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SECOND CORINTHIANS 12:11-13:14

Today, as we end our study in the Book of 2 Corinthians, we're going to see Paul make **one last appeal** to the Corinthian believers.

In today's passage of Scripture, Paul sounds like a father who is profoundly disappointed in his children.

Paul was disappointed that the Corinthians hadn't defended him when others had maligned his reputation.

Paul was disappointed that they were questioning his motives.

Paul was disappointed that they had not grown in their faith and in their love for each other.

Paul was disappointed that they hadn't shown him the same kind of love he had showered on them.

Paul was planning to visit Corinth, but he was clearly apprehensive about it. Would he find all kinds of disorders, just as if the Corinthians were his children and were running wild? Would he find them arguing and fighting? Paul hoped not...Paul hoped that they would get their act together...everything would be in order...but he had reason to believe this would not be the case.

Well, what more could Paul say to these folks?

How else could he say what he had already said?

Have you ever been trying to convince someone of the error of their ways...perhaps one of your children? And, you just KNOW if you say one more thing...that'll just do the trick? I mean...if you just hold your mouth a certain way or turn one more phrase very cleverly...it'll make all the difference? Well, this happens to me on a WEEKLY BASIS!!

This must have been how Paul felt, because Paul decided in these closing words of this letter to give it **one more shot!** And, we're going to see in the next few minutes how Paul used **3 approaches** in his attempt to motivate the Corinthians to **obedience, discernment and submission.**

The first thing I want us to see is that

1) Paul Shamed the Corinthians

(12:11-20...)

"most eminent apostles" – "super apostles"

The first thing Paul shamed them for was

a) their lack of commendation... Verses 11-13...

Paul tells them, "Folks, instead of my having to boast about myself, **you** should have been boasting about me. Instead of your being so supportive of the 'super apostles', why couldn't you be supportive of **me**?"

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Do you see the touch of sarcasm in this?

You know, I don't fare very well in a verbal battle. I just don't think quickly enough to win! (My friend and I were talking about this the other night.) I always think of some really **great** things I should have said the next day or the next week...when it's too late!

But...not Paul. He wasn't afraid of these folks and he loved them enough to want them to get their Christian walk straightened out.

Think about it...the Corinthians owed their very souls to Paul. It was **Paul** who brought the saving message of salvation to the Corinthians and it was **Paul** who cared enough about them to hold them accountable for their wandering away from the sound doctrine he had taught them...And, Paul should have been **commended** by them!!

The second thing Paul shamed them for was

b) their lack of appreciation...Verses 14-18...

Paul had the **truth**, yet they had followed after men who would lead them astray. Paul didn't ask them for any **financial support**, yet they had followed after men who took their money. Paul told them about **grace...God's free gift of grace...**yet they had followed after men who would put them back under the Law.

It seemed the more Paul loved them, the less they loved Paul!

It's really sad when children don't appreciate what their parents do for them, and it's equally sad when God's children fail to appreciate what their "spiritual parents" do for them, isn't it?

What was the cause of their "lack of commendation" and their "lack of appreciation"?

Well, it was

3) their lack of consecration...Verses 19-21...

There was sin in the camp...and Paul knew it and wanted these sins confessed, repented of and put away before he came for his visit.

Look again at **verse 20...**

How it must have broken Paul's heart to know that the very folks who should have been setting an example before the unbelievers at Corinth were acting just **like** the **unbelievers** at Corinth.

And, you know the saddest part of this? These folks knew better! Paul had addressed all this so eloquently in his first letter to the church at Corinth. In Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, Paul said, "if you have the gift of prophecy and know all the mysteries and all knowledge and have all faith, so as to remove mountains, **but do not have love, you are nothing...**"

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The most profound truths about love ever written were written to these very folks, and yet, we see that they had fallen into strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance and disturbances.

What does this tell us? **THERE WAS NO LOVE IN THE CHURCH OF CORINTH!!**

Well, we said that Paul is using **3 approaches** to reach the Corinthians in this passage of Scripture...

He not only **shamed** the Corinthians...

2) Paul Warned the Corinthians

In (13:1-8) there are actually two warnings...

a) Prepare yourselves... *Verses 1 and 2...*

Paul says, "Folks, I'm coming to see you and I'm very much concerned because of what I'm likely to find when I get there...so I want you to do some preparations before I get there. I don't want to have to depend upon hearsay or rumors...I want everything verified and confirmed by two or three witnesses."

You know, I don't believe for a second that Paul was looking forward to this trip to Corinth. I believe he would rather have gone to visit a church where folks were serving the Lord with joy...where every believer was getting along with each other and where there was **no false doctrine, no strife, no anger, no disputes, no slander, no jealousy, no gossip, no arrogance, no disturbances...**but Paul knew he **HAD** to go to Corinth and get this church straightened out!!

Paul's desire was for these folks to clean up their lives, and he preferred they do it before he gets there because when he gets there he's going to give their lifestyles the "white-glove test." He's going to open every cupboard, and he's going to run his fingers over every shelf...he's going to peer into every nook and cranny.

You know, there comes a time in the medical field when prescriptions fail to solve the patient's problems...when surgery must be considered and the problem...the tumor, the cancer must be cut out. And, that's exactly what Paul was telling them..."If my prescription hasn't worked by the time I come, then get ready for major surgery!"

Verses 3 and 4...

The Corinthians had criticized Paul for coming off really strong in his letter, but really weak in person. They had been influenced by the false teachers to think of Paul as having no apostolic power or authority.

But, Paul is saying,

"When I come, you're going to see the power of God in me."

Let me ask you this...

Is there some **disturbance** or **strife** or **dispute** or **anger** going on in your life?

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I mean...the church is made up of individuals and the Corinthian church didn't just suddenly get this way **en masse!** It happened **one person at a time**. One person, and then another person and then another who refused to deal with sin in their life.

I want to urge you today to examine any areas in your life that are causing unrest.

How many of you have ever pulled weeds? What happens when the weed breaks off before the root comes out? (It just grows back, doesn't it?)

So often these roots of turmoil and anger lie deep within us and no matter how often we break off or cut the weeds on the surface, that won't bring lasting peace because the problem is deeper than that.

Beloved, conflicts will crop up in our lives...just as surely as weeds crop up in a garden. When they do..let me mention three pieces of advice that will help us hoe them out of your life...

a) before blaming, attempt understanding...

Put yourself in the other person's place and try to understand their position.

b) instead of arguing, ask questions...

"What was my part in this? Do I seek peace? Am I being totally honest? Do both of us really desire a resolution to the conflict?"

c) rather than retaliating, pursue restoration...

Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you,
be at peace with all men."

How nice it would have been if the Corinthian believer – one by one – had prepared themselves in all this before Paul had to come and "clean house"!! How nice if they had gotten all the angry disputes and strife and all that garbage settled before Paul arrived!

Well, not only did Paul warn them to prepare themselves, but Paul also warned them to

b) examine yourselves...Verses 5-8...

The thing Paul admonished them to do was to examine their own salvation. The literal rendering of this is...

**"you yourselves test...you yourselves prove...
that Jesus Christ is in you..."**

The emphasis is on each one of us examining ourselves to see whether Jesus is really in us!

Now, this test doesn't ask how faithful we are in church...

Or how regularly we say mealtime prayers,
Or how often we read and/or memorize the Bible,
Or how much money we give.

It doesn't ask how many Bible studies we attend or teach or how many Sunday School lessons we study or teach...

No, it skips to the bottom line and says,
"Is Jesus Christ in you?"

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So, I want to ask you this same question this morning...

Do you know Jesus Christ is in you?

Was there ever a time in your life when you knew you were a sinner...

And you knew you needed to be saved...

And you knew you could not save yourself...

Was there ever a time in your life when you confessed and repented of your sins and called upon the Lord Jesus to save you by His finished work at Calvary?

Do you KNOW Jesus Christ is in you?

If Jesus isn't in you today, He never has been...

If you can't say Christ is in you or you're not sure...why don't you settle that today?

I don't ever want to be guilty of making you doubt your salvation just for the sake of making you confused, but I believe God's Word teaches us very clearly to examine ourselves...

1 John (and we're going to be there in about 3 months) is a wonderful little book that contains within it answers to questions that confirm a person's salvation. Let me quickly give you a few of these questions that 1 John answers...

- 1) Am I obedient? **1 John 2:3:** "...by this we know that we have come to know Him – if we keep His commandments..."
- 2) Do I love the brethren? **1 John 3:14:** "We know we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren."
- 3) Does the Holy Spirit live in me? **1 John 3:24:** "...and we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us."
- 4) Does Jesus abide in me? **1 John 5:12:** "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."
- 5) Are my prayers answered? **1 John 5:13-14:** "...this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."
- 6) Do I practice righteousness? **1 John 2:29:** "...you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him."
- 7) Do I practice sin? **1 John 3:9:** "No one who is born of God practices sin..."
- 8) Do I believe that Jesus is the Christ? **1 John 5:1:** "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

These are just a few of the many questions answered in the book of 1 John. The bottom line is this...If you're saved, God wants you to know you're saved!

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John 5:13: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Isn't God good? We don't have to live in fear or doubt or confusion. God has given you the great gift of salvation and He wants you to rest in it...

Well, let's look at one last approach that Paul used with these folks at Corinth. Paul shamed them, Paul warned and

3) Paul Encouraged The Corinthians

Verses 9-14...

Even though Paul has had some harsh words for these folks, Paul wanted only what was best for them. He says, “Folks, I've written all this to build you up, not tear you down.”

And, Paul gives 6 commands in *verses 11 and 12* for how we are to conduct our lives...

a) “rejoice...”

Paul is saying, “fill the walls of your home with joy and laughter...”

I'm so glad God gave us the gift of laughter. I've told you this before, but I love to be with folks who laugh. When I'm with folks who are sad and blue and depressed I get sadder and bluer and “depresseder”! But, I so enjoy laughing with folks!!

Charles Swindoll wrote a book some years ago entitled Laugh Again.

In this book, he tells the story of a grandmother who was keeping her ten year old granddaughter. The granddaughter asked her grandmother, “Grandma, how old are you?” The grandmother said, “Now, honey, Grandma doesn't like to tell folks her age.” The little girl said, “Aw, go ahead, Grandma...you can trust me.” But, the grandmother stood her ground and said, “No, dear, I never tell anyone my age.”

Well, the grandmother got busy fixing supper and then suddenly realized her granddaughter had been missing for about 20 minutes. She checked around upstairs in her bedroom and found that her granddaughter had dumped the contents of grandmother's purse on top of her bed, and was sitting in the midst of the mess, holding her grandmother's driver's license.

When their eyes met, the child announced: “Grandma, you're seventy-six.”

“Why yes, I am. How did you know that?”

“I found the date of your birthday here on your driver's license and subtracted that year from this year...so you're seventy-six.”

“That's right sweetheart. Your grandmother is seventy-six.”

The little girl continued staring at the driver's license and added, “You also made an F in sex, Grandma.”

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Now, that didn't have anything to do with Second Corinthians, except I hope it did bring a little joy into your life this morning. :->

- 2) "be made complete..." – "mend your ways" – mending a torn net, a picture of restoration"

Let me ask you...have you mended your ways after being confronted with the truths of Second Corinthians? Has this book made a difference in your life?

You know, it's not nearly as important how many books of the Bible we get into as it is how many books of the Bible get into us!!

Have you learned more about how false teachers operate? Have you learned that we are to appreciate the one God has used to give out the gospel? Have you learned more about the sufficiency of God's grace?

- 3) "be comforted..." – I believe Paul is saying, "In light of all I've just said to you...and as you do what I've told you to do, as you get your lives in order...find comfort that you're doing the right thing."

Example: Counsel on baptism

- 4) "be like minded..." – "Get away from the disputes and get back into sweet fellowship."
5) "live in peace..." – Do you live in peace with folks? Are you a peace maker or a trouble maker? Do you look for the good in folks or the bad?
6) "greet one another with a holy kiss..." - This just means to show affection...godly affection for one another.

Verse 14...

Well, I have "good news" and "bad news"...

The "good news" is that you and I have just completed studying a precious book written by the human hand of Paul but inspired by the dear Holy Spirit...

The "bad news" is that God holds us accountable for living by the truths this book contains. :->

My prayer is that the "bad news" will be "good news"...that we will delight in finding and doing God's will.

May God's will be a joy to us and not a burden!!