



Session 13: The Last Plea to the Church

And at last, we get to the last chapter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Church at Corinth: The longest two letters from Paul to a New Testament Church. Why?

2 Corinthians 13

"This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." ² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, ³ since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴ For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you. ⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. ¹⁰ This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down." ¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God's people here send their greetings. ¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

How important is it to Paul that the Corinthian Church understands that sin is self-incriminating?

Incriminate = to be involved in, or make appear guilty of, a crime, or fault.

Are we as bold as Paul....concerning the people that call us "bigots"...and "judgmental"? Should we be more tolerant with those that do the more gross, ungodly sins?

In the last chapter of this severe letter, Paul finishes with four (4) things:

1. He finishes with a warning.

- Paul is coming again to Corinth and this time there will be no more loose talk and reckless statements.
- Whatever is said will be witnessed and proved once and for all.
- To put it in proper perspective, Paul insists that there must be a showdown.

The ill, uncomfortable situation must not drag out any longer....the problem has to be resolved.

Paul knew that there comes a time when troubles must be faced.

2. He finishes with a WISH.

- It is Paul's wish that the Church (the people at Corinth that are considered members of the Church at Corinth) should do the "fine thing."....meaning that they should do the right thing, the Godly thing. The thing that the Lord would be pleased.
- If the Church would do this....then Paul would never need to exert his authority. If they repent...If they do the "right thing" then Paul would certainly not be disappointed by it ...and it would become a joy instead of a deep emotional hurt that would cause great anguish.
- Paul never wanted to show his authority for the sake of showing it.

Everything Paul did was to build up and not destroy.

Discipline must always be aimed to lift a man up and not to knock him down.

3. He finishes with a HOPE.

He has three (3) hopes for the Corinthians:

- **He hopes that they will go onwards to perfection.**
 - ✓ There can be no standing still in the Christian life.
 - ✓ The Christian who is not advancing is slipping back.The Christian is a person who is ever on the way to God, and therefore each day, by the grace of God, he must be a little more fit to stand God's scrutiny on how he lives and how he challenges others to live a Godly life.
- **He hopes that the Corinthians will listen to the exhortation he has given them.**

It takes a strong person, a big man...to listen to hard advice.

We would all be a great deal better off if we would stop talking about what we want and begin listening to the voices of the wise....and especially to the voice of the Father.

- **He hopes that the Church will live in agreement and in Peace.**

No congregation can worship the God of peace in the spirit of bitterness.

Men must love each other before their love for God has any reality.

4. He finishes with a BLESSING.

From Severity to Serenity ...

After the severity, the struggle and the debate, there comes the serenity of the benediction.

One of the best ways of making peace with our enemies is to pray for them...for no one can hate a person and pray for him at the same time.

We leave the troubled story of Paul and the Church of Corinth with the benediction ringing in our ears. The way has been hard, but the last word is peace.

A final thought....

Paul's Principles

What were the secrets of this unusual man?

We have discovered the secrets in some of Paul's key thoughts expressed in his own words as taken from the Corinthian letters:

❖ **“Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2)**

At the center of Paul's Christian experience and at the forefront of his preaching, reigned the crucified Lord of Glory.

Foolishness in the eyes of human wisdom....

Freedom for the sinner that accepted the crucified, buried, and risen Savior.

Remember, the Cross was God's secret design.

❖ **“When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10)**

What work Paul did was not done by him at all, but by the inward grace of God.

He could not boast of strength before the accusers at Corinth, but he learned that real strength comes only through weakness.

❖ **“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17)**

Human wisdom and argument are wrong...because they are but another variety of human boasting. Whoever must boast must boast in the Lord.

❖ **“I seek not yours, but you” (2 Corinthians 12:14).**

Here is God’s secret for pastors.

He did not seek their money, their praise, nor their loyalty. He sought them....men and women whom he pleaded that they be reconciled to God. He was not in business for himself. He was an Ambassador for Christ.

❖ **“We are perplexed, but not in despair” (2 Corinthians 4:8)**

The joys of the Christian run deep. They are unspeakable. On the surface...you find disappointment and baffling circumstances. But....these disappointing and troubling experiences never reach the deep running waters of peace....His peace.

❖ **“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10)**

This theme recurs many times in the Corinthian letters, and therefore was a compelling motive of Paul.

Paul had been before the judgment seat of the Roman emperor...and Governor Gallio (Acts 18:12). He knew what it was like when appearing before authorities who had the approved means to will to kill and destroy a life....or release and set free.

Paul knew that the judgment seat of Christ was a sobering thought for all who believed, especially those believers that had yielded to temptation.

It should be a sobering thought for all....that our deeds (both good and bad) will be tried by fire....and we will stand before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

❖ **“Do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)
The arrival of faith in the heart brings vast relief and freedom.**

***How do you spell relief?
Jesus on your side...and you on His!***

