

2 CORINTHIANS: DEFENDING GOD'S SERVANT TO HIS CRITICS
Part XX: Realizing Our Accountability To A Sovereign Lord To Repent Of Our Sins
(2 Corinthians 13:1-10)

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. The spiritual weakness in Corinthian believers and their exposure to false apostles compounded Paul's work load. However, he remained buoyant in spirit, for he realized every believer is accountable to a sovereign Lord Who required each one to repent of his sins or face His discipline! We focus on this fact for our insight:

II. Realizing Our Accountability To A Sovereign Lord To Repent Of Our Sins, 2 Corinthians 13:1-10.

- A. Paul sent his readers a stern warning to repent lest they face his life-and-death discipline, 2 Cor. 13:1-3a:
 - 1. He claimed he would visit the Corinthians a third time, 2 Cor. 13:1a. The first was Paul's Acts 18:1 visit when he evangelized them, his second the "painful visit" of 2 Corinthians 2:1 and the third looked like it might be like the second -- a painful visit! (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 2 Cor. 13:1)
 - 2. Accordingly, Paul warned his readers that when he came, every fact would be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses, alluding to Deuteronomy 19:15 in determining punishment for sin! (2 Corinthians 13:1b) Paul was in effect warning his readers to repent of sin before he arrived lest he punish them!
 - 3. He added that he had warned those who sinned before and all the others, and he was warning them now in his letter while absent from them, as he had on his second visit, that if he came and found them to be unrepentant, he would not spare, but use his life-and-death apostolic power to punish sinners, 2 Cor. 13:2.
 - 4. This sharp warning was meant to jar those in sin at Corinth who were arrogantly seeking proof that Christ had spoken through him, and he surely could provide it by exercising apostolic discipline, 2 Cor. 13:3a!
- B. Paul then explained *God's* involvement in Paul's ministry that led him to make such a warning, 2 Cor. 13:3b-9:
 - 1. The apostle Paul claimed that Christ was not weak in dealing with his readers, but was powerful among them, 2 Cor. 13:3b. We do not have apostles with apostolic disciplinary powers today, but the same Lord is with us today, and we are all accountable to **Him** to repent of sin lest we *also* face **His** discipline!
 - 2. Christ was crucified in human weakness, but He now lives as risen from the dead by the power of God, setting the precedent for Paul and his ministry team who were humanly weak in the Lord, but in dealing with the Corinthian believers in disciplining them, they functioned by God's enormous power, 2 Cor. 13:4.
 - 3. Paul then urged his readers to test themselves to see whether they were in the faith as true believers, for Christ Jesus was certainly in them as believers, unless of course they failed the test, 2 Corinthians 13:5!
 - 4. The apostle hoped his readers would find that he and his ministry team had not failed the test as belonging to Christ, that his readers might then heed their admonition to repent and so avoid being disciplined, v. 6-7.
 - 5. Paul added that he and his ministry team could not do anything against the truth, but only for it, being glad that when they were humanly weak his readers might be spiritually strong in being restored to a righteous position rather than staying in sin and needing to be disciplined by the power of God, 2 Corinthians 13:8-9.
- C. In conclusion, Paul noted that he was writing these words while absent from his readers that they might repent and keep Paul from having to discipline them, for the authority Christ had given him was not for the main purpose of tearing fellow believers down in discipline, but of building them up in the Lord, 2 Cor. 13:10.

Lesson: *Though Christ called Paul to be an apostle of life-and-death disciplinary authority over other believers, Paul sought to avoid exercising his power to discipline by repeatedly, patiently warning others to repent that he might edify and not tear them down. Paul's claim that Christ was present in the midst of the local church at Corinth, exercising His great power applies to our era when we no longer have apostles with life-and-death authority over us, so we are accountable to repent of sin before a Lord Who has infinite sovereignty over us!*

Application: *(1) Though we no longer have apostles gifted of God with life-and-death authority over the rest of us in the Church, Christ is still in our midst as the sovereign God to Whom we are fully accountable. (2) We must thus repent of sin that we might avoid God's sure, potent discipline. (3) Like Paul expressed in 2 Corinthians 13:1-10, Christ Himself much prefers that we obey Him to be blessed to our remaining unrepentant (cf. also Exodus 20:18-20), what can result in His punishment of the sin unto death, cf. 1 John 5:16. Thus, may we repent as needed for restoration to a position of God's blessing. (4) If we like Paul are in a position of oversight, may we be patient as he was with others that we exercise discipline upon subordinates only as a last resort.*