

## Conclusion

“Now we pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we may appear approved, but that ye may do that which is honorable, though we be as reprobate. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we rejoice when we are weak and ye are strong: this we also pray for, even your perfection. For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down. Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted, be of the same mind; live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:7-14).

Paul’s sincere desire for the Corinthians is for them to do what is right and while, when they do that, the apostle’s authority will be manifested in their obedience to his instructions; it is not this latter he is most interested in; for their right standing and relationship with God is his most earnest concern. And even if their right and wholesome behavior should make Paul seem as powerless because it was unnecessary for him to exercise extreme discipline among them, he would welcome that implied, yet false, conclusion about his authority. As for that authority his words “we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth” are not to be taken as something impossible for Paul to do. Did he not write or say, regretfully, on more than one occasion of his having done just that before he became a Christian (cp. 1 Tim. 1:12f; Acts 26:9-11)? These words do not mean something possible for him to do, but something that in the pursuit of fulfilling his calling and ministry he could not do conscientiously as he sought to defend and promote the truth.

When he wrote, “We rejoice when we are weak and ye are strong: this we pray for, even your perfecting,” the “weakness” of which he writes is contrasted with the “strength” of the Corinthians. Some at Corinth, denying his apostleship and authority, were challenging him to show his strength and power. They ignored he had manifested that already in the gifts they had received through the laying on of his hands, and they really did not want to see his rod applied for what might that consist of: blindness such as was visited upon Elymas (Acts 13:9-11) or even death as suffered by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). Surely they did not want to see Paul’s power and authority demonstrated in such a way. And Paul rejoiced that if exercising no such extreme punishment would make him appear weak because the brethren were acting holy and right, he would rejoice. So he adds that he prays for their perfecting. Paul writes sharply when absent that he may not have to deal sharply when he arrives in their midst. For while Paul indisputably had power to “cast down,” this was never his desire nor aim. He wanted them to be built up.

And so Paul bids them “Farewell,” again urging that they be perfected, comforted, of the same mind one to another, to live in peace and he promises that should such be the result among them, then the God of love and peace would be with them. Therefore, they were to salute one another with a holy kiss.

Paul's final words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit" joins together the three persons of the Godhead. Paul does not often join these three together, but occasionally he does (cp. 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22).

Paul's epistle was sent ahead of him, probably by Titus. How long Paul waited before making his personal appearance in their midst we have no way to know. Certainly he waited until he was confident the letter had arrived and that the full effect of it would be seen in the lives of those to whom it was written before he would make his way to them. Naturally one cannot help wondering what the effect of the epistle was and while we have no record of that, there are certain things which imply Paul's words finally had the desired impact. First, they did make up their promised contribution for Jerusalem which they were such laggards about (Rom. 15:25-29) and the Roman letter, written from Corinth after this second letter, is a letter which does not reflect one greatly troubled in spirit, but rather with calmness and serenity both of which implies things were calm in Corinth. But these are only surmisings and we must wait for eternity to reveal answers to questions we have no definitive answers for.

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