

## 2 Corinthians

**“Winning Through Weakness”**

**IV. Closing: 13:11-14 Be Complete**

**2 Corinth. 13:5-14**

**“Now leaving Corinth; all aboard”**

**I. Intro.**

**II. Vs. 5-6 Self examination**

**III. Vs. 7-10 Complete or incomplete?**

**IV. Vs. 11-14 Make up test**

**I. Intro.**

After many weeks going through the 13 chapters of 2nd Corinthians we finally come to the end of this letter. Culturally Corinth was similar to our American culture. They were affluent when compared to the rest of the known world, media and entertainment driven. And although a church had sprung up and numerically seemed to be doing very well it had some real problems. Looking at these two letters of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians it appears as it was far easier to get the Christians out of Corinth than it was to get Corinth out of some Christians. Have you noticed that church people can be like furniture in a Church: They have sat in a Church for years been used, heard the bible, experienced worship in fact they have been in church more hours than anyone else. Yet with that said those chairs may not be saved, you can't save your seat folks, only people can be saved!

As I read through Paul's words I'm thankful that he never gave up on them as carnal and fleshly as they were, for three years he kept on trying to get them let go of the world and fully grasp Jesus. Is Christ in you? Paul asked. It's not about being in Church, it's not about being religious! It's about a relationship with Jesus. It's not a question of theology it's a question of intimacy, knowing Jesus personally not just knowing about Him intellectually.

## II. Vs. 5-6 Self examination

Vs. 5-6 The test is subjective as Paul allows the bar to be their own conscience which will either substantiate or disprove of the genuineness of their faith. An objective test of one's faith by doctrinal agreement may stand the test of religion yet still fail the daily test of relationship. We are not saved by statement or creed. To use a doctrinal agreement as the basis of the test is to leave open the door to criticizing others while failing to examine myself. R Kent Hughes makes this observation: *“Today the warning stands over the church, and especially those who have transmitted the present cultural values into the church, so that church is little more than a Christianized version of modern culture. The warning stands where leadership is built on the cult of personality ----- where image is everything. The warning looms where worship is show time ----- where preaching is entertainment ----- where God's Word is muzzled and the pulpit panders to itching ears. The warning echoes where we are the focus of worship ---- our feelings, our comfort, our health, our wealth ----- where super apostles are preferred over Paul.”*

But Paul didn't say “*examine others*” he said “*examine yourself*”! Would I pass the test as Paul before me who held onto a vision of paradise for 14 years seeing and hearing things that he no doubt didn't even know were a mystery. Paul never published a book, or produced a video of that experience. Would I like Paul not mention the five things that Jesus said would authenticate apostolic ministry in Mark 16 even though they were clearly evident everywhere I went. Is what I would speak most about in my Christian experience be my biggest failure; the day when as a minister all I thought about how gifted, educated, and special I am was flushed down the toilet, kicked to the curb in Damascus. Would I like Paul commit to prayer for blessings to those false teachers who

prayed for my failure? Oh how there is a constant need for each of us to go through personal examination to see if we are for real.

Through the years I've been asked countless times by sincere believers if they can “*habitually engage*” in some area of life style and still be a Christian. They should be asking, “**Can they have a healthy growing relationship with Jesus and continue to practice their sin?**” And the answer to that question is an emphatic **NO!** In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus declared “*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*” There are some who truly have been born again and experienced change, but later on, began to drift back into old patterns that they once did then saw as wrong. When that happens, it raises the question, “*Does Jesus Christ dwell in me?*” Others who are watching us cannot answer that question. There are two questions we must ask ourself with regards to our sin and our faith:

1. ***How do you feel about this behavior? Are you glad to get back to it? Do you justify it?***
2. ***Do you hate yourself for doing it? Are you sorry you went back to it and long to be freed again by the power of Jesus Christ?***

How you answer those questions reveal to you whether you are a believer or a pretender!

What value is there in a cheap kind of grace that makes me no different from the man I was before I knew Christ?

### III. Vs. 7-10 Complete or incomplete?

Vs. 7-10 Paul would have been far happier with these who are following false teachers or those still actively practicing sin if they on their own repented from their sin before he comes. Dear ones the mark of maturity is not measured solely on the basis of not sinning it is measured upon us turning from that sin towards Christ. Paul was more interested in their moral improvement, not an opportunity to personally exhibit what a true apostle he is. So Paul reinstates that biblical authority is visible not in the destruction of people it is in the building up of people that sin has destroyed. Much of the New Testament is written around not taking our view of leadership from the world where those in charge lord over people reign as their superiors instead of serving the people and caring for them.

### IV. Vs. 11-14 Make up test

Vs. 11 Paul give five brief admonishments with the focus of bringing unity to the believers in Corinth all with a promise:

1. **Farwell:** The word in the Greek is “*cheer*” some have rendered this greeting as “*good-by*”. Jewish scholars remind us that this parting salutation was what Rabbis would say to each other as they parted the temple on the Sabbath. Its meaning was “*May He that has caused His name to dwell in this house cause love, brotherhood, peace, and friendship to dwell among you.*” The idea here is that

- unity will only be possible when what unites us (the Lord) is larger than what divides us.
2. **Become Complete**: The word here has the meaning to “*put back or mend*”. Paul’s thought here seems to be saying “*aim at restoration*” pull yourselves together! It speaks of being flexible enough to bend one’s self in order to repair a break. Far too often when division has come the opposing parties wait till the other person does the mending. But I think that if I sow on my torn fabric and you sow on yours we will back together sooner.
  3. **Be of good comfort**: The word comfort here is the same root word for the Holy Spirit as the comforter, which suggests that we need to be that which seeks out the person hurt. There is a need for those in the body to exercise tenderness where heart ache is present.
  4. **Be of one mind**: This was not a call for harmony for the sake of harmony but rather it was **a call not to major in minors**. It is fine to have opinions and differences just don’t allow those things to separate what you have in common.
  5. **Live in peace**: Such peace between people who differ requires work and determination. Peace is no passive word in fact there may be no word known to man that requires more effort to obtain and maintain than the word “peace”!

The promise is that “*The God of love and peace will be with you.*” The more we work on these five admonishments the more we will continue to experience God’s presence with His love and peace!

Vs. 14 The benediction is decidedly Trinitarian but the order is experiential:

- A. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we come into contact first.
- B. It is by way of the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we are first made aware of the love of God.
- C. And it through the communion of the Holy Spirit that we continue to grow in the above two.

What a gracious word from this great apostle as he closes this letter to the church at Corinth. History does not tell us what happened in the church there, whether it was able to recover and obey this word or not. But Paul has done his best. He has left with us a tremendous testimony as to what constitutes Christianity at work in a pagan world. I hope and pray that this letter to the Corinthian church will cause us to obey the word that Jesus Christ is among us and we must be His kind of people.