

The Comfort Of Paul And Titus

“So, although I wrote unto you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong, but that your earnest care for us might be made manifest unto you in the sight of God. Therefore we have been comforted and in our comfort we joyed the more exceedingly for the joy of Titus, because his spirit hath been refreshed by you all. For if in anything I have gloried to him on your behalf, I was not put to shame; but as we spake all things to you in truth, so our glorying also which I made before Titus was found to be truth, And his affection is more abundantly toward you, while he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you” (2 Cor. 7:12-15).

It seems evident from the context that the apostle still has in mind the Corinthians' discipline of the brother who had taken his father's wife and was living with her and the effect that action had on him as well as his reaction to it. In at least two different parts of this epistle the apostle refers to the matter: in chapter 2 (where the narrative indicates the sinful brother repented) and then in this chapter where the context reveals that the Corinthians also had repented of their ignoring the festering sin among them. Paul commends them for their speedy action after receiving his letter and wrote, “In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter” (2 Corinthians 7:11). Paul's words, “I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong” (2 Cor. 7:12) might be misconstrued by some. Of course Paul wrote for his cause that did the wrong. His warning in 1 Corinthians 5 reveals that he was greatly concerned for the brother. He urged that the brother be put away “for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). His command, “Put away the wicked man from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:13) evidenced he WAS writing for his cause that did the wrong. When reading his instructions there it is apparent he was deeply concerned for the church, yet equally clear he was concerned for the sinful brother as well (cp. 1 Cor. 5:5). We must conclude, Paul did write for the cause of him that did the wrong.

Never lose sight of the fact that in this passage we are dealing with a Jewish idiom, one found so frequently in the scriptures, used both by Jesus and His apostles. We call this a “not-but” expression: a statement which denies one thing (which actually was true) in order to emphasize another part of his statement. Jesus said, “Work NOT for the food which perisheth BUT for the food which abideth unto eternal life” (Jn. 6:27). Paul wrote the Corinthians, “Christ sent me NOT to baptize BUT to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). Yet, all know we ARE to work for the food which perisheth, and all SHOULD know that Christ DID send Paul to baptize because Paul was equal to the twelve and under the same instructions as they and the Lord did say to them, “Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them ...” (Mt. 28:18).

Still, it is certain that Paul's greatest concern was for the church in Corinth. They could not continue to ignore the sin of the adulterous brother without the church losing its identity as the church of God, as well as the brother losing his soul. More than one soul was at stake in the sinful circumstances. They had obeyed Paul in times past — would

they follow his instructions regarding this sinful brother? By their putting away the wicked man from among themselves the brethren would help to restore the brother. Through his repentance he would make right his sins against his father and by their obedience they would show they still regarded Paul as an apostle of Jesus.

So, Paul and Titus were comforted! They rejoiced much as we rejoice today when a sincere soul confesses his faith in Jesus and is baptized into Him, or perhaps a brother who has fallen away, tearfully renounces his sins and seeks forgiveness for them. Heaven rejoices when sinners come to God (Lk. 15:7)!

By Paul's words, it is clear he had assured Titus he would be received well and that the brethren would speedily make necessary corrections. They had done so and Paul's expressed confidence in them proved to have been properly placed. He was both relieved and happy for the good news of them. No wonder the apostle writes: "I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you."

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