

Exegetical Notes – 2 Corinthians 13:1-14

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2 Corinthians 13:1-14

Verses 1-4

This will be my third visit to you. “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others,³ since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.⁴ For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God’s power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God’s power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

- Paul is planning to visit the Corinthian Church for a third time. His second visit did not go well. He is writing to prepare them for the third visit in hopes that it will not be like the preceding one.
- It is a general principle set forth in the Law of Moses that a person is not guilty of any charge on the word of one other person. Corroborating testimony is required for conviction.
- 2 Corinthians 12:21 lists three specific sins: impurity, sexual sin, and debauchery, which were of concern to Paul when he visited Corinth the second time. 1 Corinthians 5:1, 11 and 6:13, 16, 18-19 indicate that these practices were of long standing among some in the Corinthian church and were of concern during Paul’s first visit to Corinth. Paul is warning those who participate in and/or tolerate these behaviors. If these behaviors continue in Corinth he will deal with it when he arrives.
- Paul says that some are “demanding proof that Christ speaks through him.” Those who are demanding proof are the “super apostles” and those who side with them (see chapters 11 and 12). Apparently, the “super apostles” are tolerant of bad behavior. Paul is threatening to deal with them as well on his third visit to Corinth.

- Paul reminds them that Christ was crucified in weakness, but He rose in triumphal power. Though he, Paul, is weak in Christ, Christ's power will be evident in his speaking against these sins if he finds the Corinthians unrepentant of them when he returns to Corinth.

Verses 5-10

⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. ¹⁰ This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

- Paul pleads with the Corinthian Christians to examine themselves to see if they are in Christ. They are to look at their own lives to determine if they participate in behaviors which are condemned by God and/or tolerate such behavior in others. Paul hopes that they will pass the test; that they will not be participating in bad behaviors nor approving of those who do.
- His test is that he had persuaded them to repent of bad behaviors and/or tolerating these behaviors in others (see 2 Corinthians 12:20-21). If they are repentant when he arrives, Paul will have done his job correctly. He will have spoken the truth, not told them what they want to hear. About this, he can only speak the truth. However, the point is not his success. The point is that they repent and so be found in Christ. His desire is not to be strong but to make them strong in Christ. His prayer is that they are in Christ fully.
- Paul's hope is that he will not need to be harsh when he comes to Corinth. He wants to build the church, not tear it apart. However, he will be harsh if he needs to be.

Verses 11-14

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God's people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

- Paul's final words to the Corinthians begin with the admonition to "REJOICE." It means to be full of joy. They are to repent of their sins and encourage each other to do so. They are to be united in Christ. If they are, they will experience the blessing of God. However, if they neglect these things, God's blessing on them will be diminished by their own behavior.
- They are to greet each other with a "holy kiss." It means that they are to acknowledge that they are family in Christ. When they greet each other, it should be open and joyous. They are not permitted to dislike each other.
- Paul brings them the greetings of like-minded Christians in other places. The Church is a worldwide family. The local manifestation of the Church is only one part of God's family.
- Paul ends this letter by giving the church at Corinth his blessing. Even though there are many problems between him and them, he blesses them and seeks God's blessing for them.

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