

2 Corinthians 13

Verses 1-2:

--(1) Paul is continuing his discussion about arriving and dealing with the unrepentant sin in the church. He lets them know that he will not be dealing simply with heresy but that direct witnesses will be brought forward.

--The basic standard of two or three witnesses is held throughout the Bible:

--Established in the OT: **Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15**

--Taught by Christ:

Matthew 18:16: *But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

John 8:17-18: *It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.*

--Repeated by the inspired writers of the NT: **1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28**

--The apostles were not omniscient. Paul had direct firsthand accounts from some in the church like the household of Chloe, had at least one letter written in their own words, and had heard from men like Timothy and Titus that he sent to Corinth. **Always two sides to a story so this basic practice adds safety for the accused and accuser.**

--(2) Paul is saying that these issues have been addressed and at this point the sins of rebellion and unrepentance needed to be dealt with. He warns that this time: ***I will not spare.*** . . . where previously he had purposefully given them space to repent.

1:23: *Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth.*

--When someone who claims to be a Christian is living in open sin there will come a point where a choice must be made. No man can serve two masters. This was that point for those in Corinth.

Verses 3-4:

--(3) Apparently, the Corinthians wanted proof that Christ was speaking through Paul but Paul warns them that Christ is mighty in His actions ***toward*** them and ***in*** them.

--Their doubt and rejection of Paul—since Christ was speaking through him—was a rejection of Christ. Sinners can fool themselves in their ability to manipulate or deceive men but no one can play God. God didn't need Paul to act. God will act for Himself.

--(4) Paul then makes a comparison between the life of Christ on earth and the life of Christ in believers like himself. That being, Christ died in the weakness of men but lives in the power of God. In like manner, Paul may be weak or seem weak as a man, but the living power of God worked through him. Paul knew this principle well.

1 Corinthians 1:25: *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

Verses 5-6:

--That being so, Paul turns the examination around on those that were unfairly and dishonestly testing him! The word for **examine** means *to try or test a thing* and is most often translated *tempt* in the NT. The word for **test** is similar and is most often translated *prove*.

--What was the test or proof these Corinthians were to be looking for? How would they know if they were actually **in the faith**? Paul's answer—**Jesus Christ is in you!**

--Introspection hunting for sin is a troubling practice. We can all find too much of it if we are honest! Self-examination without self-deception is impossible without the light of the Holy Spirit. Know man can know himself truly without the Creator's help. ***Ps. 139:23-24***

--So what are we examining, proving, or looking for? Jesus Christ in us!

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

--Is the life of Jesus Christ evident in me? Do I have actions and desires that I cannot account for other than a supernatural gift of life and a Spirit other than my own?

--This is more than repeating correct doctrines or creeds. This is more than segmented portions of religious actions in our weekly practice. This is even more than good works—though it is proved by its works.

--Can you look at your life and say this is when the Spirit of Jesus Christ began to live in me? This is when I became different. I know of many who grew up in the church and cannot tell you if they were saved in their youth but they can tell you when they were changed!

--Christianity is a quality of life not a formal set of religious tenets. Examine yourself. Do you have the Spirit of Christ living in you—everyday, all week, eternally?

Romans 8:9: Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

--Don't just assume. Examine! Prove! Is your life what Christ would live through you? If not, beware that you are not **disqualified** or *reprobate*. The idea is—not passing the test.

--Paul believed these Corinthians believers could figure that out for themselves and see it clearly in his own life. He didn't think this test was nebulous. If it is, then it is likely you are not actually born again and you need to repent of your Christless life and ask Jesus to make you into a new creation by His grace.

Verse 7:

--Paul didn't desire their honorable behavior to build up his own image. In fact, Paul would be happy to be unable to prove the spiritual authority invested in him by use of the rod. He didn't mind looking weak or **disqualified**. He wasn't out to "prove" himself. ***Isn't this how all parents should feel!***

--Paul didn't relish the idea of supernatural authority being expressed in judgment. He would rather their simple obedience to Christ! ***Think Moses and Korah***

Verse 8:

--This is a wonderful encouragement for any servant of the Lord. In the end, the truth will have its way. All opposition to the truth will fail.

--This is important for us today because our culture is at war with the truth of God. People fear quoting a verse like this. Speaking about the truth—as truth—seems so unloving. Especially religious truth.

--To speak the truth with confidence is seen as bigotry. To divide over the truth is seen as hypocritical. To hurt people's feelings with the truth is seen as hate. If there even is any truth at all we must hold it very lightly—and hold it in majority—and we must insist that there is no scent of intolerance about it all. The truth is not something to be overly confident about, divide over, hurt feelings with and the truth certainly isn't something worth dying for! *Of course if this is true—it's not—then why live for the truth either?*

--If we really knew enough, if we were loving enough, if we were modest enough, if we were as understanding as we should be, truth would be held very lightly by each individual and all truth would make us happy. Today, we are much too modest to believe in truth itself. The truth can do nothing *against us*, the truth works *for us*.

--Of course that is not what Paul said. ***For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.***

--Nothing about the deconstruction of our modern day and age is new!

*Saphir (Our Life-Day): *“Christian maturity shows itself in knowledge. We are to be men in understanding. The apostolic prayer is, that believers may be filled with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. We are to “go on to perfection.” We have received the unction from above, from the Holy One, and therefore possess the power to know all things. It is through the truth that the Father sanctifies us. Growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ is the necessary manifestation of life. This knowledge increases not merely in compass, but in depth; it assumes the character of intense conviction. In this respect mature Christians form a strong contrast to a peculiarity of our present age. A keen observer thus describes this feature of our day: “A weak generation feels it pleasant to be waved to and fro by every wind of doctrine; a childish and effeminate race deems it an advantage to have no fixed conviction, and would find it tiresome to continue with life-long loyalty in the one truth, and to find peace in the one thought.”*

*“It is constant change—the intellectual activity and excitement in the search after truth, and not truth itself—which is their great object. Hence words, brilliant and subtle dialectics, negative doubts, and attacks on old opinions afford the nutriment of many minds. This tendency affects even Christians; but God has revealed to us by His Spirit Himself and the spiritual realities of His heavenly kingdom. We know the things freely given to us of God. Jesus is the Truth. And the Spirit, whom we have received, leads us into the whole truth, according to the Savior's promise. It does not become the Christian, with Christ his light, with the Holy Ghost his teacher, with Scripture his manual, to speak as the children of the age, who possess opinions, but not truth; who, seeking to establish a wisdom of their own, have not submitted themselves to the wisdom of God. But to be established in the truth is the characteristic of Christian manhood, the result of diligent, earnest, and conscientious study of God's word.”**

--We can do nothing against the truth because Jesus Christ is the Truth. He did not say, *What I say is truth*. Jesus claimed to be truth itself. He, as the Origin of truth is greater even than the revelation of truth that we have. There is greater depths of truth in Him than we know!

--Pilate once looked at Jesus and asked, *What is truth?* And Jesus just stood before him. It is the truth that Jesus is the Truth. The only Truth that ever has been and ever will be. There is nothing you can do against Him. His will, His thoughts, His truth will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

*Kreeft (Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Heaven):

Why Only One Way?

Jesus' "only One Way" teaching makes no sense if religion is for subjective comfort, not for objective truth. It also makes no sense if religion is a human way up to God, not a divine way down to us. For most human things are at root equal: races, civilizations, politics, arts, cultures. It is sheer imperialism to insist that only one man-made road up the divine mountain is the right road and all others are wrong. But Christ does not claim to be a man who became God but God become Man. "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man." Christianity claims to be the road God made down, not the road we made up. That's why the "One Way" claim is necessary: because we are only repeating the message God gave us—we are mailmen, not authors.

*It makes sense for God to make just one road. He starts from unity, from the top of the mountain. We start from diversity, from the bottom. Diverse human religions are indeed equal: equally failures.**

--You and I are called to speak the truth in love. We must not fear speaking the truth as the truth. The world is desperately in need of truth! There is always a temptation to water down the miraculous truth of God. Don't speak the truth of God with the "high magic" taken out of it!

John 4:13-14: Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 7:37-38: On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

John 11:25: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?

--Jesus, the Truth, spoke with what I called earlier "high magic," though it is nothing more than Biblical life. Life that is supernatural, a mystery, and something that can only come to us from the truth of His reality. It is not our job to rationalize or segment or water-down His truth for anyone else. The truth is that Jesus promised to take care of His own truth.

John 16:13: However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

--Paul knew he had not need to defend the truth. The truth would take care of itself.

Verses 9-10:

--Again, Paul is speaking of being weak as Moses may have seemed without the supernatural evidence of God's power in him. *Moses was challenged by the people, leaders, and family!*

--Paul simply wanted this church to be **complete**. This is a unique word used only here in the NT. It has the idea of *being properly fitted together*.

--So Paul was writing sharply because he would rather have them repentant hearing his letter than have to use spiritual authority in person. Again, Paul knew his authority was from the Lord and was given to build up not tear down.

Verse 11:

--These are quick exhortations that would remind them of all he covered.

1) **Become complete**: The idea is to become mature by conforming to the divine pattern.

2) **Be of good comfort**: Paul wanted them encouraged despite all the issues. God was with them as the God of all Comfort.

3) **Be of one mind**: In regard to the truth, purpose, and obedience to the Lord.

4) **Live in peace**: With God and men.

--Doing so would open the door to experientially know the God of love and peace.

Verses 12-13:

--The emphasis for us should be **greet** not **kiss**. This being the type of greeting that leaves no one out and that engenders brotherly love. *Even more important in a large congregation like our own where it is easy to slip in and slip out.*

Matthew 5:47: And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

Verse 14:

--I believe Paul expresses this wonderful truth in the process in which we receive it.

--First, we see in Christ the grace of God coming to us, dying for us, and living as us.

--Second, we come to know in Christ the Fatherhood of God and the Fatherly love which sent the Son and was embodied in His life.

--Third, we realize that we can only know these things through divine power. Who could possibly teach us divine truths about divine persons but divinity? How do we know what we know? Only by the communion of the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus Christ.

--And the last few words are so important! **Be with you all!** Paul makes sure that these Corinthians know that all of Him is for all of us. There is no divided sum of God where one gets the less because another has more. God is not a monetary inheritance or a dessert that needs to be shared and sectioned off.

--All three are all for me. All of the grace of Jesus Christ. All of the love of God. All of the communion of the Holy Spirit. All of God for each of us!

--And shouldn't the experience of this truth do something in us? If we live in Him shouldn't that also make us more gracious, more loving, and more holy?

--God plays no favorites. We all have as much of Him as we want. Do you want more of God? He has already offered Himself freely. Ask, Seek, Knock, and draw near.

Tozer (The Pursuit of God): "Acute desire must present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain."