

TITLE: PAUL'S CONCLUSION
TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 13

INTRO: As we come to the conclusion of Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians, we recall how straightforward he was in 1 Cor about the problems they had. Now in his 2nd letter, he says that he's going to take care of business when he visits, showing the toughness some claimed he didn't have.

I. PAUL'S FINAL WARNINGS (v. 1-4):

(v. 1) *This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.*

1. This continues from **12:20-21**. Third time (again, not sure of the 2nd, and it doesn't matter).
2. 2 or 3 witnesses – OT & NT principle: **Deut 19:15**–“*One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin...at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established*” (**Mt 18:16; 1 Tim 5:19**). When Paul arrives, he'll see if what others (e.g., Chloe–**1 Cor 1:11**) are saying is true (Paul will be, at least, the 2nd witness).

(v. 2) *I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were (“as being”) 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:*

1. I have told you before (in person; in letter) and foretell (forewarn) as being present the 2nd time, and being absent now I write.... The Greek (& the different translations) make it difficult to tell if Paul had actually been there twice before, but it doesn't matter!
2. Paul has given ample opportunity to those who have sinned (**12:20-21**), & to all the rest; now he will not spare (forbear, abstain, treat leniently). In **1:23** he said he had spared them by his delayed visit. Now he's warned them enough & will come w/rebuke!

(v. 3-4) *Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. 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.* In response to his charges against them, some denied his apostleship (he already answered this in **12:12**). Now he reminds them of Christ - crucified through weakness –weakness put Jesus on the cross (weakness of the people, of Pilate; sins in general – **1 Pet 2:24**), but the power of God raised him. Likewise, it's this same power that Paul has & uses.

II. PAUL'S FINAL ENCOURAGEMENTS (v. 5-10):

A. EXAMINE YOURSELVES (v. 5-6)

(v. 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?* This is the key verse of the whole letter! This is how congregations can get on the right path.

1. Examine (test, prove, scrutinize –in a positive or negative way; usually negative–“tempt”; cf. **Jam 1:12**). You've made charges against me & I've answered them. I've also made charges against you. So look at yourself & see whether or not you're in the faith. You can fool people sometimes, but you know yourself (and God surely knows)!
 2. If these accusations are true (and they are), then clearly you are **NOT** in the faith, Christ is **NOT** in you, you're reprobates (unapproved – a negation of the word “prove” in this verse). [If OSAS were true, this verse couldn't be here!]
 3. If a brother lovingly confronts you about your sin, don't get angry; just test yourself! Is this accusation true? If so, **fix it!**
- (v. 6)** *But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.* In doing this you'll see that we are *not* unapproved!

B. EXAMINE US (v. 7-10)

(v. 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.* Paul's prayer was always that the brethren make right decisions – decisions that will get them to Heaven. He wanted them to do what's honest, regardless of what is said about him (“though we be as reprobates”).

(v. 8) *For we (the apostles) can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.* We are on the side of truth, and can (will) do nothing against it (this was true as long as they chose to accept God's calling as apostles). Contextually, “if you repent, you have nothing to worry about. But if you don't, it is in accordance with truth that church discipline will be exercised!”

(v. 9) *For we are glad, when we are weak, & ye are strong: & this also we wish, even your perfection (repair, restore, complete).*

1. **1 Cor 4:10**–Paul had spoken sarcastically in about his weakness & their strength. But this may not be sarcasm here.
2. **11:23-33; 12:6-10**–Paul had also spoken of his personal weaknesses in trying to help them. His ultimate goal was their strength & perfection (completion – which includes repentance). If their true spiritual strength causes his weakness, so be it!

(v. 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.* When I arrive, I don't want to use sharpness (as I have in letters). But know that this sharpness is always for the purpose of edification, not destruction (i.e., please know my sincerity).

III. PAUL'S FINAL WORDS (v. 11-14):

(v. 11) *Finally brethren, farewell. Be perfect...of good comfort...of one mind, live in peace; & the God of love & peace shall be w/you.*

1. Even in “goodbye” he encourages them to **1)** be perfect (complete thoroughly, repaired, restored –same as in **v. 9**). **2)** Be of good comfort (exhorted, consoled – by repenting, and through one another), **3)** be of one mind (same mind) –this is how he started the 1st letter (**1:10** –speak same thing, same mind/judgment). Don't let the enemy divide & conquer! **4)** Live in peace (but not at the expense of truth)– **Rom 12:18**–“*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably w/all men*” (**Heb 12:14**).

2. Promise for “perfect” complete Christians – God is with you! Of course, this can't be true for them if they refuse to repent!

(v. 12-13) *Greet one another with an holy kiss.* In Near Eastern countries, the kiss expressed peace (shalom; in **Gen 37:4**, Joseph's brothers “couldn't speak peaceably”–couldn't offer “shalom”). *All the saints* (of Macedonia) *salute you*. Even after a rough, rebuke-filled letter, Paul still has warm salutations. There should be (& can be) no relationship closer than that of brothers/sisters in Christ.

(v. 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.* These things should be desired by every Christian, but are only possible when we are in communion with Him.

CONCLUSION: Church discipline is difficult to do. So many avoid it because they're afraid they won't be able to handle it correctly (a legitimate fear)! But in 1 & 2 Corinthians, Paul shows how to handle it. He addressed what needed addressing (never avoiding it); he did it sternly, yet lovingly, communicating the seriousness of the problems, yet always providing the opportunity to repent. So this is a good lesson for us – to understand the importance of keeping the church pure, and to understand how to address problems that may arise.