

## Message #34

## II Corinthians 13:1-14

This final chapter of II Corinthians absolutely proves that what is happening in most churches today is not really of God. Because a church that honors God is a church that will exercise discipline. A church that honors God is a church that stands for righteousness and does something about sin. The church that honors God is one that will take a stand. It challenges the people of God to face sin and deal with sin and if they don't, it will carry out church discipline in order to keep the church pure. Each one of us is responsible before God to conduct a true self-examination. Each one of us is responsible to see evil and deal with it and most churches miss this point.

Most churches today do nothing about sin. In fact, their goal is to make a sinner feel good. They won't take a stand for true doctrine, they will not take a stand against non-repentant sin, but they will try to make all people enjoy the church experience.

The Apostle Paul did not have this philosophy. He did not do business like that. If a church is to experience the comfort of God, if a church is to experience the power of God, if a church is to be approved by God, it must be a church that faces sin issues.

That point was the final point Paul wanted to communicate to the Corinthians. In fact, Paul was so intent upon this point that he said in **verse 2**, when I come to the church as a true apostle of God, I will not spare anyone. Paul says I will come and will dish out severe church discipline no matter who the person is. In fact, that word "severity" (*αποτομωζ*) in **verse 10** means very sharp and very severe discipline (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 55).

Paul says I want this church running right and in order for that to happen, it needs to be a place that deals with sin and dishes out church discipline. If we want to run right as individuals, we need to deal with sin and be disciplined. A church that pleases God is not a free-for-all in which carnal people feel welcome. The final point Paul makes to this church is this:

**GOD WANTS HIS CHURCH TO BE STRONG AND IN ORDER FOR THAT TO HAPPEN, IT MUST BE A PLACE THAT JUDGES AND DISCIPLINES SIN AND IF THE PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH REFUSE, A TRUE MINISTER OF GOD MUST DEAL WITH IT SEVERELY.**

That is exactly what Paul is teaching in this final part of his letter to the Corinthians. Now keep in mind that Paul loved these people and he loved this church, but he would not allow God's church to be filled with people who were pursuing a life of sin. If he came to the church and discovered that the people were back in the same sins they were saved out of, he would do something about it.

Now the situation is that some of the Corinthians were downplaying Paul and rebelling against him and his apostolic instruction. They were living ungodly lives and Paul said I am coming and will put a stop to that.

**FINAL POINT #1** – Every sin discipline case is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. **13:1**

In matters pertaining to judgment due to severe sin issues, one witness is not enough. That point was even established in the O.T. (Deut. 19:15). Paul begins with this right up front, because he wanted these Corinthians to know that the next time he comes he is coming as a judge.

This principle of two or three witnesses is obviously the way that Paul conducted himself in judgment matters of discipline. He would carefully ascertain facts to determine if things were true. He would use the testimony of two or three reliable witnesses before he would start the process of discipline.

Now by virtue of the fact that Paul says “this is the third time I am coming to you,” he obviously was giving the Corinthians plenty of time to resolve their sin problems. This is the way God works with us. He gives us plenty of time to deal with sin issues before He judges. But make no mistake about this point, He will judge. When He does judge, there will be the eyewitness testimony of the Word of God, the eyewitness testimony of the Holy Spirit, the eyewitness testimony of the all-knowing and all-seeing God and the eyewitness testimony of Jesus Christ. No one will fool Him when it is time for judgment.

**FINAL POINT #2** – Every person who persists in sin will not be spared discipline. **13:2**

This is so interesting because the false apostles were accusing Paul of not having authority and Paul says when I get there, I will not spare anyone who is in sin. In other words, these people would see full apostolic authority in action.

Now Paul gives these people an “advance” warning. Now the verb “sinned in the past” (προαμαρτανω) is a perfect tense verb. What Paul is saying is when I get there I will not spare anyone judgment who has sinned in the past and continues to sin in the present. If the person would deal with the sin and stop it, Paul would not even mention it. But if the person persisted in the sin, Paul would do something about it.

**FINAL POINT #3** – Every person who persists in sin will be disciplined because of Jesus Christ. **13:3-4**

These believers were supposed to have Christ’s power in them that would enable them to live a victorious life over sin and yet they were criticizing Paul who was having victory over sin. It is obvious that the false teachers were saying that having God’s power meant that you were healthy and wealthy. But what Paul said is having God’s power means one is victorious over sin.

Paul says the power of God is tremendous. Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross and the power of God brought Him back to life. This same power now lives in a believer and every believer has the power to have victory over sin. Obviously a critical key to having victory over sin is to acknowledge our weakness and not run around telling people how strong and spiritual we are.

Paul says we ourselves are weak; however, we do have the power of God in us and that makes us strong. We do have victory over our sin and our flesh. In fact, when we get to Corinth you will see the power of God in us as we deal with your sin.

**FINAL POINT #4** – Every person who is in sin needs to examine himself to see if he is really in Christ . **13:5-6**

Paul aims this straight at the Corinthians and says you need to “test” yourselves and “examine” yourselves. The Greek indicates that each person is responsible to run his or her own test or examination. Now the word “test” (πειραζω) means to run a test that proves something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 351). The word “examine” (δοκιμαζω) means to examine something to establish the purity, like with testing metals (*Ibid.*, p. 120).

So what Paul is saying here is that every believer needs to run a test on himself. Every believer needs to examine himself to see if his lifestyle proves he has a relationship with Jesus Christ. Every believer needs to perform some self-examination to see if Jesus Christ is truly in us, which would be proved by a pursuit of purity. Paul says I’ll tell you right now that we are willing to run this test on ourselves and we don’t fail the test.

What is the test? The test is in regard to sin; the kinds of sin he mentions in 12:20-21. Paul’s challenge is to examine yourself in regard to sin. See whether or not you are really in Christ. See whether or not you really love the Word of God and love to apply it to your life. See whether or not you are really and truly saved. Here is one test you can run right here and right now. Has there ever really been a time when you invited Jesus Christ into your life and turned your life over to Him? Can you see evidence of that?

We should never be afraid to ask ourselves those questions. Are you? Every true believer can discern whether or not Jesus Christ is really living in one’s life.

This challenge to test and examine yourself is one that is needed right now in the United States of America. There are millions of people who profess themselves to be Christians, who need to look seriously at these two verses. Notice Paul does not say test yourself and examine yourself and see if you have been baptized; see if you tithe; see if you go to church; see if you are kind to your neighbor; see if you try to keep the O.T. Law; see if you are a good person; Paul says test yourself to see “that Jesus Christ is in you.”

**FINAL POINT #5** – Every believer should do what is right , not what is evil . **13:7**

Paul was not mad at the Corinthians, nor was he looking for approval from the Corinthians. In fact, he prayed for the Corinthians. He prayed that these Corinthians would do what is biblically right regardless of their view of him. Now the word “wrong” (κακον) is a word that refers to evil, wicked, worthless things. This particular word does have to do with ethical and moral things (*Ibid.*, p. 227). Paul says I want you to know that “we” (Paul and his apostolic team) actually pray for you that you will do what is right and righteous.

**FINAL POINT #6** – Every true minister must act in accordance with the truth. **13:8**

Paul makes it clear that everything is based on truth. This is what real, true ministry is all about. Base everything you believe and do on the truth of the Word of God. True biblical love is always in the context of truth. Judgment is based on truth, not some subjective or delusional perspective of one's own spirituality. This is a key point; God's church and God's minister and God's people must function in the context of truth, specifically as it has to do with sin.

**FINAL POINT #7** – Every true minister rejoices and prays that God's people are strong and complete. **13:9**

Notice this is the second time Paul mentions "we pray for you." He wanted the Corinthians to know that he and his team prayed for these Corinthians. The word "pray" (προσευχομαι) is one that specifically emphasizes that Paul and his ministry team went into the presence of God in behalf of this people. Many of these Corinthians were attacking Paul and Paul was praying that they would grow to become complete in their relationship with God.

**FINAL POINT #8** – Every believer needs to respond to the written Word before judgment comes. **13:10**

Now we see the importance of the written Word of God. The written Word of God will build you up and not tear you down **if you are dealing with sin**. If one is not dealing with sin, the Word of God is a real threat. Paul says it is time to respond to God before His severe judgment comes.

Please do not overlook this point. It is a careful understanding of the written Word that will build you up so that you have victory over sin. Nothing else can do this.

**FINAL POINT #9** – Paul gives his final commands to the church. **13:11-12**

There are six final commands that he gives to the Corinthians.

**Command #1** - Rejoice.

**Command #2** - Be complete.

**Command #3** - Be comforted.

**Command #4** - Be like-minded.

**Command #5** - Live in peace.

Now the promise is if you obey these commands, "the God of the love and peace" shall be with you. This is the only place in the New Testament where we have the phrase "the God of the love."

The point of this context is that when believers are analyzing themselves and dealing with sin, they have joy, they are being made complete, they are comforted, they have unity and they are at peace, and as a result “the God” of the true high, holy kind of love is with these people in this church.

**Command #6** - Greet one another.

Notice Paul qualifies with a holy kiss, not some immoral kiss. In this church we greet one another with handshakes and hugs, but those handshakes and hugs are not holy unless they are made in the context of biblical love and truth. A truly “holy kiss” is in the context of true holy love that is based on the written Word.

**FINAL POINT #10** – Paul gives his final encouragement to the church. **13:13-14**

There are two final encouragements that Paul gives to the church.

**Encouragement #1** - All saints greet you. **13:13**

**Encouragement #2** - All the Trinity is with you. **13:14**

Notice “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” is the grace that comes from Him, which stemmed from the love of God, and which by the Holy Spirit, connected us to the fellowship with the Godhead.

We actually are linked to God by virtue of the fellowship work of the Holy Spirit in our behalf, the love of God for us and the grace of God that the Lord Jesus Christ brought to us.

As bizarre as this church was, the Corinthians did have a rich connection to the Trinity.

What happened to this church in Corinth? Well there is some evidence that they did respond to Paul because when he writes Romans, he was in Corinth, staying with Gaius and he did not indicate that there were any major issues (Rom. 16:23). However, in about A.D. 95 or 96, Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthians (known as I Clement) and he said “we have been somewhat slow in giving attention to the matters in dispute among you...especially the detestable and unholy schism...which a few reckless and arrogant persons have kindled to such a pitch of insanity that your good name, once so renowned and loved by all has been greatly reviled” (*First Clement*, p. 28).

It would appear that for a time the Corinthians did make some adjustments, but in the end many fell back into sin. Do not let that happen to us. If this book of II Corinthians teaches us anything it is that God is a gracious God, but we need to keep applying His Word to our lives and analyzing ourselves until we get out of this world. We will not ever know the comfort of God or the joy of God if we are in sin.