

I Cor. 9:11. Remembering that the gospel had originated in Judea and that the faithful among the nation of the Jews from Abraham on were like the root out of which the true faith of the gospel had grown, we might also ask whether or not Paul is thinking of that equality that now balanced material things with spiritual things. Paul wrote to the Romans about this trip to Jerusalem on which he was to minister to the saints in connection with the contribution which Macedonia and Achaia were making for the poor in Jerusalem. He said, "Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things" (Rom. 15:25-27).

He that gathered much.—Paul quoted from Ex. 16:18, a reference to the giving of the manna, as an example of the equality about which he was writing. The manna, just as our blessings whether material or spiritual, came from God. God saw to it that no one was able to hoard the manna and thus made everyone equal in that respect. But it is His love and earnest care for others in the hearts of His people that will produce equality in things both spiritual and material.

The Mission of Titus and His Associates

Scripture

8:16-24. But thanks be to God, who putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 17 For he accepted indeed our exhortation; but being himself very earnest, he went forth unto you of his own accord. 18 And we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches; 19 and not only so, but who was also appointed by the churches to travel with us in the matter of this grace, which is ministered by us to the glory of the Lord, and to show our readiness: 20 avoiding this that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us: 21 for we take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men. 22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have many times proved earnest in many things, but now much more earnest, by reason of the great confidence which he hath in you. 23 Whether any inquire about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker to you-ward; or our brethren, they are the messengers of the churches, they

are the glory of Christ. 24 Show ye therefore unto them in the face of the churches the proof of your love, and of our glorying on your behalf.

Comments

thanks be to God.—The writings of Paul are full of praise and thanksgiving to God. He was aware that everything that he had been able to accomplish or ever hoped to accomplish had been made possible because God had given him the gracious privilege of serving as the apostle of Christ. He praised God for His comforting care in affliction; he thanked God for leading him in triumph in Christ and making it possible for the gospel to be made known through his efforts. It was God who comforted him through the coming of Titus with the report of improved conditions in Corinth. He thanked God who motivated such men as Titus and his associates to share in the task of assisting the churches to gather funds for the relief of the saints in Judea.

who putteth the same earnest care for you in the heart of Titus.—God made man with the capacity to respond to appeals to relieve the needs of others. He had used Paul to stir up this interest in the heart of Titus. More than that, Titus had seen for himself the desire of the Corinthians to relieve the suffering saints in Judea. People do respond to the cry of their fellowmen for help, for God created them with the capacity to do so. But information about the specific needs must be given if this capacity is to become effective. More than that, this capacity can and should be trained that it might be developed to its fullest extent. Training should begin with children. It should be carried on by the leaders of the church through instruction and example so that the whole family of God might have a wholesome concern for the needs of others. The basic root of all this concern is God's own love for the world demonstrated by the fact that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. The Lord exhorted men to love their enemies and do good to those who persecuted them.

he accepted indeed our exhortation.—Titus' heart had been stirred by what he had seen in Corinth. They had begun to carry out the order which Paul had given them. He willingly accepted Paul's appeal to continue his assistance to them, for it was in perfect accord with his own decision.

It is a rare thing when effective work in the church is accomplished by those who respond to undue pressure to teach a class,

to serve as deacons, or to do the many other things necessary to carry out the total work of the congregation. Unless a man's heart is in it, as in the case of Titus, in all probability it would be better for him not to attempt the task.

with him the brother.—Two others who are designated brothers were to accompany Titus and assist him in this ministry. Their names are not given. Speculation as to their identity has been indulged in through centuries to no profit. Had it been important surely Paul would have given the names. But he does commend them highly. Paul never hesitated to commend his fellow-workers such as Timothy, Titus, Apollos and the many others who had proven themselves worthy of such commendation.

This brother had received the commendation throughout all the churches because of his work in the gospel. Paul did not hesitate to pass this information along to the Corinthians. This same principle if followed carefully would save many a church from those whose reputations elsewhere are not good. The leaders of the churches should insist on looking into the reputation of new teachers who come into their midst. Indeed, the Corinthian church could have been saved much grief had they investigated the reputations of the "super-apostles" who had come into their midst attacking the reputation and ministry of Paul. The brethren at Antioch could have been spared a severe split in the church if they had looked into the reputation of those who "came from James." See Gal. 2:11-21.

appointed by the churches.—How these men were selected is not indicated. A good example of how it might have been done is given in Acts 6:1-6. The apostles set forth the qualifications and urged the church to select the men to fit these qualifications. Just how the church went about selecting the men is not indicated but when they had completed the task they brought the men before the apostles who put them in charge of the task. Another example is given in Acts 14:23. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church. The word "appoint" could mean and probably did indicate that this was done with the approval of the church. Titus was given the task of appointing elders in every city in Crete, probably with the approval of the churches as they followed the qualification which Paul had given them. See Titus 1:5-9.

Those selected to travel with Paul and the others in this gracious ministry for the glory of the Lord were men of good reputation among the churches. Paul was eager to have such assistance.

It should be pointed out that these men were selected for a specific task and represented the churches only in the task for which they were selected. In no sense did they become representatives to make decision for the congregations. The New Testament indicates that the congregations were interdependent as well as independent.

avoiding this, that any man should blame us.—Paul was aware of the fact that there were those who would assume that the collections were being made for his own benefit. False charges easily arise making it necessary for those who handle the funds of the congregation to be above reproach in every regard and to be able to prove their honesty against any false charge. Judas even stole from the treasury of Jesus and the apostles. See John 12:6. Why allow the treasurer of a church to be put into a position where he might be accused of such a thing? He should have someone to check his work; his books should be audited and every precaution should be taken for his sake and for the protection of those who contribute to the fund. Paul avoided the possibility of any improper handling of money entrusted to his care. He took "thought for things honorable not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

this bounty which is ministered by us.—The term "bounty" comes from the word which means thickness or fullness and was used to describe a plant that had reached its full development or its fruit that had become ripe. It aptly describes the generous giving of the church that had been preparing for this effort and were soon to bring it to completion.

Just as time is needed for a plant to grow and produce fruit, so a congregation should be given time to (1) to be adequately informed regarding financial projects and (2) to let their contributions grow to the point where they are adequate for the needs for which they are being given.

we have sent with them our brother.—Paul had urged Titus to undertake this mission, the churches had selected the brother with a good reputation in the gospel to accompany him, and Paul had sent still another proven man on this mission. His earnestness had been proven on many occasions and heightened at this time because of his great confidence in the willingness of the Corinthians to respond generously to this appeal.

Whether any inquire about Titus.—Paul had already written a great deal about Titus, but to make sure that any question about him could be fully answered, he adds, "He is my partner and fellow-worker

to you-ward." This is characteristic of Paul's attitude toward those who labored with him. See, for example, his attitude toward Apollos in I Cor. 3:4-9. For his attitude toward Timothy see Phil. 2:19-24.

the messengers of the churches.—As the footnote in some Bibles indicates, the word "messenger" is actually "apostle." It means one who is sent on a mission. It is not to be assumed that they had equal authority with the apostles of Christ, for those men were commissioned by Him and equipped for their task by being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Since the term was one in common use designating anyone being sent on a mission, it becomes absolutely necessary to study each context to learn who the sender is in order to avoid confusion over the use of the term. Here, for that very purpose, it is rendered "messengers"—a word which comes from Latin but means the same thing.

Long usage has accustomed us to use "apostle" to refer to those sent by Christ, but to use "missionary" to designate those who are sent out by churches to proclaim the gospel.

the glory of Christ.—All this—the selection, the commendation, and the sending of the men to protect the reputation of the apostle and the others—was for the glory of the Lord.

Too often this basic principle is forgotten. Many assume that the tasks that they may be performing in connection with the work of the gospel are for their own glory. Evidently there were such in Corinth, for Paul had to write the last section of this epistle to show that such people were in reality servants of Satan.

in the face of the churches the proof of your love.—Paul had not hesitated to remind Corinth of the generosity of the Macedonian churches. Now he urged them to respond in like manner demonstrating before the churches their love for the Lord. This was not to be some hypocritical display (Matt. 6:2-4). It was to be the sincere response of Christian love, the example of which would motivate others to respond in the same manner.

our glorying on your behalf.—Paul had been boasting both to Titus and the Macedonians about the preparation that Achaia had made for this task.

Summary

The collection for the saints in Jerusalem is discussed in chapters eight and nine. The order to make such a collection had been given

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in the first epistle. The second epistle gave more detailed instruction about that offering.

Paul lifted giving above the level of begging by showing that it is a favor from God. The Macedonians had begged for the privilege of sharing in such a project. Rather than begin with the fact that Corinth was lagging in the matter, Paul told them about the thing that Macedonia was doing despite their affliction and deep poverty. How this must have stirred Corinth to action!

Paul spoke of the riches of Macedonian single-minded devotion to the Lord. This is what made their contribution a thing of liberality. They gave beyond their power; they gave of their own accord; they begged for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints. They gave even beyond the hopes of the apostle Paul. The secret? Macedonia had given themselves first, both to the Lord and to Paul. The latter was done by furnishing men to go with him on the trip to Jerusalem. All this was done through the will of God. Paul did not say that they gave themselves to the Lord and then gave money to him. The money was given for Jerusalem. Dedication to the Lord caused the Macedonians to give to the relief of His saints in Judea.

The Macedonian devotion to Paul stood in contrast to the Corinthian opposition to him. Because of the example of Macedonia, Paul urged Titus to complete the task of collecting funds for Jerusalem, since he had already begun the work, so that Corinth might share in this grace also.

Paul urged Corinth to abound in this favor just as they had in spiritual gifts and Christian character. Giving was commended, but the measure was regulated by love. In love, they were to follow the example of Christ who became poverty-stricken on the cross that he might enable men to share His heavenly riches.

Paul had boasted much about the Macedonians, but he also complimented the Corinthians: they were first to willingly undertake this task. It would be well for them to bring it to completion. When the readiness was present, the gift was acceptable according to one's ability, not according to what he did not have.

Another principle regulating the amount to be given is equality. Material help sent by Corinth would meet Jerusalem's need. What was Jerusalem's abundance that would fill Corinth's need? Some suggest that it was material need at some future date. But Paul's remarks in 9:12-15 may be to the point. Their gift had resulted in thanksgiving to God; they needed to respond to the gracious privi-

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lege of sharing as Macedonia had done. Thus material need was balanced by spiritual want. God's miraculous power produced equality in gathering the manna. God's grace produced equality for Jerusalem and Corinth as He met the needs of each.

Paul explained the mission of Titus and his associates. Titus responded to his appeal to complete the work at Corinth, since he had already become interested in it, for God had put it in his heart to do so. To avoid criticism about handling the funds, Paul sent the others to help Titus. One who had a good reputation in the gospel among the churches was selected by them for the task. New Testament churches did cooperate through individuals of good reputation in order to carry out the Lord's work. Paul sent still another brother whom he had tested and found to be earnest many times in many things. Titus, in case anyone inquired, was Paul's partner and fellow-worker. The brethren were sent by the churches. The work to be done was for the glory of Christ.

Paul urged Corinth to give a demonstration of their love before these brethren and a reason for his boasting about their being prepared to share in this task.

Questions

1. What are the three principal topics discussed in this epistle?
2. What chapters are given over to the discussion of the collections for the saints?
3. What characterizes Paul's mood as he wrote about the postponement of his visit to Corinth?
4. How account for the change of mood as he wrote about giving?
5. How did his mood change again as he took up the defense of his apostleship against the charges of false teachers?
6. What did Paul mean by the grace of God that had been given in the churches of Macedonia?
7. In what way does this differ from the usual approach to the subject of giving?
8. How did God provide for the children of Israel in the wilderness?
9. Why didn't He provide for the saints in Judea in the same way?
10. What was the basic principle in the distribution of material goods by the church in Jerusalem?
11. How was it abused by Ananias and Sapphira?

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12. Why was it necessary to appoint deacons in the church at Jerusalem?
13. What experience had Paul already had in famine relief in Judea?
14. What had he promised Peter and John with reference to helping the poor in Judea?
15. What does Acts reveal about the churches in Macedonia?
16. What is known about the hardship and poverty which Macedonia was enduring?
17. Is poverty an excuse for not participating in the privilege of sharing with others?
18. What did Paul mean by "liberality"?
19. What caused Macedonia to give even beyond their ability?
20. Who determined what they were to give?
21. What was their attitude toward the privilege of giving?
22. What about the begging approach to budget raising?
23. What is the place of fellowship in the matter of giving?
24. What had Paul hoped for from Macedonia? What happened?
25. What was the secret of their generous response?
26. What did Paul mean when he said that they gave themselves to the Lord by the will of God?
27. How had they given themselves to Paul also?
28. To whom was the money given?
29. What had Titus done to help the Corinthians in the matter of giving for the saints?
30. Why was Paul sending him back to Corinth?
31. What had the grace of God done for the Corinthians?
32. Define faith, utterance, and knowledge? What had these to do with the grace of giving?
33. Why did he say, "I speak not by way of commandment"?
34. How harmonize this with the fact that he had ordered the churches of Galatia to prepare for the relief of the saints?
35. What is the motivating force in generosity?
36. Why did he appeal to the example of the Lord?
37. Why did Paul express his opinion to the Corinthians instead of commanding them to act?
38. What does God look for in the hearts of those who are privileged to give?
39. What was Paul's motive in asking Gentile congregations to help the needy Christians in Judea?

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40. In what way were Gentile Christians indebted to those of Jewish background?
41. What are some of the ways in which the offering for the saints in Judea might bring about equality?
42. How does the reference to the giving of the manna explain the issue of equality.
43. What are some of the things for which Paul thanked God?
44. Why did he thank God for Titus?
45. How did God put earnest care for the Corinthians in the heart of Titus?
46. What does the attitude of Titus show as to the essential qualifications of those who may be asked to serve in the church?
47. What did Paul say about the two who were sent with Titus?
48. How can this serve as a guide to churches in selecting workers?
49. How did the churches appoint the brother to travel with Titus?
50. What does this show about cooperation between congregations?
51. What was Paul's concern in handling these funds?
52. What does it suggest to those who handle the funds of the church?
53. Why did Paul use the word "bounty" to describe the offering?
54. What do we know about Paul's attitude toward his fellow-workers? toward Titus? toward Appolos? toward Timothy?
55. What is the literal meaning of the word translated "messenger"?
56. Why not use the literal translation?
57. For whose glory were these messengers to work?
58. What demonstration did Paul want the churches to make?
59. To whom had Paul been boasting about Achaia?
60. What was his purpose in mentioning it at this point?

For Discussion

1. What factors affect the distribution of food to the hungry peoples of the world?
2. How would the evangelization of the world—that's what Jesus said to do—affect the problem of caring for the needy?

CHAPTER NINE

Analysis

- A. Paul continued to explain the mission of the brethren who were to help the Corinthians in their minister to the saints (1-5).
1. His knowledge of their readiness and zeal (1-2).
 - a) Because he knew of this, writing to them was not necessary.
 - b) He had boasted of their readiness to the Macedonians to stir up their zeal.
 2. Further reasons for sending the brethren (3-5).
 - a) He had sent them lest his boasting about their preparedness become an empty thing (3).
 - b) In the event that some of the Macedonians should come with him and find them unprepared he—not to mention the Corinthians—would be ashamed (4).
 - c) He had urged them to go so that the gift they had promised might be bounteous and not forced (5).
- B. He explained the issues involved in generous giving (6-15).
1. The principle of sowing and reaping in relation to giving (6-7).
 - a) The one who sows sparingly reaps sparingly, but the one who sows generously reaps abundantly (6).
 - b) In the light of this, each one is to give as he determines in his heart (7).
 - (1) He is to make the decision in his own heart.
 - (2) He is to do it, not as one who painfully wishes that he didn't have to, but as one who remembers that God loves a cheerful giver.
 2. The ability to give (8-10).
 - a) As He makes all grace abound, so he makes the generous giver able to abound in every good work (8).
 - b) This is according to Psa. 112:9 (9).
 - c) As He supplies seed to sow to produce bread He will supply and multiply the seed for sowing and increase the fruits of righteousness (10).
 3. The results of generous giving (11-14).
 - a) Thanksgiving to God (11-12).
 - (1) From Paul.

- (2) From those whose wants were met. The ministry of this service met their needs and caused them to thank God.
- b) Praise to God as they saw the obedience and liberality of those who gave to help them (13).
- c) Longing on the part of those who had been helped for those who by God's grace had shared with them (14).
4. The closing word: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." The full account of the gift could not be put in words (15).

Ministering To The Saints

Scripture

9:1-5. For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them. 3 But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared: 4 lest by any means if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence. 5 I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

Comments

superfluous for me to write to you.—Paul had spent considerable space in this letter giving direction concerning the offerings for the saints and commending Titus and his associates for the part they were to have in assisting the Corinthians in preparing their offering. Indeed it was superfluous to go on writing to them about the matter, for he knew that they were eager to do their part. He had been boasting to the people of Macedonia saying, "Achaia has been ready for a year." Just how many months had gone by since they had begun to make preparation is not clear, but the Corinthians knew exactly. The zeal of Achaia had aroused many of the Macedonians to action. *But I have sent the brethren.*—While it was not necessary to go on writing to them about their offering, it was necessary to say some

additional words about the mission of Titus and his associates. He was sending them to make sure that his boasting about their preparedness had not been in vain. He did not want the Macedonians, some of whom had volunteered to go with him to Corinth, to find the Corinthians unprepared. This would embarrass him, to say nothing about what it would do to them.

as a matter of bounty and not of extortion.—The word translated "bounty" is commonly, within proper context, translated "blessing." It meant words that were well spoken about praise that was well deserved; it meant blessings that benefitted those who received them. Out of this concept comes the thought of bountiful giving that brings benefit to others. Paul had clearly indicated that this was the type of gift that Macedonia was preparing and he did not hesitate to suggest that Achaia's gift should be of the same kind. He did not want a poor showing on their part to demonstrate an attitude of greediness that would keep them from parting from their material wealth.

Stingy, miserly people do not give in such a manner as to suggest that their giving is a blessing to either themselves or to others.

Generous Giving

Scripture

9:6-15. But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: 9 as it is written,

He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;

His righteousness abideth for ever.

10 And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: 11 ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God; 13 seeing that through the proving of you by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution unto them

and unto all; 14 while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

Comments

He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.—Now Paul enlarges upon what he had said about bounty and extortion with the illustration of sowing and reaping. Sowing sparingly explains his remark about extortion, for the one who holds back the seed instead of putting plenty on the ground is like the miserly person who would hold back his wealth rather than look to blessing that comes both to him and those whom he might help through generous giving. On the other hand, the one who anticipates a bountiful harvest by scattering an abundance of seed is like the generous giver who will be blessed in his giving as well as benefitting those to whom he gives. It was Paul who reminded the elders of the church at Ephesus about the words of the Lord Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). James denounced the miserly rich and warned them about the miseries that were about to come upon them. He said, "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasures in the last days" (James 5:1-3).

Let each man do according as he has purposed in his heart.—Because giving has a double blessing, first to the giver and then to the one who receives each one was to decide in his own heart what he would do before making the gift. Guidelines had already been given by the apostle by which the decision was to be made. He added still others at this point.

not grudgingly, nor of necessity.—It was not to be done out of sorrow in parting with his coveted wealth; it was not to be of necessity, that is, not being forced to give rather than suffering the embarrassment of not joining with the generous people who were making up the liberal offering for those who were in want.

Since giving is to benefit the giver, the leaders of the churches should avoid methods of forcing people to give as if God were poverty stricken and had to have their help. These are they who give grudgingly and painfully and constantly complain that the church is "always after money."

for God loveth a cheerful giver.—God has demonstrated that He

has bountifully given for the benefit of all mankind. He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Paul asks, "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8: 31-32). All this, God gladly gives in bountiful measure; He loves the cheerful giver.

Pressure methods used to force people to give who really do not want to give are wrong from every point of view: (1) God doesn't have to have the money. The case of Ananias and Sapphira proved it. (2) The benefit to the giver is nullified. (3) The principle of spontaneous, generous giving as a blessing to the giver is violated.

God is able.—This seems to be Paul's answer to the one who says "I can't." Although he had recognized the principle that if a man has the right attitude, what he does is acceptable to God according to what he has and not according to what he has not. The supply of the seed for sowing and the multiplying of that seed in the harvest is all from God. Man cannot produce seed that will grow and multiply. With this principle clearly stated, Paul indicated that God graciously makes it possible for one to give for the benefit of others and to multiply the blessing. Paul quoted from Psalm 112:9 which tells of the righteous man who is not afraid to trust God as he gives to the poor.

God promised Noah that "while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22).

And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food.—Those who trust in the Lord, rely on His promise, and sow generously will go on reaping the abundant harvest. This is not to say that there will be no famines, but that the principle of planting and harvesting is guaranteed by the Lord. Distribution of the harvest of the land may depend on the generosity of those who love the Lord. Hence the gospel that transforms the hearts of men is the key to the world food problem. Jesus said, "But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

worketh through us thanksgiving to God.—Among the benefits of generous giving are not only those to the giver and the receiver, but the motivation of men to thank God for His blessings and for those who generously share with others.

seeing that the proving of you by this ministration.—This ministry on behalf of the saints gave the Gentile Christians an opportunity

to prove that they were glorifying God and being obedient to their commitment to the gospel of Christ.

your confession unto the gospel of Christ.—Those who accept the privileges of the gospel of Christ openly acknowledge their indebtedness to others. See Rom. 1:14-15. They had received the blessings of Christ's gospel and were obligated to make these blessings known to other and to share their material things with all the family of God.

long after you.—Those who received the material blessing prayed for those who gave. Their hearts were stirred with deep longing for the welfare and even the presence of those who had been moved by the grace of God to help them.

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.—Paul closed the subject of giving with thanks to God for His gift which no words could adequately describe. The context indicates that that gift had produced in the hearts of the saints in Judea prayers to God for the Gentile Christians and a deep longing for fellowship with those whom they now accepted as fellow-heirs of the inheritance of the saints.

This marvelous gift, of course, comes out of the gift of His Son through whom fellowship among God's people was made possible.

Commentators have long been divided on these two points. Strict adherence to the context indicates that the gift is the result of the grace of God in the hearts of those who longed for the fellowship of their fellow-Christians. But in no way does this ignore the gift of God's love in the Person of His Son.

Summary

Paul began the discussion of the offerings for the saints in Judea with a word of praise for the Macedonian churches. Now he shows the Corinthians that he had boasted of their readiness to the Macedonians. The example of Ahaia had stirred up the zeal of the Macedonians.

In this chapter, Paul continues to explain the mission of the brethren who had been sent to help the Corinthians in their effort to relieve the suffering of the saints. Although he knew of their readiness and zeal, he thought it necessary to write to them to explain still another reason for sending the brethren to help them. He wanted to make sure that his boasting would not turn out to his embarrassment, not to mention their shame if the brethren should come from Macedonia and find them unprepared. The brethren would help

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them prepare a generous gift, but would not force anyone to give beyond his ability.

Paul explained the principle of generous giving by referring to sowing and reaping. The one who sows sparingly reaps a poor harvest; the one who sows generously reaps an abundant harvest. Thus he drew attention to the results of giving which provide strong motivation for giving generously. Forced giving may help the needy, but it robs the giver of the blessing that should come to him. Let each one make up his own mind and so let him give out of love, for God loves a cheerful giver.

But how could they give? Macedonia was burdened with deep poverty. The Corinthians may have been but little better off. Paul's answer was: God is able! He is able to supply the seed for sowing and bring about the increase at harvest time. He is able to do the same in the spiritual realm, making it possible for his people to share with those less fortunate in material things.

The bountiful harvest resulting from generous giving was the thanksgiving to God in the hearts of those whose needs had been met. But there was another remarkable feature to that harvest: the longing in the hearts of the saints with Jewish background for the welfare of their brethren in Christ with Gentile background. God's unmerited favor in permitting Macedonia and Achaia to share had resulted in this abundant harvest.

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable grace." The full account of this abundant harvest could not be put into words.

Questions

1. In what way is the thought of this chapter related to the preceding one?
2. Why did he say that it was superfluous to write to them?
3. What had he told Macedonia about Achaia?
4. What had the zeal of Achaia done for the Macedonians?
5. What was the additional reason for sending Titus and his associates?
6. What embarrassment to the Corinthians was he anticipating?
7. How can one word be translated "bounty" in one context and "blessing" in another? What does the word denote?
8. What did Paul mean when he said that the offering was not to be a matter of extortion?

CHAPTER NINE

9. How does the example of sowing and reaping explain the principle of generous giving?
10. What did the Lord Jesus say about the blessing involved in giving?
11. What did James say about those who misuse riches?
12. Who is to determine the amount to be given?
13. In what way are some people forced to give?
14. Why does God love the cheerful giver?
15. How did He demonstrate His willingness to freely give us all things?
16. What did Ananias and Sapphira do that was wrong?
17. How was it possible for poverty-stricken Macedonia to give for the relief of the saints in Judea?
18. How did God multiply the harvest of their giving?
19. How had their giving glorified God?
20. How had it shown their obedience to their commitment to the gospel?
21. How are those who accept the privileges of the gospel under obligations to others?
22. What is unusual about the fact that the saints of Judea longed for their brethren among the Gentile congregations?
23. What is God's unspeakable gift to which Paul refers?
24. Why was he unable to put into words a full account of this gift?

For Discussion

1. In what way do pressure methods force some to give who would rather not do so.
2. How has God made it possible to give to the needy?

CHAPTER TEN

Analysis

- A. Paul appealed to the Corinthians for understanding in his defense of his apostolic authority (1-6).
1. He made it a personal appeal (1-2).
 - a) It was made in the meekness and gentleness of Christ (1a).
 - b) Parenthetically, he let them know that he was aware of the charge that he was meek when present but bold when he was absent (1b).
 - c) He begged that he might not have to deal boldly with some who assumed that he was acting in mere human manner (weak and fearful before the enemy) (2).
 2. He corrected the false notion about the nature and effectiveness of his kind of warfare (3-6).
 - a) Although he was living in the world, he was not waging war in a worldly manner (3-4).
 - (1) His weapons were not of this world—not spears of slander, nor arrows of defamation and lies, etc., but the truth of God's Word!
 - (2) They were powerful before God—that is, as God considers them.
 - (3) They effectively destroyed strongholds.
 - b) He described the stronghold which his weapons were capable of destroying (5a).
 - (1) Imaginations or speculations.
 - (2) Every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God.
 - c) He explained the effectiveness of his warfare (5b-6).
 - (1) Every thought was made captive to obedience to Christ (5b).
 - (2) He was prepared to punish all disobedience when their obedience was complete—that is, when they had been given ample time to obey (6).
- B. Paul defended his boasting about the authority which the Lord had given him (7-12).
1. He charged the Corinthians with taking a superficial view of the issues before them (7-8).

CHAPTER TEN

- a) They were looking at the things that were before them but failing to see that the basis of another's claim to belong to Christ was the same as Paul's.
 - b) He reminded them that his authority about which he may have boasted too much (from the view point of his critics) was from the Lord.
 - c) He intended to use this authority to build up and not to cast down.
2. He answered those who had criticized his letters (10-12).
- a) The critics said his letters were weighty and strong, but his bodily presence was weak (10).
 - b) He declared that his action when present would match his words by letter (11).
 - s) He was not like those who compared themselves with themselves and measured themselves with themselves—that is, by their own standards—and consequently were without true understanding (12).
- C. He defended the standard by which his boasting was to be judged (13-18).
1. He boasted only in the limits God had set for his work that reached even to Corinth (13).
 2. He did not overextend himself but reached even to Corinth in the work of the gospel of Christ (14).
 3. In doing so, he had not been boasting in other men's labors (15-16).
 - a) He kept within the appointed measure which the Lord had set.
 - b) He hoped for further progress of the gospel through their mature faith.
 - c) This would mean preaching the gospel in areas beyond Corinth and still not boasting in another's field of effort.
 4. He explained his basic principle in boasting (17-18).
 - a) It was to "the glory of the Lord."
 - b) In boasting, he sought the approval of the Lord—not men.

Defense of Paul's Apostolic Authority

Scripture

10:1-6. Now I Paul myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who in your presence am lowly among you,

but being absent am of good courage toward you: 2 yea, I beseech you, that I may not when present show courage with the confidence wherewith I count to be bold against some, who count of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh 4 (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds); 5 casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; 6 and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full.

Comments

Now I Paul myself.—This chapter begins the third and last section of the epistle. It is Paul's defense of his apostolic authority which had been given him to build up and not to tear down. In it he answers the false charges of the super-apostles who in his absence had come to Corinth and were seeking to undermine his influence and destroy the work which he had done.

There is a distinct change in the tone in this part of the letter. Since his apostolic authority was under attack and since this was the very foundation of the relation of the church to the Lord, it became necessary for him to deal sharply with the enemy and to remind all that unless false teachers were abandoned he would necessarily deal harshly with them on his forthcoming visit. Some have imagined that Paul could not have changed his mood so abruptly. As a result they have also imagined that this rebuke must have been from some other epistle. But the change of his mood is perfectly understandable in the light of the change of subject matter. There is no good reason for assuming that Second Corinthians is a synthetic epistle made up of sections from several other epistles of Paul. In the light of the sound reasons for Paul's change of mood as well as complete lack of manuscript support for the theory that attacks the unity of the epistle, we may be assured that we now have the epistle as Paul wrote it to the Corinthians.

In a most emphatic manner Paul lets his readers know that this defense is coming from him. He has frequently used the plural in his writings. In doing so, he is usually considering himself in connection with the rest of the apostolic group. But since this is an answer to the attack that had been made on him and his apostolic authority he

emphatically declared that the appeal he was making to them was his own personal appeal. And since he wrote as an apostle, this was written under the control of the Holy Spirit as were all of his writings.

by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.—Although Paul's tone grew harsh as he dealt with the false teachers who had wrought such havoc in Corinth and had so unfairly attacked his apostleship, he began this section in the same gracious manner in which he had sought to win the approval of the Corinthians on all the issues about which he had written.

We note the exalted view of the church which is presented in the opening words of First Corinthians, but which had to be followed by severe condemnation of the sinful practices that had been permitted to go on. The temple of God was being destroyed by them. In this section, Paul does not suddenly lash out at the enemy, but by gracious reasoning and encouraging appeal he urged his readers to look at the real facts of the case. Finally, he warned them of the result of failure to heed his appeal. He was coming to them a third time, and just as he had promised in his first letter (I Cor. 4:18-21) so he made it clear again that he would not spare the wrong doer when he arrived.

Paul proceeded in all his dealings with man in the courteous and gracious manner that had characterized the ministry of our Lord. Isaiah prophesied of Him in these words "He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; neither shall anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and a smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send for judgment unto victory" (Matt. 12:19-20). He was gentle in dealing with the erring, urging them to sin no more. He reasoned with His critics who condemned Him for "receiving sinners." But when compelled to do so by hardhearted hypocrisy on the part of those who would not listen to reason, He did not hesitate to pronounce severe judgment upon the willfully disobedient.

The Corinthians were familiar with our Lord's methods of dealing with men. Paul had preached nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He had upheld the Word of the Cross which is a symbol both of the love of God expressed toward those who repent and of awful judgment upon those who persisted in willful disobedience.

I who in your presence am lowly among you.—Paul, parenthetically, reminded his readers that he was fully aware of the attitude of the

false teachers toward him. It was they who were saying that Paul was lowly when he was with them but when he was absent he made a show of courage. Genuine humility is to be commended on the part of anyone at any time. Paul did not lack this virtue. The thought that is implied by the remark of his critics was that he was a person of low status and not to be compared with those whom he later designated as "super-apostles." They considered themselves elevated above such as Paul because of their professional status as orators and teachers of wisdom. Paul prepared his readers to anticipate his answer to such unfair insinuations.

that I may not when present show courage.—Now Paul's plea becomes more intense as he begs his readers to listen to his gracious appeal that he might not have to show boldness which he fully intended to do on his arrival against those who were claiming that he was conducting himself "according to flesh." He did not conduct himself on the same basis as worldly-minded human beings. The description of his weapons of warfare shows how mistaken his enemies were.

we do not war according to the flesh.—Paul never claimed to be other than a human being, but he did not conduct himself in the manner of the false teachers who were disturbing the brethren at Corinth. He did not carry on a campaign nor wage a war in the manner of men. While he does not specify at this point the nature of that warfare, it is easy to see what he meant by the description of the action of those who had arrayed themselves against him. They had resorted to unfair tactics. They had not hesitated to stoop to falsehood, boastful claims of importance, and hypocritical pretense of relation to Christ while in reality they were servants of Satan.

the weapons of our warfare.—In carrying on his campaign for Christ, Paul did not use such weapons. By contrast, they were powerful in the sight of God. His mighty weapon, as the Corinthians well knew, was the truth of the revealed wisdom of God (I Cor. 2:6-16). They had seen it demolish the claims of Greeks who placed their confidence in their own wisdom and of Jews who demanded signs. But both of these had rejected the Word of the Cross that exalted Christ who was "made unto us wisdom from God."

Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the warfare against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. He urged them to take up the whole armor of God that they might be able to withstand the attack of the devil. He named the elements of that armor: truth,

righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. See Eph. 6:10-18.

casting down strongholds.—The Corinthians were familiar with the engines of war in use in their day. They enabled conquering armies to demolish fortresses that stood in the pathway of their progress toward victory. Paul likened the gospel to such instruments of victory.

casting down imaginations.—The gospel which Paul preached was able to demolish the clever systems of thought that had been devised by the Greeks.

We need to turn the light of that same gospel upon the systems of thought devised by men in our day, for some have disregarded God's wisdom which came down from above. Too frequently we strive to test the message of God's Word by the theories of men. A careful reading of the first chapter of Romans in the light of the tragic things that are happening all over the world today will show the folly of such procedure. And a careful reading of the third chapter of Romans will indicate the remedy which we so desperately need. Paul wrote to the Philippians reminding them that he had at one time been led astray from the truth, but had long since considered everything loss that he had once held dear that he might gain Christ and know Him and the power of His resurrection. See Phil. 3:10-11.

every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.—With full confidence in the truth of the knowledge of God with which he was armed, Paul expected to capture the thought of men as a victorious army would take prisoners in battle and lead those thoughts to obedience to Christ.

and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience.—Paul knew that there were those who would not submit to the truth of God and he was prepared to deal with such disobedience. This was a direct reference to the false teachers who had been disturbing the church at Corinth as well as those in the congregation who had sided with them. All disobedience would be punished as he had warned in I Cor. 4:18-21 and as he was about to repeat the warning in II Cor. 13:2. Paul was not bluffing; he intended to punish those who were attempting to destroy the church of God at Corinth.

when your obedience shall be made full.—Once again he is indicating what he had plainly stated before that he had delayed coming to Corinth in order to give them ample time to comply with all that he had instructed them to do. He is now anticipating the necessity of dealing with the super-apostles. Those who had insinuated that his

absence implied lack of courage to deal with the situation were reminded that he would delay sufficiently long for them to correct their ways, but that he would punish the disobedient upon his arrival.

A Defense Of His Boasting About His Authority

Scripture

10:7-12. Ye look at the things that are before your face. If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself, that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we. 8 For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning our authority (which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for casting you down), I shall not be put to shame: 9 that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. 10 For, His letters, they say, are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account. 11 Let such a one reckon this, that, what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such are we also in deed when we are present. 12 For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding.

Comments

Ye look at the things that are before your face.—Paul began the defense of his apostolic authority against those who had attacked his person and methods. He reminded those, of readers who had been in sympathy with his enemies, that they were taking a superficial view of things that were before their very eyes. These men were in their midst, their claims were well known, and their motives should have been understood. But lest there be any doubt about it, Paul explained it to them in plain language. See 11:20-33.

If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's.—This seems to be directed against anyone who was attacking Paul while claiming to belong to Christ. But there is really only one way by which anyone can belong to Christ, and that is the way of complete surrender to Him. As Paul had done when he asked on the Damascus way, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" so must every one obey Him. Paul obeyed the instruction of the Lord through Ananias whom the Lord sent to tell Paul what to do and got himself baptized into Christ. From that time on, he conducted himself as a Christian, for Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). By this standard the brethren at Corinth could judge the teachers who at that time were disturbing them.

Had they actually obeyed from the heart that form of teaching which led them to be crucified with Christ and be buried with Him in baptism and walk with Him in the new life? Had they demonstrated by their conduct that they had been transformed so that their thinking and action conformed to the truth revealed in God's Word?

For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning our authority.—In the light of the claims of these false teachers, it was necessary for Paul to boast about his authority. This was his apostolic authority which he received from the Lord Jesus when He appeared to Paul on the Damascus road. Paul quoted the words of the Lord Jesus in his trial before Agrippa, "But arise, and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and the Gentiles, to whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:16-18). Which of these false teachers had received such a commission from Christ? The brethren at Corinth knew that Christ had commissioned Paul as an apostle, for the signs of an apostle had been performed in their midst. See 12:12. Who among those who were seeking to tear down the apostolic authority of Paul could produce divine credentials to support their claims?

which the Lord gave for building you up.—The apostolic commission and the miraculous powers that accompanied it were not given to Paul for his exaltation nor to be used to destroy others. The intention of the Lord had been made clear in His instruction to Paul, for the ultimate goal was to bring men to the inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ.

Paul's authority was not given him for the purpose of destroying the church at Corinth. But these servants of Satan were doing so.

I shall not be put to shame.—Paul had perfect confidence in the message which as an apostle of Christ he had delivered to the church at Corinth. He was confident in the ultimate victory in the struggle to overcome the destructive false teaching to which some were apparently willing to listen.

that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.—These were not idle threats designed to strike terror in the hearts of those who read his letters; they were the solemn warnings of one whose

love for them had been demonstrated time and again, for he was their father in the gospel.

His letters.—So far as we know, Paul had written only one letter to the Corinthians. He had written other letters to other churches with which the people at Corinth may have been familiar. It is best however, to take the plural as a general reference to his writings rather than use it in support of theories about the "lost letter" or the "severe letter." See comment on I Cor. 5:9 and II Cor. 2:3.

The critics had pointed to the threatening tone of Paul's writings such as given in I Cor. 4:18-21. They had been attempting to destroy the effect of these warnings by resorting to a personal attack on the apostle. His bodily presence may not have been that of a strong, robust individual. He mentioned, "an infirmity" in connection with his preaching the gospel to the Galatians. See Gal. 4:13-14. He mentions "the thorn in the flesh" in II Cor. 12:7. But after reading the account of the things which he had endured as given in 11:23-33, it would be difficult indeed to believe that he was a physical weakling. In all probability this was a vicious attack without any foundation. It was designed to destroy the confidence of the brethren in the one who had led them to Christ.

and his speech of no account.—Paul readily admitted that he did not belong to the order of professional orators. See 11:6. When he came to Corinth the first time, it was "not with excellency of speech or of wisdom," for he had but one message and that was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Athenians had looked upon his preaching of Jesus and the resurrection with utter scorn, for to them it compared in no way with the systems of wisdom taught by their philosophers. See Acts 17:16-22. But there is no eloquence or system of thought that surpassed Paul's when he spoke on Mars Hill revealing the God whom the Athenians had worshipped in ignorance. He said, "the time of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commands men that they should all everywhere repent: in as much as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Paul hastened to assure his readers that his deeds when present with them would coincide exactly with what he had said in his letters in his absence.

For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves.—In boasting about the authority which the Lord had given him, Paul was in no

way attempting to compare himself with the false teachers at Corinth. He had urged his readers to be aware of the fact that his authority had been given him by the Lord. On the other hand, the false teachers had set up their own standards and had measured themselves by them and, consequently, were without proper understanding of the true basis of relationship to Christ which was to be found only in the authoritative Word proclaimed by His apostles.

The Standard By Which The Apostle Boasted

Scripture

10:13-18. But we will not glory beyond our measure, but according to the measure of the province which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even unto you. 14 For we stretch not ourselves overmuch, as though we reached not unto you: for we came even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ: 15 not glorying beyond our measure, that is in other men's labors; but having hope that, as your faith groweth, we shall be magnified in you according to our province unto further abundance, 16 so as to preach the gospel even unto the parts beyond you, and not to glory in another's province in regard of things ready to our hand. 17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Comments

beyond our measure.—When the Lord appointed Paul to the apostleship He clearly defined the limits of his activities, sending him to the Gentiles. When he was at Troas on his second journey, in a vision, the Lord gave him specific instruction to go to Macedonia. Paul's policy was, and this seems to be within the limits the Lord had set for him, to preach the gospel where Christ was not already known, thus avoiding building upon another man's foundation. See Rom. 15: 18-21. Paul planted, but Apollos watered. This division of labors was approved by Peter and James and John when they gave Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship as they went to the Gentiles while the others continued their ministry among the Jews. Their only request was that Paul and Barnabas should remember the poor of Judea which, of course, he was willing to do. See Gal. 2:6-10.

In the history of Paul's first visit to Corinth given in Acts 18, no specific direction of the Lord is mentioned indicating that he should

preach the gospel there. On other occasions, when emergencies arose, Luke does record the fact that the Lord gave Paul specific instruction as for example when He told him that he would go to Rome. See Acts 23:11. It is quite possible, then, that Paul's journey to Corinth to preach the gospel of Christ came under the general order to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

The point that Paul is making is that he was under the orders of God to carry out his ministry in Corinth. This raises a serious question about his critics who came later and who were disrupting the progress of the gospel among those who had been converted to Christ through Paul's preaching. From whom did they receive direction to go to Corinth? Paul makes it very clear that they were not ministers of Christ but ministers of Satan. See 11:14-15.

For we stretch not ourselves over much.—Paul and his associates had not over extended themselves when they came to Corinth, for he was within the limits that God had set for him. He came in his capacity as an apostle of Christ preaching the gospel that had been revealed to him. In no way was he violating the limits which the Lord had set for him; he was not encroaching on other men's labors. He very definitely implies that the false teachers who were disturbing the church at Corinth were imposters. Indeed, they were not true teachers as Apollos had been, for he built on the foundation which Paul had laid (I Cor. 3:10-11); but they were endeavoring to destroy that very foundation by perverting the gospel and destroying the confidence the people had in the one who had led them to Christ.

but having hope.—Paul, appealing to the sound judgment of those who knew the history of the work in Corinth, expressed his hope that as the faith of the Corinthian brethren increased his place in their affection and his opportunity to work among them might be greatly enlarged. It was also his hope that he might be able to preach the gospel in areas beyond Corinth, but without the need of boasting about work already done by others.

Since the gospel was to be taken into all the world there was no need for duplication of effort even on the part of the faithful gospel ministers, not to mention the imposters who had sought to disrupt Paul's work at Corinth. This raises a serious question about the duplication of work in many areas today, a duplication which has in many cases been brought about by the sin of division. Corinth is a good example of what happens when through strife and faction men seek to propagate their own theological opinions rather than dedicate them-

selves to the sincere proclamation of the truth as God gave it to be presented to all the world.

But he that glorieth.—Paul called attention to a basic principle of his ministry: glorying in the Lord, referring to Jer. 29:4 in support of his view.

False teachers were commending themselves as they measured themselves by their own standards, but Paul was concerned that he have the approval of the Lord.

Summary

This third and last section of the letter is a defense of Paul's apostleship. It is a series of appeals in which he answered charges of his enemies. It closes with an explanation of his intended visit.

The first appeal is humbly presented in the spirit of gentleness and meekness of Christ who endeavored to win men to the truth which the Father had sent Him to reveal. Paul had preached Christ to the Corinthians, and they were familiar with His gentleness and deep concern for the erring.

Evidently Paul's enemies had remarked disparagingly about his humility as opposed to what they said was a show of courage through his letters when he was away. Paul begged them to accept the evidence of his apostleship so that he might not be forced to use this courageous boldness in dealing with them as he confidently expected to do against his critics who were saying that he was motivated by base principles.

Taking up the charge, he said, "Although we may be walking in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the principles and methods of men." His weapons were mighty, for they were spiritual and capable of demolishing every stronghold in the way. He spoke the truth as an inspired apostle of Christ. Exalted imaginations and arrogant thoughts of men were brought as prisoners to obey Christ. Paul stood ready to avenge every disobedience when they had been given ample opportunity to obey.

Paul charged that they were taking a superficial view of the issues before them. The basis of anyone's claim to be Christ's applied to Paul also. If he had boasted somewhat of his authority, they were to remember that it had been given him by the Lord to edify and not to tear down. But he intended to use this authority if necessary when he came to Corinth, for he was not merely frightening them by the letter. His enemies had said that while his letters were weighty and strong he was weak in person and should be despised. He warned them

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that what he was in his letters he would be in reality when present.

As to his right to instruct the Corinthians, he was not like some who were setting up their own standards comparing themselves with themselves and who, consequently, were without understanding. He conformed to the standard of measurement which God had established for him. It gave him the right to be the first to come to Corinth to preach the gospel. His enemies evidently, had attempted to take credit for work he had done. Still, he hoped to be assisted by the Corinthians in carrying the gospel to regions beyond them. He did not want to boast about work done by others as if he had done it. "Let one's glorying be within the Lord's approval. It is not the one who commends himself, but whom the Lord commends, that is approved." Paul's self-commending critics were not approved by the Lord.

Questions

1. Why did Paul turn to the defense of his apostleship in this third and last section of the epistle?
2. Why was it necessary to again mention his forthcoming visit?
3. Why is there such a distinct change in Paul's attitude in this section of the letter?
4. What defense is there for the unity of the epistle in view of the harsher tone expressed in this section?
5. Why did he use the expression "I Paul myself" instead of his usual "we"?
6. When Paul uses the plural pronoun, to whom does he usually refer?
7. What is meant by the meekness and gentleness of Christ?
8. Why would the Corinthians be expected to understand it?
9. Why did Paul first appeal to them in this manner?
10. Why did he assume a somewhat harsh manner in his later effort to get them to look at the facts before them?
11. Why did he speak of himself as lowly in their presence but courageous when he was absent from them?
12. How did he confidently expect to use his apostolic authority upon his arrival? Against whom?
13. Who had been making these disparaging remarks about Paul?
14. How did Paul indicate that his critics had misjudged him?
15. What did he mean when he said that he did not war according to the flesh?

CHAPTER TEN

16. What had been the tactics of those who arrayed themselves against Paul?
17. What weapons did Paul use in carrying on his campaign for Christ?
18. How had he demonstrated their effectiveness to the Corinthians?
19. How did Paul describe the whole armor of God when he wrote to the Ephesians?
20. What stronghold were standing in way to victory for the gospel?
21. What was Paul's view of the outcome of the clash which he anticipated with the false teachers upon his arrival?
22. What did he mean by the expression, "when your obedience shall be made full"?
23. What did he mean when he said, "Ye look at the things that are before your face"? To whom did he refer?
24. What is the only way by which anyone can belong to Christ?
25. How did this apply to Paul as well as those who were claiming to be His?
26. How had Paul demonstrated the meaning of this standard to the Corinthians?
27. Measured by that standard, what could be said of the super-apostles who were attempting to discredit Paul?
28. What had it become necessary for Paul to boast somewhat about his authority?
29. From whom had he received his authority? When?
30. What could the false apostles at Corinth say about any commission they may have claimed as a reason for their being there?
31. What proof did he give that the Lord had commissioned him as an apostle?
32. What was the purpose of this authority?
33. Why, then, did he say that it was not for tearing down?
34. Why did he say, "I shall not be put to shame"?
35. How did all this answer the charge that he was attempting to terrify them by his letters?
36. If Paul had written only one letter to the Corinthians prior to this one, how explain the reference of his critics to "his letters"?
37. What possible evidence could the critics present to establish their claim that Paul was weak?
38. What did they mean when they said that his speech was of no account?

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39. How does this compare with what Paul had written to the Corinthians? See I Cor. 2:1-5.
40. How had the Athenians looked upon his preaching about Jesus and the resurrection?
41. By what standard had the false teachers been measuring themselves? With what result?
42. By what standard was Paul's work to be judged?
43. Who authorized Paul's mission to Corinth?
44. What was Paul's policy in his missionary work?
45. How was this seen in the work that he and Apollos had done at Corinth?
46. What, then was the basic difference between the work of Apollos and the false teachers at Corinth?
47. What was Paul implying when he said that he had not encroached upon other men's labors?
48. What did Paul hope that the Corinthians might do to help him?
49. Whose approval was Paul seeking?
50. From what Scripture did he take this basic principle?

For Discussion

1. How can the light of the Word of God be turned on some of the widely accepted views of men that ignore God and His Word?
2. What can be done about the duplication of effort to preach Christ that is occasioned by division among His followers?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Analysis

- A. Paul appealed to the Corinthians to understand his position in respect to their relation to Christ (1-5).
1. He began with an ironical appeal for them to "bear with a little foolishness" (1-6).
 - a) He made the appeal even though he aware that they were bearing with him (1).
 - b) He stated his position in respect to their relation to Christ (2-3).
 - (1) He was the one who had betrothed them to Christ.
 - (a) As such, he was jealous of others who might usurp his position.
 - (b) He wanted them to remain as a pure virgin betrothed to Christ.
 - (c) He reminded them that Christ was to be their one husband.
 - (2) He expressed his fear that they might be led away from this pure relationship to Christ.
 - (a) Just as the serpent deceived Eve, they were being deceived by false teachers.
 - (b) They were actually in danger of being led away from sincere devotion to Christ.
 - c) He pointed out the conditions under which they were ready to listen to other teachers (4).
 - (1) They would listen if some came preaching another Jesus.
 - (2) They would listen if they received a different spirit than that which they had received when they accepted the gospel that Paul preached—this is a part of the "foolishness" about which he wrote.
 - (3) They would even listen to a different gospel which was not the one they accepted when he led them to Christ.
 - d) He defended his apostleship against these deceivers (5-6).
 - (1) He was in no way inferior to these "super-apostles."
 - (2) He admitted that he was no professional orator, but

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defended his knowledge which he had in every way shown to be from God. They had seen the evidence that this was true.

2. He contrasted his ministry at Corinth with that of the false teachers (7-15).
 - a) He asked, "Did I sin in lowering myself that you might be exalted?" (7-11)
 - (1) This issue was based on the fact that he had preached the gospel to them without charge (7).
 - (2) Ironically, he stated that he had "robbed" other churches—he had accepted support from them—in order to preach the gospel without charge to the Corinthians. (8)
 - (3) The brethren of Macedonia had supplied his needs when he was at Corinth and in want. (9a).
 - (4) He determined not to be a burden to them and that no one would stop him from boasting about this in Achaia (9b-10).
 - (5) Why was this? It was to show his love for them, for God knew that he did love them (11).
 - b) He explained his reason for continuing this policy in Achaia (12-15).
 - (1) It was to prevent others from making the claim that they were on the same footing as Paul in relation to the Corinthians (12).
 - (2) It was to show the real motive of others (13).
 - (a) He revealed what they really were:
 - i) False apostles.
 - ii) Deceitful workers.
 - iii) False apostles of Christ.
 - (b) He revealed their relation to Satan (14-15).
 - i) Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.
 - ii) His servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. See Rom 6:16 ff.
 - (c) He revealed what their end will be: It will be according to their deeds.
- B. Paul ironically asked to be allowed to boast a little (16-33).
 1. He asked that no one think him foolish; yet if they did, he wanted them to allow him to boast a little (16-21a).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

- a) He asked them to accept him even if he was boasting foolishly (16).
 - b) This approach was not the manner in which the Lord had appealed to His hearers (17a). See 10:1.
 - c) He had confidence in his grounds for boasting about these things (17b).
 - d) Since others gloried in the flesh—their human accomplishments—he would also, for the Corinthians seemed to be willing to listen to this foolishness. They thought of themselves as being wise. (18-19).
 - d) He described the type of man they were willing to put up with (20).
 - (1) One who enslaved them.
 - (2) One who devoured them.
 - (3) One who took advantage of them.
 - (4) One who exalted himself.
 - (5) One who struck them in the face.
 - f) Judged by such standards Paul admitted that he was weak (21a).
2. He compared his grounds for boasting—his labors and sufferings—with that of others (21b-29).
- a) In relation to the fathers, he was their equal (21b-22).
 - (1) Are they Hebrews? So was he.
 - (2) Are they Israelites? So was he.
 - (3) Are they Abraham's seed? So was he.
 - b) In relation to Christ, he excelled them (23).
 - (1) To call them ministers of Christ is to speak as one who is mad.
 - (2) Paul excelled them in labors, imprisonments, beatings, and death for Christ.
 - c) In relation to the things he suffered as a minister of Christ, he was far beyond them (24-29).
 - (1) Beatings, stonings, shipwrecks (24-25).
 - (2) Journeys and perils (26).
 - (3) Labors, travail, watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold and nakedness (27).
 - (4) Anxiety for all the churches (28).
 - (5) Identity with the weak and stumbling (29).
- He presented an example of the solemn truth about his boasting in weakness (30-33).

- a) The truth of this account was known to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus. (30-31).
- b) As evidence of his weakness, he related the story of his escape from persecution at the hands of the governor under Aretas (32-33).

An Ironic Appeal

Scripture

11:1-6 Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness: but indeed ye do bear with me. 2 For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ. 4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we did not preach or if ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with him. 5 For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. 6 But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge; nay, in every way have we made this manifest unto you in all things.

Comments

in a little foolishness.—It was really unnecessary for Paul to defend his apostleship since it had been established by the signs which he had performed in their midst. More than that, the Corinthians were thoroughly aware of the fact that their relation to Christ depended on the message which Paul had preached to them and which they had accepted. See I Cor. 9:1-2 and II Cor. 3:1-3. Consequently, Paul could say, "I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness." That is, let him go on defending his apostleship which had come under attack from false leaders who had come to Corinth after his departure. *but indeed ye do bear with me.*—Paul knew from the report of Titus that the Corinthians had responded to the directions he had given them in his first letter. They's why he said, "Of course, you do bear with me. But in this particular issue in which my apostleship is being attacked by the super-apostles, I want you to let me restate the facts in answer to the charges that are now being brought against me."

For I am jealous over you.—Paul's position in the Corinthians' relation to Christ was that of a father who had espoused his daughter to the bridegroom. Paul had espoused them to Christ. Just as a father would

be jealous of anyone seeking to usurp his position in such a case, so Paul expressed his jealousy over the fact that some of the Corinthians were listening to the Satanic teachers who were interfering with the arrangements that he had made in committing the Corinthian Christians to Christ.

a godly jealousy.—Paul's attitude was like that of God toward those who would lead His people away from Him.

Jealousy can be, and often is, an evil thing. This is true when it becomes an expression of selfish envy. But no such element enters into the attitude of Paul in his relation to the church at Corinth.

The Old Testament frequently represents God as the jealous husband of a faithless wife who has forsaken her husband for another man. Israel kept forsaking God for the gods of the pagans. She was like a faithless wife, and God is said to be jealous in such cases. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" is the basic principle on which the Law of God for the Israelites rested. He would not tolerate Israel's running after idols and getting involved in all the sinful practices associated with idolatry.

The apostle of Christ with Godlike jealousy resented the defection of the Corinthian Christians to the false teachers whose true character Paul was about to point out as being Satanic.

to one husband.—The marriage relationship presented a perfect illustration of the point Paul was making. From the beginning, the divine plan was that there should be one husband for one wife. See *Studies in First Corinthians*, chapter seven, for the instruction Paul had given the Corinthians on the divine standard of marriage. With that letter before them, they knew exactly the meaning of Paul's words when he said that he had espoused them to one husband that is, to Christ. In the Ephesian letter, Paul referred to the relationship between the church and Christ and called upon wives to be faithful to their own husbands as unto the Lord. See Eph. 5:22-23.

John wrote about the marriage supper of the Lamb as he anticipated the coming of Christ and the gathering of the saints unto Him. "Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God" (Rev. 19:7-9).

a pure virgin to Christ.—Paul indicates that the purity of the bride who anticipates her wedding should symbolize the purity of the church as it anticipates the coming of Christ and the privilege of being with Him in the heavenly kingdom. Purity, of course, meant loyalty to Him and none other, abiding by the truth of His gospel, rejecting all falsehood, and keeping themselves unspotted from the sinful practices of the world. It meant faithfulness to Christ and His word in the Christian life which is the period of preparation for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The term "virgin" in our language denotes purity. Since it had other connotations in the language of the Greeks, it became necessary for Paul to define his meaning by saying "pure" virgin so that no member of the church could mistake his meaning.

To further insure his readers against any possible misunderstanding, he illustrated exactly what he meant by calling their attention to Satan's complete deception of Eve in the Garden.

But I fear.—Paul had grounds for his fears, for the Corinthians were in real danger. They were gladly listening to the false teachers who were endeavoring to undermine the work of the apostle of Christ who had preached the gospel to them. And it was that gospel that had converted them to Christ.

as the serpent beguiled Eve.—There isn't the slightest indication that the inspired apostle Paul believed that the account of Satan's effort to deceive Eve was some mythological explanation of the presence of evil in the world. He presented it in exactly the same way that Moses did in the third chapter of Genesis, that is, as an historical fact. To complete his account, he identified Satan, the troublemaker at Corinth, with the serpent. John does the same thing when he refers to the old serpent as the one who is called the devil and Satan. See Rev. 12:9.

his craftiness.—Paul had already warned the Corinthians against the schemes of the devil as he tried to take advantage of God's people. His craftiness had succeeded in Eve's case. Paul had his fears that Satan might also succeed in some instances at Corinth.

corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ.—In the epistle to the Romans Paul tells what happens to men who turn from the knowledge of God to the worship of idols and the sins that accompany such worship. When they did so, God gave them up to an unapproved mind. See Rom. 1:18-32. But since God has provided the means by which sins are blotted out, Paul could exhort his readers to be not fashioned according to this present age, but to be transformed

by the renewing of their minds, so that they might approve the will of God, the thing that is good, acceptable to God, and complete. See Rom. 12:2. The plea of the message of the Bible is for men to straighten out their thinking in the light of the truth of God revealed Word.

Some of the Corinthians were in danger of having Satan corrupt their minds from the simplicity and purity of the truth by which their relationship to Christ was governed. The word "simplicity" suggests the single-minded devotion to the things God wants man to do. It is translated "liberality" in 8:2. This singleness of purpose had led the Macedonians to give generously for the relief of the saints in Judea. But in 11:3 it suggests the sincere dedication of mind and purpose to the service of Christ. It is coupled with purity of heart and mind in all this vital relationship.

Paul had good reason to fear that some of the Corinthians were being led astray from this devotion to Christ through the craftiness of Satan. Every Christian must be constantly on guard against this happening to him. Some things that help prevent it are: (1) A real knowledge of the Word of God. Jesus illustrated this when He said to Satan, "Thus it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." That individual who does not know what God has written may fall easy prey to the devices of Satan cleverly presented by false teachers. (2) Not only must one know the Word but he must also translate it into life. Anything short of active participation in the total program of Christ for His church places the Christian in jeopardy. Paul had written that it was necessary for him to buffet his body and bring it into bondage lest by any means after he had preached to others, he might be rejected. See I Cor. 9:27. There is more to Christianity than being present in the assembly on the Lord's Day, keeping the Lord's supper, and hearing the Word taught. The first business of the church is to seek and save the lost. Every Christian should be busily engaged to the extent of his ability in this work of Christ. The untaught, idle church member needs to be brought to the realization of the peril which he faces, the very real danger of being lost.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus.—Paul had been sent to Corinth to preach the Lord Jesus Christ. "Lord" indicated, in all probability, that Jesus was identified with the eternal living God. "Jesus" means "Savior." "Christ" refers to the fact that He is prophet, priest, and king. Could the super-apostles who had come to Corinth

preach another Jesus who was superior to Jesus whom Paul preached? It is true that they were preaching another "Jesus" but the Corinthians needed to learn that Jesus whom Paul preached was the only one in whom there is salvation, for there is no other name given among men in whom they must be saved. See Acts 4:12.

if ye received a different spirit.—This is not a reference to the Holy Spirit. The Galatian churches had been corrupted by false teachers just as the Corinthians were being corrupted by the super-apostles. Paul asked them, "Did you receive the Spirit that is, the Holy Spirit—by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith" (Gal. 3:2)? By "receiving the Spirit" in that context, Paul referred to the miraculous power which had been granted to those upon whom the apostles had laid their hands. This demonstration of power showed the Galatians that they should not follow the false teachers who wanted them to observe the works of the Law. Paul encountered a similar situation in the case of the disciples of John whom he found at Ephesus. They knew only what John had taught about Jesus. Paul asked them, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" They had heard nothing of the Holy Spirit, so Paul commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. After he had laid his hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them in the manifestation of miraculous power that enabled them to speak in foreign languages and to prophesy. See Acts 19:1-7.

Since Paul was referring to a different spirit which the Corinthians received through the work of false teachers who in no way could impart the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, it becomes necessary to determine the meaning of his question in the light of what he has taught in his epistles. Paul wrote to the Romans explaining that those who are led by the Spirit of God, that is, led through the things said by the inspired apostles, are sons of God. Then he added, "For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear: but ye received the spirit of adoption—that is, sonship—whereby we cry Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:14-15). The spirit that is received as a result of obeying the gospel is that frame of mind of the one who knows he is a child of God and can give expression to this knowledge by calling God "Father." See also Gal. 4:4-7. It was this spirit which the Corinthians had received as a result of their obedience to the gospel which Paul preached.

What, then, was the different spirit which they received when they submitted to false teachers? It was a spirit of faction, jealousy, and

deception that characterizes the children of the devil. See John 8:44. It is no wonder that Paul was afraid lest they be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ.

a different gospel.—Paul marveled at the Galatians who so quickly after their conversion to Christ were transferring their allegiance to a different kind of gospel which was not another gospel of Christ. See Gal. 1:6. The super-apostles were preaching a different kind of gospel to the Corinthians. It was not the Word of the Cross that had saved them when they believed in Christ.

ye do well to bear with him.—A fine touch of irony in the same vein as that regarding "foolishness of his boasting."

For I reckon.—As Paul considered the issues, he was convinced that in no way was he inferior to these super-apostles.

But though I be rude in speech.—An unfortunate translation, misleading in every way. Paul was never rude in our understanding and use of the term. This does not mean that he did not denounce false teaching in the severest of terms. Jesus had done the same thing in the case of the hypocrites with whom He dealt, but He was never rude.

The word translated "rude" simply means one who does not belong to the class of professional people, in this case orators. It is to be doubted, however, that the professionals were ever able to match the eloquence of Paul as he preached the gospel. He openly set forth Jesus Christ crucified before the eyes of his listeners. See Gal. 3:1. Festus, listening to his defense of the gospel, cried out, "Paul, you are mad. Your much learning has turned you mad." Even the king said, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." While there are differences of opinion as to the interpretation of Agrippa's words, it is evident that the eloquent defense of the gospel which Paul made that day really stirred the minds of all who heard him. See Acts 26:24-29. Not infrequently in Paul's writings do we find examples of his ability to express himself in excellent style. See Rom. 11:33-36; I Cor. 13:1-13; and I Cor. 15:51-58. Examples are also to be found in Second Corinthians.

not in knowledge.—His knowledge came through the ability given him as an apostle by the Holy Spirit to understand the deep things which he received by revelation from God. See I Cor. 2:6-16. No super-apostle nor false teacher was superior to Paul in knowledge pertaining to the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

we made this manifest to you in all things.—When he was present

with the church at Corinth and through his letters, Paul had clearly demonstrated the fact that his wisdom and knowledge came from God. See I Cor. 1:18-31; 2:1-5, 10, 16.

Paul's Defense Of His Ministry At Corinth

Scripture

11:7:15. Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought? 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; 9 and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want; and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying in the regions of Achaia. 11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. 12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire an occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. 13 For such men are false apostles deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. 15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Comments

did I commit a sin?—This is a continuation of the ironical appeal in defense of Paul's ministry. The Corinthians knew that Paul had refused to accept support from them in order to avoid criticism from those who might say that he was preaching the gospel for material gain. See I Cor. 9:12-18.

They were also aware of the fact that as a teacher Paul had a right to receive support from them. He did not hesitate to work with his hands at tent-making when he first came to Corinth while awaiting the help that later came from the churches of Macedonia. It was a custom that every Jewish boy be taught a trade and learn the dignity of work. Paul was no exception. The only reason that he said that he had humbled himself by working with his hands is that it was not in accord with the custom of that day to let teachers do so.

I robbed other churches.—This is also said in irony, for it was actually

a privilege for those who had received the gospel through the ministry of Paul to share with him as he went elsewhere preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. He had taken wages from them that he might preach to the Corinthians. His needs had been met by others, and he kept himself from being a burden to any man at Corinth.

when they came from Macedonia.—The church at Philippi began supporting Paul when he was at Thessalonica. At that time they were the only ones helping him. More than once they responded to his needs. See Phil. 4:14-18. For some reason not stated by Paul, the line of supply was broken when Paul came to Corinth. This caused him to fall back on his trade to make a living. In the light of his own statement about the matter, we can be reasonably sure that Paul was entirely too busy spreading the gospel to continue working at a trade any longer than necessary for the support from Macedonia to reach him. But he had kept himself from being a burden to the churches of Achaia and he was determined to hold steadfastly to that policy. As the inspired apostle of Christ he spoke the truth when he preached, and what he was now saying was equally true. No one, not even the super-apostles who may have been pressing the issue, could stop him from boasting about this in the regions of Achaia.

Wherefore?—Such a statement called for an explanation. The teachers who had come to Corinth after Paul left were evidently aware of the fact that he had received no support from the Corinthians. Apparently they were endeavoring in some manner to get him to do so, or to insinuate that he had done so, in order that they might have the opportunity to receive support or to justify the support they had already been accepting. Since they were false teachers, Paul absolutely refused to allow them any such opportunity to boast about their work.

because I love you not?—Paul's attitude toward the churches of Achaia in no way indicated that he loved the less than the churches of Macedonia from whom he had received support. God knew his love for them. Since Paul had demonstrated it to them time and again and had openly declared it in his letters, the Corinthians knew that he loved them.

For such men are false apostles.—Paul boldly labeled those who had been attacking him and attempting to undermine his work at Corinth. They were not apostles of Christ; they were false apostles, deceitful workers who were attempting to appear as apostles of Christ. Where they came from or who had sent them is not known, but the Corinthians must have known about it.

for even Satan.—Paul clearly implies that Satan was back of the work of those whom he called false apostles. Since Satan could fashion himself into an angel of light, his minsters had no difficulty in masquerading as ministers of righteousness. Their destructive work only served to indicate the ultimately destruction that would be visited upon them.

Satan had appeared in an attractive form when he completely deceived Eve. His true character is indicated by such figures as those used by Peter and others. Peter refers to him as a roaring lion seeking to devour his victims. See I Pet. 5:8. John refers to him as a great dragon and calls him the old serpent and deceiver of the whole world. See Rev. 12:9. Jesus said he is a murderer and the father of the lie. See John 8:44. Being warned by such clear description the enemy of all righteousness, the people of God ought not to listen to his ministers.

Boasting A Little As One Counted Foolish

Scripture

11:16-21a. I say again, Let no man think me foolish; but if ye do, yet as foolish receive me, that I also may glory a little. 17 That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of glorying. 18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. 19 For ye bear with the foolish gladly, being wise yourselves. 20 For ye bear with a man, if he bringeth you into bondage, if he devoureth you, if he taketh you captive, if he exalteth himself, if he smiteth you on the face. 21 I speak by way of disparagement, as though we had been weak.

Comments

Let no man think me foolish.—Paul had begun this ironical appeal as if speaking in foolishness. The evidence he gave in his defense was based upon truth; the element of foolishness lies in the fact that the Corinthians knew that he was an apostle of Christ for he had performed the signs of an apostle in their midst and God knew that he loved the brethren in Christ. It should not have been necessary, therefore, to defend his apostleship against the charges of the ministers of Satan. But since it had apparently become necessary, he continued the defense of his apostleship.

I speak not after the Lord.—This does not indicate that Paul was

setting aside his power to speak under the direction of the Holy Spirit. He had begun his appeal by speaking in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. But there is no example in Our Lord's ministry of the type of defense which Paul was now forced to make because of conditions in Corinth resulting from charges and false claims of the super-apostles. They were boasting from a purely human point of view. They were boasting of their professional status. They were boasting of their wisdom which, of course, was the wisdom of the world. It would be foolish for the apostle to come to that basis in order to offset their claims. But he was more than a match for them even on their own grounds.

Seeing that many glory after the flesh.—Since others were boasting about their human achievements, Paul would do so also. The Corinthians considered themselves wise and gladly listened to this type of boasting. They did so even though they were being enslaved by it, even though such persons were taking unfair advantage of them, even though the false teachers were exalting themselves while striking them in the face.

I speak by way of disparagement.—It was a shame for the apostle to be forced to follow this line of reasoning; but since he was compelled to do so, he spoke of his weakness as demonstrated by all the things which he suffered in his service for Christ.

Paul's Labors and Sufferings

Scripture

11:21b-33. Yet whereinsoever any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also. 22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; 26 in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily,

anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not? 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus he who is blessed for evermore knoweth that I lie not. 32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to take me: 33 and through a window was I let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands.

Comments

Yet whereinsoever any is bold.—It was foolish to be forced to compare his sufferings for Christ with anything the false teachers had suffered, for they were preying on the church at Corinth and endeavoring to lead the people away from Christ. In relation to God's ancient people, Paul was their equal; but certainly in relation to Christ he excelled them. In relation to the things he suffered for Christ, he was too far beyond them for comparison.

Are they Hebrews?—Although Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, his parents were Hebrews and on that score he was easily equal to any of the false teachers who were claiming to be true teachers since, in all probability, they had come from Jerusalem.

Are they Israelites?—The ancient chosen people of God bore the name which was given to Jacob after he had wrestled with the Angel of the Lord and had been blessed by him. The name symbolized the transformation that had taken place in his life. It appropriately applied to the nation that had been chosen from among all the nations of the world as "a royal nation, a holy priesthood, a people that belonged to God." Were these teachers at Corinth Israelites? So was Paul.

Are they seed of Abraham?—The Jews proudly looked to Abraham as their father. They argued with Jesus despite their intention to put the Son of God to death that they were the seed of Abraham. Literally, of course, they were; but their hatred for Jesus proved that they were the offspring of Satan. See John 8:31-44. The Jewish teachers who troubled the church at Corinth claimed to be Abraham's offspring. Paul could substantiate his right to be called a child of Abraham for he was of the stock of Israel and of the tribe of Benjamin. More than that, He had surrendered his life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are they ministers of Christ?—While one would have to be out of his mind to admit their claim to be ministers of Christ was true, Paul was prepared to compare his ministry with theirs and to demonstrate

that he far excelled them in relation to Christ. He had labored more abundantly than they. He had been imprisoned as a result of his service to Christ more than they. He had undergone countless beatings and had constantly faced death for Christ. What had they done for Him?

Of the Jews five times received forty stripes save one.—This list of the things that Paul had suffered in his ministry for Christ is a challenge to the false teachers at Corinth to compare the things that they had done with the things Paul had endured. The Corinthians who certainly must have known much of what Paul had undergone were well aware of the fact that the super-apostles were in no way a match for him.

He mentioned the beatings which he had received, the time when he was stoned, and the times that he had suffered shipwreck. Although he was a Roman citizen, he had been beaten and imprisoned at Philippi. He was stoned and abandoned for dead at Lystra. He suffered shipwreck three times. At one time, probably because his ship went down far from shore, he spent a full twenty-four period in the deep.

in journeyings often.—Paul listed the perils which he had faced on his many travels. He had risked his life in crossing rivers, in traveling through bandit infested areas, in the things he had suffered from the hands of his own countrymen as well as Gentiles. He had faced perils in the cities, in the wilderness and at sea. He knew what it meant to be among false brethren. His experience with them was enough to justify his warning the church against them.

in labor and travail.—Paul did not have an easy life; it was one filled with labor, hardship, and suffering. It meant standing guard during periods of distress; it meant being without food and drink; it meant fasting often in order that he might give all his time to the task before him; it meant enduring cold and nakedness.

Besides those things that are without.—Paul gave the list of the things he had suffered for the cause of Christ. It was adequate to establish his claim to have undergone suffering for beyond anything the false teachers at Corinth had ever done. Aside from all this, there was one thing that had not been mentioned: the thing that brought daily pressure upon him, anxiety for all the churches. If there had been any question in the mind of anyone regarding all that he had said in refutation of the claims of the false teachers, there could be no doubt whatever about this climactic issue, for Corinthians knew very well about Paul's anxiety for them. But he was just as concerned for the

Philippians and the brethren at Thessalonica. They all knew of his deep concern for the saints in Judea.

Who is weak?—The meaning of anxiety is indicated in Paul's attitude toward the weak. He understood and desired to help as if he were that weak person himself. It is doubtful if any more Christlike attitude toward the weak can be found. As he thought of the brother in Christ who for some cause had stumbled, he so identified with that one that he burned with the shame that should have been felt by the erring one. The Corinthians knew about his concern for the weak and erring. Did they see anything like it in the teachers who were attempting to discredit Paul by saying that he was weak in their presence even if he was bold in his writings?

If I must needs glory.—Since the situation at Corinth had forced Paul into this line of defense, he insisted in boasting not about his power but about his weakness. The secret of this weakness is revealed in 12:9. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ knew that Paul was not lying when he related the incident by which he was to prove his weakness and humility and through which he had been forced to put his trust in God alone. The incident had taken place in Damascus. A guard had been thrown around the city to prevent his escape, but his friends had let him down through an opening in the wall, and he had escaped the hands of those who were bent on killing him. See Luke's description of the incident in Acts 9:23-25. The providence of God had watched over him; the faithful messenger of the gospel went on his way preaching Christ.

Summary

As Paul continued the defense of his apostleship, he began a long, ironical appeal for them to bear with him in a little foolishness. Irony is seen in the fact that he appeared to boast, but in reality he wasn't. His sincere purpose in coming to Corinth was to preach the gospel that he might espouse them to Christ as a pure virgin. He was afraid lest false teachers should lead them away from the simplicity and purity that ought to mark their relation to Christ. Eve had been completely deceived by the serpent. They were in danger of having the same thing happen to them through the work of the ministers of Satan in their midst.

In each of the examples given to support the charge, Paul assumes that the thing was being done. Someone had come to them and had preached another Jesus. Paul had preached Jesus Christ

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and Him crucified. He had preached the resurrection of Christ as the foundation of hope of resurrection from the dead. But some in Corinth had denied that there is a resurrection, despite the evidence Paul had given to prove it. Just what the super-apostles were saying about another Jesus is not stated, but no other Jesus could have them from their sins.

The second example had to do with the spirit they had received. What was the different kind of spirit which they had not received through his ministry? It may have been the spirit of slavery as opposed to the spirit of freedom found in the spirit covenant.

His third example had to do with the gospel. They were accepting a different kind of gospel. It may have been some such perversion of the gospel as mentioned in Gal. 1:6-8. Paul said, "You bear beautifully with this kind of thing." The irony lies in the fact that they could not put up with his gospel as he preached the truth about Christ.

In defense of his ministry as an apostle of Christ Paul said, "I consider that I do not fall short of the chiefest apostles." Who were they? Not Peter nor John, for there was no such distinction among the apostles of Christ. Paul had in mind those who were preaching another Jesus, those whom he labeled "false apostles." Paul freely admitted that he did not belong to the class of professional orators, but this implied no inferiority in his message. Our word "rude" denoting a lack of artistic or refined expression misses the point, for no uncultured crudeness or unpolished, inelegant speech can be attributed to Paul.

Paul continued to speak in irony as he asked, "Did I commit a sin by preaching to you without pay, robbing other churches that I might be able to do so?" Macedonia had supported him in Corinth. He had been a burden to no one. He was determined to maintain this policy in order to prevent false apostles having an excuse to receive support from the church. They had boasted of the right to support and apparently would have been glad for Paul to receive it in order to justify their doing so. Paul was determined to give them no grounds for such a thing.

In irony he said, "Let no one think that this attitude of mine is foolish." But even if they did, he was going to boast a little about it. This was not through the gentleness and meekness of the Lord, that is, the Lord had not used this approach in dealing with false teachers

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in His day. Paul was not saying, however, that he was substituting his opinion for the inspired message of the Lord.

He intended to boast in the flesh—as a human being—since others were doing so and the Corinthians were gladly listening to them. They thought this was permissible since they were wise—irony again!

Paul compared his racial and religious background with that of the false apostles. He compared his service for Christ with that of the false apostles, even if it was foolish to think of them as ministers of righteousness.

After telling of his labors, his sufferings, and his trials, there was one more thing to mention: his anxiety for all the churches. Even the foolish ones at Corinth would know better than to attempt to compare the super-apostles with Paul on this point.

His experience in Damascus was another example of his weakness in which he boasted, since boasting seemingly had to be done.

Questions

1. Why did Paul ask that they bear with him in a little foolishness?
2. Why did he say that they were bearing with him? What evidence did he have to prove this?
3. Why did Paul say, "I am jealous over you"?
4. To what kind of jealousy did he refer? How did he illustrate it?
5. What were the Corinthians doing to make him jealous?
6. What was Paul's position in their relation to Christ?
7. How does marriage explain the relation of the believer to Christ?
8. What had Paul written to the Corinthians on the subject of marriage that would cause him to recall this point?
9. What had Paul written to the Ephesians illustrating the same point?
10. What is suggested in Revelation on the subject?
11. Why was it necessary for Paul to use the word "pure" in connection with the word "virgin"?
12. What was he implying by the use of these terms as to the conduct of the Corinthians?
13. How had Satan completely deceived Eve?
14. What grounds did Paul have for his fears that the Corinthians were being deceived?
15. What did John say about the old serpent?

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16. How is the craftiness of Satan illustrated in his deception of Eve?
17. What is meant by the simplicity and purity that it showed toward Christ?
18. Explain how the word translated "simplicity" can also be translated "liberality."
19. How can the Christian guard himself against the crafty deception of Satan?
20. What is the first business of the church?
21. What comparison can be made between Jesus whom Paul preached and the Jesus whom the false apostles were preaching?
22. What was the different spirit which they were receiving?
23. What did Paul mean when he asked the Galatians, "Did ye receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?"
24. What did he mean when he asked the disciples at Ephesus "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"
25. What did the Christians at Rome receive that enabled them to call God "Father"?
26. What, then, was the different spirit which the Corinthians received when they listened to the super-apostles?
27. How did the gospel which Paul preached compare with the different gospel preached by the false apostles?
28. Why did he say that they did well to bear with such false teachers?
29. What did Paul say about himself in comparison to such teachers?
30. What is meant by the word that is translated "rude" in some of our Bibles?
31. What may be said of Paul's style and manner of speech and writing?
32. What claim did Paul make as to his knowledge? Why?
33. Why did Paul ask, "Did I commit a sin?" by not taking wages from the Corinthians?
34. How had Paul demonstrated to the Corinthians that his message was from God?
35. How had he been supported when he was at Corinth?
36. How are we to understand his statement that he "robbed other church"?

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37. What did Paul say to the Philippians about the support of his ministry?
38. Why did he say that no one could stop him from boasting about this policy in the regions of Achaia?
39. Why did he raise the question of his love for them in this connection?
40. In what terms did Paul describe these false teachers?
41. In what terms did he describe Satan's activity?
42. In what terms did Jesus and Peter describe Satan?
43. How explain the irony in Paul's reference to foolishness?
44. Why did he say, "I speak not after the Lord"?
45. What were the false teachers at Corinth boasting about?
46. Why did Paul feel a sense of shame in having to boast about the things he had suffered in his ministry for Christ?
47. How did Paul compare with the super-apostles in relation to the Israelites? the Hebrews? the ministry for Christ?
48. What is the meaning of "Hebrews" and "Israelites"?
49. Who are the seed of Abraham?
50. Into what categories did Paul put the things he had suffered as an apostle of Christ?
51. What did he mean by anxiety for all the churches?
52. What had been his attitude toward the weak?
53. Why did he insist that he would boast only in his weakness?

For Discussion

1. What are some of the crafty ways in which Satan is attempting to deceive the church today?
2. What can the church do to demonstrate its faithfulness to Christ?

CHAPTER TWELVE

Analysis

- A. Paul continued boasting in his weakness (1-13).
1. He reminded the Corinthians of the visions and revelation of the Lord (1-10).
 - a) He was compelled to boast because it was forced upon him by the claims of the false apostles, although nothing was gained by it (1a).
 - b) He came to the matter of visions and revelations of the Lord, that is, given to him by the Lord (1b).
 - c) In an impersonal manner he told of the experience in which he was caught up to the third heaven (2-4).
 - (1) He said "I know a man in Christ." This happened to such a one—it was, of course, Paul himself.
 - (2) This happened some fourteen years before his writing Second Corinthians.
 - (3) He said, "Whether in the body I know not; God knows." He had no way of knowing whether he was taken up bodily or just in spirit.
 - (4) Such a one was caught up to the third heaven.
 - (5) He was caught up to Paradise.
 - (6) He heard words not lawful for man to utter.
 - d) Boasting about this experience emphasized his own weakness (5-10).
 - (1) On behalf of one who had such an exalted experience, he boasted; but as to himself he boasted in his weakness (5).
 - (2) This actually happened to Paul, so it was not foolish to boast about it, except that some might tend to overrate him because of it (6).
 - (3) To keep him from self-exaltation, Paul was given "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to buffet him" (7).
 - (4) He asked the Lord three times to remove it, but the answer was: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (8-9a). God's favor had already granted him strength to endure it. Cf I Cor. 10:13.
 - (5) Paul gladly, therefore, boasted in his weakness

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that the power of Christ might rest upon him or cover him (9b).

(6) It was for that reason that he took pleasure in weakness, injury, necessity, persecution, and distress for Christ's sake for while he was weak in himself, he was strong in Christ (10).

2. Paul concluded the defense of his boasting by admitting that he had become foolish (11-13).

a) He had become foolish, but they had compelled him to do so by their attitude toward the super-apostles (11).

(1) He should have been commended by the Corinthians.

(2) Even though he was nothing in himself, he was in no way inferior to these false apostles.

b) He reminded them that he had performed the signs of a true apostle before them (12).

(1) These signs were done in all patience.

(2) They were signs and wonders, and mighty works.

c) Since the Corinthians had received all these benefits, Paul asked, "In what sense were you inferior to the other churches?" The implied answer was: "In no way."

d) Then he referred to the only possible thing in which they were not on the same footing at the other churches: He had not been a burden to them. Ironically, he added, "Forgive me this wrong."

B. As Paul neared the end of the epistle, he turned again to the matter of his intended visit (14-21).

1. He reaffirmed his intention not to be a burden to them (14-18).

a) He explained his reasons for this position (14-15).

(1) He did so because of his impending third visit.

(2) He laid down his basic principle in dealing with them: "I seek not yours but you."

(3) He explained the issue involved: "Children ought not to lay up for the parents but the parents for the children."

(4) As their father in the gospel, he said, "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls."

(5) Then he asked, "Since I love you more, am I to be loved less?"

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- b) He answered a possible charge of crafty dealing (16-18).
 - (1) He stated the issue involved in the charge (16).
 - (2) Then he asked, "Did I or any of those whom I sent (Titus and the brother) take advantage of you?" (17-18a).
 - (3) Didn't these co-workers act exactly as he had done? (18b) These questions would force the Corinthians to admit that he had dealt with them in a thoroughly Christian manner.
- 2. He reminded them of his reason for the delay in making this third visit (19-21).
 - a) It was for their own good (19).
 - (1) Did they think that he was making excuses for himself?
 - (2) He solemnly declared as an apostle of Christ that it was for their upbuilding.
 - b) Then he explained his fears that he might find them acting as he would not want and as they might not want him to find them (10-21).
 - (1) He again named the conditions that he feared might exist: Strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults. These were the very things about which he had written in his first epistle.
 - (2) He had delayed lest God should humble him before them in mourning over their sins and failure to repent.
 - (3) He listed these sins: Uncleaness, fornication, and lasciviousness. He had spoken of them in detail in his first epistle.

Visions and Revelations of the Lord

Scripture

12:1-10. I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God

knoweth), 4 how that he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5 On behalf of such a one will I glory: but on mine own behalf I will not glory, save in my weaknesses. 6 For if I should desire to glory, I shall not be foolish; for I shall speak the truth: but I forbear, lest any man should account of me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth from me. 7 And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. 8 Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Comments

I must needs glory.—Paul had been forced by existing circumstances at Corinth to boast about his weakness. Although there was nothing to be gained by it, since he had demonstrated through the miracles which he had performed as an apostle that the approval of God rested upon him, he nevertheless, proceeded to relate an incident that had happened in the life of one on behalf of whom he could boast.

visions and revelations of the Lord.—Paul had been given the privilege of seeing the risen Christ at the time of his appointment to the apostleship, but the incident to which he was referring had to do with the visions and revelations which the Lord had permitted him to see and hear after his conversion.

I know a man in Christ.—Although there can be no doubt that Paul was speaking of himself, he did so in an entirely impersonal manner for the simple reason that this was something that the Lord had done in contrast to the long list of weaknesses which he had experienced.

fourteen years ago.—The incident was so vivid that it remained in the mind of Paul even after all those years. There is no point in trying to fix the date when this occurred, since Paul chose to point out the significant fact that it had remained in his mind throughout this long period of his labor and suffering for Christ.

whether in the body.—While Paul knew exactly when the incident

had occurred and what had happened at that time, he could not say whether it happened to him bodily or in the spirit. But he knew that he had been caught up even to the third heaven. It made no difference whether bodily or spiritually, for it was something the Lord had done and it had left this lasting impression upon him.

the third heaven.—This expression has caused much speculation on the part of commentators. Some even suggest that after he was caught up to the third heaven he was again elevated to an even higher position called Paradise. It seems better to assume that the third heaven was Paradise where Paul heard "unspeakable words."

I know such a man.—Paul again emphasized the impersonal aspect of the incident. He did not know whether it was bodily experience or not, nor did it matter, for he said, "God knows."

Paradise.—Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It is safe to say, then, that Paradise is the place where the Lord is. We do not know all things about the future state, but we do know that absence from the body is at home with the Lord. As to Paul's experience, he knew that he had been caught up into Paradise and had heard things that could not be revealed. See *Studies in Luke*, pages 278-279 and 380.

It is impossible to put into human language the glories that shall be revealed for the saints of God at the coming of Christ. John says, "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. But we know, that when it shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2). This was enough to make Paul "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8).

On behalf of such a one I will glory.—In face of the boastful claims of the false teachers at Corinth, Paul had lowered himself to that which should have been entirely unnecessary: the giving of a detailed account of the sufferings which he had undergone as an apostle of Christ. But he was determined to limit his boasting to his weakness. There is no inconsistency between this and his boasting on behalf of the one to whom the Lord had given such visions and revelations, for it was a thing the Lord had done, not Paul. Furthermore, it was something that could not possibly have happened to those who were boasting about their power and position among the Corinthians for they were ministers of Satan, not of Christ. Paul occupied an unassailable position when he restricted his boasting to the things done by the Lord and his own weakness.

I shall not be foolish.—It was not foolish to boast in the thing which the Lord had done. Paul spoke the truth about what the Lord had done with him and limited his remarks to this lest anyone should exalt him above what they saw in him and heard from him.

And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations.—Paul was now ready to relate the incident about which he had boasted. Such an exalted experience could easily tempt one who was less dedicated to Christ to distort its meaning and lead others praise him rather than the Lord. To prevent this thing from happening, there was given Paul a thorn in the flesh.

thorn in the flesh.—Paul identifies this as a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Much speculation has been indulged in in an effort to identify the thorn in the flesh. No one really knows what it was, except for the things Paul said about it. It was in the flesh as a messenger of Satan and acted as an opponent in the boxing ring that kept him from being too elated over what had happened. It kept him from using what the Lord had done for him as a means of self-glory.

a messenger of Satan.—Paul wrote to the Ephesians indicating that the forces of Satan are like an opposing army against which the followers of Christ must wage war. The church has been equipped with the whole armor of God with which to stand against the wiles of the devil. See Eph. 6:10-18.

God permitted Satan to afflict Job with great bodily suffering. But Job remained steadfast and faithful to the Lord through all of it. Paul reminded the Corinthians that God would not permit them to be tempted above their ability to endure, for He would with the temptation make the way of escape that they might be able to endure it. See I Cor. 10:13. In this life, the people of God constantly face the enemy who will destroy them unless they remain faithful to the Lord.

I besought the Lord thrice.—Whatever this thorn in the flesh was, it brought such distress to Paul that he asked the Lord three times that it might depart from him. The answer was: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness."

God does not always answer our requests in the manner in which we might expect. Certainly He was not deaf to the plea that Paul made. The favor that He had already bestowed on him in commissioning him as an apostle of Christ, in endowing him with all the signs of an apostle, in providentially watching over him through all the

things he suffered for the sake of Christ, was sufficient to assure him that he could triumph over this thing even though it had brought him great distress. He had written to the Corinthians in the first letter about his apostleship despite his having persecuted the church of God. He said, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace which was with me" (I Cor. 15:10).

for my power is made perfect in weakness.—Paul's reason for relating this experience is now made clear. The thorn in the flesh symbolized human weakness. There were some things that he could not do; only the Lord could have caught him up to the third heaven. Thus the power of the Lord stood in bold contrast to the weakness of Paul even though he was a true apostle of Christ.

that the power of Christ may rest upon me.—Jesus had promised the eleven that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit should come upon them. See Acts 1:8. On the Day of Pentecost they were baptized in the Holy Spirit and were empowered to speak in other languages that those who heard the message on that day might know that it came from God. More than that, they were enabled to perform miracles that demonstrated that the Spirit of God was speaking through them. See Acts 2:43 and Heb. 2:3-4.

All of the signs of an apostle were done by Paul in the midst of the Corinthians. God's providential protection had covered him like a tent that protects the desert traveler from the burning sun. For all this, Paul gladly boasted in his own weakness.

I take pleasure in weakness.—Paul had listed the weaknesses that were his, the injuries he had sustained, the wants in which he had found himself, the persecutions which he had endured and the distresses which he had undergone for Christ's sake.

for when I am weak, then I am strong.—This is the remarkable climax of the boasting that was forced upon Paul. Being aware of his weakness, he had committed himself to the providential care of the Lord. Knowing his weakness, he determined to preach Christ and Him crucified, for therein lay his strength.

Admission of Foolishness

Scripture

12:11-13. I am become foolish: ye compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing was I behind the very

chieftest apostles, though I am nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works. 13 For what is there wherein ye were made inferior to the rest of the churches, except it be that I myself was not a burden to you? forgive me this wrong.

Comments

I am become foolish.—Paul did not hesitate to remind the Corinthians that he should have been commended by them. Their very position in relation to Christ depended upon the gospel which he had preached to them. Through his preaching and their obedience he had become their father in Christ and they were his children. His credentials as an apostle were well known to them. Through them they had been given spiritual gifts involving the word of wisdom and knowledge as well as the powers by which these were proven to be the revelation from God. See I Cor. 12:8-10. It is difficult to understand how they could have forgotten all this and gladly listened to the claims of false teachers in the absence of Paul.

though I am nothing.—Paul readily admitted that in himself he was nothing. The favor that God had granted him had enabled him to do the work of an apostle. He had therefore refused to boast in anything save his own weakness. But though he was nothing, he maintained that he was in no way inferior to the super-apostles who had attacked him in order to gain power over those whom he had converted to Christ.

by signs and wonders and mighty works.—These were the credentials of the apostles through which the Lord demonstrated His approval on their ministry. They were guided by the Holy Spirit into all the truth pertaining to life and godliness. What credentials could the super-apostles present? Empty claims and boastful pretensions!

inferior to the rest of the churches.—The Corinthians knew that they had been "in everything enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among them" (I Cor. 1:5-6). They lacked no gift that would enable them to conduct themselves as true followers of Christ while awaiting the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had preached the same gospel to them that he had preached to all the churches. He had performed the same apostolic signs in their midst that he had shown in all the churches.

except it be that I myself was not a burden to you?—This is an

ironical thrust at those teachers who were seeking, if indeed they had not already been receiving, support from the church at Corinth. *forgive me this wrong.*—In the height of irony, Paul begged for their forgiveness! They knew that there was nothing to forgive. Did they burn with shame when they remembered how he had labored in their midst while insisting on preaching the gospel of Christ to them for nothing?

Paul's Intended Visit

Scripture

12:14-21. Behold, this is the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be a burden to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15 And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less? 16 But be it so, I did not myself burden you; but, being crafty, I caught you with guile. 17 Did I take advantage of you by any one of them whom I have sent unto you? 18 I exhorted Titus, and I sent the brother with him. Did Titus take any advantage of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps? 19 Ye think all this time that we are excusing ourselves unto you. In the sight of God speak we in Christ. But all things, beloved, are for your edifying. 20 For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not such as I would and should myself be found of you such as ye would not; lest by any means there should be strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults; 21 lest again when I come my God should humble me before you, and I should mourn for many of them that have sinned heretofore, and repented not of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they committed.

Comments

this is the third time I am ready to come to you.—The first time Paul had visited the Corinthians was when he first preached the gospel to them and established the church. The second time was when he was present in spirit as they obeyed the instructions he gave in his first letter for them to follow in dealing with the sinful practices which they had allowed to grow up in their midst. He had delayed coming again, as he had explained in the beginning of the letter, that they might have an opportunity to carry out those instructions. News had

been brought to him by Titus that they had gladly obeyed. The section of this letter beginning in chapter ten, however, clearly indicates that false teachers whom Paul had designated "super-apostles" and who were actually servants of Satan had come to Corinth seeking to undermine his influence and insinuating that he was interested in the money he might obtain from them. It is possible that they had been distorting his purpose in connection with the collections for the saints in Judea. It is evident that their own motive was a desire for financial gain as they pretended to serve as ministers of righteousness.

and I will not be a burden to you.—Paul defended his position on this issue from every standpoint, since it seems to have been the chief point of attack of the false teachers who were opposing him.

for I seek not yours, but you.—There is an implied thrust in this remark at the false teachers to whom the Corinthians had so readily listened. Their ministry was being carried out for what they could get out of it in contrast to the unselfish devotion to Christ that characterized all of Paul's work on their behalf. It was not their possessions, but themselves that Paul sought. He wanted their understanding and love and, above all, their faithfulness to the Lord.

for the children ought not to lay up for the parents.—Paul had repeatedly reminded them that the relation which they sustained to him was as children to parents. As their father in the gospel he had done everything in his power to protect them from the erosion of sinful practices which they had allowed to go on. He had sought to warn them against the encroachment of the false teachers who had come to them and to protect them from the subtle attack of Satan whose goal was their destruction. Just as parents lay up for their children, so Paul had done all this for their benefit, for they were dear to him in the Lord.

for your souls.—Paul reminded them of what they must have known: he was willing most gladly to spend and be spent for their souls. He was following the pattern set by Our Lord who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. See Mark 10:45. This must ever be the position of the true minister of Christ.

am I loved less?—Was this demonstration of Paul's overflowing love for them to result in their loving him less? As this letter was being read to them, one wonders if many present hid their faces in shame for failing to respond in kind to the love of the apostle whom Christ had sent to them with the message of His love?

being crafty.—Again Paul reminded them that he had not become

a burden to them. He had anticipated possible difficulties which might arise in connection with his preaching the gospel to them. He had written to them in the first letter telling them that he was willing to forgo his right to support in order to avoid any criticism of his ministry. He was "being crafty." He had caught them unawares. They had not seen through his reason for refusing to accept support from them, although he did receive support from others. But the thing that Paul feared had happened. Now, perhaps, they would understand his position and his determination to maintain it.

Did I take advantage of you?—Having called attention to a fact which they well knew, for he had not been a burden to them, he came to the defense of Titus and the brother who was sent with him to carry on the work of the gospel in his absence. Did Titus take any advantage of you? They knew that he had conducted himself in exactly the same spirit of devotion to Christ that had characterized all of Paul's labors in their behalf. He had walked in Paul's footsteps leaving no ground for criticism of himself or of Paul.

Ye think all this time that we are excusing ourselves unto you.—It is possible that Paul put this in the form of a question as the footnote in some Bibles indicates. But the punctuation makes little difference, since the point that Paul was making was that all this defense was not a matter of excusing himself in connection with the delay of his intended visit. He was aware that he lived and acted in the sight of God and that what he said was spoken as an apostle of Christ. Instead of making excuses for himself, he was sounding the warning and giving instructions for their benefit. Christ's purpose in his ministry was that they might be built up and not torn down. If they should follow his directives they would be built up in the faith; if they failed to do so, they would certainly be punished when he arrived.

For I fear.—Paul had a right to fear the consequences of the presence of false teachers in Corinth. He knew that they were listening to them gladly. He knew how they had permitted sinful practices to go on in their midst which had all but destroyed the church of God. The false teachers and indifferent leaders would have accomplished their goal if the church had not responded to Paul's instruction in his first letter to them. Titus had reported their obedience to this instruction; but as this had happened before, there was real possibility that they might again fall victims to the influence of the false teachers.

when I come, I should find you not such as I would.—Paul longed to see them break with these false teachers who were ministers of Satan and discontinue their sinful practices. He wanted them to reach ma-

turity so that they might function to the fullest capacity as members of the body of Christ.

lest by any means there should be strife.—Those of the household of Chloe had reported to Paul the divisions, factions, jealousies, and wraths that had existed among them. Would they slip back into this sinful practice? Would they give themselves again to slander, gossip, conceit and disorder, acting in a manner unbecoming to the saints of God?

Lest again when I come my God should humble me before you?—Paul had written of his anticipation of a joyful visit both in his first letter and in the beginning of this second letter. Now he wonders if it will be necessary for God to humble him before them when he comes again. Will they reject the apostle whom Christ is sending to them for the ministers of Satan? They had been led into sin before, and that had caused great grief to Paul. He had told them in the beginning of the letter about his sorrow. He repeated the warning at the close of the letter, for he did not want them to forget it. Would those who had sinned fail to repent of their impurity, immoral conduct, and licentious practice?

Summary

Paul continued to boast in his weakness, since it had been forced upon him by the claims and false charges of his critics. But nothing was to be gained by it, since none of the critics could possibly match the experience about which he was to tell. He took up the matters of visions and revelations which the Lord had permitted him to have. The Lord had granted visions and revelations to Paul on various occasions, but this one was different. Its purpose was to emphasize the power of the Lord and the weakness of the apostle.

The incident which he related occurred fourteen years before the writing of Second Corinthians. No information is available that would enable us to fix the exact date of the incident or the place where Paul was when it happened. The vivid impression which it had made on Paul had remained with him through all those years.

Paul said that he was caught up to the third heaven, caught up to Paradise. There he heard words not to be uttered by man. He did not know whether this had been a bodily experience or just one that had occurred in the spirit. This may have some bearing on the intermediate state of the dead, since the term "Paradise" is used elsewhere in that connection. If so, it would indicate that Paradise existed after the resurrection of Christ. Although it is interesting, the theory is not

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vital: freedom of opinion should be observed in connection with it.

The purpose of the vision was clear, as well as Paul's reason for relating it. After such an experience, Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him from arrogant boasting. We do not know what that sharp thing was; there is no use to speculate on the matter.

Paul said that it was a messenger from Satan. Perhaps Job's experience may shed some light on its meaning. It did serve to remind Paul of the power of the Lord and of his own unfinished task. Three times he asked to have it removed, but the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The unmerited favor of the Lord Jesus had made him an apostle. His providential protection had been with him in all the hardships which he had endured for the sake of Christ. Paul boasted in his weakness, for then the protecting power of Christ was spread over him like a tent.

As he looked back at what he had just written about the divine approval of his apostleship, Paul said, "I have become foolish." They had compelled him to mention these things in order to answer the false charges against him. The evidence of his apostleship, however, was to be seen in the miracles which he had performed in their midst. The Corinthians were in no way inferior to the rest of the churches in this regard. But there was one difference: He had not been a burden to them. Ironically, he said "Forgive me this wrong."

Paul was determined not to be a burden to them on this third visit. Speaking ironically, he said, "Being crafty, I caught you with guile." He had anticipated the possibility of some charging him with the guilt of preaching the gospel for the sake of money. Although he had a right to receive support, he had not used it. His purpose was to preach the gospel to win men to Christ. He had worked with his own hands when he was in Corinth and in want. He had received help from the brethren in Macedonia, but he had not and would not become a burden to Achaia.

Paul was not making excuses for himself. He had delayed his visit to give them time to set their house in order. But he was fearful lest upon his arrival he might find things not as he would have them to be. He knew that false teachers were present and that some of the people had gladly listened to them. Would God humble him again by letting him find strife, jealousy, wrath, faction, backbiting, whispering, swelling, and tumults among them? It had happened once; would they see to it that these things were not present again when he arrived on this impending third visit?

II CORINTHIANS

Questions

1. Why had it become necessary for Paul to boast in his weakness?
2. Why did he say that nothing was to be gained by it?
3. What are some of the visions and revelations in which the Lord had appeared to Paul?
4. Why is this one different?
5. Why did he write about it in an impersonal manner?
6. What evidence is there that he was the man who had actually experienced this thing?
7. What is the point in his having mentioned the fourteen years that had elapsed since this happened?
8. Why did he say that he did not know whether it had been in the body or just in spirit?
9. What is the third heaven?
10. What is Paradise? What are some of the things said about it in the Scriptures?
11. Why was Paul permitted to hear things which man was not permitted to speak?
12. What are some of the things which Paul and other New Testament writers were permitted to reveal about heaven?
13. Why could Paul boast about "such a one" while refusing to boast about himself?
14. Why did he indicate that he was not foolish in boasting about this one?
15. Why was he given a thorn in the flesh?
16. What is meant by the messenger of Satan?
17. How may the story of Job help to explain this?
18. What is shown by the fact that Paul asked the Lord three times to remove this thing?
19. What was the answer to his prayer?
20. In what way had the grace of God been with Paul?
21. What was it to do for him under these circumstances?
22. How is the Lord's power made perfect in human weakness?
23. What special power had the Lord given to the apostles?
24. In what way had He providentially watched over Paul?
25. Why did Paul take pleasure in his weakness?
26. Why did Paul finally say, "I am become foolish"?
27. Although Paul said he was nothing, how did he compare with the super-apostles?

CHAPTER TWELVE

28. What were the apostolic credentials which Paul presented to the Corinthians?
29. What credentials could the super-apostles present?
30. How had Paul shown that the Corinthians were in no way inferior to the other churches?
31. What difference had he made between them and others?
32. Why did he say, "Forgive me this wrong"?
33. What are some of the views by which attempts have been made to explain the number of times Paul visited Corinth?
34. Why are such matter, while interesting, unimportant?
35. Why did Paul insist on continuing his policy of not being a burden to the churches in Achaia?
36. What was his real interest in them?
37. How did he use the relationship of parents to children to illustrate his meaning?
38. In what way was Paul following the example of the Lord in thus dealing with the brethren at Corinth?
39. Why did he ask, "Am I loved the less?"
40. Why did he say that he had been crafty?
41. Why did he ask if he or Titus had taken advantage of them?
42. What point was Paul making when he said, "You are thinking that we are excusing ourselves".
43. What grounds did Paul have to fear that the Corinthians might be found in sinful practices upon his arrival?
44. What sins did he think he might find?
45. How would God humble him before them?

For Discussion

1. The providence of God as seen in His gracious dealing with His people.
2. How can the church prevent backsliding such as Paul feared might occur at Corinth?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Analysis

- A. Paul reminded the Corinthians of the things he intended to do when he came to them on this third visit (1-4).
1. He stated the basis on which any testimony would be accepted (1).
 2. He warned that he would not spare those who had sinned (2).
 - a) He had told them about this in the first epistle, and was repeating it for their benefit.
 - b) He had warned them when he was present the second time (that is, through his first epistle to them).
 - c) He was repeating it in his absence, warning them that he would not spare those who had sinned or the rest when he came again.
 3. He gave his reasons for this intended action against sinners in their midst (3-4).
 - a) They had desired proof that Christ was speaking through him (3a).
 - b) Christ is not weak, but powerful in His dealing with them (3b).
 - c) Explanation of the issue of weakness and power (4).
 - (1) He was crucified in weakness—voluntarily submitting to death on the cross—but He lives by the power of God as demonstrated by His resurrection.
 - (2) In the same way, Paul declared that he was weak in Him, but lived with Him by the power of God. God's power raised him from death in sin and enabled him to live for their sakes.
- B. He urged them to settle their problems in the light of the truth (5-10).
1. The issue to be settled was their relation to Christ (5-7).
 - a) They were to examine their relation to the faith (5a).
 - b) They were to test their relation to Christ (5b).
 - (1) Were they in Christ?
 - (2) Were they rejected? Had they failed to pass the test of true relationship to Him?
 - c) Paul expressed his hope and prayer for them (6-7).

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- (1) He hoped that they would not fail in their relation to Christ (6).
- (2) He prayed that they might do no wrong (7).
 - (a) This was not that he might appear to have been vindicated.
 - (b) He wanted them to do what was right.
2. He was writing to help them do this very thing (8-10).
 - a) In doing so, he must act according to truth.
 - b) He rejoiced in his own weakness when they were strong.
 - c) He prayed that they might settle their problems.
 - d) He wrote while absent that he might not have to use the authority which the Lord gave him to build up and not to tear down (10).
- C. He closed the epistle with words of admonition, promise, greeting, and benediction (11-14).
 1. Admonition (11a).
 - a) Rejoice (good-bye).
 - b) Settle your own problems—put things in order.
 - c) Be comforted—accept his help.
 - d) Straighten out your thinking—think the same thing.
 - e) Live in peace.
 2. Promise: The God of love and peace will be with you (11b).
 3. Greeting (12-13).
 - a) Greet one another with a holy kiss.
 - b) All the saints greet you.
 4. Benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (14).

Paul's Intended Action on His Third Visit

Scripture

13:1-4. This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established. 2 I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again I will not spare; 3 seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me; who to you-ward is not weak, but is powerful in you: 4 for he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth through the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you.

Comments

This is the third time.—See comment on 12:14. Anticipating the long delayed third visit, Paul kept reminding the Corinthians that he was coming. In the above paragraph, he had indicated his determination not to be a burden to them. He also pointed out his intention of dealing with any sinful practices of which they might not have repented. *At the mouth of two or three.*—Quoting from Deut. 19:15, Paul cited the Law as the standard by which he intended to deal with sinful practices mentioned in 12:20-21. There is no good reason to assume that this quotation was being applied to his own statement about his forthcoming visit.

as when I was present the second time.—Paul had been present with the Corinthians, not in body but in spirit through his authoritative apostolic epistle in which he had given specific instructions for dealing with sinful practices which the Corinthians had allowed to develop in their congregation. He had received adequate evidence to establish the fact that parties and divisions actually existed in their midst. He had not written to them on the basis of mere hearsay. Reliable testimony had been furnished by those of the household of Chloe. In the case of immoral conduct involving the man who was living with his father's wife, the evidence was so clear that even the pagans were condemning the church for condoning such a thing. In the matter of lawsuits among brethren, the evidence against them was such that the pagan judges looked disparagingly upon the churches for allowing such a condition to exist.

Although Titus had reported their obedient response to the instruction Paul had sent in his first letter, the presence of false teachers at Corinth was sufficient grounds for his fear that some of them might have sinned again, or that some may never have repented.

Upon his arrival, he intended that every charge should be supported by adequate testimony. Those among them with Jewish background were thoroughly familiar with this procedure and would surely assent to the fairness of Paul as he anticipated the possibility of being forced to use the authority which the Lord gave him to build up and if need be, to destroy the sinful practices that were opposing the gospel of Christ.

to them that have sinned heretofore.—Paul had asked in his first letter: "What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?" (I Cor. 4:21). While the church as a whole had responded to his warning, he kept repeating it for the sake

of some who may not have heeded it and the rest who might have become involved again in such sins as he had listed in 12:20-21.

seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that he speaketh in me.—Apparently some had begun to question whether or not Christ had been speaking through Paul as he had written to them warning them of the consequences of their sins. Some had gladly listened to those false teachers who said, "His letters are weighty and strong, but he is weak when present." Clearly, the false teachers had implied that Christ was not speaking through Paul and that he would not be able to carry out such punishment as he had promised. Yet the Corinthians knew that their very relation to Christ depended upon the gospel which Paul had preached to them. Furthermore, they knew that he had exhibited the credentials of his apostleship in the miracles which he had performed in their midst. All this points to the fickleness of the human heart. We do not wonder that Paul was afraid that the Corinthians might lapse into their old sins, for he knew how quickly the Galatians had turned from the gospel as he preached it to a different kind of gospel that would enslave them in false teaching.

who to you-ward is not weak, but is powerful in you.—Paul had constantly boasted in his own weakness and in the power of Christ that had raised those who were dead in trespasses and sin to sit with Him in the heavenly places. That power had been channeled into their lives through the gospel which Paul preached. False teachers had no such power. As ministers of Satan teaching false doctrine, they were corrupting men and making them slaves of unrighteousness. Only through the power of the gospel can men be transformed into the glorious image of the Lord. See II Cor. 3:18.

for he was crucified through weakness.—Christ Jesus who existed in the form of God and was on an equality with God took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the death of the cross. See Phil. 2:6-8.

Jesus said, "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from the Father" (John 10:17-18). Although He could have called twelve legions of angels to defend Him, He meekly submitted to arrest in the Garden and suffered the indignities that were heaped upon Him by His tormentors at the time of His trial and, finally, allowed them to crucify Him. From the human point of view no greater symbol of weakness could be found than the cross. But

myopic men have failed to see that in His death He destroyed him who has power of death, that is, the devil. See Heb. 2:14.

yet he liveth through the power of God.—The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of Christian faith. The world has not known a greater demonstration of power than that which raised Christ from the dead and caused Him to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It was to this power that Paul directed the thinking of the Corinthians who had been saved from sin through the power of the gospel, but who, if they insisted on returning to the old sinful ways, were facing eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might. See II Thes. 1:8-9.

For we also are weak in him.—In his first letter, Paul had written: "God hath set forth us apostles last of all, as men doomed to death" (I Cor. 4:9). From the human point of view, Paul readily admitted his weakness, but he refused to boast in anything except the power of Christ that had saved him from sin. He had been crucified with Christ, but he was living in faith, that is, he believed the gospel of Christ and conducted himself in accord with it. He was anticipating the life with Him in the eternal kingdom made possible through the power of God.

Problems Settled In The Light of Truth

Scripture

13:5-10. Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate. 6 But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate. 7 Now we pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we may appear approved, but that ye may do that which is honorable, though we be as reprobate. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we rejoice, when we are weak, and ye are strong: this we also pray for even your perfecting. 10 For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down.

Comments

Try your own selves.—The Corinthians had been wanting Paul to prove to them that Christ had spoken through him. He had given them adequate proof of it, reminding them that he would again

demonstrate it when he arrived on his third visit. He also reminded them that it was their responsibility to put themselves to the test with regard to their own faith and to determine, by testing it, whether or not they were living a life of faith in Christ. Such a test could only be carried out in the light of the authoritative message of the gospel that had been delivered to them by Christ's apostle. It couldn't be done by measuring themselves by the standards of the false teachers who "measured themselves by themselves and compared themselves with themselves, and were without understanding" (II Cor. 10:12).

Paul was recommending to the Corinthians an exercise by which every Christian should continually check his relation to the Lord. Only a diligent study of the Word and a sincere effort to put into practice can assure one that he is living in harmony with the true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

prove your own selves.—Paul had written in his first letter that a man was to prove himself in the light of the meaning of the loaf and cup in the Lord's supper. He was to determine what there was in his life that met the approval of Christ. The bread represented the body of Christ and the true relation of each member of that body to Christ the Head. The content of the cup symbolized the blood of Christ which was the means of blotting out all sin. No better place could be found for the Corinthians to examine their own lives than at the Lord's table as they meditated on the meaning of the death of Christ for their salvation.

Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—Paul did not hesitate to declare that Christ lived in him because he had been crucified with Christ. See Gal. 2:20. He also made it very clear that those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh—a symbol of sinful conduct—with its passions and longing desires for things that are evil. See Gal. 5:24. He had written to the Corinthians in his first letter to remind them that their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit which was in them which they had from God. They did not belong to themselves, for they were bought with the price of the blood of Christ. Therefore, Paul urged them to glorify God in the body. See I Cor. 6: 19-20. If they were actually glorifying God in the things that they were doing, they could be sure that Christ was in them. If the test which he had directed them to make proved otherwise, they could know that the Lord did not approve their conduct. Had they failed by the standard of measurement which the Lord had given them through His faithful apostle?

But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate.—Since the test of their faith and the presence of Christ in them depended upon the standard of the gospel which Paul preached, he hoped that they would know that he and all the apostles through whom Christ had spoken were not rejected by the Lord. This, of course, was something that the super-apostles had insinuated, if indeed they had not openly declared it. Since they were ministers of Satan, nothing they said could possibly be used by the Corinthians to test their relationship to Christ.

Now we pray to God.—The earnestness of Paul as he thought of the tragic fate of those who were about to reject the gospel of Christ led him to express his views in his prayer to God that they do no evil. His concern was not for himself nor for what the false teachers might say about him. He did not want to be guilty of joining with them in false teaching that he might merely appear to be approved by Christ. His concern was that they, as his children in the gospel, might do the thing that was right before the Lord even though false teachers might attempt to discredit him and show that he did not have the approval of the Lord.

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.—As an apostle of Christ, Paul spoke the truth. And as one who had been crucified with Christ and had committed himself wholeheartedly to the Lord, he acted in accord with the truth.

For we rejoice, when we are weak.—It did not matter to Paul that false teachers were calling him weak. He had gladly admitted it, because the secret of his life was to be found in the power of Christ who had raised him from death in trespasses and sin to the place where he could truthfully say that Christ lived in him. He did not make void the grace of God. Although he could rejoice in his own weakness, Paul rejoiced that his children in the gospel were strong. Their strength, too, depended upon their relation to Christ. It depended upon their being in the faith; upon their living by the standard of the gospel; upon their putting on the whole armor of God, that they might withstand the crafty work of the devil through his ministers who had fashioned themselves into ministers of righteousness.

even your perfecting.—Paul uses this interesting term again in verse eleven. He had used it in I Cor. 1:10. See *Studies in First Corinthians* on the various usages of the term.

In this context, Paul is urging them to settle their problems, to get rid of their sinful practices, to rearrange their lives that they might be

in harmony with the truth of Christ as delivered to them by His inspired apostle.

For this cause I write these things while absent.—Once again Paul called their attention to his purpose in writing this epistle. What he said to them about sin and its punishment was no idle threat. It did, however, give them an opportunity to correct their ways and avoid the punishment which would otherwise be meted out to them through the authority which the Lord had given to Paul.

They had joined with Paul in punishing, according to his instructions, the one who had been guilty of immoral conduct. That had meant delivering the guilty one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, with the fond hope that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Paul was hoping and praying that it might not be necessary to again use his authority against sinners in their midst who refused to repent.

Closing Admonition And Benediction

Scripture

13:11-14. Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you. 12 Salute one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints salute you. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Comments

Finally, brethren, farewell.—Despite the fears which he held that they might again be corrupted through the efforts of the false teachers, Paul addressed the Corinthians as brethren when he told them good-bye.

This was characteristic of his letters, for in the first epistle he had addressed them as the church of God, although he was aware of their divisions by which they were destroying the temple of God. He called them "brethren" although he was aware of the spiritual immaturity that marked them as men. The term "brethren" implied that they were members of the family of God. But it in no way implied approval of practices unbecoming to a child of God. It did indicate Paul's love and hope for them that they might settle their problems in the light of the gospel so that they might be in the family of God in heaven. For that reason he urged them to be perfected. He urged them to

accept the help that he as their father in the gospel offered those who were like beloved children to him. He wanted them to be united in their expressed opinions regarding their relation to Christ, by basing their conclusions on the truth which he had taught them. He wanted them to live in peace with one another, but peace must be preceded by purity in teaching and conduct. Their factions, jealousies, and back-bitings could all be abolished by bringing their lives up to the standard of conduct which Christ had set for them. Only by doing so could the peace of God guard their hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

and the God of love and peace.—Paul served the God of love and peace. He demonstrated His love in giving His Son to die for us. He made peace possible through the blood of the cross. Those who have found peace at the cross should be able to live at peace with their brethren in Christ.

Salute one another with a holy kiss.—This was the usual greeting among brethren. Brotherhood is determined by relationship to Christ. Brethren in Christ should follow the apostolic injunction to greet one another even if local customs suggests that it be done through the handshake rather than the holy kiss which was the custom in Paul's day.

All the saints salute you.—Saints are those who have separated themselves from the things of the world by washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. They have dedicated themselves to the pure service of God. Paul had addressed this epistle to "the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia." He lifted high this holy standard as he closed the letter even though in it he had warned the impenitent sinners about the punishment that would be visited upon them in his forthcoming visit.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.—In this sublime benediction, Paul expressed his fondest hope and deepest longing for those whom he loved as his children in the gospel. He prayed that the grace of Christ, His unmerited favor, might be with them. He knew from experience how that grace had saved him and had continued in providential protection to be with him in all his trials and labors for Christ. He prayed that the grace of Christ by which they too had been saved through their faith expressed in obedience to the gospel might also providentially protect them from the destructive power of Satanic false teaching that they might be presented in purity and victory before Christ when He comes.

and the love of God.—He prayed that God's love which had been

the compelling force in his life might motivate them to obey His Word so that they might not be chastized with the disobedient.

This was God's love for them. His love made forgiveness through Christ available to the believer. But they were not to presume upon the love of God, for those who will not walk with Christ in the new life shall suffer punishment, even destruction from the presence of the Lord. See II Thes. 1:8-9.

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.—This was the fellowship or partnership of the saints which had been made possible through following the wisdom of God revealed by the Holy Spirit through the inspired apostles. Paul prayed that it might be a reality in their lives as they worked together for Christ at Corinth and joined with the brethren in Macedonia to help the saints in Judea.

As these solemn words were being read to the church, the brethren must have realized that they were far more than a mere formal closing. This was an earnest prayer that had come from the heart of the one who had led them to Christ and who continued to love them as a father. The sublime benediction embodied the apostle Paul's hope and prayer for the saints of God at Corinth.

Summary

Paul had mentioned his forthcoming return visit to Corinth in his first letter. Much of the second epistle centers in the explanation of his delay in coming. It had been necessary to postpone the trip until he had given them time to act upon the instruction given in the first epistle about the tragic sins which they had permitted to go unreproved in their midst.

While he had written with loving care for those whom he considered his children in the gospel, he again, as he closed the letter, called attention to the necessity of getting themselves straightened out in the light of the truth of the gospel which they had learned from him. He was coming. And he would not spare those who were guilty of conduct unbecoming a Christian. But he assured them that all would be done in fairness for every charge would be established by adequate testimony.

Under the influence of false teachers, they had been led to question his authority. Did Christ really speak through him? Since they had asked for proof, Paul gave them ample evidence to support his authority which the Lord had given him to build up the church, not to tear it down as the false teachers were doing.

Since they sought proof of him, he suggested that they put them-

II CORINTHIANS

selves to the test and find out in the light of the truth whether or not they were in accord with the faith in Christ. Was Christ in them? He was, unless they failed to pass the test of conducting themselves according to His gospel. Out of his love for them, Paul expressed his hope that they would not fail, even though false teachers attempted to disqualify him as an apostle of Christ. He boasted only in his weakness and in the power of Christ by whose death and resurrection he, as well as the believers at Corinth, had been saved.

Paul prayed to God that they would do no evil, but he reminded them he was guided by the truth in all his dealings with them. As an apostle of Christ, he could do nothing against the truth. Lest they miss the point, he reminded them again that the purpose of his writing was to give them time to take care of their problems so as to avoid being punished upon his arrival.

The letter was finished. Reluctantly, it seems, Paul said "good-bye" to the brethren whom he loved in Christ. But once more he urged them to straighten out their problems, to take courage, to hold the same views of the gospel, and to live in peace. "Do this," he said, "and the God of peace will be with you."

Gathering up all his hope and prayer for them in one sublime benediction he wrote: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you."

Questions

1. Why did Paul repeat his statement that he was about to make a third visit to Corinth?
2. What had he expected them to accomplish before he arrived?
3. Why did he insist that everything was to be established by two or three witnesses? To what things did he refer?
4. How had Paul dealt with the charges against them when he was present in spirit?
5. What punishment had been meted out by the church to those who had sinned?
6. What may this suggest as to the action Paul intended to take through the authority the Lord had given him?
7. Since Titus had reported that they had obeyed the instructions of the first letter, why did Paul anticipate the possible need for further disciplinary action on this third visit?
8. What proof were some demanding of Paul? Why?
9. How had Paul responded to this demand?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

10. In what sense was Christ crucified through weakness?
11. How was the power of God demonstrated in Him?
12. What effect did this have on the Corinthians? on Paul?
13. What was the nature of Paul's weakness about which he boasted?
14. How will the power of Christ be used against the disobedient when He comes?
15. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ?
16. What does it mean for Christ to live in the Christian?
17. Why did Paul tell the Corinthians to try themselves?
18. How were they to do this?
19. How were they to know that Christ was in their midst?
20. What would demonstrate that they were unapproved by Christ?
21. Why did he say "I hope that you will know that we are not unapproved"?
22. Whom did he include in this expressed hope? Why?
23. Who had been suggesting that Paul did not have the approval of Christ?
24. Why did Paul say, "We can do nothing against the truth"?
25. Why did Paul rejoice when false teachers called him weak?
26. In what did he rejoice in the lives of the Christians at Corinth?
27. What did he mean by "your perfecting"?
28. Did Paul teach "perfectionism"—the doctrine that holds that it is possible to reach a state in this life in which it is impossible to commit an act of sin?
29. What are some of the ways in which the word translated "perfect" was used in Paul's time?
30. Why did Paul, in his closing words, refer to the Corinthians as "brethren" after having just warned them about their sins?
31. Why is God called "the God of love and peace"?
32. What is the Christian's obligation and privilege in the matter of greeting others?
33. What did Paul mean by "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ"?
34. What did he mean by the "love of God"?
35. What did he mean by "the communion of the Holy Spirit"?

For Discussion

1. In the light of Paul's instruction for the Corinthians to try themselves, how can the Lord's supper be made a meaningful experience to the conscientious Christian?
2. What is the place of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in the life of the faithful Christian.

