

Having established his authority and ministry as an apostle of Jesus Christ Paul speaks very directly to the Corinthians. He has been very discreet when talking about himself but now he exerts his clout. He lays down an ultimatum. Either you clean up your own house or I will come and make you. I will not spare! Any among them who were hiding their sins would be exposed. The assembly would be coached by the apostle to deal with these persons. They could avoid an embarrassing public scene by repenting privately of sins not yet known to all. The assembly could avoid the awkwardness of a visitor having to prompt them to do their job. They have the Lord in their midst and His authority to investigate and act if sin is indeed exposed. They were to have just and orderly proceedings though. Every matter must be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. This procedure was required under the Law of Moses (Numbers 35:30, et al), but was also instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself while here on earth, Matthew 18:16. There He established our responsibility for brotherly care and the local assembly's authority and responsibility for exercising discipline if repentance was not forthcoming. Paul is reiterating this assembly responsibility here, as he already had directed in 1Corinthians 5, and 2Corinthians 2 and 7. There can be no doubt of our responsibilities along this line today as well. But the existence of Paul's epistles, especially this one, are living proof that bringing teaching and correction, and seeking restoration are the first priority. Exclusion of a sinning person is the last resort. But clearly the assembly is authorized and responsible to do it if necessary. Christ has promised to be in the midst to guide.

Paul again points out proof of Christ speaking in him. Apparently they were even questioning that. Surprise! The proof was themselves, their conversion. Were they in the faith? Why? Because he originally brought it to them. Had Christ spoken through him? Was He still? They apparently thought not because of his weak manner and appearance. But, he points out, Christ was crucified in weakness. And Christ is now alive, the resurrected Man in glory. He lives by the power of God. Resurrection power. They were not weak, need not be weak, but had access to the same power Paul had. That of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Christ was mighty in them. Paul would live (act) toward them, in the that same power, and that same weakness. They should live toward him in that same way. So should we. They knew Jesus Christ was in them, they but had to be reminded. If they examined themselves they would realize that. They certainly didn't view themselves as

reprobates (unaccepted by God). They had no doubt of that. So Paul builds on that fact to convict them of their foolish thinking regarding him. They had to acknowledge God's approval of him if they accepted God's approval of themselves.

This statement should not be used to urge that believers can once saved be lost. It has just the opposite thrust. Nevertheless some there perhaps were not really believers. Many **profess** to be Christians but some have never truly **confessed** themselves to be lost sinners and placed their personal trust directly in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and confessed Him as Lord. Their behavior certainly had raised questions in Paul's mind. Such should examine themselves whether they be in the faith and act to repent. Do it now!

Now Paul says "do no evil. Not that they should do no evil because it is what he wants, but that they would be found doing what was honest. If they did that, that was all that mattered to him. In his love for them he would be despised and counted as reprobate (lost) by them, if they could but be saved and walk with the Lord. This self sacrificing attitude reflects the Lord's sacrifice on the cross for us. Paul says something similar about Israel, Romans 9:3. Moses also loved Israel to the point he was willing to be blotted out of God's book if they could not be saved otherwise, Exodus 32:32. This Christlike attitude is an immense delight to God. We love because He first loved us.

Paul desired they be strong and perfect (complete). Bringing that about was his goal and mission. He didn't want to waste his time and spiritual energy "house cleaning" when it could go into "home decorating, building them up spiritually. Edification, not destruction, was his goal. But destroy he would if they would not judge themselves. And rebuild he would if given the opportunity.

So he bids them farewell. This letter was the second one coming to them before he did. Meanwhile he blesses them with some gentle admonitions. (We do well to follow his example and stay away if there is trouble somewhere, unless the Lord moves us to go to be of help.) Despite his sharp warning he bears only good will toward them, not ill will.

Be perfect (thoroughly complete),
 be of good comfort (*parakaleo*, allow the Spirit, and others, to come along side and help),
 be of one mind (the mind of Christ, see Philippians 2:5),
 live in peace (love will enable this),
 the God of love and peace shall be with you.
 Greet (or salute) one another with an holy kiss (with affectionate love as well as agape love).