

II Corinthians Lesson 13

II Cor. Chapter 13

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Memory verses for this week: *2 Pet 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

Introduction: Last week in Chapter 12, Paul further validated his apostleship by telling of the visions and revelations God had given to him after his salvation. He warned the church to follow in the true doctrine, and to be sure that the teachings were not contrary to scripture. We conclude our study of II Corinthians this week. Chapter 13 contains some fairly frank advice from the Apostle to some in the Corinthian church to consider if they were in fact in the faith. There is more personal admonition dealing with being direct by letter so that he need not do so in person. The epistle concludes with personal greetings and an invocation of God's grace to them.

I. The Proof of Christ by Paul

2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. 2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: 3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

The Apostle Paul announces his impending arrival. As we discussed last week, this may have been his third visit or at the least his third attempt to visit them. With perhaps some connection to that, he quoted from Deuteronomy 19:15, In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. He, Titus, and other companions would be witnesses even according to the Mosaic law. The error of their ways would be established upon his arrival.

Chapter 13 documents Paul's final appeal to the Corinthian church.

His thought is that he had warned them before and was now warning them again in writing that if and when he came he would not spare those who had sinned. They would face his wrath. Also, there is further hint that he had in fact been there twice already though it could be construed to be his second written warning.

This was a church with a wide diversity in its membership. The vast majority

were living for God and had corrected the errors Paul had pointed out, especially in his first letter to them. But there were a few who were disobedient. This letter is of a different tone. To those who were following Christ, he gave them warm affection. But those who were disobedient, he attacked with sharpness and warnings. Paul again speaks of his prospective visit to Corinth and declares that he will not spare those who are guilty of sin when he comes. Many of the disobedient had questioned his apostleship, and they sought proof of Christ speaking through him. Perhaps the greatest proof of Jesus Christ working through Paul was the changed lives of the many who had accepted Christ and were living for him in the city.

The great Apostle one more time confronts those who questioned his apostolic authority: Referring back to Christ, Paul continued, "which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you". They full-well knew the power of God thru the gospel for they had experienced it themselves. Therefore, since they sought a proof of Christ speaking through him, that proof would he give.

2 Cor 13:4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

Paul's answer was clear: "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you". Even as Christ was crucified in voluntary weakness, He now lives by the power of God. Paul and his associates also were weak humanly. However, they also lived and fulfilled their ministries by the power of God.

Paul uses a contrast here when he says that Christ was crucified through weakness, but now lives by the power of God. While Christ was crucified through his humble willingness to go to the cross, He could have stopped the crucifixion at anytime if he had desired. He had the power to lay down His life and He had power to take it up again. He could have called a legion of angels and been taken from their midst, but he chose rather to die that you and I might have a means of salvation. To him, we owe it all.

John 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Psa 91:11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

John 19:10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? John 19:11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no

power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Mat 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Mat 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

Mat 26:54 But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

When Paul spoke of weakness, he was referring to the fleshly body.

Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

While it is true that Christ was crucified on Calvary and died, what sets Christianity apart from all other religions is that we do not worship a dead God. Christ came out of the tomb, and we have a heavenly mediator that lives in resurrection power. What a hope the child of God has for tomorrow.

II. The Call for Self-Examination by Paul

2 Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

The peak of Paul's case is now in view. His critics had challenged Paul to prove his apostolic authority. He turns the tables on them and directs them rather to examine themselves. He challenged them to prove they in fact were in the faith. Determine if you are really saved. Demonstrate if Christ is really in you. The alternative is lest they be reprobates.

In short, Paul confronted his hostile critics with the question, are you really saved? Are you really in the faith? Does Christ truly dwell within you? If not, you have failed the test. You are not truly His. That is a serious consideration even to this day. His critics had shown such hostility to the truth and things spiritual, they really evidenced no working of the Spirit of God in them. To the contrary, they manifested all the symptoms of an unsaved person.

Every Christian has the responsibility to examine themselves. Paul warned that if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. And when we have proper self-examination, it keeps us from being chastened by God's hand. We are bought with a price, and we are to glorify God with our bodies. We many times don't like to examine ourselves because we find that we are not up to the standards God would have us to be.

1 Corinthians 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

2 Cor 13:6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. 7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

Paul to the contrary noted that they have not failed that test. Though Paul had doubts about the salvation of his critics, there was no question in his mind regarding his own. Paul prayed for them that they no longer do wrong.

He had no desire to exercise his apostolic authority and 'appear approved.' He far rather would have them do right and deny him the opportunity of asserting his apostolic authority in reprimanding them. In verse 8, the Apostle then comments, "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth". His thought simply is that he would do nothing to thwart the truth. Rather, he only could and would promote the truth of the gospel.

When we examine ourselves, and compare ourselves to Christ, it helps us to recognize the truth in fellow Christians. We see if their lives align with the Word and if they are living the way Christ would have them to. He says that we can not do anything against the truth, but for the truth. This is not saying those that are in opposition do not have an effect, but they can not overcome the truth. Men's works with come to naught, but The work of God shall stand forever.

Acts 5:38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

Acts 5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

J Vernon McGee made a good comment on verse 8.

Here is another great truth we should mark well. My friend, you can't do anything against the truth. That is why I don't worry about folk who are disagreeing about the Word of God. They cannot do anything against the truth. We should declare the Word of God and not spend our time defending it. God doesn't ask us to defend it. He asks us to declare it, to give it out.

This is so true. Whether someone believes God's word is true, whether we believe it is true, does not change the truth. It is true.

2 Cor 13:9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection. 10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Paul sought to place their relationship in its proper perspective. For his part, he was happy to be weak and see them strong. His greater desire was for their perfection. The word so translated (katartisiv katartisis) relates to the process of spiritual maturity: training, disciplining, and instruction, resulting in full spiritual development (i.e., perfection). That was his goal.

That is why he had been so direct. Paul wrote so pointedly in absentia in order that he would not have to be sharp in person. The Lord had given to him the privilege to edify them. His purpose surely was not destructive. He, however, had to confront the error present and destroy it before he could properly strengthen them. It was like a cancer which had to be cut out before they could recover and regain their spiritual strength.

When we examine ourselves, we find what our weaknesses are. And then, by coming to God for strength, we can become strong in his power and might. Paul desired that everyone strive for perfection, as Christ was perfect. When you set your sights on Christ, you have an example that will never fail you, and no greater example will ever be found. The power Paul was granted by God was not given for just tearing down and destroying, but was for building up. We spoke of how true teachers of God's word always build up the people. False teachers seek for division and to tear down. Sometimes, when sin is in a person's life, there first has to be a "tearing down" before there can be a building up. But God gives us wisdom concerning those things, and we confront only when we are led by the Lord to do so, and always in a spirit of love and restoration.

Zec 4:5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

Zec 4:6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Matthew Henry had this to say about these verses.

Verses 7-10. The most desirable thing we can ask of God, for ourselves and our friends, is to be kept from sin, that we and they may not do evil.

We have far more need to pray that we may not do evil, than that we may not suffer evil. The apostle not only desired that they might be kept from sin, but also that they might grow in grace, and increase in holiness. We are earnestly to pray to God for those we caution, that they may cease to do evil, and learn to do well; and we should be glad for others to be strong in the grace of Christ, though it may be the means of showing our own weakness. let us also pray that we may be enabled to make a proper use of all our talents.

“Even your perfection” does not mean perfect as we usually think of perfection, but it means maturity. He wishes them to be mature Christians. He wants them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. We still hear that expression today—“Why don’t you grow up?” That is what Paul is saying to them. Grow up in Christ!

III. The Final Farewell by Paul

2 Cor 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

The conclusion of the epistle is at hand. In spite of all the sharpness Paul had been forced to use, he concludes by urging them to rejoice. In that same vein, he issues four closing imperatives.

(1) Be perfect. The word so translated (kata- rtizw katartizo) has the sense of ‘mature’ or ‘spiritually complete.’

(2) Be of good comfort. The Apostle essentially ends the epistle where he began, by urging them to be encouraged.

(3) Be of one mind. The injunction to seek unity was sorely needed in the Corinthian church. And then,

(4) live in peace.

Of all churches, the Corinthian church needed to pay heed to this injunction. Satan will always seek to drive a wedge of division into the slightest rift between God’s people. As they so followed these injunctions, Paul via the Holy Spirit promised, and the God of peace shall be with you. A sweet principle is at hand. As Christian people seek unity to be at peace one with another, the God of peace will especially be with them.

In the conclusion of the book of II Corinthians, Paul urges the church to do several things. He wants them to be perfect. They must grow spiritually and let God work through them. Only by the blood of Christ is anyone made perfect before God.

Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Heb 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

Heb 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

Heb 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Heb 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Heb 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

Heb 10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

Heb 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Heb 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Heb 10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

Heb 10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Heb 10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

Heb 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Paul wanted them to be of good comfort, and to be of one mind. We are to mind heavenly things, and to have the mind of Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Cor 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

1 Cor 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Paul tells them that if they do these things, be perfect, be of good comfort, and have one mind, they will live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with them.

2 Cor 13:12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

One final injunction is issued. "Greet one another with an holy kiss". A holy kiss was an eastern practice found in Jewish synagogues wherein greetings were exchanged by kissing another on the cheek. This practice continued in the early church and continues to this day in the eastern world. It is more cultural than spiritual. Its practice in the west has been largely dropped.

2 Cor 13:13 All the saints salute you. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Do you think Paul might have been from the south like us? He ends his last sentence with "you all" which is very common for we southerners. It is interesting, but just a term of speech. How many of you greeted everyone with a holy kiss when you came into the assembly this morning? I'm afraid that things were substantially different in Paul's day and their customs are not much like ours in America today. But today, we greet one another with a salutation and a handshake. In Paul's day, they did greet one another with a holy kiss. This symbolized the true love that they had one for the other as Christians. Paul says that all the saints (the saved people of the churches) salute them. He asks that the Holy Trinity be with them. The Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Ghost.

Paul refers to the brethren likely in Philippi and no doubt other churches as well. "All the saints salute you". As is customary in so many of Paul's epistles, he concludes with an invocation of God's grace. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen".

Here, the apostle touches upon each member of the Trinity in invoking the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to them. The Epistle concludes with the appropriate amen 'so be it.'

1 [The second *epistle* to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas.>]3065]

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.