

## **II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS**

### **I. Paul's Relationship With The Church, 2 Corinthians 1-7**

#### **L. Accepting The Emotional Cost Of A Corrective Ministry (2 Corinthians 7:2-16)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and they had tried to promote their own views while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. 2 Corinthians 7:2-15 describes the high emotional cost that Paul and his ministry team handled in exercising a corrective ministry in the difficult church at Corinth. We view the passage for our insight and application:

#### **II. Accepting The Emotional Cost Of A Corrective Ministry, 2 Corinthians 7:2-16 NIV.**

- A. Back in 2 Corinthians 2:4-6, Paul had alluded to a severe, painful letter he had written to the Church at Corinth to discipline a man who had been making damaging remarks about Paul to the Corinthians, remarks that had hurt not only his credibility, but, more importantly, the discipling that God had wanted to produce at Corinth.
- B. In 2 Corinthians 7:2-16, "Paul resumed his appeal for mutual love, mentioned in 6:11-13. The accusations made about him were unfounded. He could offer disclaimers (e. g., 2:17; 4:2; 6:3), but the Corinthians' conviction of his integrity was his best" response. "Unhappily, however, this was yet lacking," Ibid., p. 571.
- C. The high emotional cost to Paul and his team of handling this case is seen in 2 Corinthians 7:2-16 as follows:
  - 1. Paul urged his readers at Corinth to make room for his ministry team in their hearts, for Paul's team had wronged no one, they had corrupted not one, nor had they exploited anyone, 2 Corinthians 7:2.
  - 2. The apostle did not make this statement to condemn his readers, for he and his team had stated before that the Corinthians had such a great place in their hearts that they were willing to live or to die with them, v. 3.
  - 3. Paul had addressed them with great candor because he held his readers to be very dear to him, v. 4.
  - 4. To illustrate, Paul reported that when his team came to Macedonia, they had no rest, but were hassled in every way with conflicts outside and fears within, wondering how the believers at Corinth had responded to Paul's letter, 2 Corinthians 7:5. However, God Who comforts the downtrodden had comforted Paul and his team by Titus' coming and telling them of his encouragement over the longing of the Corinthians for Paul, their sorrow for their transgression and their concern about Paul to his great joy, 2 Corinthians 7:6-7.
  - 5. Paul thus expressed his lack of regret for writing his severe letter or reproof to the Corinthians, for though he temporarily regretted having to hurt his readers, he was happy that their sorrow had produced the needed repentance unto righteousness in accord with God's will, 2 Corinthians 7:8-10.
  - 6. That godly sorrow, so different from the death-causing sorrow of the world, had produced earnestness, eagerness in the Corinthians to clear themselves of wrong, indignation at sin, alarm at it, followed by longing, concern, and readiness to see justice done, 2 Corinthians 7:11a,b. In every way, Paul's readers had produced the right response to his severe letter, 2 Corinthians 7:11c.
  - 7. Paul added that though he had written the stern letter to them, it was not written primarily because of the one who did the wrong nor because of the injured party, but rather that before God the Corinthians themselves could see for how devoted they actually were to Paul's ministry team, 2 Corinthians 7:12.
  - 8. The encouragement had been great for Paul's team, 2 Corinthians 7:13a. Even greater was their joy to see how happy Titus had been in being so refreshed by his meeting with the responsive Corinthians, v. 13b.
  - 9. Paul had initially expressed his confidence to Titus that the Corinthians would respond positively when he had sent Titus to meet with them, which expression had proved to be true to the edification of Titus, 2 Cor. 7:14-15. The responsiveness of the Corinthian believers had also made Paul have complete confidence in his readers, 2 Corinthians 7:16.

***Lesson:*** *To perform a corrective ministry with the Corinthian believers was emotionally costly to Paul's team, but in view of the long-term results of repentance and reconfirming of their relationships, it was very worthwhile.*

***Application:*** *If God Biblically directs us to conduct a corrective ministry, may we be willing to bear the high emotional cost of performing such a work. In view of our accountability to God and in view of the edifying, long-term effects of righteousness, doing what is right regardless of the initial emotional cost is always worthwhile.*