

4 – FORGIVING AN OFFENDER (2 CORINTHIANS 2:3-11)

I. Paul's Prior Letter (2 Corinthians 2:3-4)

- Paul brought this point out in his prior letter to the Corinthians.
- Paul wrote that letter so that he would not have a painful experience with some.
- He expressed that he wrote that letter from the anguish of his heart for them.
- The purpose of the letter was to serve as a means of bringing loving correction.

II. The Issue of Forgiving an Offender (2 Corinthians 2:5-11)

A. The Impact of the Injury (2 Corinthians 2:5)

- Paul points out that the offender hurt not only the apostle, but the whole church.

Some scholars feel that the offender is the believer addressed in 1 Corinthians 5. It is very unlikely for two reasons: (1) Paul called for his excommunication. (2) The offense here does not seem to be a matter of immorality.

B. The Punishment (2 Corinthians 2:6)

- The offender was disciplined by the church as a whole.
- Paul saw the punishment as appropriate.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 18:15–17 (ESV)

¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

C. A Call to Forgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:7-8)

1. The Acceptance of the Penitent (2 Corinthians 2:7)

- The man had repented.
- The church still held the offense against the man.
- Paul tells them to forgive the repentant offender.
- Their lack of forgiveness would hurt the repentant offender.

God's Abundant Grace: Second Corinthians

- The point of discipline is restoration.

2. The Command to Forgive (2 Corinthians 2:8)

- Paul tells them to reaffirm their love and acceptance of this individual.

D. The Test of Obedience (2 Corinthians 2:9)

- Paul wrote them to test their obedience concerning this issue of forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is not an option for believers, but an issue of obedience.

E. The Need to Forgive (2 Corinthians 2:10-11)

1. Mutual Forgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:10)

- Paul stresses that whoever they forgive, he forgives.

2. Satanic Opposition (2 Corinthians 2:11)

- Satan will use the lack of forgiveness for his purposes against the church.