

In The Sight Of God Speak We In Christ

“Ye think all this time we are excusing ourselves unto you. In the sight of God speak we in Christ. But all things, beloved, are for your edifying. For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not such as I would, and should myself be found such as ye would not; lest by any means there should be strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults; lest again when I come my God should humble me before you, and I should mourn for many of them that have sinned heretofore and repented not the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed” (2 Cor. 12:19-21).

The words, “Ye think all this time we are excusing ourselves unto you” appears as a declarative statement in the ASV, while other translations (KJV, NKJV) phrase it as a question. Bear in mind that in the original manuscripts there were no punctuation marks so translators had to make a judgment whether it was a question or statement. Those who view it as a question think that in so doing it makes the apostle’s words seem somewhat softer, less harsh. But, while there might be uncertainty whether the phrase was intended to be a question or a statement, there is no uncertainty in the apostle’s meaning when he writes, “In the sight of God speak we in Christ.” The Father and the Son both knew the earnestness and sincerity of the apostle, nor did they doubt his motive in these letters the Spirit directed him to write. His aim and concern in whatever he wrote or did for the Corinthians’ was for their benefit and for their edification.

There follows, beginning in verse 20 through the chapter’s end, three things that Paul fears for Corinthians. He first wrote, “For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I shall find you such as I would not and should myself be found of you such as you would not ...” Paul’s concern was that he should find some of the Corinthians unrepentant and the sins he enumerates should be still present among them. And, should such be the case when he came, the Corinthians would find him in a way they would not like to see him. If he found them such as he would not, he would have to exercise discipline — use the rod among them and they would find such not to be to their liking; they would find Paul such as they would not.

His second fear was that he should find “strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults ...,” all which things would show that they were still very much divided among themselves as witnessed by the different evils which also accompany such divisions. It was their divisions which was the first ill he addressed among them in 1 Corinthians (1:10-14) and which came about through jealousy, wraths and factions, which spawned backbiting, harsh speaking, whispering, gossiping, swellings (likely puffed up with pride) and tumults — signifying disorder and unrighteousness. This Paul feared to find.

Then he expresses his third fear: “lest again which I come my God should humble me before you ...” To find any Corinthian in carnality would bring him low; he had spent much time and effort among them and such an unseemly situation would be an embarrassment for him and would show they had not developed into mature and faithful

saints. He feared such an humbling of himself would make him mourn for their uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness these brethren had practiced and of which they had not repented and if such were found among them would necessitate the use of a rod. Such fears weighed heavily on the apostle's heart.

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