirits that will be unveiled in eternity. This leads us to long for the eternal state, and that in turn leads us to focus the more on rightly serving God now that we might give a good accounting at Christ's Judgment Seat.*

Application: *May we not lose heart over ministry sufferings, but in view of the glory of discipling and the glory that is being produced in us in the process, and in view of our accountability to Christ, may we keep at His assignment!*