

Parson to Person

2 Corinthians 2 – Part 1 (Restoration After Discipline)

*“Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.”
(2 Corinthians 1:23–24)*

“But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me?”

And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you. But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (2 Corinthians 2:1–11)

Discipline

As we think back to 1 Corinthians 5, we recall that there was need of Church discipline in Corinth as the result of an incestuous relationship between a young man and the wife of his father. Sadly, the church in Corinth was looking past this great sin (among others),

and therefore the Apostle Paul called for the church leaders to deal with this young man and put him out of fellowship—in order to bring him (and the woman) to repentance. Here he wrote, *“For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things”* (vs. 9).

Church discipline is a scarcely practiced action in today’s modern “churching.” This is a tragedy. The Church is to be a holy (set apart) people who live righteously—honoring the Lord. The Church is a distinct entity of God’s working and should look like it.

Those who come to a church and see nothing different than what they see in the world are grossly disappointed. This discouragement should be rare, yet it is far too often reported. When those seeking the truth and relief from the way of the world come into a church gathering and see the same things they see in a bar, theater, school, club, etc., they are often left with frustrations that send them off in search of something else—only to be disappointed again.

Forgiveness and Restoration

Here in our text we see that the church discipline engaged was effective. The young man apparently came to repentance and would now need to be forgiven and restored. Paul wrote, *“This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love to him”* (vss. 6–8), and, *“Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices”* (vss. 10–11).

As I have mentioned in the past, “unresolved conflict (especially in the church) generates the greatest sorrow for a pastor.” It is agony for the soul.

It should be noted that all church discipline should be an act pointed toward restoration—not destruction.

Satan’s devices—Unforgiveness and Contempt

Paul mentioned the need for forgiveness and restoration of the erring part when he wrote of him saying, “*lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow*” (vs. 7b). Moreover, he added, “*Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love to him*” (vs. 8).

Herein we see both sides of the spiritual coin: He needed forgiveness and the church needed to forgive— “*lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices*” (vs. 11).

In this case the pastor must also declare, “unresolved conflict generates the greatest sorrow.” In this case, it is when the repentant is refused back into fellowship—or welcomed back while contempt and distance remains. This cannot occur! Christians must forgive even as they have been forgiven! If we let our pride get in the way, we will no longer embrace the erring brother or sister and therefore disallow genuine restoration.

My friends, have ye anyone with whom you hold contempt? Satan loves division and the failure of restoration. We are not ignorant of his devices.

The Testimony of Love and Healing

We should all remember that those seeking the truth and relief from the way of the world should come into a church gathering and see something altogether different than what they see in a bar, theatre, school, club, etc. They must see the difference in us and

desire what we have and how we live. We do not want them to leave with frustrations in search of something they fail to see in the church.

Jesus said, *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul