

**I. Read II Corinthians 2:1-11**

- A. Read I Corinthians 5:1-13 as background for Paul's concern expressed in II Corinthians 2. A man had been involved in gross immorality. It was notorious (publicly known). Paul had encouraged the Corinthians to discipline him by excluding him from the fellowship of the church. Now he has evidently repented. Yet the Corinthians, who may have been reluctant to discipline him initially, refuse to forgive him. What does Paul give as the reason the Corinthians ought to forgive him? (v 6-7)

Why do you suppose the Corinthians might have been taking this sort of hard line against the penitent man?

- B. Read Galatians 6:1-2 and explain how the attitude toward a brother caught up in sin described in the passage contrasts with the attitude of the Corinthians.
- C. It is important to note that Paul (in II Corinthians 2) *is not* rebuking them for applying discipline initially. He is admonishing them to apply it wisely and compassionately, which in this case means forgiving the man and re-admitting him into the fellowship of the church. The reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century believed that proper discipline was one of the marks of the true church. Recall that in the Roman Catholic Church of that time, immorality among the clergy and particularly in Rome was rampant. Why do you suppose churches in our day are reluctant to apply discipline when needed?

*Note: "... Luther...was in Rome in the year 1511, being then an ardent young man of twenty-eight. His own words describe his emotion and the eager expectancy that thrilled him as he gazed upon the Eternal City. Falling down on his knees he cried aloud: 'I greet thee, Holy Rome, thrice holy from the blood of the martyrs that has been shed in thee!' But presently his dreams were rudely shattered. He found in Rome not the city of his devout and ardent hopes but a cesspool of corruption. He was impressed and appalled. As he afterwards said, 'I would not for a hundred thousand florins have missed seeing Rome. If I had not seen it myself, I might have been troubled lest I had been unjust to the Pope.' Thrilled with eager expectations he had entered the city: he departed from it a sadly disillusioned man. 'Adieu! Rome,' he said, 'let all who would live a holy life depart from Rome. Everything is permitted in Rome except to be an honest man.' The scales had*

*fallen from his eyes, though we must not take too literally Lindsay's rhetorical statement that he went to Rome 'a mediaeval theologian; he came back a Protestant.' It is sufficient to say that Luther's visit to Rome made an impression on him that he never forgot." (William Stevenson in The Story of the Reformation)*

D. What should the two-fold *purpose* of discipline within the church be?

Should discipline be punitive? (a means of punishment)

E. Read Matthew 18:15-20 and describe the proper steps of biblical discipline within the church.

F. Is there a *proactive preliminary* step in church discipline which may reduce the instances in which discipline is necessary?

G. What are some *isms* in our contemporary culture that militate against even the mildest form of accountability in churches?

H. Is there a rule of thumb that believers who take the Word of God seriously could apply to each and every circumstance in which the application of discipline might be considered?

I. In II Corinthians 2:11, Paul mentions the "schemes" of Satan. What does he mean?

