

Out Of The Mouth

“This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established. I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare, seeing ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me; who to you is not weak, but is powerful in you, for he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth through the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you. Try yourselves, whether ye are in the faith, prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves that Christ Jesus is in you? Unless indeed ye be reprobate. But I hope that ye shall know we are not reprobate” (2 Cor. 13:1-6).

It has been noted more than once, the uncertainty whether Paul had made a second visit to Corinth (just as there is some uncertainty whether a second letter before this one was sent to Corinth) but all the discussion pro and con of either a second prior visit or a previous second letter alters neither the inspiration of this letter nor diminishes the fact that the ills of Corinth: partyism, unrepentant sin, and the work of false teachers who sought to discredit the apostle were still uncorrected. The truth is: supposing that this letter is his third and this eminent impending visit is also his third only raised additional questions: if a second visit had been ineffective, what value could come from a third? One thing is certain: the charges of false teachers that Paul’s bodily presence was weak is about to be put to the test (2 Cor. 10:10). The apostle is coming prepared to use a rod if necessary to right the persistent false accusations against him and to correct any and all other ills still lingering among the brethren there.

Yet, whatever punishment he would inflict would be fair and just. Nothing would be done on either hearsay or third hand information. He would call forth two or three witnesses to confirm every charge which would be made against any brother there. Such proof was required under the law to establish a truth (Dt. 17:6); and was recognized by Jesus as necessary to fairly establish proof today (Mt. 18:15-17). Every charge Paul made against brethren would be fully proven; then appropriate discipline would be meted out. Furthermore Paul tells these brethren He will “clean house” — “I will not spare.”

Paul’s rendering just judgment was both right and necessary to do and in addition would meet the challenge of those who “sought a proof of Christ speaking in him” (2 Cor. 13:3). Those who asked for such a sign ignored a powerful sign they already had. Paul had just written, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience by signs and wonders and mighty works” (2 Cor. 12:12). They could hardly reject Paul as spurious without indicting the spiritual gifts they exercised also as spurious for those gifts came through him.

Paul calls attention to the fact they recognized Jesus as powerful, yet they could not deny Christ was crucified through weakness, yet he demonstrated his power by his resurrection. Perhaps Paul was weak in some respects; he was powerful because of the

powerful Christ (who was powerful, although crucified through weakness) who worked in him.

Although the Corinthians sought to test Paul, they would be better served by examining themselves! Jesus' words, and the application of them, would have saved both them and Paul the heartache caused by their challenge of him who brought the gospel to them. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Mt. 7:4-5). Did they know, or not know, whether Christ was in them indeed? Were they reprobate while challenging one whose credentials showed his standing with God? Paul hoped brethren would know he was not reprobate, for if they viewed him as such, it was they, not he, who were not in the faith and in whom Christ was not found.

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