

**TITLE: SUCCESSFUL DISCIPLINE!**

**TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-11**

**INTRO:** One of the toughest things Christians are commanded to do is to address sin in the congregation. It's difficult because **1)** many times if a brother is sinning to the point that he *needs* our rebuke, he's already accepted his sin (i.e., isn't going to change) and isn't going to listen to anyone else. It's also difficult because **2)** as the rebuker, you recognize that each of us has sinned and is *not* perfect. This is a popular excuse *not* to do our job!

- I. THE PROCESS OF A REBUKE:** When a brother/sister is sinning, there's a process that should occur to resolve the problem.
- A. 2 Cor 13:5**—“*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves...*” We should *all* be testing ourselves to make sure we are in the faith. This requires *knowing* the faith (that which *has* been delivered—**Jude 3**), then judging ourselves against it (cf. **1 Cor 11:28-32**). It's when we fail to examine ourselves & repent, that further action is necessary by the church.
  - B. Gal 6:1**—“*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness...*” **1 Cor 5:12**—the church is to judge itself (cf. **Mt 18:15-18; 1 Thess 5:14** - “*warn them that are unruly*”).
  - C.** The congregation then is to withdraw from a brother who will not repent (**2 Thess 3:6**—“*withdraw yourself from every brother that walketh disorderly*”; v. **14**—“*if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed*”). (see also **Eph 5:11; 1 Tim 1:20; Titus 3:10**).
  - D.** These actions are difficult, but we must understand that the purpose is *never* to be mean, make life difficult for a brother, or to “show off” our own righteousness. It is to win a brother back to Christ.

**II. THE PURPOSE OF A REBUKE (v. 1-11):** (2 rebukes in **1 Cor 5**)

**A. Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians (v. 1-4)**

- 1. (v. **1-2**) *But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness (sorrow, grief). For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?*  
Still on the topic of why he *didn't* come, Paul says he not only wanted to spare them (**1:23-24**), he wanted to spare *himself!* Having spoken of the comfort that he gave them & they gave him (1:3-4; 11), he indicates his desire to experience that again when he arrives in Corinth. If he had shown up and had to deal with this issue of fornication (and all the other issues he dealt with in 1 Cor), it would be a “sorrowful” visit instead of an uplifting one.
- 2. (v. **3**) *And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.*
  - a. So instead of going to Corinth, he wrote 1 Cor, rebuking them for *not* rebuking their fornicating brother, & thereby gave them the opportunity to resolve this problem themselves (without him right there “looking over their shoulder”).
  - b. He *wrote* to them because he didn't want to have a sorrowful visit to Corinth (he wanted this to be resolved before he got there so he could rejoice with them). And he expresses his confidence in them, saying that “my joy is your joy” (i.e., we see eye to eye; I knew you'd understand).
- 3. (v. **4**) *For out of much affliction & anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.*
  - a. It wasn't easy for Paul to say what he said in 1 Cor 5 (& much of the rest of the letter). In making application, it's important for us to understand (as the rebuker or rebukee), that confronting a brother about his sin is *never* easy or fun.
  - b. Paul wanted them to know that his love for them (& the erring brother) far outweighs any negative feelings they may think he had for them. **Love** is *always* the motivating force in correction!

**B. The Corinthians' rebuke of the fornicator (v. 5-11)**

- 1. (v. **5-7**) His needs (the effect on the member)
  - a. (v. **5**) *But if any has caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but you all in part: that I may not overcharge (burden). Paul is talking about the fornicating brother of 1 Cor 5. He never mentions this man's name (since he repented & withdrawal wasn't needed). There had been no grief from the church before because they had accepted it (1 Cor 5:2). But now, after Paul's letter, there was grief, in part of them (Paul will talk about this grief/godly sorrow in more detail in 7:8-12). The result of their grief over sin is that he didn't have to overcharge (further burden) them with this issue.*
  - b. (v. **6-7**) *Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, & comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.*  
Paul's main point regarding this brother: **1)** You exercised discipline, **2)** he repented, so **3)** forgive him (**Lk 17:3-4**)!  
When a member repents, we need to forgive, comfort, & encourage him in his good decision to repent. Otherwise we can easily drive him further away (into “overmuch sorrow”). This is one of Satan's devices (v. **11**).
- 2. (v. **8-11**) Their needs (the effect on the church)
  - (v. **8**) *...confirm your love toward him. He needs this, but so does the church!* Harboring bad feelings toward someone who has repented is destructive to him *and* the church! It's divisive! And what if God treated *you* that way (**Col 3:9**)?
  - (v. **9-10**) *For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. Paul was testing them! Their disfellowshipping of this brother, then forgiving & loving him, showed their obedience to Paul as an apostle. And it's in this capacity that he says in v. 10, To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also...in the person of Christ. Paul is speaking & instructing them on behalf of Christ (as in 1 Cor 5:3). They **must** forgive as Christ forgave (**Col 3:9**).*
  - (v. **11**) *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. Satan can use this so easily! A problem that has been resolved can linger & escalate simply by the church's silence in not expressing its forgiveness! Think about how Satan can use this as a negative if we don't use it as a positive!*

**CONCLUSION:** The Corinthians did the right thing: they exercised discipline on this erring brother. This brother did the right thing: he repented. The church was then to forgive & love him. Paul said these actions by the church (handling **all** of this situation properly) proved them worthy (v. **9**). Are we worthy? Are we willing to exercise discipline if necessary? And are we willing to forgive when a member repents?