

I. Review

A. 2Cor. 13:1-4

- i. Paul is coming for the third time.
- ii. His discipline will be based on a legal principle found in Deuteronomy 19:15
 1. His witnesses (whether in the form of persons, visitations or warnings) will testify to the guilt of those who have not repented of wrong doing.
 2. He warned them at least twice, and now, it's time for disciplinary action if those warned are found continuing doing wrong.
- iii. Just as Christ, who, in death, appeared powerless but lives victoriously in the power of God, so Paul, who, appeared powerless during his prior visits, will come a third time, in power, not sparing those who continue to do wrong.
- iv. It must have been a great insult to Paul for some at Corinth to demand proof that Christ is speaking through him (cf. vs. 3)
 1. Paul's preaching of the gospel is what brought salvation to the Corinthians when they believed and were baptized (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 18:8).
 2. He spent 18 months disciplining them and performing miracles among them (cf. Acts 18:11; Romans 15:18-19; 2Cor. 12:12).
 3. And through the implication of the Scriptures, Paul had imparted spiritual gifts to them by the laying on of his hands as he did with the Ephesian converts in Acts 19:6).
 4. Yet some demanded "proof" that Christ is speaking through him!
- v. It is not Paul who needed to do a "spiritual audit" of his faith and apostleship; it was those who challenged Paul's authority that needed to do a spiritual audit on themselves...

B. 2Cor. 13:5 (ESV), "*Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*"

- i. Instead of cross-examining Paul, they should be examining themselves to see how they check out as Christians.
- ii. Paul is not telling them to see if they really became Christians!
 1. They did believe the gospel and were baptized (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Acts 18:8)
 2. So this is not a statement, challenging the Corinthians to see if they truly became Christians!
 3. Paul is challenging their conduct, calling them to examine their conduct!
- iii. Paul used this concept of self-examination in other places as well...
 1. Gal. 6:4 (ESV), "*But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.*"
 - Paul tells the Galatians that each believer ought to "examine" or "test" his own work, then he will have a reason to boast (or rejoice) in himself, not comparing himself to others.
 - Here, as in 2Cor. 13:5, a disciple ought to take a good, hard and honest look at himself and form an impartial evaluation of himself based off of the Word of God.
 - i. It is the Word of God that will judge the disciple in the last day (cf. John 12:48)

- ii. A disciple ought to ask himself the following questions:
 1. Am I as loving as Christ commands me to be?
 2. Am I living what I preach to others?
 3. Am I as merciful as God is?
 4. Am I as concerned for the lost as Christ is?
 5. Am I a disciple maker as Christ commands me to be?
 6. Am I a source of encouragement as God commands?
 7. Do my words build up others as God's Word commands?
 8. Am I gentle and humble in character as my Lord?
- iii. A great place to grow in Christian character is by studying, meditating upon and living the principles found in the book of James!
 - If a disciple does an honest self-examination and finds that he is walking in a manner worthy of the calling, then, and only then, can he find himself boasting (or rejoicing) in the notion that he is pleasing God, assuring himself that he will escape condemnation!
 - No one will be justified by measuring his works by another person, even if he finds his own work better than another's (cf. Luke 18:11-14)
 - i. One must measure his work (his character, his life) with that of Christ, seeing Him as his Teacher and Example (cf. Matt. 11:29; 1John 2:6).
- 2. 1Cor. 9:27 (ESV), "*But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*"
 - The word "disqualified" is the opposite of "proven; tested" – it denotes one who has failed the test!
 - Paul used this concept of self-examination on himself, telling the Corinthians that no one can slide by God's judgment.
- 3. Hebrews 6:8 paints a vivid picture of what "failing the test" entails:
 - Hebrews 6:7-8 (ESV), "*For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.*"
 - i. The useful crop denotes a tested life that truly manifests Jesus Christ (cf. 2Timothy 2:21).
 - ii. The "*thorns and thistles*" denote a failed life that manifests worldliness!
- iv. Paul calls the Corinthians to do a self-evaluation of their own conduct of life and way of thinking, not by comparison to others, but by comparison to Christ!
 1. This is Paul's answer to those who dare to compare themselves to others (cf. 2Cor. 10:12).
 2. And the Corinthians must not follow the way of the false apostles, but they ought to know themselves as being IN Christ and examine themselves BY the Christian faith!
 3. Never forget the context of this passage:
 - Paul is warning them to shape up before he arrives so that he can be pleasantly surprised by their moral reform!

C. 2Cor. 13:6 (ESV), “*I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.*”

i. This call for self-examination will authenticate Paul’s ministry to them when they conclude that Christ is in them!

1. This conclusion should lead them to recognize that just they belong to Christ, so does Paul (cf. 2Cor. 10:7).
2. If they approve themselves, they must approve the one who brought the gospel to them!
 - After all, they are his seal of apostleship (cf. 1Cor. 9:2).
 - And his letter of recommendation for the entire world to read (cf. 2Cor. 3:1-3).
 - If they fail the test, then all of Paul’s work among them has been in vain!
 - i. 1Cor. 3:12-15 hints at this, speaking of a man who builds with material that passes the fire test as opposed to material that doesn’t.
 - But if they pass the test, it will confirm that Paul is a genuine apostle!
3. And, as Paul laid out earlier, if they are to pass as those who are tested, they must obey Paul, especially in the area of Christian behavior (cf. 2Cor. 2:9)
 - Christian behavior is the benchmark or barometer for determining whether those who claim to be Christians really are.
 - This is why the Lord’s word says...
 - i. 1John 2:4-6 (ESV), “*He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* ⁵ *But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.* ⁶ *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*”