

2 CORINTHIANS 13 | *Test Yourself*

By the Power of God

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 2 I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them— 3 because you seek proof that Messiah is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful (δυνατέω) among you. 4 For he was crucified in weakness (ἀσθένεια), but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

Test Yourself

5 Examine (πειράζω, pres.)¹ yourselves, to see whether you are in the [Christian] faith (ἐν τῇ πίστει). Test (δοκιμάζω, pres.)² yourselves. Or do you not realise (ἐπιγινώσκω, pres.) this about yourselves, that Jesus Messiah is in you (ὅτι Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς³ ἐν ὑμῖν)?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. 7 But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right (καλός), though we may seem to have failed. 8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth (ὕπὲρ τῆς ἀληθείας). 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your maturation (κατάρτισις)³ is what we pray for. 10 For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority (ἐξουσία) that the Lord [Jesus] has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

Grace, Love, and Fellowship

11 Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice. Aim for restoration (καταρτίζω, pres.)⁴ comfort (παρακαλέω, pres.) one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you. 14 The grace (χάρις) of the Lord Jesus Messiah, the love (ἀγάπη) of God, and the fellowship (κοινωνία)⁵ of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

¹ “[T]o endeavor to discover the nature or character of someth. by testing, *try, make trial of, put to the test*” (BDAG, 792).

² “[T]o make a critical examination of someth. to determine genuineness, *put to the test, examine...* to draw a conclusion about worth on the basis of testing, *prove, approve*, here the focus is on the result of a procedure or examination. ...*prove by testing*, of gold...accept as proved, approve” (BDAG, 255).

³ “[T]he process of perfecting, maturation...we pray for your maturation (for the perfecting of your characters Goodsp.)” (BDAG, 526). **Ga 6:1** 1 Brothers and sisters, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore (καταρτίζω) him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

⁴ “[T]o cause to be in a condition to function well, *put in order, restore...* restore to a former condition, put to rights” (BDAG, 526).

⁵ “[C]lose association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship*” (BDAG, 552).

Overview

1. Paul wrote *Romans* during the three months he was in Corinth (Ac 20:2-3, ad 56-57).

Lessons for Life

1. **Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses (v. 1).**
2. **Jesus is not weak in dealing with us, but is powerful among us (v. 3).**
 - a. Jesus was crucified in weakness, but he lives by the power of God (v. 4).
 - b. There is a weakness about Christianity, but there is also a strength. Nietzsche criticised Christianity's weakness and failed to see its strength.
3. **Although we are weak in Jesus, in dealing with others we are to live with Jesus by God's power (v. 4).**
4. **We are to keep examining and testing ourselves whether: (1) we are in the Christian faith; and (2) Jesus is operating in us (vv. 5-6).**
 - a. *πειράζω*: "to endeavor to discover the nature or character of someth. by testing, *try, make trial of, put to the test*" (BDAG, 792).
 - b. *δοκιμάζω*: "to make a critical examination of someth. to determine genuineness, *put to the test, examine...* to draw a conclusion about worth on the basis of testing, *prove, approve*, here the focus is on the result of a procedure or examination. ...*prove by testing*, of gold...accept as proved, approve" (BDAG, 255).
 - c. This is more of a corporate examination than an individual examination. All the "yous" and "yours" are plural.
 - d. This verse may at first seem to be talking about gaining assurance of one's salvation. However, this was not what Paul advocated here or anywhere else in his writings. He was writing to genuine believers (2 Co 1:1, 21-22; 3:2-3; 6:14; 8:9).⁶
5. **We are to do everything for the truth and absolutely nothing against it (v. 8).**
 - a. Truth equals reality.
(1) *ἀλήθεια*: "an actual event or state, *reality*" (BDAG, 42).
 - b. How can we do everything for the truth if we cannot know the truth? This is where postmodernism gets it so wrong.
6. **We are to pray for the maturation of others (v. 9).**
 - a. *κατάρτισις*: "the process of perfecting, maturation...we pray for your maturation (for the perfecting of your characters Goodsp.)" (BDAG, 526).
7. **We are not to be severe in the use of our authority unless absolutely necessary (v. 10).**
8. **The authority Jesus gives us is for building up and not tearing down (v. 10).**

⁶ Constable, 177.

9. We are to rejoice, aim for restoration, encourage one another, agree with one another, and live in peace (v. 11).

- a. A holy kiss (v. 12) is an outward sign we are in fellowship with one another.
- b. Yes, even Kiwi Christians need to show outward signs of Christian affection.

10. The grace of Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit is with us all (v. 14).

- a. κοινωνία: “close association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship*” (BDAG, 552).
- b. This verse goes far in proving the doctrine of the Trinity.

Blog

“Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice. Aim for restoration, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.” - 2 Corinthians 13:11

In 2 Corinthians 13, Paul continues to ready the Corinthians for this third visit. When he arrives, he doesn't want to be forced to severely discipline certain sinning members of the church. He asks the Corinthians to examine and test themselves whether they are thinking and living in accordance with what he has taught them over the years. Ultimately, he wants them to live in peace with one another in the grace, love, and fellowship of the Trinity. Here's ten life lessons from this final chapter of 2 Corinthians.

- 1. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses (v. 1).**
This is ancient rule for God's people (Dt 19:15; Mt 18:16). Before we accuse someone of a sin or exercise discipline in the church, we must ensure the evidence for that sin is reliable and sufficient. We definitely should hear both sides of the story. Our fellow Christians are innocent until proven guilty. In love and justice, we are to give our brothers and sisters the benefit of the doubt.
- 2. Jesus is not weak in dealing with us, but is powerful among us (v. 3).** There is a “weakness” about Christianity that is unattractive to many. Nietzsche despised Christianity's “weakness.” He failed to see or acknowledge its strength. In fact, Christianity's weakness is its strength. Jesus was crucified in weakness, but he lives by the power of God (v. 4).
- 3. Although we are weak in Jesus, in dealing with others we are to live with Jesus by God's power (v. 4).** As Christians, we prefer to be gentle with others, not strong. We don't enjoy exercising church discipline, and we don't rush into conflict. However, it is sometimes necessary for us to be strong. When we are forced to be strong, it is to be God's power, not our own power, working in and through us. Jesus is personally among us when we appropriately exercise church discipline. “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask [regarding church discipline], it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Mt 18:18-20).
- 4. We are to keep examining and testing ourselves whether: (1) we are in the Christian faith; and (2) Jesus is actively operating in us (vv. 5-6).** To examine (πειράζω) means “to endeavor to discover the nature or character of someth. by testing, try, make trial of, put to the test.” To test (δοκιμάζω) means “to make a critical examination of someth. to determine genuineness, put to the test, examine...to draw a conclusion about worth on the basis of testing, prove, approve...prove by testing, of gold.” Like the Corinthians, we are to keep examining and testing ourselves. Are we truly following Jesus and abiding in him? Do we fully agree with what Jesus and the apostles taught? Is Jesus actively operating in and through us? All the “you” and “yours” are plural, which indicates this is

more of a corporate examination than an individual one. Paul has no doubt the Corinthians are saved (2 Co 1:1, 21-22; 3:2-3; 6:14; 8:9), so this is not a test of salvation. This is a test of fellowship. Every believer is “in Messiah,” but “Jesus is in” only those believers who are in active fellowship with him. If Jesus is not active in us, we are to stop and confess our sins (1 Jn 1:9), in order that fellowship with him may be restored.

5. **We are to do everything for the truth and nothing against it (v. 8).** As believers, we are to be dedicated to objective truth. Truth is reality. Postmodernism says truth is inaccessible to us. Christianity responds with a strong no to this. We can know the truth because God has: (1) given us the capacity to know truth as his image-bearers; and (2) revealed truth to us through creation, conscience, the canon of Scripture, and Christ.
6. **We are to pray for the maturation of others (v. 9).** The Greek word *κατάρτισις* means “the process of perfecting, maturation.” It is a joy to see our spiritual children and grandchildren mature and become more like Jesus. I am seeing this very thing right now in my nephew and his wife, who became Christians a little over a year ago. They are making good decisions as they raise their family in the Lord. I want to continue to pray for their maturation.
7. **We are not to be severe in the use of our authority unless absolutely necessary (v. 10).** This is similar to lesson three above. We don’t enjoy using our authority to exercise severe discipline as parents or church leaders. Severity is called for only in extreme situations. Only when there is a clear and repeated lack of repentance are we to be severe.
8. **The authority Jesus gives us is for building up and not tearing down (v. 10).** If we are in a position of authority, whether at home, at work, or in the church, our job is to build up the people and institutions for which we are responsible and not to tear them down. As Christians, we are builders, not destroyers. We will give an account to Jesus for what happens under our watch.
9. **We are to rejoice, aim for restoration, encourage one another, agree with one another, and live in peace (v. 11).** Is our local church marked by joy, restoration, encouragement, unity, and peace? These are corporate qualities we are to aim for. “... [E]ager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). “...[S]tanding firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel...” (Php 1:27). Our church is going through a rough patch at the moment. These words from Paul definitely apply to us.
10. **The grace of Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit is with us (v. 14).** Along with Mt 28:19, this is one of the great Trinitarian verses of the New Testament. Paul ends his letter with a focus on the Trinity. Jesus specialises in grace, our Father in love, and the Spirit in fellowship. This is a perfect prayer to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

My biggest takeaway from this chapter is Paul's command to aim for restoration (v. 11). Restoration and unity in the local church is worth "fighting" for. In almost every one of his epistles, Paul emphasises unity. It was an issue in the early church, and it is an issue now.

Father, help us to aim for and achieve unity in our local church. Thank you for your unconditional love for us, and the grace that we have in the Lord Jesus. May we experience true *koinonia* fellowship with one another as we carry out the great commission in Dunedin. We love you, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.

- Jeff Coleman