

"The Heart of the Apostle"

2 Corinthians 13

Introduction: Tonight, as we come back to our study of 2 Corinthians we are coming to the back to chapter 13 and tonight we shall see more of the heart of Paul. There are several thoughts to consider as we approach the text before us. Paul had seen himself as a parent to those who were at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 4:14-15

¹⁴ *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.*

¹⁵ *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

2 Corinthians 12:14

¹⁴ *Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.*

Paul saw himself in the same position to those who were at Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 2:7

⁷ *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:*

When Paul was instructing those within the church he assumed the role of a parent. So, as the spiritual parent of those who were at Corinth he desired the very best for them. He longed that they would repent of their sin, he longed for them to live in unity and purity, and he longed for their spiritual growth. As his children he had warned them that when he arrived the third time he would discipline them if they refused to repent.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:1-4

He was also concerned that there may have been some mixed in with the true believers who were reprobates and for that reason he exhorted them to examine themselves.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:5

This is where we stopped last week.

I. **Paul's Desire for the Corinthians**

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:6

Paul anticipates that some of those who were at Corinth would challenge him because he exhorted them to look at themselves to be sure they were in the faith. But there was much evidence that Christ was in him and that he was a true apostle. Paul's conduct was clear evidence that he was genuine. There was no hypocrisy to be found in him. Like Jesus Christ, Paul had poured out all he had for the Corinthians. He was absolutely transparent with the Corinthians.

As we move on we see Paul's desire as the spiritual parent.

A. **Obedience**

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:7

Now in this verse we can learn much about the character of Paul. He longed for them to do no evil. One of the desires we have as parents is that our children would walk in obedience. I remember when our girls were little I used to lecture them before we would visit someone or when we visited another church. I would threaten them that if they were not obedient there would be consequences when the visit was over. Now if I can be absolutely honest I must admit there were really two reasons why this was important to me.

1. I desired that my girls would learn the importance of obedience because that was what God desired in their lives. I wanted them to grow up respecting others and respecting the authority over them.
2. The second reason was because if they were obedient it was a reflection upon my wife and me. Their obedience made us look like good parents. This by the way is PRIDE.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:7 again.

Paul desired for the Corinthians to walk in obedience but not for the purpose of making him look good as their spiritual parent. It was not so that he would appear approved. But it would be that they would do the things that were honest. Paul desired the church to walk in obedience to the Word of God and to walk in fellowship with Christ. Let us not forget that this church was located in a very strategic location and they had contact with many travelers. They had great potential of reaching many with the Gospel. If they were going to be effective as a light in the darkness they needed to be in fellowship with the Lord.

Application:

I need to remind each of us that wherever God has placed you then you too are in a strategic location. Each soul that you have contact with is someone whom God is interested in. Let me give you an example.

Acts 8:5-8

⁵ Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

⁶ And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

⁷ For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

⁸ And there was great joy in that city.

Here we see that Philip was in Samaria and God was reaching many people through his ministry. Samaria was being changed through the power of the God as He worked through Philip. Then we see something that seems to be out of step with what is happening.

Acts 8:26-29

²⁶ And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

²⁷ And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

²⁸ Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

²⁹ Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

Here we see that God pulled Philip out of Samaria to reach one man in the desert. The point is that every person we have contact with is important to God and we need to walk in obedience so we do not hinder the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:7 again.

Getting back to this verse we need to see that Paul desired the Corinthians to be obedient but not so that he would look like a perfect spiritual parent. He desired to see them walk in obedience even if he was seen as a reprobate.

Paul was not concerned about his reputation. He was more concerned about the church at Corinth than he was about how others viewed him. Let us remember that the false apostles viewed Paul as weak because he was so humble and meek when he had come to Corinth the first time when the church was founded. They desired to see the power of Christ in him and they would if they refused to repent. But if they repented and chose to walk the path of obedience then there would be no need for him to show forth the power of Christ

through disciple. This then was what Paul preferred and if that meant that he would be seen as weak and as a reprobate then he was willing to set his reputation aside for the purpose of the church at Corinth walking in obedience.

This is a small demonstration of the selflessness of Paul. Let me show you the pinnacle of his selflessness.

Romans 9:1-1-5

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

² *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*

³ **For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:**

⁴ *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;*

⁵ *Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

Paul tells us here that if he could he would be willing to spend eternity in hell so that his fellow Jews could be saved. That is selflessness!

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:7 again.

The word "honest" here means "that which is beautiful". Paul desired that these believers would live their lives so that when others seen them they would see something beautiful. This was a request for them to live lives that magnified their Lord.

In the world today when we listen to the news or we watch people of the world it is rare that we see actions among them that are beautiful. Normally the actions are ugly for we live in a fallen world. As believers we are to live our lives in a way that people desire to possess what we have within our hearts.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:8

Paul is saying here that if the Corinthians would repent of their sin then there⁴ would be nothing he could bring against them when he arrived. He would make the journey to Corinth but there would be no display of power if there was repentance.

Application:

The Truth within this verse is so very important for all of us to grasp. When someone has chosen a path of sin then the church MUST exercise church discipline for reasons that we considered in the beginning of the chapter. BUT when there is repentance then we are to extend forgiveness and grace to the person. Too many times the church refuses to extend forgiveness and grace. There are always those who feel like they must continually suppress the person who was involved in sin. Let me remind you of how Paul advised the believers at Corinth to deal with the man who had become involved in immorality.

2 Corinthians 2:1-8

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

² For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

³ And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

⁵ But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

⁶ Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

⁷ So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

⁸ Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

Let us notice what Paul wrote in Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:30-32

³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

When we came to Jesus Christ God extended forgiveness and He never brings our sins back up again and treat is how we are to treat those of the family of God who repent and turn from their sin.

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:9

Paul desired to be seen as weak, meaning that he did not need to exercise power through discipline. He wanted to see them walking in spiritual strength and if it meant that he was seen as weak that was fine with Paul. He also reveals in this verse that he desired to see their PERFECTION. The word "perfection" means "to be strengthened". This has the very same idea as what Paul wrote in chapter 12.

2 Corinthians 12:19

¹⁹ Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

The church at Corinth lacked nothing in spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 1:4-7

⁴ I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

⁵ That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;

⁶ Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

⁷ So that ye come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:

They had all the spiritual accessories but they were not putting them to use. The Chief Corner Stone had been laid but they had done very little building upon Christ. Sin was weakening them and it was Paul's desire to see them build upon Christ and to increase in spiritual strength. Notice what Paul wrote to the Colossians.

Colossians 2:6-7

⁶ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

⁷ Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

For every church that Paul had contact with this was his desire. He wanted to see spiritual growth and spiritual strength within the body of Christ.

Application:

Every Pastor whose heart is in tune with God will have this desire for his church. It will not be a desire to see his church grow in great numbers. It will not be a desire for him to be elevated within the community. It will not be a desire to entertain his people. It will be a desire to see the people whom God has entrusted to him to advance in spiritual knowledge and growth. Let us all realize that God desires for us to grow in faith and knowledge and if there is sin within our lives our growth will be hindered.

Conclusion:

Notice 2 Corinthians 13:10

It was not Paul's desire to come into the church swinging the Sword of the Spirit. He desired to TEACH the Word not use it in discipline. It was his desire to edify the church. The words of this letter were sharp but they were intended to cleanse the church. It was better to receive this sharp letter than it was to have to face Paul as he carried the Sword of the Spirit. This is the very attitude of a loving father with his children. It is not his desire to have to discipline his children but he would rather appear weak to those around him, meaning that he does not desire to conduct his life like a tyrant because his children are always out of control. But he would rather see his children walking in obedience so that he might appear to others as a weak father because he does not need to be stern in the public's eye.

In closing let me just say that we have a Heavenly Father that is even more loving than Paul. He always gives us space to repent because it is not His desire to exercise chastening upon us. He warns through His Word and if that verbal warning falls flat then He will certainly step into our lives and begin the chastening process.

Hebrews 12:6-10

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.