

2 Corinthians 13:7-14 – “Be Complete”

13:7 - *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.*

Paul’s desire was to see these Corinthian Christians maturing in their walk and becoming transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. There’s no place for a believer to be acting wickedly or doing evil.

- Remember, he wrote of his concern that when he arrives some may be continuing in a life of sin (12:21).
- This church in Corinth had been ripe with compromise. And where there’s compromise in character and conduct, there’s confusion in conviction. What do I mean by that? It means when you have a believer that is walking in ways that are contrary to God’s ways, it brings about questions and confusion for those who are seeking to know and follow Jesus.
- For example, if someone was invited to church who’s exploring Christianity, and as they enter the premises, I’m outside sitting in a lawn chair with a reefer hanging out of my mouth, a Jack Daniels in my hand, and I’m cursing out some kid for looking at me funny, there’s going to be some questions. A person that is looking into Christianity is going to get a very bad preview and understanding based on that scenario. To the point where they may be turned off altogether. Where there’s compromise in character and conduct, there’s confusion in conviction. How many people have said no to Jesus based on the examples they’ve seen in other Christians?
- So, Paul’s plea and prayer for this church is ***do no evil***. That should be the prayer for ourselves as well. We should be those that want nothing more than to walk in a way that pleases God; one that pursues holiness.

And Paul isn’t trying to get them to put on an act of holiness so that Paul may seem more holy or righteous himself. Paul doesn’t need to prove himself. He wants them to live righteously because it’s what they’re called to do. It’s the way that’s going to be the most joyous and profitable for themselves.

Paul doesn’t care if this helps his case with the false apostles. He’s not worried about that. He wants these Corinthian believers to do the right and honorable thing before a God who has saved them and called them to a life of holiness and being set apart from the things of the world.

It's amazing to see this heart of Paul. So often in his prayers and in his writings, he showed a deep concern for others. He wanted others to know the greatness of God. If Paul was in prison, he wasn't pleading for his case, he wrote that others would be strengthened and encouraged. He lived a selfless life; one of sacrifice if it meant that others would be built up in the faith.

And this is the life that pleases God and it's the life that again is blessed. Laying down your life for God's will to be done is the way to truly be content.

13:8 - *For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.*

Paul was all about promoting truth and seeing people stand upon the truth. He wasn't out for selfish gain (like vindicating himself with the false apostles), he just wanted truth to win out. And he knew it would, so there was no point going against the truth.

13:9 - *For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.*

In using the word **we**, it appears Paul is speaking of himself and the other true apostles. Paul was more than willing to present himself as weak so that others could be strengthened through that display.

- It's a philosophy I have sought to employ here as a pastor. Many of you have seen apparent weaknesses with me. A poor usage of the English language. Not being able to say 'experience' properly. Perhaps an inability to do simple math. These are all ways that I am more than happy to build you up in strength 😊.

But seriously, Paul has already pointed out that in his weakness Christ's strength was made perfect (12:9). Ultimately, our weakness leads us to our insufficiency and to Christ's all sufficiency. Paul's hope was that the church in Corinth would see that and live with a newfound strength and dependency in the Lord.

Paul knows that as they learn to depend on Christ this moves them into greater maturity as believers.

This is what Paul prays for – ***that you may be made complete***. Now this word is translated in different ways in other translations.

It's translated as *perfection* in the KJV; *restoration* in the ESV; *mature* in the NLT. This is what Paul wants more than anything for these believers. That they grow in the things of the Lord.

Sin has broken them, ravished them, left them desolate. But he prays that they would be restored, and perfect. This isn't about spiritual perfection but spiritual maturity. Paul prays that they will mature as Christians.

- You know what children can be like. They're selfish, demanding, whiners. You love them, but if they're acting like that when they're in their thirties, you got some issues. You want to see them complete. Moving on to maturity.
- Now here's the thing, I've matured from where I was, but can I say I've reached full maturity? Some would say not by a long shot (thank you for your honesty). But that's the idea here. You see, none of us have arrived. None of us can say there's no room for improvement. We are all in this race to grow and mature which leads to being complete. We want to be more and more like Jesus. We're a long way from that but may that gap ever be narrowing.

13:10 - *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.*

Paul is somewhat thankful that he's getting these things out to the church now before he arrives on his third visit. His hopes are that the church will receive these words and begin to put them into practice. Paul does not want to have to show up there and bring a strong word of rebuke, even though he has the apostolic authority to do so.

And though a strong word may need to be given, it's ultimately to build them up and not tear them down.

- God's desire for us is that we may be built up in Him. And there are times certain things need to be destroyed or knocked down. Things that are impeding our growth. And though destruction may be needed to remove the old and take away that which is unstable, it's so that we may be built up and strengthened and more fully established in Christ.

13:11 - *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.*

As Paul bids farewell and closes this letter, he leaves us with 4 key exhortations. Before we get into those, this word **farewell** is a good word. Not that saying goodbye is a good thing, though some of you may really appreciate it at times. This word farewell is the Greek word *chairo* and it's only translated as farewell here. It's used 74 times in the N.T. and 46 of those times it's translated *rejoice!*

- In other words, as Paul wraps things up, as hard as it's been to address some of the things he's had to address, he wants this church to rejoice. God hasn't cast them aside, there's still grace and reconciliation found in Him. He doesn't want them hanging their heads in shame, he wants them filled with joy and gladness at the prospect of life in Christ and walking in truth.

How about you? Are you rejoicing today in what you have in Christ?

This word *chairo* is the same used in **Philippians 4:4**, "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*"

Paul says that this is something we should always be doing! *Well, what about when I have bad days, or I'm really discouraged? What if I face a pretty heavy tragedy?* Here's the great thing, when our lives are rooted in Christ, no matter what we go through, we have reason to rejoice always because whatever may come against us, we know it's temporary and even our afflictions are working out something good in light of the promise of eternity with Jesus.

- **2 Corinthians 4:17**, "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*"
- It doesn't get any better than life in Jesus and life with Jesus. He's worth whatever trials this world could throw at me. And because He's secured my salvation, I can rejoice!

Now here's these 4 exhortations that Paul concludes with. And putting these into practice ensure our rejoicing.

1. ***Become complete.***

Now this word is a little different than what was used in vs. 9. This word, *katartizō* in the Greek means "to mend (what has been broken or rent), to repair. To complete."¹

These exhortations have in common that they're related to the church as a whole. They are directed to individuals, but for the purpose of the church being made whole together. This church has had a lot of fractures in it that need setting. There's a lot of holes that need to be mended. This word *katartizō* is the same word used in Matthew 4:21 of the disciples *mending* their nets.

- Is there brokenness in you that is preventing you from fellowshiping in the church? Are you causing unity to be stifled? It's time to be complete. Restore that which is broken, be made whole in and through Jesus. Don't

¹ Strong, J. (1995). In *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

hold on any longer to hurts or to fractures. Come together in grace and love and allow the body to be complete.

2. **Be of good comfort.**

This church has had to endure a letter that had some strong words in it at times. But it was for their good. Again, it was to edify and not destroy (vs. 10). So, Paul says to be of good comfort, or be encouraged. It's the word *parakaleō*, which means to come alongside. Paul doesn't want to drive them further away, he wants them to heed the instructions he's written them, he wants them to come alongside him in these things. The church doesn't need to be down or discouraged; they just need to receive it for their benefit. So be of good comfort and comfort one another with these things.

3. **Be of one mind.**

Paul's not calling us to uniformity. We don't all have to think the exact same thing, or look identical. So what does it mean to be of one mind?

We may think it means to find the right mind and follow it – everyone be connected to that mind. Now that's not too far off actually.

- The problem is I tend to think my mind is usually the right mind to have. And I'm sure there's a good number of you that would agree (not that you agree my mind is the right mind, but rather your mind is the right one). But it's not about who's got the best idea, or the best mind, it's about having the mind of Christ. When we have the mind of Christ then we can begin to be of one mind and live in unity.
- **Philippians 2:4–5**, *"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,"*

4. **Live in peace.**

We're called to live in peace with each other. People say church would be great if it wasn't for all the people. That's like saying my marriage would be great if it wasn't for my spouse. You don't have a marriage without a spouse. The church is the people. We're the bride of Christ. And we're called to learn to live in peace with each other. Yes, people will irritate you, frustrate you, maybe even hurt you. But live in peace. It's a much lighter and enjoyable way to live when we're just at peace with one another despite what they may have done. Holding grudges weighs us down and prevents us from living this rejoicing life we're called to live.

It's interesting that in this farewell Paul is exhorting the believers to **be** these things. He doesn't say pray for them to begin to grow or try them out. He says **be** them. It's not easy to live this way but it is something we are to be putting into practice in a disciplined manner.

And notice the outcome: ***and the God of love and peace will be with you.*** Now isn't He already with us? Yes, He is. But living this life and putting these things into practice causes us to be abiding in Him all the more where His presence, goodness and grace are known as an experienced reality.

13:12 - *Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

As a young adolescent growing up in the church, this was a wonderful verse to share with the girls in youth group. It didn't always go over well. And there was certainly nothing holy about my motivation.

Of course, we need to be careful we aren't removing this from the custom of Paul's day.

- You see this was actually the practice in the synagogue where men sat with men and women with women, on opposite sides of each other. So it was the men that greeted other men with a holy kiss. There was nothing weird about it, though if you walked into a church today and saw men kissing other men, you may find it a little weird, or liberal.
- For various reasons this is a custom that hasn't carried over to the western world (though in some middle eastern culture you will still see this exercised). But we tend to go with the holy hand shake. And it's simply a way of greeting, accepting one another and showing this togetherness.

13:13-14 - *All the saints greet you. ¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*

“Long before the church developed the formal doctrine of the Trinity, the apostle Paul was using the three Persons of the Trinity in his benedictions. He said goodbye with a prayer for the presence in the lives of the Corinthians of the grace that finds its source in Christ, and the love that God inspires, and the partnership of life that the Holy Spirit creates (13:14). Even in his final word Paul is issuing a call to a celebration of the life that is “in Christ.””²

² Chafin, K. L., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1985). *1, 2 Corinthians* (Vol. 30, pp. 289–290). Thomas Nelson Inc.

This is the only place in the N.T. where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned together in this kind of blessing. Paul certainly wanted the Corinthian church to be blessed in all that God is.

And we are as we remember the grace of Jesus Christ who gave His life for us that we could be forgiven and freed from sin.

We remember the love of God – *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God”* (1 John 3:1).

We remember the sweet communion (koinonia) provided us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit which was poured out at Pentecost to form the church, the bride of Christ. This fellowship, or communion, is not natural. It’s supernatural and such a blessing to be a part of what God is doing through the church.

Let’s continually be growing and maturing in Jesus; walking in love, grace and peace together as we serve Him and remain watchful for His coming!