

2 Corinthians 13

13 This will be my third visit to you. “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others,

In verse 1, Paul reminds them that this will be his third visit to Corinth. He came the first time and planted the church and he stayed for 1 ½ years. Then he went to Corinth a second time after he had beaten them up with his first letter. And now this will be the third visit. You can tell by his tone through this letter that he is reaching the end of his patience with them. He is using more and more sarcasm with each chapter.

He quotes Deuteronomy 19:15. It looks out of place but he is referencing that fact that this is his third visit. He has witnessed their improper behavior the first two times. So he has met the letter of the law that he has quoted. This time he isn't coming to witness their bad behavior, he is coming to judge it.

In verse 2, he confirms this interpretation. He says that he has warned them twice and now in this letter he is warning them again, while he is absent from them. In the previous chapters, the Corinthians have complained that when he is with them, he was weak but in his letters he speaks boldly. At the end of verse 2, he warns them that he is going to be bold in person.

He says that he “*will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others.*” He is coming to take corrective actions. One theologian said of these verses that if you rebel against God's appointed messenger then you are rebelling against God himself.

³ since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

In verse 3, Paul says that he will give them proof that everything that he has taught them and written to them has come from Jesus. He is saying, “You want to see power, then you will see the power of Jesus in me!” In the second part of verse 3, Paul essentially says what it says in Revelation 19:15. Jesus came the first time to “*seek and to save*” or as a servant leader. When Christ returns or even in heaven, he has the full power and authority of God. “*He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.*”

In verse 4, Paul says that Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified in weakness or as it says in Isaiah 53, “*he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*” As Paul continues in verse 4, he reiterates that Jesus has the full power of God at His disposal and Paul is willing to use the power of God in dealing with these false teachers and those that believe them.

⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

In verse 5, Paul tells them to examine themselves first. Jesus said it this way in John 7:3-5, “*3 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.*” Make sure that there isn’t a problem between you and Jesus before you judge someone else.

He wants them to make sure that they truly are following Jesus and are truly putting their faith in Jesus as their savior. It is easy to criticize someone else but before you do, Paul says check yourself first. In Galatians 6:4, Paul said, “*Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else.*”

“To examine yourself, in fact, is to submit to the examination and scrutiny of Jesus Christ the Lord — and this never to fix attention on sin but on Christ — and to ask Him to reveal that in you which grieves His Spirit; to ask Him to give you grace that it might be put away and cleansed in His precious blood.” Self examination “takes the chill away from your soul, it takes the hardness away from your heart, it takes the shadows away from your life, it sets the prisoner free.” (Redpath)

What is truly in your heart is not visible to others but you can know what is in your own heart. You know whether your motives are for personal gain or whether or not you are following Jesus. Are you doing what is right or are you putting on a front to impress others? Jesus knows.

We have used Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11) several times in our study of Corinthians. They told everyone that they were giving everything but they were holding some of their money back. No one knew but God and them. They were willing to bet their lives on the fact that no one would find out.

Here in verse 5, Paul reminds them that “*Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you?*” If you fail the test, then you are not a true believer, just a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

In verse 6, Paul says that he hopes “*they do not fail the test*”. Based on the fact that at least some of the Corinthians are attacking and judging Paul, he fully expects some of them will fail, if they judge themselves correctly.

⁷ Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We are glad whenever we are weak but

you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. ¹⁰ This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

In verse 7, Paul is saying that if they failed the test, he hopes they will not refuse correction. If we are really wrong to the point that we doubt that we are Christians, then we must repent and get right with God. If we still believe that Christ is in us, then we have to do what 1 John 1:9 says, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*”

In verse 8, Paul says that as true apostle of Christ, he is on the side of truth. Since he is on the side of truth then he cannot do anything contrary or against the truth. As recorded in John 14:6, Jesus is *the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” If Jesus is the truth, a believer has to be on the side of Jesus, who is the truth. The false teachers or so called “super-apostles” were teaching a false gospel so they were not on the side of truth. They worked against the truth.

In verse 9, Paul says that he is glad when his weakness contributes to their strength in Christ. In Chapter 12 verse 9, Paul said that Jesus said to him, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.*” Here Paul wants his weakness to help bring the Corinthian believers to completeness. If they can have a better relationship with Jesus, Paul will be blessed by it.

In verse 10, Paul says that he has the authority that Jesus gave him. He wants to use that authority to build them up and not tear them down. If he can be rough on them in his letter so that they get straightened out before he arrives in Corinth. It comes down to correction versus edification.

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God’s people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

These verses fall under a title, “Final Greetings” in my Bible. In verse 11, Paul used the Greek word, ‘*chaírō*’, “Farewell is much better translated *rejoice*. Even though Paul has been severe with the Corinthian Christians, all was written to the end that they would enjoy the joy of walking in a right relationship with God.” (Guzik)

“Paul listed five exhortations followed by a promise of divine blessing.” (Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians)

The 5 exhortations or encouragements are:

- a. Farewell or rejoice

- b. Strive for full restoration or be made complete
- c. Encourage one another or be comforted
- d. Be of one mind or be like-minded
- e. Live in peace.

The promise of divine blessing: “And the God of love and peace will be with you.”

In verse 12, Paul says, “*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*” “The idea of greeting one another with a holy kiss was common in that ancient culture. Our cultural equivalent is a handshake or a hug and a warm greeting.”

In verse 13, Paul sends the Corinthian church greetings from Paul’s missionary team and the believers that he sees on a daily basis.

Finally, Paul ends the letter with a “trinitarian benediction”, “*the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*”