II Corinthians 13:1

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Introduction:

1. This chapter concludes the book and ends Paul's last lesson of over three chapters defending his apostolic office.
2. We trust the Holy Spirit, Who inspired this chapter and all others, to have valuable lessons in it for each of us.

Outline of Chapter 13

1. 1-4 Paul was coming to Corinth in Christ's power!
2. 5-7 Self-examination is crucial to determine election!
3. 8-10 Paul's goal in threatening was their perfection!
4. 11-13 A closing with miscellaneous duties.
5. 15 Benediction.

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.

A. Paul was in Corinth once before (1:15). He speaks of his second intention and plan to come (13:2).

B. He appealed to Moses and Christ's law for the judgment he would execute on sinners when present.

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:

A. He told them in the first epistle, and now he is telling them again, as if he had come the second time.

B. The first epistle had very similar warnings of his coming in ministerial judgment (I Cor 4:19-21).

C. And of course, he had told them in this epistle as well that he would come to revenge sin (10:2,6,11).

D. The words of the two epistles were the things he would have told them had he come the second time.

E. Paul promised to deal with those who had already sinned (12:21) and those sinning subsequently.

F. This kind of language and speech is Scriptural and godly, though universally unpopular today.

G. There is no power in the form of godliness with which most are content today (II Tim 3:1-5; 4:1-4).

H. After warnings, there is no place for mercy in the preservation of righteousness (Titus 3:10-11).

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

A. Paul reveals the arrogance and rebellion of some by their rejection of his ministerial authority, even

though there were so many signs of Jesus Christ through Paul and in the church at Corinth.

1. From the very beginning they had been converted to idols to serve the true God by Paul's work.
2. There were already many weak, sickly, and dead at Corinth by the power of Christ for their sins.

B. The purpose of this verse is to give the reason for his intent to come to Corinth and not spare them.

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.

A. Jesus Christ humbled Himself and chose to submit to death meekly as a Lamb for our redemption.
   1. He descended from glory to humility in this world to save us (Phil 2:5-8; Eph 4:9-10; Is 53:1-3).
   2. He came as the infant child of Mary, was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.
   3. Those in love with Nativity Scenes during the season of Christ's Mass love to keep Him there.
   4. Those adoring the effeminate and submissive-to-Mary Jesus of the Catholics keep Him there.
   5. Only two of the gospels even tell us about the birth, though all four clearly describe His death.
   6. He went to the cross as a sheep to the slaughter, meekly and submissively, for our salvation.
   7. Those in love with crucifixes love to keep him there on their walls and in Gibson's "Passion."
   8. Those adoring the effeminate and halo-crowned Hindu guru of the Catholics keep Him there.
   9. He went to the cross, even though He could have called 12 legions of angels and vaporized them!

B. But He is no longer in a manger or on a cross, and He never will be again. He reigns in heaven!
   1. He conquered Satan, death, sin, the grave, and this world's atmosphere to ascend to His throne!
   2. He is alive forevermore with the infinite power of God as the glorified Son of God and David!
   3. Other than believing His virgin birth and historical facts, Jesus is crowned in heaven with power!
   4. It is a foolish delusion to believe and visualize Jesus Christ anywhere but on His exalted throne!
   5. The Almighty God of heaven, Jehovah by name, gave Jesus Christ divine power to live again!
   6. He is coming soon with mighty angels in flaming fire to destroy His enemies (II Thess 1:7-10).
   7. You do not take comfort by visualizing Him in His humility but His faithfulness in His glory.

C. In a similar way, Paul labored often in weakness, but he had God's living power as Christ's apostle.
   1. There is no reason to leap forward to the resurrection, because that does not fit the context.
   2. There is no reason to leap forward to the resurrection, because Paul applied it "toward you."
   3. In the same way that Jesus Christ now rules in the power of God, so would Paul at Corinth!
   4. If we follow on from the introduction of this thought in the previous verses, the sense is easy.
   5. Paul had God's power in connection with Jesus Christ for authority in the churches of Jesus Christ (I Cor 2:4-5; 4:19-21; 5:4; II Cor 4:7; 6:7; 12:9; 13:10).
   6. He definitely had the power of God in Jesus Christ in matters of church doctrine, practice, and judgment (I Cor 5:1-13; Gal 1:6-9; 2:11; II Thes 2:15; 3:6; I Tim 1:20; II Tim 2:2; Tit 3:10-11).
   7. The ambassadors of the Blessed and Only Potentate represent and carry His glorious authority, for He gave authority to His servants when He went into heaven (Mark 13:34).

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?

A. Here is one of the great spiritual duties and exercises of saints, which should never end in this life.

B. Paul calls for it here so those with sincere hearts, conviction, or repentance might clear themselves.

C. It is most fitting here, since some of these rebels were examining Paul to see if he were in Christ!

D. To examine and prove is to make a very careful inspection with a desire and suspicion to find fault.

E. If you paid money and ordered an inspection of your car, would you be content with kicking tires?

F. Do you prove an ax by reading about it or using it? What about gold? What about waterproofing?

G. The faith of the Lord Jesus Christ is not hearing, believing, or saying (James 1:22; 2:19; I John 2:4).
   1. The faith of the Lord Jesus Christ is the doctrine which is according to godliness (I Tim 6:3-5).
   2. It is the opposite of the perilous compromise of Christianity in our generation (II Tim 3:1-5).
   3. We must prove that we are practicing the correct doctrine (Acts 17:11; I Thess 5:21), but we must also examine our hearts for any idols or stumblingblocks that are there (Ezekiel 14:1-5).

H. David practiced self-examination as an important religious exercise to judge and correct his heart.
   1. David asked the Lord to judge, examine, prove, and try his inner man and heart (Psalm 26:1-2).
   2. David asked God to search his heart and mind for any sin that might be there (Ps 139:1-6,23-24).
   3. He asked God to deliver him from both sins of ignorance and presumptuous sins (Ps 19:12-13).
   4. He knew God was involved in trying him, and he welcomed it from the Lord (Psalm 17:3).
   5. David knew the Lord gave Him wisdom and counsel, even in night communications (Ps 16:7).
   6. It is only a man keeping his heart pure by self-examination that can claim holiness (Ps 86:2).

I. A man without Jesus Christ dwelling in Him by the Spirit of God is none of His (Romans 8:1-9).
   1. If you are alive in the Spirit by regeneration from above, then walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:25).
   2. A reprobate is a reject, one not chosen. Election is choosing for one; reprobation is rejection.

J. How do you know that Jesus Christ is in you? This is an important question, but not a hard one.
   1. Do you have the lively faith that He had in God – trusting Him at all times in all situations?
   2. Do you have the same love of righteousness and hatred for iniquity that Jesus Christ had?
   3. Do you have the same pleasure in worshipping and obeying God that He had while here?
   4. Do you bear the indignities, trials, and sacrifices of suffering for His sake that He showed?
   5. Are the people of God the most important persons on earth to you regardless of differences?
   6. How do you know that you love anyone or anything? Apply the same measures consistently.
   7. Since a double minded approach is no approach at all, you need to be singleminded for sure.

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

A. Paul believed there would be enough evidence in his authority and character to justify himself.

B. Though the church members were called to examine themselves, Paul was known to be elect.

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.

A. Paul did not want to come in severity. He wanted most of all for these people to repent and do good.
B. And this desire was not for his approval or acceptance among them, but for their righteousness.
C. If the above were the case – their righteousness – he did not care what they thought of him at all.
D. Here is the spirit of a godly minister – desirous for the salvation of many without personal regard.

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

A. God's true ministers, especially in this apostolic case, are neither partial nor personal, but righteous.
B. Directed by the Holy Spirit, Paul and his colleagues had only motives to promote truth at Corinth.

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

A. A true minister has no regard for his reputation or reception, if those he seeks are strong in Christ.
B. Paul had no need to exert his power as an apostle, as long as the Corinthians were strong in Christ.
C. He was willing to be weak in appearance to them and not show apostolic power he had threatened.
D. Here is the spirit of a godly minister – desirous for the salvation of many without personal regard.

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.

A. Again, as once before, Paul reminded them, even in a passionate warning, that his power in the gospel was for edification and building up, not destruction and tearing down.
B. Whenever we judge as a church, we should remember that exclusion is for salvation (I Cor 5:5).
C. Here is great wisdom that Paul was providing a space of time to repent by writing this second letter.

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.

A. Perfect is not sinless perfection, but mature completeness in serving Christ without conscious error.
B. Take hope in the mercy and comfort of God and encourage one another in these very same things.
C. Unity is a blessed thing, which the saints of God are to endeavor to maintain (Eph 4:3; Ps 133:1).
D. Peace is the fruit of true righteousness, and the goal of the saints of God (Jas 3:17-18; I Thess 5:13).
E. There is great reward for those that do such things, for the God of love and peace will bless them.

13:12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

A. As children of God and saints in His church, we realize "blood is thicker than blood," in that the blood ties in Jesus Christ are stronger, deeper, and more precious than family. So warm physical expressions of affection and unity should be pleasant, not painful. And it should not surprise us that Peter refers to it as

a kiss of charity (I Peter 5:14).

B. Personal and physical greetings are incompatible with envy, strife, bitterness, division, or enmity, which exalts physical affection as a protective tool against such things; and the apostle was always opposing these sins to magnify the unity and peace of the Spirit.

C. We hug relatives, close friends, and others in moments of great affection or appreciation; but kissing is quite rare in our society other than for romantic or family purposes.

D. We find all the kissing exhortations among his salutations, not among the rules of brotherly love (Romans 16:16; I Cor 16:20; II Cor 13:12; I Thess 5:26; I Peter 5:14).

E. And they are so positioned in his salutations to likely be little more than the "xox" we put at the end of some personal letters with words like, "Give everyone a hug for me."

F. Kissing was part of salutations in the New Testament (Mark 14:44), but such salutations were not universal, especially such personal and intimate ones (Luke 7:44-46; Gal 2:9).

G. We find little difference here from their practice of washing feet, which was done in their culture for the dry and dusty climate and lack of socks and enclosed shoes. And there is further similarity with the anointing of oil, which was also a kindness due to climate that was shown sometimes but not always (Luke 7:46).

H. Jesus told the disciples to wash one another's feet (John 13:12-17), but we know this merely illustrated humility and service; the churches did not practice such a rite, or Paul would not have used it as a unique mark of exceptional widows (I Tim 5:10). It is amazing to hear the proponents of feet washing argue adamantly for the one while rejecting the other out of hand, though it has even more Scriptural foundation.

I. Jesus understood there was no need for feet washing with closed shoes (John 13:10).

J. We want to do more than shake hands, for a handshake holds the other at a distance, and shaking hands is not considered a very personal or intimate form of greeting or saluting among good friends. You do not greet close family with handshakes.

K. If we choose the literal and direct sense of this text as a literal and perpetual rule, do men kiss women? (Women kissed Jesus very intimately.) On the hands? On the feet? On the lips? How often? How long? Both morning and evening services? With or without hugging? The reason these questions exist is because it was a social custom, which we have lost and therefore neither understand the method or the limitations.

L. And how could we keep the designation "holy," since kissing would be so very unusual to both participants and observers, due to its lack of use in our culture and society?

M. The right hand of fellowship given to Paul was a public act of authoritative approval (Gal 2:9), not a personal greeting or salutation of personal affection and love, which leads us to separate it from our practice of greeting our new members with affection.

N. If we lived in a country where kissing was accepted as appropriate greeting by intimate friends, we might well apply this passage differently, with the rules of that culture.

O. Even in a culture and time where it was accepted, Paul always limited it to a "holy kiss," which rejected any lascivious kiss (Pr 7:13) or treacherous kiss, like that of Judas.

P. In another place, brother John exhorts to greeting mutual friends by name (III John 1:14).

Q. We understand the emphasis to be on “greet” and “holy,” with “kiss” being their custom.

R. Therefore, we will continue to apply this passage with regular hugging between those of the same sex and infrequent hugging of those of the opposite sex, which is the more intimate form of greeting in our society and culture, and far superior to casual greetings.

13:13 All the saints salute you.

A. These were the saints at Philippi, Macedonia; from where Paul sent this epistle by Titus and others.

B. Though we practice closed communion – limiting it to a local body – we are all the family of God.

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.

A. Here is Paul’s token with additions, the proof in every epistle of his authorship (II Thess 3:17-18).

B. Here are the things we all need: Jesus Christ’s grace, God’s love, and the Holy Spirit’s fellowship.

Conclusion:

1. Church administration can be learned better from these two epistles than any course of study at any seminary.
2. The power of God’s ministers was established in the first verses as being different from churches today (1-3)
3. The Lord Jesus Christ should be viewed as He is now, not as He was when He came in weakness to die (4).
4. Self-examination to see the Lord Jesus Christ in your life and prove your election is a very important duty (5).
5. A minister should have a noble spirit for the perfection of his people without any personal regard (6-10).
6. There are basic necessities for any church to be one that please the Lord Jesus Christ and his servants (11-13).
7. The benediction of the apostle instructs us as to those things that are very important for our own lives (14).

For Further Study:

A. The sermon outline, “The Heart of David,” which details the importance of self-examination in David’s life.