

- Welcome back everyone. Today we venture into the last Chapter of 2 Corinthians – Chapter 13 (hard to believe, isn't it? But it's true).
  - We ended our teaching last week with Verses 20-21 of Chapter 12, where Paul ended with these words. Let me read it to you.

**2 Cor. 12:20** For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish, and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps *there will be* strife, jealousy, angry tempers, selfishness, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

**2 Cor. 12:21** *I am afraid* that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and indecent behavior which they have practiced.

- As I noted last week, Paul's words were somewhat concerning. Concerning the fact this was a church he founded and led (Pastored) for roughly two years. It's also disturbing because as I said last week, this church was made up of believers (for the most part).
  - And so, for him to have to address such things was not only disheartening for him to write, but honestly, it is somewhat disheartening for us to contemplate. I mean, how in the world could this happen? I understand how someone can sin. I have no issue with that. It happens to us all.
  - But, for some of them to have done such things and remain in an unrepentant state, it's strange. But it happens all the time, and an FYI to all of us sitting here today. The way it happened then is the same way it happens to believers now. Over time we slowly get off track. Ever so slowly. Little bit by little bit, believers allow the world to creep in.
    - And over time, slowly, the shiny things of this world begin to replace the things of God in our life. And we know better, but it just happens. It doesn't happen on purpose. It's not as if we make a conscious decision to ease away from God, and in His place move closer to things of this world.
  - It just happens and it always starts the same way. With a choice or decision where we take one small and sometimes tiny step toward the world. It's subtle. It might start with a change in our job that leads to a change in friends or environment. It could be a change in our interest (our hobbies), our curiosity.
    - Whatever it is, the enemy is always looking for a way, trying to appeal to our likes and dislikes (our flesh). Trying to lead us astray. And make no mistake about it, our enemy is patient. He is in it for the long haul. And so, no matter our current lifestyle or set of friends, he will continue to place the things of this world in our path.
- As I studied this section of scripture, I began thinking about the things that draw us away from God. And for years, preachers have correlated this process to things like drinking or the things we watch or listen to, and indeed, these are things that can draw us away from God, and even I, myself, have used these as examples throughout my ministry.
  - But the things that really cause us to veer off track are not necessarily the things we

think about. They are not things that (on the surface) really seem to be problems at all, they are not things anyone really thinks about in the moment.

- They are subtle things, as I said, things like a job change, where you meet someone and then you develop a relationship with that person because you work with them every day, and before you know it, that relationship has taken you to a place you never intended to be.
  - I mean, think about it. If you told someone you were getting a better job, no one would ever say, be careful, you never know what might happen. No one would say, remember, our enemy walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.
  - And then of course there are our hobbies. Hobbies like golf and hunting. I have known many men who have fallen in love with these sports, only to find themselves (once again) in a place where they never intended to be. In a place where they have forsaken their families, their church, and their relationship with God.
  - And then there are children's sports. Nothing wrong with sports unless they rob your child of the opportunity to spend time in church. The enemy is always at work, looking for an opening, looking for ways to introduce us to new things. Things that cause us to lose our focus, influencing us in a way that garners our attention, leading us to a place where we take our eyes off the prize.
- It was true then, and it's still true today. Which means as far as humans are concerned, nothing is new. That's exactly what King Solomon testified to in Ecclesiastes 1:1-9, when he said this. Listen to what he said:

**Eccl. 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.**

**Eccl. 1:2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher,  
"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."**

**Eccl. 1:3 What advantage does man have in all his work  
Which he does under the sun?**

**Eccl. 1:4 A generation goes and a generation comes,  
But the earth remains forever.**

**Eccl. 1:5 Also, the sun rises and the sun sets;  
And hastening to its place it rises there *again*.**

**Eccl. 1:6 Blowing toward the south,  
Then turning toward the north,  
The wind continues swirling along;  
And on its circular courses the wind returns.**

**Eccl. 1:7 All the rivers flow into the sea,  
Yet the sea is not full.  
To the place where the rivers flow,  
There they flow again.**

**Eccl. 1:8 All things are *wearisome*;  
Man is not able to tell *it*.**

**The eye is not satisfied with seeing,  
Nor is the ear filled with hearing.**

**Eccl. 1:9 That which has been is that which will be,  
And that which has been done is that which will be done.  
So there is nothing new under the sun.**

- Remember, this was King Solomon saying this. He was the richest man to ever live, and his words were part of his summation of this world at the end of his life. He said there was nothing new under the sun. Nothing new as it relates to our problems.
  - I mean, for the most part, problems are problems, albeit maybe there is a variation in our issues, but problems are still problems, nonetheless. But, having said that, the good news is, just like there is nothing new with problems, the same holds true for solutions.
  - You see, God knew we would experience troubles and trials in life, and that we would drift from time to time. And so, as a counterbalance to those dips and downturns in our lives, He gave us the ability to take hold of our situation and do something about our plight.
    - All we have to do is recognize where we are and follow God's instructions on how to begin solving our problems. You drink too much? God's Word gives us a solution. Your marriage in shambles? God's Word gives us a solution. Your kids are out of control, you hate your job, financial problems, you're sick, and the list goes on and on. God's Word gives us a solution.
    - And so, with all that said, what might those solutions be? Well, Paul gives us some insight into the starting point for bettering your life's circumstances, and he does so in 2 Corinthians 12:21, where he says that he was afraid that when he came to them, he might find some who had previously sinned but had not yet what? REPENTED.
  - Repentance is the first step in cleaning up your situation. And why? Well, 1 John 1:9 tells us why. It says:

**1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

- But then in Colossians 3:1-17, we are given further insight into the solution to our problems, which we read about last week. But I want to read it again because it's so applicable to the church at Corinth (their situation), and ours.

**Col. 3:1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above (verb – action on your part), where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.**

**Col. 3:2 Set your mind (verb – once again – action on your part) on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.**

**Col. 3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

**Col. 3:4** When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

**Col. 3:5** Therefore *consider* the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

**Col. 3:6** For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,

**Col. 3:7** and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

**Col. 3:8** But now you also, put them all aside: (verb-action on your part) anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth.

**Col. 3:9** Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices,

**Col. 3:10** and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

**Col. 3:11** a *renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

**Col. 3:12** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (Verb – action on your part)

**Col. 3:13** bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

**Col. 3:14** Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

**Col. 3:15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

- And then, here is the key:

**Col. 3:16** Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing (urging) one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

**Col. 3:17** Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

- Paul's words clearly tell us that we have a choice. Specifically, we have the ability to begin the process of turning our life around by grabbing hold of our situation (the church's situation) and doing something about it. Because, as we know, the Church in Corinth is in a very bad place.
  - They have allowed false teaching to permeate their fellowship. And worse than that, it appears they have begun buying into what they have been taught. And so, Paul's solution in Colossians is still the same solution for all of us sitting here today. Do you have problems?

- Keep seeking the things above. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of the earth (the things of this life). And remember this, if you are saved, Paul says that you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Also, as a help, never forget our lives are on a countdown timer. Every day as we live and breathe on this earth, we are one day closer to death, to that day when we will be with Him in Glory.
- Moving on. Next, Paul went on in Verse 5 to give us the definition of what it meant to be dead to the things of this life. He said consider the members of your earthly body dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed, and *idol worship*.
  - By the way, I find my NASB's choice of words interesting when it says consider the members of your earthly body as dead. That's interesting to me because the Greek says, 'put to death'. I find that to be a bit more compelling than the word consider, don't you?
  - Consider seems light in comparison to put it to death. Consider seems polite, where put to death, well, not so much. But how do we do that? How do we put our earthly body to death? It's a mindset that is a byproduct of intentionally and deliberately focusing on God by way of His Word.
    - The cause and action here are that of replacing one thing with another. Meaning, if you are doing something that you know is not of God, or that God would not approve of, stop doing it and replace it with the things of God. That's in essence the process of causing your body to die to sin.
    - And so, with that introduction of sorts squarely at the top of our mind, let's enter the final Chapter of 2 Corinthians and see what Paul says next. My NASB Bible entitles this section: Examine Yourselves (Pretty Fitting Title Don't You Think?)

**2 Cor. 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.**

**2 Cor. 13:2 I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest *as well*, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*,**

**2 Cor. 13:3 since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.**

**2 Cor. 13:4 For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God *directed* toward you.**

- In verse 1, Paul says this is the third time I am coming to you, And Every FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. This will be the second time Paul warned his readers that he planned on visiting them for a 'third time' (cf. 12:14).
  - Dr. Thomas Constable said, "There are at least four possibilities about what Paul meant by the 'two or three witnesses' that would confirm his credibility and his critics' guilt:

- First, he may simply have been saying that the church would pass judgment, and, on the testimony of witnesses, they would decide who was right (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:3-5).
  - Second, Paul may have viewed his three visits to Corinth as three witnesses to his innocence.
  - Third, he may have been referring to his warnings that he would not spare the Corinthians. These may be the one in 1 Corinthians 4:21, possibly a warning given during the painful visit, and the one in verse 2b.
  - Fourth, Paul may have meant the witness of his fellow workers when he returned to Corinth. He may have meant Titus for example, the brethren who accompanied him (cf. 8:23), and/or Paul's fellow travelers”.
- I tend to agree with Dr. Constable. He said he favors the first possibility because it views the witnesses as people, which is the normal meaning of witnesses in the passage quoted (Deut. 19:15).
- He also said the fourth view seemed weak to him, because Paul's friends would have appeared biased to his critics. Regardless of what view you might hold to; he mentions witnesses as just another way of confirming what he is saying. It's another way for him to defend his position and authority.
- Next in verse 2, some might say Paul warns the church. Others might say he threatens the church when he says:

**2 Cor. 13:2 I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest *as well*, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*,**

- You see, Paul had previously warned the Corinthian Church during his second visit, also known as the “painful visit”, and now he was issuing a second warning in anticipation of his return to Corinth.
  - When he says he “would not spare anyone”, he meant he would personally discipline anyone in the fellowship who required correction. But that left me asking the question, what kind of discipline was he talking about? I mean, was he going to give them a spanking?
  - Well, to answer that question we must ask ourselves what type of discipline was available to him as an Apostle? There are a few theories out there, ranging from public rebuke and correction, which would include putting them out of the fellowship.
    - The severest possibility or theory was something akin to what God did when He acted decisively when holding people accountable in the early church, as He did with Ananias and Sapphira, where God took their life.
    - Similar to that story was in Acts, where “Elymas” (Eee-la-mas) the magician, where Paul said he was going to be blind, and sure enough he was. And then of course we have Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, where he tells the church to turn a man over to the devil due to his immoral acts. Regardless of what it is, they knew what he meant, and it was not going to be good.

- Moving on. Next, in Verses 3&4, he says (one more time):

**2 Cor. 13:3** since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

**2 Cor. 13:4** For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God *directed* toward you.

- Paul echoes the same theme that he's continued to mention all throughout 2 Corinthians, specifically 2 Corinthians 12:10, where he said:

**2 Cor. 12:10** Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

- Weakness continues to be the theme, which is so polar opposite of how we think.
  - And wonder why? Why did God choose weakness as the means to access His power? It's because weakness is the opposite of pride, and as I have said, pride is the 'kryptonite' to the Christian. It's really that simple, and God demonstrates this very thing with Jesus' crucifixion, which was the ultimate display of weakness, at least in the eyes of those who were standing there that day.
  - Just imagine what they must have been thinking, how they could not believe that the Messiah would allow Himself to be treated this way. It made no sense whatsoever, and honestly, when we think about it, I understand why they would have thought that.
    - It would be like watching a movie, say a Clint Eastwood movie, where Clint dies in the end and his enemies win. And then the movie is over. If that happened, we would be so mad. But that's the sense here. God sent His Only Begotten Son to die for all of us. And not just any old death.
    - No, he died the most horrific death at the hands of His enemies. And in that moment, for those people standing there that day, the story ended there. Can you imagine what it must have been like for the disciples? For all those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah?
  - From a purely human perspective, there simply couldn't have been a greater show of weakness for the world to see. Can you imagine what Jesus' followers must have felt in that moment? You can almost hear them say, "Oh well, any moment now God is going to strike all these people dead".
    - But it didn't happen, and with each passing moment, with each dying breath, everyone's hope slowly faded away. They had to think to themselves, were we wrong? Was Jesus really who He said He was? Maybe He was and maybe He wasn't. No doubt these were the thoughts that plagued the disciples along with each and every one of His followers.
    - But in His weakness, God's Power was on full display. And why? Because real



strength is displayed as anger under control. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ folks, and I want to stop here today. I would be remised if I didn't speak into this a little bit more this morning, and honestly, this is where I would like to close this morning.

- Belief in Jesus' death is the key unto salvation, and if you are sitting here today and you have never made that profession of faith in Him, if you've never confessed that and if you feel God tugging at your heart, if you feel Him calling you to do so, then I want you to know that Salvation is free and available to you this morning.
  - I want you to know that salvation is available to anyone who believes in the story of Jesus. That is the essence of Salvation. That is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.
  - But belief in what? In His work, in His crucifixion, in His death, His burial, and Resurrection. All those who believe will be saved. And why? Because believing in that story makes zero sense on a human level, and the only way you can believe in Jesus is when God gives you the ability to believe through the gift of faith.
  - I know most people sitting here today have probably made that profession of faith, but maybe there is someone sitting here who has not. If that's you, then I want you to do that this morning if you feel so compelled. And how do you do that?
    - Well, you pray. You tell God that you know you are a sinner, and you believe that He sent His Son, His only begotten Son, to die for you, for your sins, and then you follow that up with a public profession of faith through Baptism. That is the process of salvation, and here's how I would like for you to do this.
    - In a moment I am going to pray for you and with you, and if you pray this prayer with me, then I would like for you to take a Grow Card out of the pew in front of you and put your name on it, and simply write on the back, "I prayed that prayer this morning". From there, I will call you this week and set that up.
  - It's not hard and we are not going to make it hard. Also, I would like to offer up another invitation for anyone who may be saved but feels far away from God. If that's you then you pray as well. Repent and ask God to forgive you and He will do so.
  - And then, if you would like to write on the Grow Card, "I would like to be Baptized as a sign of renewing my faith and commitment to God", we will have a day of baptism. Who knows, maybe Easter.
    - If no one feels led to do that, that's okay. God is Sovereign and is in control of all things, so bow with me in a word of prayer.