

**Men's Sunday Night**  
**The Book of 2 Corinthians**  
**"Finding Strength in Weakness"**  
**Lesson 12 – 2 Corinthians 13**  
**"Examine Yourselves"**

As Paul brought his letter to a close, his great love for the Corinthians constrained him to make one last appeal. He did not want his third visit to their church to be another painful experience for them and for him. He had opened his heart to them, explained his ministry, answered their accusations, and urged them to submit to the Word of God and obey the Lord. What more could he say or do? In this closing section of the letter, Paul used several approaches in his attempt to motivate the Corinthians toward obedience and submission.

His statement in v. 4 is interesting. In His death, Christ seemed to reveal weakness; but His resurrection revealed the power of God. In his previous visit, Paul showed seeming weakness as he served, this next visit would be different. There are times when we show His power in us by our seeming weakness, there are other times when we must be severe through the power of God. Paul's thorn in the flesh experience is an example of being "weak in Him" yet living by the power of God.

The Corinthians were spending a great deal of time examining Paul, now it was time they examined themselves. "Are you even in the faith?" asked Paul. "Are you truly saved?" Every believer must prove his or her faith, no one can tell others whether or not they are born again.

In v. 8, Paul is not suggesting that there is no way to oppose the truth. Satan certainly opposes the truth with his lies, and people are more prone to believe his lies than they are to believe God's truth. Paul is saying that the repentance of the Corinthians would be in accordance to the Word of God. Since they would be obeying the truth, Paul could do nothing against them in terms of judging sin or disciplining the offenders. He himself did not want anything other than the truth in the church at Corinth.

Paul closes with one of the greatest of the Bible blessing, the blessing of the Trinity (v. 14). The "*grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*" takes us back to Bethlehem, when, "*the love of God*" takes us to Calvary, where God the Father gave His Son; and "*the communion of the Holy Spirit*" takes us to Pentecost, where the Spirit baptized all believers into the body of Christ. How fitting this blessing was for this divided, unspiritual church.

**Read 2 Corinthians 13:1-4. Pray and answer the following questions:**

This is the final section of Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. He has done all he can to lead the false teachers, the critics, and those who are in sin to repent and turn back to the Lord. Paul asks once more that they respond to his loving appeal. His prayers for them and his desire not to tear them down but to build them up, was to set a model for Christian leadership in each generation. His final words include a warning, a prayer, a challenge, and a blessing.

1. What can the Corinthians expect from Paul's third visit?
2. What proof can Paul give that Christ is really speaking through him?
3. How is gentleness (meekness) misunderstood as weakness in our world today?
4. Verse 4 sums up the whole book. Why does the cross represent the heart of what Paul has been saying to the Corinthians?

**Read 2 Corinthians 13:5-10. Pray and answer the following questions:**

In many of Paul's letters, his closing passages are filled with personal comments and greetings to individuals. That's not the case in these following passages. Although Paul knows the Corinthians by name, he keeps his comments short and generic.

5. Instead of examining Paul, what should the Christians be doing? How should this affect their attitudes and behavior?

6. What does this passage reveal about Paul's concern for the Corinthians spiritual welfare and regard for his own reputation?

7. For what purpose had God given authority to Paul?

8. How is Paul's attitude one more example of the use of authority to build up rather than tear down?

**Read 2 Corinthians 13:11-14. Pray and answer the following questions:**

9. In what specific ways does Paul pray that the brethren will be built up?

10. How is this prayer encouraging to you?

11. If you are unsure about your position in Christ, what can you do about it in light of this chapter?

## **Spiritual Authority**

If you exercise leadership among other believers, you'll want to carefully study Paul's comment about his authority (2 Cor. 13:10). Like many of us, Paul liked to be in charge, and he felt frustrated when people failed to follow his lead, as the Corinthians had. As an apostle, he had spiritual authority over them, which at times led him to deal severely with them. But it's important to notice how Paul exercised his authority, especially as he grew older in the faith. He didn't lord it over others or try to use his authority to personal advantage. Nor did he abuse his power by using it to work out his own anger. Instead, he recognized that spiritual authority is given "*for edification and not for destruction,*" for building others up, not for tearing them down. Is that how you use your position and authority? Do you exercise leadership in order to accomplish the best interests of those who follow you? As they carry out your directives, are they built up in Christ, or torn down?

## **Journaling**

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.