

Examine Yourselves: Strength Through Christ's Power

Second Corinthians 13:1–14

Introduction: A Final Visit with Eternal Stakes

As Paul concludes his second letter to the Corinthians, the tone is both serious and hopeful. This is not a farewell written lightly. It is written by a shepherd who loves deeply, who has warned repeatedly, and who now prepares for a final confrontation if repentance does not occur.

Paul has already visited Corinth twice. This third visit will not be casual. It will be decisive.

“This will be the third time I am coming to you. By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.”

Paul grounds his warning in Scripture. He has been patient. He has spoken plainly. Accountability is now unavoidable.

1. Christ's Power Revealed Through Apostolic Weakness

Second Corinthians 13:2–4

Paul warns that persistent, unrepentant sin will not be overlooked when he arrives.

“If I come again I will not spare—since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.”

Some in Corinth questioned Paul's authority and demanded proof. Paul responds by pointing them not to himself, but to Christ.

“For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God.”

The cross appeared weak to the world, yet it was the means by which sin was defeated. The resurrection declares that Jesus Christ is God, Savior, and Lord. Paul explains that this same pattern governs Christian ministry.

“For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.”

Paul's authority does not rest in personality or force, but in Christ's resurrected power working through yielded servants.

2. A Call to Honest Self-Examination

Second Corinthians 13:5

Rather than continuing to scrutinize Paul, the Corinthians are commanded to examine themselves.

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you are disqualified?”

This is not a call to morbid introspection, but to sober reflection. Faith is not proven by association, heritage, or outward appearance. It is proven by the indwelling presence of Christ.

Paul is not asking whether they once professed belief, but whether their lives presently bear evidence of Christ's rule.

3. Paul's Desire: Integrity, Not Vindication

Second Corinthians 13:6–9

Paul expresses his heart clearly.

“But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.”

Yet he immediately redirects attention away from himself.

“Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable.”

Paul is not concerned with winning an argument. He is concerned with their obedience. Even if it means he appears weak, he rejoices if they are strong.

“For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.”

True spiritual leadership desires maturity in others, even at personal cost.

4. Authority Given to Build, Not to Destroy

Second Corinthians 13:10

Paul explains why he writes so firmly before arriving.

“Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.”

God-given authority always has a redemptive aim. Discipline is never meant to crush, but to restore. Paul longs to build up the church, not grieve over it.

5. A Final Call to Maturity, Unity, and Peace

Second Corinthians 13:11

Paul closes with a series of pastoral exhortations.

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Christian maturity is not merely doctrinal accuracy, but relational wholeness. Growth produces unity. Unity fosters peace. Peace reflects the character of God Himself.

6. Fellowship Marked by Holiness

Second Corinthians 13:12–13

“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.”

In Corinthian culture, the “holy kiss” was a customary greeting—essentially a handshake expressed with the lips. Much like certain cultures today where people do not greet one another with a handshake but with a kiss on the cheek, it was a familiar, respectful, and culturally appropriate expression of fellowship and peace.

Paul emphasizes sincere affection within the body of Christ—love that is pure, honorable, and rooted in fellowship, not flesh.

7. A Trinitarian Benediction of Grace

Second Corinthians 13:14

Paul concludes with one of the richest benedictions in Scripture.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Here, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in blessing. Grace flows from the Son, love originates in the Father, and fellowship is sustained by the Spirit.

Practical Application for Believers

- Regularly examine your faith, not others’ failures
- Submit to Christ’s authority rather than resisting correction
- Pursue maturity, unity, and peace within the body
- Remember that true strength is revealed through obedience
- Allow God’s discipline to restore, not harden, your heart

A Challenge for the Church

Christ’s power is real, but it is not to be presumed upon. Grace does not excuse unrepentant sin. God loves His church too much to leave it unchanged. Grow up in Christ. Walk in truth. Live in peace.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross to save sinners. He rose from the dead, declaring victory over sin and death. He is God, Savior, and Lord.

You cannot rely on religion, morality, or association. You must be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Turn from sin. Believe in Him. Receive His grace—and He will save you.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Help us to grow to maturity, to walk in unity, and to live in peace. Teach us to trust Your sovereign care and to rejoice in Your all-sufficient grace. We commit ourselves to You through Jesus Christ. Amen.