

**ENGAGE**

- We are wrapping up 2 Corinthians this week. Paul informs them that he will be making his third trip there and all the matters and concerns he has brought up will be dealt with.
- He calls for them to examine themselves to see if they are really in the faith.
- Discuss what it means to be in the faith.
- Discuss what the Scripture means by “do they pass the test”.
- What markers need to be present in our lives so that we might say that we are in the faith and pass the test?

**EXAMINE****5. (11-13) Conclusion to Paul’s “foolish boasting.”**

**I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!**

a. **I have become a fool in boasting:** Since he began this section in [2 Corinthians 10:1](#), Paul was forced to boast more than he wanted to before the Corinthian Christians. Paul is almost apologizing for writing so much about himself, because he would much rather write about Jesus.

b. **For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing:** If Paul thought his “boasting” was foolish, why did he do it at all? Not for his sake, but for the sake of the Corinthian Christians. They did not defend Paul’s character and standing as an apostle before the **most eminent apostles** who criticized and undermined Paul.

i. It wasn’t so much that the *presence* of the **most eminent apostles** bothered Paul. It was their *influence* among the Corinthian Christians that bothered the true apostle.

c. **Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you... in signs and wonders and mighty deeds:** Paul could also point to the **signs and wonders and mighty deeds** that **were accomplished** among the Corinthian Christians. Each of these was evidence of Paul’s apostolic standing.

d. **For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches:** If Paul is inferior in any way, it is only in that he refused to take money from the Corinthian Christians. So, he sarcastically asks their forgiveness: **Forgive me this wrong!**

i. “A pleasant irony, such as whereof this Epistle is full.” (Trapp)

ii. "It is the *privilege* of the Churches of Christ to support the ministry of his Gospel among them. Those who do not contribute their part to the support of the gospel ministry either care nothing for it, or derive no good from it." (Clarke)

## B. Paul announces his third trip to Corinth.

### 1. (14-18) Paul isn't trying to deceive the Corinthians.

**Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. But be that *as it may*, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning! Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus, and sent our brother with *him*. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did *we* not *walk* in the same steps?**

a. **Now for the third time I am ready to come to you:** On his first visit to Corinth, Paul founded the church and stayed *a year and six months* ([Acts 18:11](#)). His second visit was a brief, painful visit in between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Now he is prepared to come for a **third time**.

b. **And I will not be burdensome to you:** Paul lets the Corinthian Christians know that when he comes, though he will receive a collection for the saints in Judea ([2 Corinthians 8](#)), he will not receive money from them for his personal support. He will continue his previous practice among the Corinthian Christians of supporting himself and he **will not be burdensome** to the Corinthian Christians.

i. A minister may be **burdensome** to a congregation by receiving support when it is not appropriate or by receiving too much support. "He who labours for the cause of God should be supported by the cause of God; but woe to that man who aggrandizes himself and grows *rich* by the *spoils of the faithful!* And to him especially who has made a fortune out of the *pence* of the poor! In such a man's heart the *love of money* must have its *throne*. As to his professed *spirituality*, it is *nothing*; he is a *whited sepulchre*, and an abomination in the sight of the Lord." (Clarke)

c. **For I do not seek yours, but you:** This is the testimony of every godly minister. They do not serve for what they can get *from* God's people but for what they can give *to* God's people. They are shepherds, not hirelings.

i. This is the heart of Jesus towards us. We often think that what God really wants is what *we have*; but He really wants *us*. Jesus selflessly seeks our good, and His heart is *for* us, not for what He can "get" *from* us.

ii. "Paul is only a faint shadow of the Lord Jesus; and if these qualities are found in his life, it is only because they were found completely in the life of Jesus Christ our Lord." (Redpath)

d. **For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children:** This explains part of the reason why Paul did not want to receive support from the Corinthian Christians. Since he was

their spiritual “father” and they were his spiritual “children,” it made sense that they should not feel “burdened” to support him.

i. At the same time, this is not a compliment towards the Corinthian Christians. Since Paul did gratefully receive support from other churches ([Philippians 4:10-19](#)), we know this was not his policy towards all churches. Instead, it is as if Paul is saying, “You Corinthian Christians are not mature enough to support me yet. You are still spiritual children. When you grow up some, you can be partners with me in the work and support me. But until then I am glad to support myself.”

e. **I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls:** Paul did not resent the lack of support from the Corinthian Christians. Certainly, he would have appreciated it, but more for what it *said about them* than for what it *did for him*. For himself, Paul was glad to give; he would **very gladly spend and be spent for your souls**.

i. Paul had this heart, even though the Corinthian Christians were unappreciative. In fact, Paul puts it painfully: **the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved**. There is hurt in those words! Yet, Paul did not allow that hurt to cripple him or even to rob his joy in serving and living. He would still **very gladly spend and be spent for** the Corinthian Christians.

ii. We can give and do it in any number of ways; but do we resent it when we give or serve? A good way to measure this is to see our reaction when our service is unappreciated. Do we resent it? Paul’s service was unappreciated by the Corinthian Christians, yet he did not resent it. Instead, he would **very gladly spend and be spent for your souls**.

f. **Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile!** Here is Paul being sarcastic again. Some among the Corinthian Christians accused Paul of **being crafty**. Their accusation probably went like this: “Sure Paul won’t take any support money from you, but he will trick you by taking the collection that is supposed to be for the Jerusalem Christians and then put it in his own pocket.” In response Paul sarcastically said, “You bet I’m **being crafty!** I’ve **caught you with guile** and tricked you superbly!”

i. Paul’s opponents, the *most eminent apostles* mentioned in [2 Corinthians 11:5](#) and [12:11](#), were in ministry at least partly for the money. They could not bear the fact that Paul didn’t care about money in the ministry, so they assigned *their motives to him*.

ii. Some have thought that Paul spoke seriously here and admitted that he was **crafty** and used **guile** in his ministry to the Corinthian Christians. “Many persons suppose that the words, *being crafty, I caught you with guile*, are the words of the apostle, and not of his slanderers; and therefore have concluded that it is lawful to use guile, deceit, [and so forth], in order to serve a good and religious purpose. This doctrine is abominable; and the words are most evidently those of the apostle’s detractors, against which he defends his conduct in the two following verses.” (Clarke)

g. **Did I take advantage of you?** Paul proves that the charge he is **being crafty** is false. He reminds the Corinthian Christians that neither Paul nor any of his associates had ever behaved in a financially inappropriate way before the Corinthians.

## 2. (19-21) Paul encourages the Corinthians to repent before he comes.

**Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But *we do* all things, beloved, for your edification. For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and *that* I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest *there be* contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.**

- a. **Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ.** Paul is concerned that his defense before the Corinthian Christians may be taken as just excuse making. But Paul is not making excuses; he has nothing to excuse. Instead he boldly says, **“We speak before God in Christ.”** Paul proclaimed the truth before God, not excusing himself before the Corinthian Christians.
- b. **We do all things, beloved, for your edification:** *Everything* Paul did for the Corinthian Christians he did to build them up in the Lord. Every letter he wrote, every visit he made, every prayer he prayed was with one goal: to build up the Corinthian Christians in Jesus Christ. His heart was for *them*, not for *himself*.
  - i. If Paul’s opponents – the *most eminent apostles* mentioned in [2 Corinthians 11:5](#) and [12:11](#) – were to speak honestly, they would say: “We do all things, beloved, for *our* edification.” But Paul was a different kind of man.
  - ii. “It is not his purpose to make the Corinthians squirm, but to bring them to their senses, to help them to rid themselves of the narcotic effect produced on them by the false apostles who had invaded their community.” (Hughes)
- c. **For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish:** Paul is worried that he will find the same old problems among the Corinthian Christians when he visits a third time and that they would still be unrepentant.
  - i. Just so they know exactly what Paul is writing about, he makes it clear: **lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults.** All these were the fruit of the worldly thinking the Corinthian Christians bought into, and these must change before Paul comes for his third visit to Corinth.
- d. **I shall be found by you such as you do not wish:** Looking forward to his next visit, Paul warns the Corinthian Christians. If they are not in a state pleasing to Paul (before the Lord), then they will find *him* to be in a state not pleasing to them.
- e. **Lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you:** If the Corinthian Christians were still stuck in their worldly thinking, Paul would be *humbled* among them. He would have reason to think, “I must not be a very good apostle or leader because these Corinthian Christians will not respond to me.” That was not the whole truth, but it would still **humble** Paul.

i. **And I shall mourn for many:** If the Corinthian Christians were mired in their worldliness when Paul came the third time, he would be angry, and he would be firm. But he would also be *humbled*, and he would also **mourn**. As much as anything, the worldliness of the Corinthian Christians grieved Paul and made him **mourn for many**.

ii. "Paul reveals to us the mind of a true and sincere pastor when he says that he will look on the sins of others with grief." (Calvin)

f. **Who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced:** Paul's anger and mourning would not be directed to those who had sinned. More specifically, it would be directed to those **who have sinned before and have not repented**. Paul did not ask for perfection; he only asked for repentance.

## Chapter 13

### A. Paul warns the Corinthians to examine themselves before he comes.

#### 1. (1-4) Paul promises to come with severity, if necessary.

**This will be the third time I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." 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—since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. 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.**

a. **This will be the third time I am coming to you:** On his first visit to Corinth, Paul founded the church and stayed *a year and six months* ([Acts 18:11](#)). His second visit was a brief, painful visit in between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Now he is prepared to come for a **third time**.

b. **By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established:** Paul quotes this passage from [Deuteronomy 19:15](#), and quotes it in reference to his coming visit. Either the **two or three witnesses** are Paul's three visits or they are the testimony of his associates. The point of the quotation is to remind the Corinthian Christians that he comes this time as a judge, not an investigator. He has enough evidence to write, "**If I come again I will not spare.**"

i. Those are strong words: **I will not spare**. However, the situation among the Corinthian Christians called for strong leadership. A Christian pastor must never let authority corrupt into authoritarianism, yet, "Rebellion against an appointed minister is rebellion against the higher power that appointed him." (Hughes)

c. **Since you see a proof of Christ speaking in me:** Paul's opponents, the *most eminent apostles* among the Corinthian Christians ([2 Corinthians 11:5](#) and [12:11](#)), said they wanted to see more "power" from

Paul. He seemed too weak and humble for their liking. So Paul addressed this thinking: “You want to see **proof of Christ speaking in me?** Fine. When I come the third time, you will see **the power of God** in my rebuke as I clean house. So clean it up before I come.”

i. **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.** Just as Jesus displayed weakness yet now reigns in power, so Paul will come with similar power after showing the Corinthian Christians his weakness.

ii. “It would seem that in their immaturity the Corinthians were unimpressed by Christlike gentleness and meekness... but were overawed by arbitrary displays of power.” (Harris)

## 2. (5-10) A plea for self examination.

**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. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified. 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. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. 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.**

a. **Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?** Paul asks the Corinthian Christians to consider a sobering question: “Am I really a Christian?”

i. We are rightly concerned that every believer has the assurance of salvation and knows how to endure the attacks that come in this area from Satan. At the same time we also understand that there are some who *assume* or *presume* they are Christians when they are not. It is a challenge to all: **Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?**

ii. We are often very ready to examine and test others, but first – and always first – we must examine and test ourselves. “That was the trouble at Corinth. They criticized Paul and failed to examine themselves.” (Redpath)

iii. “To examine yourself, in fact, is to submit to the examination and scrutiny of Jesus Christ the Lord – and this never to fix attention on sin but on Christ – and to ask Him to reveal that in you which grieves His Spirit; to ask Him to give you grace that it might be put away and cleansed in His precious blood.” Self examination “takes the chill away from your soul, it takes the hardness away from your heart, it takes the shadows away from your life, it sets the prisoner free.” (Redpath)

iv. “Now, ‘prove yourselves.’ Do not merely sit in your closet and look at yourselves alone, but go out into this busy world and see what kind of piety you have. Remember, many a man’s religion will stand

examination that will not stand proof. We may sit at home and look at our religion, and say, 'Well, I think this will do!'" (Spurgeon)

v. **Unless indeed you are disqualified:** Paul knew there were some among the Corinthian Christians who were **disqualified** for eternal life and salvation. Their thinking was worldly because they were of the world, not of the Lord. This is a hard truth to confront, but it is better to know *now* than when it is too late. The word for **disqualified** is simply the negative of the word for **test** in this same passage. If we don't **examine** ourselves and **test** ourselves now, we may find that we ultimately don't pass the **test** and are **disqualified**.

b. **Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?** What are we to look for when we **examine** and **test** ourselves? We are to see if **Jesus Christ is in you**. We are not to look for perfection – in ourselves or in others – but we should see real evidence of Jesus Christ in us.

i. "Now, what is it to have Jesus Christ in you? The true Christian carries the cross in his heart; and a cross inside the heart, my friends, is one of the sweetest cures for a cross on the back. If you have a cross in your heart – Christ crucified in you, the hope of glory – all the crosses of this world's troubles will seem to you light enough, and you will easily be able to sustain it. Christ in the heart means Christ believed in, Christ beloved, Christ trusted, Christ espoused, Christ communed with, Christ as our daily food, and ourselves as the temple and palace wherein Jesus Christ daily walks." (Spurgeon)

c. **But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified:** Paul anticipates a counter-question. "Paul, you ask us to examine ourselves. Well, why don't you examine yourself? Maybe you aren't a Christian after all!" Paul dismisses this question out of hand. It is so apparent that **we are not disqualified** that he simply trusts that they recognize the truth of it.

i. Even so, Paul admitted, **though we may seem to be disqualified**. If one judges a genuine Christian life by worldly standards (emphasizing "power" and "success"), Paul might **seem to be disqualified**. It was by these standards that Job's friends were convinced that his hardships were the result of sin in his life. However, one could say that only by judging with worldly standards.

d. **For we can do nothing against the truth:** Paul, even as an apostle, could **do nothing against the truth**. Even the apostles were not above the truth. Paul could only work effectively **for the truth**, not **against the truth**.

i. "This passage is of special interest as fixing the limits of all ecclesiastical power, whether ordinary or miraculous... The promise of our Lord, that what the church binds on earth shall be bound in heaven, is limited by the condition that her decisions be in accordance with the truth." (Hodge)

e. **For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong:** If Paul's weakness could contribute to the strength of the Corinthian Christians, he would be **glad**. His real concern was that the Corinthians **may be made complete**.

i. To **be made complete** is basically the same idea as in [2 Corinthians 12:19](#): *we do all things, beloved, for your edification*. Paul wanted to build up the Corinthian Christians, to make them **complete**. They were already a body strong in spiritual gifts and personal testimony ([1 Corinthians 1:4-7](#)), but their strength was not complete. They were not like a building that was just a foundation and a bit of rubble. They were like a building built tall and strong – for one and a half walls, with the other walls crumbling or barely started. Paul wanted them to **be made complete**.

f. **Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness**: Paul preferred that the Corinthian Christians would clean up their act *before* he came to see them. He wanted to use his **authority** for **edification**, not **destruction**.

## B. Conclusion to the letter.

### 1. (11) Concluding exhortation.

**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.**

a. **Finally, brethren, farewell**: **Farewell** is much better translated *rejoice*. Even though Paul has been severe with the Corinthian Christians, all was written to the end that they would enjoy the joy of walking in a right relationship with God.

b. **Become complete**: In [2 Corinthians 13:9](#), Paul revealed that he prayed that *you may be made complete*. Now he exhorts them to help answer his prayer as he challenges them to **become complete**.

i. As Christians, we shouldn't excuse and neglect areas of our life by saying, "I'm just not into that" or "That's just my weak point." We certainly cannot work on everything at once before the Lord, but we can have a heart to **become complete**.

c. **Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace**: By exhorting the Corinthian Christians to do these things, Paul proves an important point. These are at least partially in our power to do. We often think that our **comfort**, or being **of one mind**, and our being at **peace** with others just depends on *them*. In part that is true, but it also depends on *us*. We need to let God worry about their part, and we can worry about our part.

i. It costs something to work hard to **be of good comfort, be of one mind, and to live in peace**; but the reward is worth it: **the God of love and peace will be with you**. If you feel that God isn't with you, perhaps it is because you are resisting and rejecting His call to **be of good comfort, be of one mind, and to live in peace**.

### 2. (12-14) Final words.

**Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.**

a. **Greet one another with a holy kiss:** The idea of greeting **one another with a holy kiss** was common in that ancient culture. Our cultural equivalent is a handshake or a hug and a warm greeting.

i. The fact that it is a **holy** kiss shows that it had nothing to do with romantic affection. It was commonly practiced as a warm greeting in the early church but was rarely done on Good Friday, in remembrance of Judas' kiss that betrayed Jesus. In later times, the practice was thought inappropriate. In 1250, in England, the Archbishop of York introduced a "peace-board," which was first kissed by the clergy and then passed around to the congregation.

ii. "The fact that the kiss was described as *holy* indicates that erotic overtones were excluded, the kiss was a greeting, a sign of peace and Christian *agape*." (Morgan)

iii. Hodge wisely relates the practice to our modern culture: "It is not a command of perpetual obligation, as the spirit of the command is that Christians should express their mutual love in the way sanctioned by the age and community in which they live."

b. **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.** This is the only place in the New Testament where the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together in this kind of blessing. Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to be completely blessed by everything God is.

i. In essence, Paul wanted them to be blessed as true *Christians*. "For a Christian is one who seeks and enjoys the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." (Hodge)

## QUESTIONS

- **vs 12** What kinds of evidence identify one as an apostle and how do these differ from the identifying marks of ordinary Christians?
- **vs 14** What is the Biblical principle concerning financial dependency between parents and children?
- And how did Paul practice this in his relationship with the Corinthians?
- **vs 21** Why would Paul be humbled if he found inappropriate behavior among the Christians in Corinth when he returns?
- Why do you think Paul plans to visit them again?
- What kind of test do you suppose Paul was referring to in verse 5?
- How do you know whether you are in the faith?
- Is it possible to identify whether others are in the faith or not in the faith?
- What do you suppose Paul's attitude would be if people misjudged him?

- How do authorities in our life help to build us up?
- How can we go about becoming of one mind?
- What should Christian unity be based around?
- How should it be practiced and how should it not be practiced?