

Read 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Introduction

The apostle Paul was about to visit Corinth again for a third time.

What would be the outcome?

Perhaps, on the one hand, the situation could be retrieved and the church could address the issues that threatened its very survival, re-establish its credibility and go on to make progress.

Or perhaps, on the other hand, it would fail to respond to Paul's advice and warnings and ultimately sink into oblivion.

Summary

In 2 Corinthians 13:1-14, Paul brings his letter to the church in Corinth to a close by saying certain things about his upcoming visit.

1. Readied Firmness vv. 1-2

Paul was ready to be firm with the Corinthians if the situation demanded it (**13:2**). He clearly felt that it might well be necessary to set the wheels of church discipline in motion, but he would not use this as an opportunity to settle personal scores. Everything would be scrupulously fair and above board.

Paul's manner is very emphatic (**2 Cor 13:2**).

He warns 'those who have sinned before,' and also warns 'all the others.'

Verse 2 is summed up in the blunt phrase: '**I will not spare them.**'

Paul intended to act decisively.

Today, far too many professing Christians treat both Christ and his church very shabbily. People like that should think twice. God is not mocked.

2. Lord's Spokesman vv. 3-4

We should not see this as an instance of Paul lashing out and getting his own back. The apostle saw himself as Christ's mouthpiece (**2 Cor 13:3-4**).

At various times in this epistle, we have seen that Paul's detractors in Corinth had accused him of weakness.

Consequently, in their eyes, Paul could not be a spokesman for Christ.

This explains Paul's opening statement in **verse 4**.

His rivals could hardly claim that the Lord Jesus Christ was not a fit messenger of God. Yet the Saviour had embraced human 'weakness' at his incarnation and in that 'weakness' had been 'crucified.' Nevertheless, 'He lives by the power of God.' Paul then, though weak himself, could know the power of God in all he did for the Corinthians.

This perspective is vital whenever we consider the subject of church discipline. Churches have both the right and the duty to protect the good name of the Savior, the gospel and the Christian community itself by formally recognizing that such a person has actually forfeited any spiritual credibility.

The church can fail in one of two areas in practicing Church Discipline. Church Discipline can either be neglected and ignored or it can be pursued inordinately and excessively. Church discipline, however, is ultimately the will of the crucified and risen Christ speaking through his human instruments. It must be carried out in the way that Christ himself has ordained (**Matt. 18:15-20**) and it should relate only to areas of Christian life clearly governed by Scripture.

3. Preemptive Action vv. 5-6

Paul was ready to be firm with the believers in Corinth, if the situation demanded it. It is clear from verses 5-6, however, that he hoped that they would forestall him by taking action themselves.

This is the reason for the double exhortation (**2 Cor 13:5**).

In effect, Paul is saying: 'You yourselves examine yourselves!' There is also the unwritten but obvious implication: 'If you do that, I won't have to!'

The second part of verse 5 contains a question with a disturbing rider.

This was necessary because the Corinthians had brought their profession into doubt. The time had come for a frank reappraisal of their true situation.

Given that they claimed to be a repentant people, let them 'bear fruit in keeping with repentance' (**Matt. 3:8**).

Paul then contrasts himself with the Corinthians (**2 Cor 13:6**).

He, for his part, had not called his profession of faith in Christ into question.

The believers in Corinth were being asked to take a long, hard look at what they had become, take stock of their situation and then take steps to put things right so that outside intervention would not be necessary.