

## 2<sup>nd</sup> CORINTHIANS 10-13: VINDICATION OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP

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#### Ch13v1-2: Paul's warning to them

v1: ***"This is the third time I am coming to you"*** (see also ch12v14); i.e. the 3<sup>rd</sup> time Paul was preparing, making plans & intentions to come to Corinth (see Acts 19v21, 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 16v5-8, Acts 20v1-2).

***"In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established"***, quoting the OT law (Deut 19v15), that all things be administered on a righteous basis (see also John 8v17, Matt 18v16, 1<sup>st</sup> Tim 5v19, Heb 10v28).

Other witnesses could corroborate that Paul was indeed intending to come to Corinth on several occasions.

The Lord's servants must be prepared to be misunderstood & misrepresented at times; but we should all be very careful in judging the service, motives & intents of other believers (see Luke 6v37, 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 4v5).

We need to be exercised as servants, but also commit everything to the Lord, to look for His leading & guidance.

#### Ch12v19-21: Paul's fears for them

v19: ***"we speak before God in Christ"***; our service comes under divine scrutiny, and our motivation should be the spiritual edification of those we love, ***"we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying"***.

v20: Paul expresses anxious fears regarding their spiritual condition; ***"I shall not find you such as I would"***, and they would not welcome coming under his apostolic rod, ***"I shall be found unto you such as ye would not"***.

Paul lists fleshly behaviour that he did not want to see among them, and would warrant apostolic correction; ***"lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults"***.

v21: Paul fears they were tolerating unrepentant sinners, guilty of continuing in the practice of moral uncleanness.

Ch13v2: Paul's warning, and his anxiety regarding their true spiritual condition, follows on from ch12v19-21. Paul forewarns not only any unrepentant offenders, "***I write to them which heretofore have sinned***", but also the whole company, "***and to all other***", that if they themselves did not deal with the problem, then when he came he "***will not spare***" them his apostolic rod of judgment & correction, for the good & recovery of the assembly. This would all be done according to right practice & scriptural principle, with appropriate witnesses (v1). These same administrative principles would apply to assembly government & discipline operating today.

### **Ch13v3-6: Paul's appeal to them**

NB. The parenthesis in v3-4; "***Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me ... Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves***".

v3: The proof of Paul being Christ's spokesman, "***Christ speaking in me***", was their salvation; his ministry toward them was "***not weak, but is mighty in you***", in that he had brought them to Christ.

v4: Paul contrasts the ways in which Christ was speaking in him, in the visits he made to Corinth, and the contrasting displayed character of Christ in relation to His death & resurrection, i.e. weakness & power.

Concerning Christ's death, "***though He was crucified through weakness***"; that was how He was perceived by men, as One unable to deliver Himself from death, even when challenged as Son of God to come down from the cross.

In reality, Christ had been given authority to lay down His life (John 10v18); death had no claims upon Him.

He was capable of dying, and "***became obedient unto death***" (Phil 2v8), but He was never subject to death.

Concerning Christ's resurrection, "***yet He liveth by the power of God***", i.e. the power of His resurrection.

So for Paul's service at Corinth, he may have been perceived as weak, but when he comes again to them, it will be in the power of the risen Christ in their midst; "***we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you***" as he would execute appropriate judgment on any who yet refused to repent of sins committed.

So when Paul would come to them again, they would know again the proof of Christ speaking powerfully in him.

For ourselves as "***ambassadors for Christ***" (ch5v20), we can know the power of the risen Christ speaking in us.

v5: "***Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves***"; an appeal for self-examination.

Since they were "***in the faith***", this was the assurance of Christ speaking in Paul (v3), bringing them to Christ for salvation, and there was that demonstration of the power of God in the service of the apostle.

NB. God does not intend any believer to have doubts about their salvation.

***"Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"*** The evidence of their salvation, indicating that they were not "***reprobates***", i.e. disapproved / counterfeit, was "***Jesus Christ is in you***".

A true believer has the inward joy of Christ living in them; "***Christ liveth in me***" (Gal 2v20), "***Christ in you, the hope of glory***" (Col 1v27). The believer finds all their satisfaction & delight in the risen & glorified Christ.

v6: "***But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.***"

Paul and his fellow workers were genuine, as Paul believed the Corinthian believers were also.

In the context of the passage, Paul is not so much doubting their salvation, but getting them to recognize the reality of their salvation, and with that the reality, genuineness & power of his own apostolic service.

### **Ch13v7: Paul's prayer for them**

The apostle is praying that the Corinthians will live lives that display the reality of their salvation, by doing “**no evil**” and “**that which is honest**”, i.e. by themselves judging any sin in their company, and dissociating from the false teachers. If this prayer is answered, then that would remove the opportunity for Paul to come to Corinth and display his apostolic authority, which might be construed that he did not have such apostolic power. But such is his selflessness, that their recovery is Paul's desired outcome, even “**though we be** (regarded) **as reprobates**”.

### **Ch13v8: Paul's declaration regarding the truth**

They had no power against the truth of God, and service that will have real power must be according to the truth.

### **Ch13v9: Paul's selflessness**

Paul is not looking for any personal vindication, and is happy to be regarded as “**weak**”, as long as they as an assembly were spiritually “**strong**”.

His further prayer for them was their “**perfection**”, i.e. ‘**complete adjustment**’, meaning their full recovery & restoration to an assembly that honours God & Christ.

### **Ch13v10: Paul's authority for intervening**

The apostle's preference was to write these warnings to them, rather than be in their presence having to “**use sharpness**”, and have to move against them “**according to the power which the Lord hath given me**”.

His only motive in seeking to correct them was for their “**edification, and not to destruction** (casting down)”.

Any spiritual gift is to operate only for the edification of other believers (see also ch12v19, 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 14).

### **Ch13v11 Paul's closing exhortations & appeal to them**

Paul's tender appeal to his “**brethren**”, a lovely title for believers 1<sup>st</sup> used by the risen Lord Jesus (John 20v17).

“**Be perfect**”, i.e. ‘**perfectly joined together**’, i.e. a recovered & united assembly, with no schisms.

Also “**be of good comfort**”, i.e. be encouraged, “**be of one mind**” collectively as a united assembly, and “**live in peace**” with one another. If there is such a moral atmosphere of unity, harmony & peace, then in response “**the God of love and peace shall be with you**”, and they would enjoy the presence of God in their midst.

### **Ch13v12-13: Paul's closing salutations**

v12: “**Greet one another with an holy kiss**”, i.e. appropriate & genuine outward expression of fellowship between believers, displaying inward feelings of true affection.

v13: “**All the saints salute you**”, i.e. expression of fellowship between assemblies, here greetings likely from Philippi to Corinth, and then there were similar greetings from Corinth to Rome (see Rom 16v23).

### **Ch13v14: Paul's rich benediction**

Expressions of fellowship with divine Persons, as we would all enjoy all these resources of the triune Godhead.

“**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**”; i.e. sustaining & strengthening grace, as Paul himself knew (ch12v9).

“**the love of God**”; that divine love that is unfailing & eternal, and from which we cannot be separated (Rom 8v39).

“**the communion** (fellowship) **of the Holy Ghost**”; we have always the inward witness of the Spirit (Rom 8v16).