

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition
Part IV: Relying On God In Sincerity To Overcome Satan's Strong Influence
(2 Corinthians 2:12-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Living in a world where the Evil One is the god of this world (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4), a world that is at his control (1 John 5:19 NIV), makes for a trying time for the believer who is called of God to make headway for Christ's Kingdom in this world.
- B. However, a path of victory for believers is available, one Paul exemplified for us in 2 Corinthians 2:12-17:

II. Relying On God In Sincerity To Overcome Satan's Strong Influence, 2 Corinthians 2:12-17.

- A. We learned in our last lesson that "as long as the matter" of the need to discipline a man in the Corinthian Church who [likely] opposed Paul's apostolic authority "was not settled, Satan kept Paul and the church estranged," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., footnote to 2 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.
- B. However, this estrangement by Satanic pressure so afflicted Paul on the personal level, it actually caused him temporarily to cease his ministry efforts at Troas, 2 Corinthians 2:12-13:
 - 1. Paul reported that after he had written his strong letter to Corinth directing the Church to discipline the sinful party, from "wondering how his severe letter had been received," he had "had no rest" upon arriving at Troas and not finding Titus who was supposed to report back to him on the response of the Corinthians to his severe letter, Ibid., fn. to 2 Corinthians 2:13; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 559.
 - 2. Now, the Lord Himself had opened a door of opportunity for Paul to minister the Gospel in Troas, meaning the Lord had wanted him to minister there at that time, 2 Corinthians 2:12.
 - 3. Nevertheless, deeply troubled over the pressure he faced in wondering if the Corinthian believers had responded appropriately to his severe letter, a pressure evidently fueled by Satan (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to 2 Cor. 2:11), Paul left Troas and headed toward Macedonia (where Titus there eventually met Paul and told him of the reception of his severe letter at Corinth, cf. 2 Corinthians 7:5-7).
 - 4. However, at the time of Paul's departure from Troas, he was at a low point in his Christian experience, suffering harassing outer conflicts and inner fears, 2 Cor. 7:5 NIV; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
- C. In grace, the Lord kept the door of ministry opportunity at Troas open for Paul so he could minister there at a later time, Acts 20:5-11; Ibid. In line with this fact, 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 explains the spiritual mechanics of how this later triumph occurred in countering Satan's strong influence to thwart the ministry:
 - 1. The narrative of Paul's itinerary is broken off at 2 Corinthians 2:13 and not resumed until 2 Corinthians 7:5 (Ibid.), and in its place is a long section that describes the ministry God had given Paul, Ibid.
 - 2. His first description reveals the spiritual dynamics by which God always caused Paul and his coworkers to succeed in ministry though facing troubling setbacks fueled by Satan, 2 Cor. 2:14-17:
 - a. Paul expressed thanksgiving to God Who always caused him and his ministry team to triumph in Christ, and to manifest the aroma of the knowledge of Christ by them in every place, 2 Cor. 2:14.
 - b. His words at 2 Corinthians 2:14 picture a Roman triumphal procession, "the victory parade awarded a conquering general in which enemy prisoners were forced to march," Ibid.
 - c. Scholars report that such parades were marked by the burning of incense, an odor that caught the attention of their prisoners as, at the end of the procession, some of them were destined to be executed while others were destined to remain alive as the general's slaves!
 - d. Accordingly, Paul noted that God had worked in all situations and in all places he and his coworkers were sent to act like such an aroma, sending forth the Gospel of Christ that caused some unsaved to gain eternal life since they believed it, and others to be damned in rejecting it, 2 Cor. 2:15-16.
 - e. What made Paul and his team sufficient ministers in such a colossal ministry effort was God, the Lord who powerfully used them as they ministered in truth and sincerity, 2 Corinthians 2:17!

***Lesson:* Though humanly unable to counter Satan's powerful influence themselves, by depending on God and ministering in sincerity, the Lord always, everywhere made Paul and his coworkers effective!**

***Application:* May we realize that we ourselves are utterly powerless to counter Satan's influence, but that as we rely on the Lord and minister in sincerity, GOD ALWAYS MAKES us EFFECTIVE!**