

2 CORINTHIANS: DEFENDING GOD'S SERVANT TO HIS CRITICS

Part III: Tempering Strong Stands With Brotherly Love

(2 Corinthians 2:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. 2 Corinthians was written "to defend the authenticity of " Paul's "apostleship and his message" to a church of believers who were susceptible to heeding false teachers who critiqued him, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552.
- B. Accordingly, as is often the case in spiritually carnal and immature Church groups, strong stands against sin are needed to check severe sin, but such stands can easily become so harsh that they cease to edify!
- C. 2 Corinthians 2:1-13 reveals Paul's effort to temper strong stands with brotherly love, a great lesson for us:

II. Tempering Strong Stands With Brotherly Love, 2 Corinthians 2:1-13.

- A. In 2 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul recalled a severe disciplinary action he had taken in the Church at Corinth on a painful visit he had previously made at that Church:
 - 1. Paul wrote that he had determined not to make another painful visit to Corinth following a severe disciplinary action he had taken in a former visit, for visiting soon after such an event could only lacerate feelings the more than were he then to remain absent for some time afterwards, 2 Corinthians 2:1-2.
 - 2. While absent after that painful visit, Paul had written a letter that had caused him much pain, indicating he had written it out of "much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears" not to cause his readers "pain, but to let" them "know the abundant love that" he had for them, 2 Corinthians 2:3-4 ESV.
 - 3. In 2 Corinthians 2:5, Paul's hesitancy to name the wrongdoer's sin suggests that "his authority as an apostle was affronted or challenged at some point in the course of his painful visit (v. 1). The Corinthians apparently failed to make the connection between a challenge to Paul's authority and their own spiritual well-being. They had regarded this as a personal problem requiring no action on their parts, a view which Paul had dispelled in his letter and which they now realized," *Ibid.*, p. 558.
 - 4. This indicates the difficulty of the situation: weak believers at Corinth might simply think Paul had a personal grudge against the man who opposed his apostleship when Paul realized that the spiritual welfare of the Church at Corinth was at stake were he to be rejected and the people exposed to a godless teacher.
- B. The Church had joined Paul in disciplining the wrongdoer, and following the exercise of this discipline, the sinful man had repented, creating a whole new series of spiritual concerns (as follows), 2 Corinthians 2:6-11:
 - 1. Paul urged his readers to cease punishing the offender along with Paul's action against him, for he had repented, 2 Corinthians 2:6; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn. to 2 Corinthians 2:6.
 - 2. The apostle was concerned about two severe dangers that lurked in this new situation that had arisen:
 - a. First, Paul knew that the repentant man needed to be forgiven, comforted and shown love by the body lest he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow and his discipleship thus be stunted, 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.
 - b. Second, Paul was writing to get his readers to affirm their love and devotion to the repentant man by getting them to obey him, and now he called them to forgive the repentant (2 Corinthians 2:9-10) lest the Church be outwitted by Satan and engulf the body in destructive spiritual defeat, 2 Corinthians 2:11 ESV.
- C. 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 reveals Paul was so concerned over the effects of the tearful letter he had written as a follow up to his painful visit to Corinth that he was in turmoil of spirit:
 - 1. Paul had gone to Troas after sending his follow up letter via Titus back to Corinth, and in Troas he had found the Lord had opened a door of opportunity there to evangelize the area, 2 Corinthians 2:12.
 - 2. However, Paul was restless since he did not find Titus had returned from Corinth to that town, 2 Cor. 2:13a. Paul had planned to meet Titus there to inform Paul of the situation at Corinth following his letter to the Church via Titus (*Ibid.*, B. K. C., N. T., p. 559), so Titus' absence only left Paul more concerned.
 - 3. Accordingly, Paul had left the people of Troas to minister to them at another time and gone back to Macedonia in an apparent attempt to continue on back to Corinth, 2 Corinthians 2:13b; *Ibid.*

Lesson: *If we must take a strong negative stand in some capacity, we need to bathe the process in brotherly love, for brotherly love avoids unedifying destruction of the errant party and of the body life of the whole Church.*

Application: *(1) May we not only have a deep devotion to righteousness and holiness in taking strong stands in relation to weak or carnal believers who need us to take such stands, but may we temper our stands with an equal emphasis on brotherly love to protect individual relationships and Church body life. (2) There may be cases where the wrong is so great that our stand is not understood as loving, but we must still try to temper our stand with love.*