

## 2 Corinthians 13:1-6 – “Self-Examination”

As we wind down our study in Corinthians, our whole theme has been “Church Under Construction”, not in a physical way but in a spiritual way. Paul’s been attempting to build up the Church and see them walking in close relationship with Jesus and in obedience to the Word.

Now Paul is getting ready to come to them and he’s worried that things are not going to be in order as they should be.

- It’s kind of like when Michelle and I go away, it’s always nice to come back home, but we’re never sure how we’re going to find things. Are the dishes going to be piled up, are the garbage’s going to be overflowing, are the plants all going to be dead? Paul doesn’t want to see things in ruin as he gets ready to make his way back to Corinth.
- It’s interesting that Chapter 12 began with the glimpse into the third heaven, but it ended with the realities of a sinful world: *“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” (2 Corinthians 12:21).*
- Paul is ready to step into this potential condition, so he warns and pleads with the believers to be sure they’re right with God.

**13:1 - *This will be the third time I am coming to you. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”***

Paul has been pouring into these believers at Corinth. He’s had a concern for their spiritual health. He’s ready to go a third time, only this visit is not expecting to be a very cozy comfortable visit. Paul’s going to be coming with some heat.

- It’s like when you were a child and had been acting up through the day and your mom just had enough and just had to say those words: *wait til dad comes home*. You knew you were in trouble and you were dreading his coming. You’re like, I hope rush hour is really bad tonight.
- That’s kind of the situation here. Paul has been seeing things taking place that is not good. He’s seen people succumbing to sin, but he’s also seen people succumbing to the lies of these false apostles that have made their way into the church there. Paul has been questioned and challenged so now it’s time to come and put things in order.

As Paul says, this will be the third time he is coming to them. On his first visit to Corinth Paul had founded the church. He stayed a year and half there and

ministered faithfully in a tough place. He then paid them another visit sometime in between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians. This was a tough, painful visit as well. Now he's about to come for a third time; one in which he's needing to really lay the law down and exercise some authority.

***“...By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”*** Now why does Paul quote from Deuteronomy 19:15 here?

1. Some believe he may be referring to this third visit and that its time people listened to him because of the strength of this consistent witness. But that doesn't really mesh because it's still just coming from one witness.
2. Some believe Paul was referring to his associates and travel partners, like Titus (8:23).
3. It could be referring to the witness of the church in Corinth. Everything Paul will reveal will be backed by the church there.
4. It could be that Paul is speaking this for the false apostle's reference. That their accusations don't stand the test of the law in their accusations against Paul. So, whatever they say about him should be backed by two or three others.

Regardless of the purpose for quoting this verse, Paul is establishing that he's going to be coming in authority and won't be speaking on his own. Nor can any accusation or criticism against him hold any water unless properly proven by a witness.

Remember what **Proverbs 18:17** says: *“The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.”*

This is important for us to know as well, that everything we speak and hear must be true. It needs to be able to be backed by a witness or two.

Thankfully we know that we have a solid 3-fold witness of what is dependable and true. We have the 3-fold witness of the Trinity.

**1 John 5:6–7**, *“This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.”*

Because of this 3-fold witness, every word is established. The Word of God is dependable.

- **Psalms 119:89**, *“Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.”*

**13:2-3 - *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—<sup>3</sup> since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.***

Bringing correction and truth is nothing new for this Corinthian church. They've been down this road before. Paul is saying to them, *I'm not changing my tune with you. Time has not caused me to forget the things that need to get in order.*

In fact this time around Paul says when I come to you ***I will not spare.***

- This church has appreciated Paul's grace. But they've kind of abused this grace.
- Paul would much rather come in gentleness and love, which would have been the attitude if the church had responded in obedience. But now Paul will need to come in a stronger way to make things right.
- Daddy is coming home and there is a spiritual spanking that needs to be doled out.
- And we're not talking about Paul coming in an abusive or sinful way, we're talking about Paul coming in a disciplinary way to deal with sin. If a sickness can't be helped by the easier remedy of medicine, then sometimes surgery is required.

And what's ironic is that this is what the false apostles have been accusing Paul of lacking in. They've said he's weak, that he's not authoritative enough. They've been denying his apostleship. Well now Paul is going to come and show them how strong he can be, or more so, how mighty Jesus is through Him.

The sad thing is that these false apostles were really mistaking meekness for weakness.

**13:4 - *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.***

Paul brings up the example of Jesus. Jesus' crucifixion may have seemed very weak to the average eye. A Promised Messiah who's put to death doesn't seem like a lot of hope. But the power was seen in what came after. In God's economy glory comes out of suffering. As Jesus rose from the dead the power of God was so very evident in His life.

Paul knows that to be weak in Jesus means to lay our own power aside for a greater, more godly power.

- Paul said that when he is weak, then he is strong (12:10). How so? By learning to depend solely on the Lord's strength and might in your life.
- So though Paul is laying his life down, which may seem weak to others, he's really living in the power of God, and it's this power of God that will be on display when he returns to Corinth to deal with anything that is not of God.

**13:5 - *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.***

A lot of people were examining Paul. They were saying lots of nasty things about him. But Paul turns it around now and says, ***examine yourselves***...

- These believers in Corinth needed to take a look inside their own hearts to see what they were truly standing for.

I find I'm a really good examiner of other people. I can spot the wrongs in others like there's no tomorrow. But examining myself? I tend to relax on that a bit. We're called to examine ***ourselves***. This is something the Word of God reminds us to do.

**Psalms 26:2**, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart."

**Psalms 139:23**, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;"

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

You see a lot of people feel that they're doing just fine and going to heaven because they go to church. Maybe it's because they give to a specific charity. People place a whole lot of emphasis in different things to give some sort of assurance that they're right with God. But have they truly examined themselves?

But again, what are we examining? Are we examining whether we're being a good person, or doing enough to be saved? No! We're examining ourselves ***whether you are in the faith***.

- Now what does it mean to be in the faith. I know what it is to be ***in*** trouble. I've been ***in*** debt, I've been ***in*** love (still in love actually). These things I know. But to be ***in the faith***?
- Well, we know that faith is not just faith in faith, it's faith in a person. Jesus is the object of our faith. So to be in the faith is to be equivalent to being in Jesus. The question then is are you in Christ? Have you put on the Lord Jesus Christ as your means of salvation?

- A lot of people have a concept of Jesus, perhaps even believe He came and died on a cross, but they've failed to see their own need for Him.
- You see to be in the faith means you've put your reliance in Jesus as the One that forgives you of your sin and makes you new and gives eternal life.

Now someone may wonder, how can I know if I'm really in the faith and in Christ? If you're in the faith then fruit is going to follow. And the Word of God shows us some evidences of being in Christ:

1. The Holy Spirit bears witness of this new relationship.

**Romans 8:9–10**, *"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. <sup>10</sup> And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."*

**Romans 8:14–16**, *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,"*

We have the Spirit residing in us who leads us and brings us into a new reconciled relationship with the Father by which we cry out Abba, Father. That's the words of a child to a loving Father. We're in a new relationship!

2. You have a new love for God's family.

Being a child of God now means you have a new family. And an indicator that you are in the faith and thus in Christ is that you love the brethren.

**1 John 3:14**, *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."*

3. You have a new desire to do what is right.

Before coming to Christ we kind of did what we wanted, and we didn't feel too bad about it. But now that we're in the faith we want to pursue holiness.

**1 John 2:29**, *"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him."*

**1 John 3:9**, *"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."*

4. You no longer are living according to the world.

There's new priorities, new pursuits, there's no longer an appetite for the things that this world promotes (and by world we're talking about this system that's in opposition to God). There's now the ability to overcome these things that perhaps once held us captive.



**1 John 5:4**, *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith."*

It's been said that any dead fish can swim downstream. We're no longer walking according to the course of this world. We're swimming upstream, and going against the current of this world.

5. You have a hunger for the word of God.

**1 Peter 2:2–3**, *"as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."*

You know before you came to the Lord there was a disinterest in the Word. But when you came to know Jesus suddenly the Word came alive. When you are in Christ and you know what He has done for you, you just love being in the Word and allowing Him to speak into your heart through it.

Now let me clarify here, these things don't save you. This is not what makes you a Christian, but these are evidences that you are a Christian and that you are in the faith.

Test yourself by these things, lest you be **disqualified** (which means to fail the test). We're not talking about perfection, we're talking more about progression.

**13:6 - But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.**

Paul hopes that as they examine themselves, they will see that they are in the faith, and that this is a further proof of Paul's apostleship. There's no reason for him to be questioned or disqualified.

My prayer and hope for each and everyone of us is that we pass the test. Examine yourselves, test yourselves. Is there fruit in your life? Is there an indication that you are in Christ? I say this not to scare you, but so that you can rest in assurance that you are indeed in the faith.

Application Points:

1. God's witness is true and dependable. Are we upholding a true witness by what we say and hear? Do we jump on gossip or lean on hearsay, or do we allow a matter to be established in truth?
2. Have you truly examined yourself as to whether you're in the faith? Is your life now lived in Christ and through Christ? Is there evidence of a transformed life? Are you walking in a personal relationship with Jesus?