

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 13TH-14TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

FINAL WARNING (2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-4)

LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE

Paul gave more attention to the Corinthians than to any other church. He lived there for one and a half years, wrote to them frequently, and was about to visit for the third time.

- Though his patience had waned, Paul understood that **seeing lasting change in yourself and others takes effort and time.**

THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES

On this trip, Paul would address the issues raised between him and the church. He made it clear that he would not entertain rumors or accusations unless they had been established by the word of two or three eyewitnesses.

- **We must avoid the ambiguous "they" and focus on legitimate concerns (Matthew 18:16).**

A "WARNING"

Paul had warned people in the church who knowingly sinned, "If I come again, I will not be lenient," but many of the Corinthians still demanded proof of Paul's authority.

- "Discipline" would be his proof. This could mean excommunication or Paul **calling on God to deal with rebellious people.**

WE RARELY TALK ABOUT THIS SIDE OF GOD

V. 3 says that God "is not weak in dealing" with people who abuse grace and truth, but He is "powerful among you."

- **God is love. He is also all-powerful, righteous, and will hold evil into account. This knowledge should lead us to a proper fear of God (Psalm 145:20, Acts 5).**

THROUGH HUMILITY, WE CAN LIVE IN POWER

Our ability to be strong, righteous, and wise is weak. But, **if we submit to Jesus Who humbled Himself in order to display His power, we too "will live with Him by God's power."**

- **God's power and authority flow down to those who humbly follow the Word and the Spirit's conviction.**

A PECULIAR POWER TO SOME

There is a power from the Spirit common to all true Believers. There is also a peculiar power given to the biblical apostles and those called to lead the church (Hebrews 13:17).

- This also requires great responsibility and invokes a greater judgment if they abuse this power and authority (James 3:1).

INTROSPECTION (2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-10)

"EXAMINE YOURSELVES"

If we're to "**test [ourselves] to see if [we] are in the faith,**" there must be evidence of a standard by which we are called to live.

- "A tree is known by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33-37). **If we claim Christianity, there will be visible evidence in our lives that lines up with biblical teaching.**

TRUE SALVATION LEADS US INTO A PROCESS

Many saved people fail to "recognize... Jesus Christ is in [them]" and miss out on an empowered life. Through humility and self-examination, God will take us into the process of **sanctification.**

- **Salvation begins the process of us conforming more into the image of God. In this, we think and act more like Jesus.**

"THOUGH WE MAY APPEAR TO FAIL"

Paul wanted to assure the Corinthians that in his dedication and prayer, he did not "fail the test" and that he was doing what was right even if people criticized and hated him.

- **It can often look like God and His teachings are losing, but we must remember truth always wins in the end.**

"FOR WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING AGAINST THE TRUTH"

This can mean several things. First, Paul was assuring everyone that he lived by Jesus' teachings. Secondly, he implied that **anyone claiming to be a Christian must not act contrary to Jesus' teachings.** Thirdly, it reminds us that **nothing can ultimately stand up against the truth of the Word of God.**

MATURATION, EVEN IN OUR WEAKNESS

Paul acknowledges he's weak, but through reliance on Jesus, he's able to live in strength. He also prays the Corinthians "fully mature" in their faith so they can live in God's power and grace.

- **We're prone to failure, but through a relationship with Christ, we can become stronger, more God-honoring people.**

BUILDING UP, NOT TEARING DOWN

Though Paul had to discipline others at times, this was not the focus of his ministry. Paul was called to **build people up, not tear them down.** The only way was to **encourage and turn them to repentance and obedience to Jesus.**

- **In our harsh society, are we building up or tearing down?**

BUILDING UP (2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-13)

TO WRAP THINGS UP

To conclude his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, Paul encourages them to do five things that will lead to the divine blessing of God.

- The Bible is full of conditional promises. This means that **if we take the steps to draw near to God, we are assured His favor and blessings in our lives.**

THE 5 ENCOURAGEMENTS

- 1) **Rejoice:** literally means *farewell* but implies **living a life of thankfulness and joy.**
- 2) **Become mature:** to **grow in our obedience and understanding of God.**
- 3) **Be encouraged:** to **remember the power and promises of God.**
- 4) **Be of the same mind:** This means Christians should **unite on the majors of the faith** and not let the minors tear them apart.
- 5) **Be at peace:** We are called to **live at peace with others.**
 - If we will live in this manner, the "God of love and peace will be with [us]."

GREET WITH A "HOLY KISS"

To this day, many Christians in the Middle and Far East still practice light kisses on the cheek as a sign of love for other Christians. Paul includes the word "holy" to ensure there was no improper motive behind the kiss.

- Though our culture is different, the point is to **warmly welcome other people.**

A TRINITARIAN BLESSING

Paul concludes with a blessing that reflects the goodness of the Triune God. He wanted the Corinthians to live in the **grace** of Jesus, the **love** of God, and the **fellowship** of the Spirit.

- If the Corinthians (and us) would **apply the Word of God to their lives, they would live in love, grace, and communion with God.**

CHANGE TAKES DESIRE, TIME, AND EFFORT

- In order to see change in ourselves and others, we must first want change. **The desire for change begins with humility.**
- True desire to change will produce action. **When we make time to pray, read, and serve God and others, we will be empowered by the Spirit and experience change.**

MATURATION TAKES SELF-EXAMINATION

- To ensure confidence in our salvation and to mature in our relationship with Jesus, **we must first take inventory of our lives to see if how we live lines up with God's Word.**
- Maturity begins with knowing we are weak, but through Christ and sanctification, we are made strong and God-honoring.

THIS IS FOR OUR BUILDING-UP

- The commands and discipline of the Bible are not meant to tear down but to build up.
- If we are to be built up, we must strive to live in **joy and thankfulness, maturity, encouragement from the Word, community with other Believers, and at peace with God, ourselves, and others.**

IT IS EXTRAORDINARILY SIMPLE

- If we will **humble** ourselves and **repent, desire** to learn and grow, and put **effort** into acquiring knowledge and building a relationship with God, **He will save us, build us up, strengthen and empower us, show us grace when we fail, and prepare a place for us with Him forever.**