

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

III. The Apostle Paul's Vindication Of Himself, 2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

F. Paul's Notice Of The Accountability Of His Readers

(2 Corinthians 13:1-10)

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. After using the last part of his letter to address the false apostles who had opposed him, Paul shifted his attention to the responsibility of the Corinthian believers to make necessary adjustments for the truth.
- C. 2 Corinthians 13:1-10 presents Paul's notice of the accountability of his readers to respond to his appeal with obeying it or to suffer the consequences, so we view the passage for our insight, application and edification:

II. Paul's Notice Of The Accountability Of His Readers, 2 Corinthians 13:1-10.

- A. From 2 Corinthians 10:1 to 12:21, Paul had written to vindicate himself and thus his message of the truth that had contrasted with the messages of the false apostles who had influenced the believers at Corinth.
- B. He had also warned his readers that he was about to visit them a third time (2 Corinthians 12:14), and that he was concerned that he might find them in a state of sin (2 Corinthians 12:20-21) so that he might have to use his apostolic authority to exercise severe physical punishment on them (2 Corinthians 10:6 ESV).
- C. Thus, beginning at 2 Corinthians 13:1, Paul repeated his announcement that he was about to visit his readers for the third time, but that in this visit, he would hold them accountable either to have obeyed his word or to find them still in a position of disobedience. In the latter case, Paul asserted that at the mouth of two or three witnesses, every fact would be established so that he would come to a verdict and administer God's discipline.
- D. The time for repentance was coming to an end: Paul wrote that when he arrived, he would not spare the guilty, for his readers were seeking proof that Christ spoke in him, 2 Corinthians 13:2-3. This proof would come at great cost to those who were unrepentant at Corinth since it might even involve capital punishment (as in the case when Peter announced to Ananias and Sapphira that they would die for their sin, and they died instantly as an act of God in Acts 5:1-11).
- E. Christ's ministry through Paul had appeared to be weak to his readers, explaining why they had doubted that he gave Christ's message, but though Christ had been crucified in weakness, He was resurrected from the dead and lives by the infinite power of God. Similarly, though Paul's team was humanly weak as patterned after Christ in His earthly life, they would live by God's resurrection power toward the Corinthians as Paul's readers would witness the discipline of the living God on those who had not repented, 2 Corinthians 13:4.
- F. Paul then "handed the lens to the Corinthians, with the challenge that they consider their own conduct (**yourselves** is in the emphatic position in Gr.). Paul's question" in 2 Corinthians 13:5 "is usually construed with regard to positional justification: were they Christians or not? But it more likely concerned practical sanctification: did they *demonstrate* that they were **in the faith** (cf. 1 Cor. 16:13) and that **Christ** was **in** them by their obeying His will? To stand **the test** was to do what was right. To **fail** was to be disobedient and therefore subject to God's discipline" as believers. (Ibid., p. 584-585)
- G. Regardless of the doubts that his readers had about his conduct, Paul thought that "a sober evaluation would lead them to vindicate him," 2 Cor. 13:6; Ibid., p. 585. He hoped that this would actually occur, 2 Cor. 13:7.
- H. Paul stated that he and his ministry team could not do anything against the truth, but only for the truth, and that they were glad when they as a ministry team were humanly weak while the Corinthians were strong, for Paul was concerned only about the restoration of his readers, not for his personal gain, 2 Corinthians 13:8-9.
- I. Accordingly, Paul added that he was writing about these things while absent from his readers that when he finally arrived in Corinth the third time that he might not have to use his apostolic authority for tearing down his readers but rather to build them up in the Lord, 2 Corinthians 13:10.

Lesson: *Though Paul had sought to direct his readers at the Church of Corinth to believe his message as opposed to the words of the false apostles, he asserted near the end of his epistle that the time for repentance was ending, that his readers were accountable to heed Christ in obeying Paul's message or suffer divine discipline.*

Application: *(1) If God's Word through His apostolic messengers in Scripture directs that we repent, confess our sin(s) and obey God's directive, we must realize that the TIME we have to heed that message is LIMITED before God's discipline falls. (2) May we then adjust as SOON as POSSIBLE to any directive we receive from the Lord.*