

The Book of 2nd Corinthians

Chapter 13:1-14

March 28, 1999

- **Outline of 2nd Corinthians:**

- Chapter 1 God equips His people through trial, comfort and perseverance.
- Chapter 2 Restore fellowship to the repentant; One aroma, two response.
- Chapter 3 The glorious covenants
- Chapter 4 The Light of the Glory of Christ
- Chapter 5 Longing to be further clothed; Christ died for the world
- Chapter 6 Faithfulness in persecution; Separation from the World
- Chapter 7 Godly sorrow leads to repentance.
- Chapter 8 Gracious giving abounds from grace received.
- Chapter 9 Sparse sowing yields sparse reaping.
- Chapter 10 Weapons of war; Spheres of authority.
- Chapter 11 Uncovering the false teachers.
- Chapter 12 Authentic Apostles; Sufficient grace
- Chapter 13 Exhortation to faithfulness; examine yourselves

- **Review & Introduction**

One of the central reasons why Paul wrote this letter to the church at Corinth was to prepare them for his third visit. The preparation was to consist of them dealing with those in the church who were divisive, heretical teachers. As we have seen, these teachings hinged on undermining the creditability and authenticity of Paul's ministry. In this chapter, Paul will conclude by restating his expectations for the church and with warnings to those who were faithless. This is again a manifestation of the love that Paul had for the Church. He was willing to do whatever the Lord would call him to so as to ensure the purity and protection of this bride.

- **Exposition of 2nd Corinthians 13:1 - 14**

This will be the third time I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."² I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare—³ since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

- We can see that Paul's intentions are to conduct court proceedings against those who are unrepentant. Quoting a familiar principle of such proceedings, Paul states that all of the testimony will be established by two or three witnesses just as Jesus had done in Matthew 18:16. Some have contended that because this was Paul's third visit that each of his visits would serve as witnesses to the facts of the case. This does not seem likely because it escapes the clear, high-bar requirements for due process. Instead, Paul would be calling upon others in the church to establish all of the facts necessary for the proceeding.
- Apparently the opponents of Paul were questioning whether Christ was truly manifest in Paul's ministry. He instructs them not to confuse his personal weakness with the mightiness of Christ. When it comes to protecting the faithful whom the Father has given to the Son, the Son has promised to protect and purify so that all will be raised up to glory at the last day. This assurance will become manifest in Paul gloriously when he comes to deal with the false teachers.

4 For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives 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.

- In a similar manner, they should not confuse the meekness which Christ demonstrated in submitting to the Father as a servant on the cross with the fact that He now sits at the right hand of the Father wielding all authority in heaven and on earth. Because true believers are placed in Christ, they too have the power of God made manifest in their lives despite their own apparent weakness.

5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.⁶ But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

- Given that the regenerate shall live with Christ with the power of God, we should examine ourselves to see if this power has been made manifest. If anyone has been placed in Christ, there will be fruit. Too frequently we simply demonstrate our gullibility when asked whether someone is a Christian or not. Although we have hopes of their conversion, these hopes should not confuse the fact that when someone is placed in Christ, the power of God is made evident. Regeneration does not come without effect. When the Spirit of God moves, although you can't see where it came from or where it

goes, you can see the effects of its work. John 3:7-8.

- But what should we look for in this test for conclusive evidence? John appears to answer this question in 1 John 5:13. But what does he say are the distinguishable marks of true believers? Here is a summary:

- Walks in the light as He is in the light (1:7)
- Acknowledges sinfulness (1:8)
- Keeps the commandments of God (2:3; 5:2-3)
- Loves the brethren (2:9)
- Hates the world, that is, the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life (2:15)
- Confesses that Jesus is the Christ (2:22)
- Those who abide in Him do not live in sin (3:6)
- Would lay down his life for the brethren (3:16)
- Confesses the incarnation of Christ (4:2)

7 Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified.⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

- Paul prays to God for the faithfulness of the church at Corinth. The essence of this prayer is that God would work faithfulness into the church and that as a result, the church will manifest this in-working by outward acts of obedience.
- Paul's primary concern is not his reputation. Regardless of whether they ultimately restore their fondness of Paul or not or whether they believe him to be a true Apostle or not, he implores them to act honorably by taking care of the discipline that is needed. Ultimately speaking, even if they choose disobedience, or even if they choose to disregard Paul, the entire truth will someday be known and clearly evident to all. Therefore, because God is God and He is Truth, falsehood, lies and treachery will not prevail.

9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.¹⁰ Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

- Paul would gladly take reputation of being weak or discredited if it meant that Christ was shown to be strong in them by their faithfulness. Even though he clearly would not be worthy of such a calumnious reputation, Paul's love for the church is made evident by the fact that he simply wishes glorious faithfulness to be evident in this church.
- He would rather have the church deal with those false teachers in the church rather than have him do it. But he wants it to be very clear that he will wield his authority given to him by the Lord over them for their edification.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, 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 the saints greet you.¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. NKJV

- Through all of the correction and discipline that is necessary at this church, Paul instructs them to be like-minded, peaceful and restored. The word for complete means to be restored, whole or perfect. The tolerance of heresy in the church has caused divisions and fellowship cannot be restored until their obedience is complete.
- Paul concludes with a grand Trinitarian exhortation. Paul wishes for them the grace of Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Spirit. The church is made complete by the completeness of our God. In all ways He has made provision for us. We also see that here we have a command to manifest that which God supplies. They have been commanded to live in peace and God is the source of all peace. They have been commanded to love and God is love. God works it into us and therefore, by faith (also supplied by Him) we work it out.