

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

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

BY THE POWER OF GOD (2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-4)

Paul promises to return to Corinth with severity if necessary (vs. 1-4).

- Paul's first visit was to preach the gospel and plant this church (18 months, Acts 18:11), his second visit was brief and painful (sometime between 1 & 2 Corinthians). Now he's prepared to come for a 3rd time.

- Although Paul wouldn't be lenient when he came back to Corinth, he would be fair.

"A FACT MUST BE ESTABLISHED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES..." (DEUT. 19:15)

Paul was found guilty until proven innocent by many in Corinth, but he ensured when he came to visit them any offended parties within the church would be given due process.

- Even though Paul had been treated dishonorably, he still responded in a Biblical, Christ-like, and honorable way.

Paul would come to Corinth in the name and authority of Christ.

- The fact that Jesus was crucified (and that Paul's ministry was identified by his weakness) might have been seen as a sign of weakness, but the resurrection showed God's power (vs. 4).
- The same power that raised Christ from the grave (Rom. 8:11) provided Paul the strength and authority he needed in his life and ministry.

Christlike gentleness and meekness in a world drunk with vulgar displays of anger, violence, and power isn't weakness—it's a sign of a power in us that's greater than what the world can offer.

- Being a person who speaks truth yet does it in a loving way is a sign of an otherworldly power.
- Being a person who is firm, yet fair and honorable in the face of dishonor is powerful.

The distinguishing characteristic between someone who knows and belongs to God and someone who doesn't is the presence of God's power in their lives through the Holy Spirit.

- If the power of the resurrected Christ is in you, the world may not be able to understand it, but they definitely should be able to see it.
- Are you allowing God's power to be seen in your life by embracing the way of Christ?

"...I am learning from Jesus to live my life as He would live my life if He were I. I am not necessarily learning to do everything He did, but I am learning how to do everything I do in the manner that He did all that He did."

---Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

- *"How would Jesus respond to this situation if He were in my shoes? How would Jesus treat this person? How would Jesus have this conversation?"*

TEST YOURSELVES (2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-7)

A profession of saving faith and a possession of saving faith are two entirely different things. In fact, Jesus warned us that many people on the last day will profess to have a saving faith that they didn't actually have (Matt. 7:21-23).

- Many of the problems in churches, families, marriages, and in our personal lives have to do with the simple reality that some professing Christians aren't truly born again.

"TEST YOURSELVES...EXAMINE YOURSELVES..." (V. 5)

If you truly love the Lord, fear God, and know the magnitude of eternity, you should never get beyond the need for serious and regular self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28, Gal. 6:4).

- The folks in Corinth had spent so much time picking apart and examining Paul's character and whether he was a true apostle. Now, Paul turns it back on them.

In light of all the dissension, sin, rebellion, and false teaching within the community of Corinth, it was a fair question if Jesus was actually in them.

- The Bible is very clear that if we're truly saved, Christ dwells in our hearts and should be evident and noticeable in our lives (Rom. 8:10, Gal. 2:20, Eph. 3:17, Col. 1:27).
- If Christ's presence isn't noticeable, maybe it's because He's not there.

Saving faith is not a matter of agreeing mentally with a set of facts about Jesus and what He did.

- Saving faith is not a matter of praying a magic prayer or getting dipped in magic water.
- Saving faith is not a matter of loose affiliation with a family heritage, a voting demographic, or a certain church or religious group.
- Saving faith is a matter of your heart fully trusting in and surrendered to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Paul is hopeful that the presence of Christ in his life is obvious and noticeable to the Corinthians (v. 6).

- Paul is encouraging them to, "pass the test" (to prove Christ's presence and saving work in their lives) by doing the right thing and walking in holiness and repentance (v. 7).
- "Passing the test" isn't sinless perfectionism, but it is consistency in your commitment.

THE TESTS OF AUTHENTICITY

1. A true belief about the person, work, and identity of Jesus (1 John 2:22-23).
2. The absence of habitual, willful, and unrepentant sin (1 John 3:4-10).
3. The absence of hatred towards others and a genuine love for God's people (1 John 3:15).
4. The willingness to love in deed and in truth, not just talk (1 John 3:17-18).

BECOMING MATURE (2 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13)

Paul wants the Corinthians to repent from any ongoing sin in their lives and turn back to God, thus showing a legitimate saving faith in Jesus and Paul's status as a true apostle.

- However, Paul isn't primarily concerned with outward appearances—he wants them to do what's right because it's right and because they truly love Jesus and belong to Him.

"WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING AGAINST THE TRUTH, BUT ONLY FOR THE TRUTH" (V. 8)

Paul and the rest of the apostles had no power or desire to exercise discipline against those who were truly walking by the truth of the gospel.

- They were for the truth—they wanted to build up, encourage, and aid true Believers who were walking in the truth of Jesus.

Paul was glad and rejoiced when his weakness made the Corinthians strong (v. 9).

- Paul was praying for these Believers to become mature—to grow up in their faith and stop being childish.
- Spiritual immaturity sees power and prestige as something to be earned, achieved, and flaunted.
- Spiritual maturity sees true spiritual power as the result of humility and God's Spirit at work in our weakness.

Paul has written tough truths to them so they will grow up and clean up their act, and he won't have to deal harshly with them when he sees them in person.

- As difficult as it was for the Corinthians to hear tough truth, Paul spoke it with authority to build them up, not to tear them down (v. 10).
- To grow up, sometimes we've got to toughen up and take some correction.

Christian maturity is not a product of physical age, time spent in church, or even how many years one has been a Christian.

- Christian maturity is not "head knowledge," possessing certain spiritual gifts, or an instantaneous or final spiritual experience (no "one and done" moments).
- Spiritual maturity is simply Christlikeness—we're mature when we're like Jesus.

Christian maturity is a lifelong journey of committed and consistent obedience in the same direction. It doesn't end until we reach heaven and are transformed perfectly into the likeness of Christ.

- In the here and now, we can either speed up or slow down our maturation process through decisions to either surrender to God and cooperate with the Spirit's work in our lives or to quench the Spirit and try to stay in control.

HOW DO WE GROW?

1. You need to eat (to spend time in God's Word and in prayer daily).
2. You need a family (to spend time in the Body of Christ being disciplined).
3. You need to let the Lord correct you (confession and repentance).
4. You need to learn that it's not all about you (giving and serving will grow you up).

"FINALLY..." (VS. 11-13)

- "Rejoice"—God's joy should be evident in our lives.
- "Become mature"—we're to pursue growth.
- "Be encouraged"—we are to be hopeful.
- "Be of the same mind"—we're to live in unity.
- "Be at peace"—we're to be reconciled.
- As we do these things, we experience the presence of the God of love and peace in a real way!

POWER, NOT POWER (VS. 1-4)

- Jesus didn't come displaying the world's version of power—He came in humility, poverty, and meekness. Yet, the life and work of Jesus was so powerful that it changed the entire course of human history and made a way for us to be reconciled to God.
- To see the power of Christ at work in your life, you have to give up your version of power.

DOES JESUS LIVE HERE? (VS. 5-7)

- Imagine a house on your street...
- If your spiritual house is broken down, falling apart, and shows no signs of life, it's a fair question to ask if Jesus lives there!
- Professing saving faith isn't the same as possessing saving faith—if you have saving faith, you'll do the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21).
- Can you pass the "Christian" exam of 1 John?

TIME TO GROW UP (VS. 8-13)

- Spiritual arrested adolescence is sad and is often the cause behind most church drama and dysfunction.
- Maturity is growing to look more like Jesus.
- You need to eat, you need to be in a family (Life Groups), you need to respond to correction, and you need to learn it's not all about you through giving and serving.

THE GOOD NEWS (GOSPEL).

1. God is holy, perfect, just, and good.
2. Sin has separated us from God, and we are unable to bridge that gap through our own works, religion, or performance.
3. Jesus died the death our sin deserved on the cross as payment for our sins.

BEING "BORN AGAIN" (JOHN 3:3)

- When we choose to turn from our sins (repent) and put our faith in the finished work of Jesus, all our sins, past and present, are forgiven.
- We are welcomed into fellowship with God, He adopts us into His family now and forever.
- This victory over sin and death is available to all who will genuinely turn from their sins and fully put their trust in Jesus Christ.
- Matthew 7:20-23