

I. Chapter 13

A. 2Cor. 13:1 (ESV), *“This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”*

- i. Paul’s first visit was when he founded the Corinthian church (Acts 18:1-18a)
 1. After they believed and were baptized, Paul spent 18 months (1½ years) teaching them the word of God.
 - Paul is a great example of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).
 - He not only does he fathers them in the preaching of the gospel, he spends time with his gospel children, them teaching them to obey the commands of Jesus.
 - ii. Sometime later, he visits his gospel children, only to have a painful visit as noted in 2Corinthians 1:23-2:1.
 1. It seems that Paul had a grievous confrontation with an individual in the church that caused him to cut short his visit.
 - iii. Now, he is coming for the third time.
 1. His visit and church discipline will be based on a legal principle found in Deuteronomy...
 - Deut. 19:15 (ESV), *“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.”*
 2. There are at least four possibilities about what Paul meant by the two or three witnesses that would confirm his innocence and credibility and his opponents’ guilt...
 - Possibility #1
 - i. Based on what Jesus said in Matthew 18:15-20 and 1Corinthians 5:3-5, the church (along with Paul) would pass judgment on those guilty based on the testimony of two or three witnesses.
 - Possibility #2
 - i. Paul may have viewed each visit as a figurative “witness.”
 1. Each visitation (witness) would testify to Paul’s innocence.
 - Possibility #3
 - i. Paul may have been referring to each of his warnings as a figurative “witness.”
 1. The first warning being found in 1Corinthians 4:21
 2. The second warning being given them during Paul’s painful second visit (cf. vs. 2a).
 3. The third warning that he gives them now (cf. vs. 2b).
 - Possibility #4
 - i. Paul may be referring to the witness of his fellow workers such as Titus, etc.
 3. Whatever the correct interpretation of Paul’s use of Deuteronomy in this passage, it is important for us to realize what Deuteronomy 15:19 implies...
 - It is better for a guilty party to go unpunished for lack of the amount of witnesses required than to harm an innocent man with false accusations.
 - Deuteronomy goes on to say in 15:16-19 that if a person makes a false accusation, whatever punishment that would have been done to the alleged “guilty person” would be done to the accuser.
 - It is also important to know that while we may get away with being a false accuser, we will not escape the judgment of God. There is no mercy for the false accuser!

- B. 2Cor. 13:2 (ESV), “*I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—*”
- i. Paul reminds them that he is not suddenly springing this threat on them.
 1. He has warned them before, that is, during his painful, second visit.
 2. Who are the ones warned?
 - Those who were mentioned at the end of the previous chapter:
 - i. Those causing disruption in the church.
 - ii. Those involved with sexual sins.
 3. Who are the “*all the others?*”
 - These may include those under the influence of the false apostles.
 - These may also include those who, due to indifference to or leniency toward immoral behavior on the part of church members, have condoned it by their silence, tolerance or lack of warning.
 - To Paul, there are no “innocent by-standers” in what had happened at Corinth.
 - “Standing by” implies toleration and that makes one a party to the sin.
 - Paul’s aggravation with the Corinthians’ tolerance of even outrageous sins bursts forth in 1Cor. 5:5 when he expresses dismay and surprise that they are not mourning about the man living with his father’s wife.
 - They were not to ignore or sit back and wait for the leading brethren to handle matters.
 - ii. Paul has acted with gentleness in dealing with the Corinthians and even retreated rather than force a showdown during his second visit.
 1. His critics said he was weak in appearance, timid, a coward when present? No!
 - He was being patient with them as he issued a warning!
 - Now, he has given sufficient warning and has the “witnesses” to act firmly. He will not spare them!
 - What kind of punishment will they face?
 - i. The epistle does not mention it, but we know that those punished were:
 1. Excommunicated until repented (cf. 1Cor. 5)
 2. Were divinely inflicted with an illness, even unto death (cf. 1Cor. 11:29-30).
 - We see here that Paul’s intention was to “clean up” once and for all the messy situation at Corinth!

C. 2Cor. 13:3-4 (ESV), “since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.”

- i. Some of the Corinthians had failed to see Christ’s power working in Paul in his gentleness and weakness.**
- ii. When he comes, they will get all the proof they need to see that Christ is working powerfully in him as he disciplines those who are guilty of sin!**
- iii. Paul uses Christ’s death and resurrection as a parallel to his dealing with the them:**
 - 1. Christ:**
 - Though crucified as a human, beaten and appearing powerless and weak to onlookers, the reality was God’s power sustained him!**
 - As a result, He was raised to life by God’s power!**
 - 2. Paul:**
 - Though he was gentle and experienced many hardships, even bearing a thorn in the flesh, God’s power sustained him.**
 - As a result, he will come to the Corinthians ready to deal with them as Christ will when He returns to deal with His people (sheep to the right, goats to the left – Matthew 25:31ff).**