

2Cor. 13:1 ¶ This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

This last chapter begins with a statement that Paul's coming visit to Corinth will be his third one. According to Acts 18, his first visit lasted 18 months; we don't know when his second visit occurred. He seems to be saying that he is tired of dealing with false accusations and is ready to confront them in person with witnesses so as to set the record straight once and for all.

2Cor. 13:2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

2Cor. 13:3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

Paul's message had not changed; he declared the same truth in his first two visits that he declared in his two letters. This will always be true of those declaring God's word. Just as He never changes, neither will the truth of His word; it will endure forever.

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not;"

Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Psalms 119:160 "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."

Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

1 Peter 1:25 "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

In context with the previous verse, the language is strong and indicates that Paul will be coming in power and authority to deal with those who are destroying the church from within by their sin. Since his warnings and attempts to bring about repentance and obedience have gone unheeded, he is coming in person to exercise his God-given apostolic authority. In light of their spiritual weakness, they will soon understand the fullness of the power of the Spirit acting through Paul.

It stands out to me that Paul is bold and confident through the power of the Spirit working in him. When you are declaring the truth of God's word, you can always face the enemy with confidence and without fear.

2 Timothy 1:7 "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

When we are declaring the truth of God's word, those who choose to reject our message are rejecting God.

"Since ye seek a proof...." – The wording here is directed more toward the person and not toward the message. Paul was clear to state that we are to always compare the message to the written word of God.

Acts 17:10–11 "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

2Cor. 13:4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

Paul is making a comparison of how he chose to minister with how Christ ministered. One would think that the crucifixion showed Jesus to be weak and without the power and authority of God. The truth is that it was through weakness that He was most able to demonstrate the power of God in Him through the resurrection. Paul and his team had chosen to minister through the same principle. They chose to present the truth in meekness and love, but they would act in the full force of the power of the Spirit when necessary to combat the forces of evil attacking the church.

2Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

2Cor. 13:6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

These are important verses that every person professing Christ should take to heart. Paul challenges the people in the church at Corinth to examine themselves as to whether they truly possess faith or are just professing faith. To examine oneself requires that there be a standard against which one can measure. The only acceptable measure for the Christian is the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:15–17 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

How can we know we possess faith? Those who possess faith have the indwelling Spirit—Jesus Christ is part of their being.

Ephesians 1:12–14 "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of

promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Romans 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

How can we know that the Spirit indwells us? Because He will be manifest by the fruit produced in us.

Galatians 5:22–23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance:"

Ephesians 5:9–10 "(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord."

Paul is confident that those who honestly examine themselves and can truly identify themselves as men and/or women of faith will also recognize Paul and those who minister with him as true men of faith. The truth being that Paul is the one who established the foundation of faith for that church, and based on the truth he taught they could come to no other conclusion. He is basically saying that those who come to any other conclusion are reprobate.

2Cor. 13:7 ¶ Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

This verse expresses the humility of Paul in that his desire is for the Corinthians to have a good testimony by doing what is right to the glory of God. The Greek for "honest" is a reference to doing what is moral and virtuous. He is very clear in stating that his desire is not for their testimony to be a reflection of his ministry but a reflection of the power of God working through them—no matter what others may think of Paul and his team.

I think it is also important to note Paul's commitment to prayer on behalf of those in the Corinthian church. His heart for them is according to their spiritual need—not according to their actions and/or attitude toward him.

2Cor. 13:8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

"truth" = not concealing; Webster adds the ideas of free from falsehood and faithfulness

Paul is basically declaring that he and those ministering with him are refusing to compromise their message to conform to the desires of their listeners or to try and be politically correct. They are determined to remain faithful to the word of God and declare its truth without compromise or equivocation. His concern is toward gaining God's approval—not man's.

2Cor. 13:9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection.

Paul is most concerned that the believers in Corinth clean up their act and choose to act according to God's truth. He is not worried about appearing weak before the false apostles. The Greek for the word "perfection" is a reference to repair and restoration. Paul would rather come to them in fellowship, encouragement and peace rather than in authority, correction and judgment.

2Cor. 13:10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

As Paul closes his letter he again states his hope that this letter will result in the repentance and restoration of those who had been deceived by the false apostles. He wants his visit to be one of fellowship and encouragement and not accompanied by the need to exercise judgment according to his apostolic authority. The apostles were given their authority by God to establish a strong foundation for the faith of the believers.

Ephesians 2:19–21 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord...."

That responsibility included acting to ensure the strength of that foundation and guard against those who would try to destroy it.

2Cor. 13:11 ¶ Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

"farewell" – be well, rejoice

"perfect" – be complete, restored in fellowship, fitly joined together (see verse in Ephesians 2 above)

"be of good comfort, be of one mind" – After looking at the Greek and Webster, I would understand Paul to be encouraging them to find strength in unity according to the truth of God's word and a desire to be obedient to that truth.

"live in peace" – This would include a desire that there be no divisions among the body of believers, which would seem to be a natural result of obedience to God's word. The Greek also made reference to experiencing prosperity, which I think is a reference to spiritual growth and happiness.

I think the last phrase is a reminder that obedience to God results in His blessing. It also seems to be a reminder that our actions toward one another have a direct

bearing on God's actions toward us. This is a principal specifically taught by the Lord Jesus.

Mark 11:25–26 “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Luke 6:35–38 “But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

2Cor. 13:12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

2Cor. 13:13 All the saints salute you.

2Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Greeting with a “holy kiss” is a kiss of friendship without sexual intent of any kind. It is a common practice in some cultures to greet one another with kisses on both cheeks. It is another expression from Paul that they become one in spirit before the Lord and not allow the false teachers to cause division among them.

Paul also closes with greeting from the believers with whom he was serving at that time. His benediction is one that calls for them to experience the grace, love and communion that should permeate the body of believers through yielding to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

I think it is significant that Paul makes reference to the fullness of God in three persons as He calls for God's blessing upon this body of believers. The “grace” of the Lord Jesus makes reference to the divine influence upon our hearts that is ours as a direct result of His willing sacrificial death and resurrection on our behalf. The love of the Father is what made that sacrifice possible, and the indwelling ministry of the Holy Ghost is the power that facilitates our fellowship in the Lord through His guidance and teaching.

The second *epistle* to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas.