

- Today we officially finish our journey through the book of 2 Corinthians, and it has been a long ride – to say the least.
 - How long?
 - Well – I am glad you asked – we started our journey on – drum roll please.
 - We started it on January 7th – 2023,
 - So roughly – 64 weeks ago – take out Easter, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day – Christmas, a snow day or two and we have completed roughly 52-54 teachings.
 - Just in case you’re sad – because you missed some of the teachings – you’re in luck – because you can log onto our website – and listen to the ones you missed – or re-listen to all of them if you feel as you might have missed something.
 - So, here we are – and today is the day.
- After today’s teaching – we are going to partake in the Lord’s supper, which – I feel is fitting at the end of a letter or book – don’t you?
- Now – before we begin this morning, I want to conclude this letter – by reminding everyone why Paul wrote this letter in the first place.
 - Remember – he was the founder of this fellowship.
 - He was the leader & pastor of this group for roughly 2 years.
 - His primary purpose in writing this letter was the same purpose – or reason – he wrote most of his epistles.
 - “Except Romans”
 - He wrote them this letter – because he had received some news.
 - The church had lost its way.
 - And it wasn’t just a little bad news.
 - And it wasn’t ambiguous news.
- In other words, the letter he received didn’t simply say:
 - Dear Paul, remember the church you started in Corinth?
 - Well – it’s gotten off track.
 - You might want to reach out to them and see if you can help straighten them out.
 - That’s not the way it was – it was specific to their issues, and they were very serious.
 - Paul was told that this fellowship, or better yet, he was told the “leadership” in this fellowship.
 - That they had allowed a man (at least it began with a man) - but now it consisted of men, who slipped in – an begin teaching heresy.
 - False teaching – false teaching in the form of “Asian Mysticism” and even more than that, these men were teaching a different Gospel than that of the one Paul taught – which was the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - These men were working hard to place doubt in the mind of these people,

specially, about Paul – his Apostleship – and of course - his authority as an Apostle.

- Paul was also told – there was some other serious issues taking place inside this church.
 - Things such as sexual immorality – which is hard to believe.
 - But it was true, and the sad thing is no one was doing anything about it.
 - Which – (as I have stated repeatedly) – was very disturbing and disheartening to hear about, especially given the fact – that this fellowship was made up of “primarily” Christian men and women.
- We could stomach it a little bit easier if that wasn’t the case.
 - If this were simply a church of lost people, then maybe it wouldn’t be so disturbing – but unfortunately it was the case.
- And so, Paul wrote the letter of 2 Corinthians.
 - This wasn’t the only letter he wrote to this Church.
 - Scholars believe he wrote 4 letters and some even believe he wrote 5.
 - But 4 letters for sure, but the 1st letter and 4th letter are missing.
 - Leaving us with 1st Corinthians and 2nd Corinthians as the only letters we have recorded in the Canon of Scripture.
 - Which would mean, 1 Corinthians is 2nd Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians is 4th Corinthians.
- Anyways, my point is - this church had issues – and continued to have issues – which is why Paul wrote to them so many times.
 - Let me also say, in the beginning of our teaching of this letter, which began over a year ago, I told you that this epistle – was difficult to teach.
 - Reason being, it appears to be pieced together – maybe, from other writings.
 - Which prevented it from flowing well.
 - Causing it to be called an “amalgam”(uh-mal-gam)
 - Which simply means – *a mixture of different elements*.
 - All because it appears to be somewhat broken up – which, as I said – makes it harder to teach.
 - Primarily because – it doesn’t flow well.
 - Anyways, that’s a little background on this church.
- So, with that behind us, let’s press on into today’s teaching, and finish up 2 Corinthians.
 - Last week, we finished with verse 4 of 2 Corinthians 13 and I just want to back up a re-read verse 1-4 again, for context.
 - Here’s what Paul wrote. My NASB Bible – entitles this section – (as I stated last week): Examine Yourselves

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.

- So, even now - at the end of this letter, Paul is still making comments – which refers us back to the main purpose of him writing this letter in the first place.
 - Here in verses 1-4 – he still in the mode of defending his position and authority as an Apostle.
 - The 2 main themes that come out of these verses are:
 - 1 – A warning – which really shows up as a threat.
 - 2 – The topic of weakness.
 - The reason I say this warning – showed up as a threat is because of what he said in verse 2:

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*,

- If we study his final words he says – I will not spare anyone.
 - And so - I don't know about you – but that sounds somewhat threatening.
 - And sure enough, as I said – when you do a little study on his statement, you could make a case for this very thing.
 - Remember, Paul is an Apostle – and he has Apostolic Powers
 - We don't know the total extent of those powers, but we do know they contain – raising people from the dead, casting out demons, and healing the sick etc.
 - They are supernatural powers.
 - What we also know is his powers seem to extend even further, from the positive to – what I would call - the negative side of life.
 - But interesting enough - no one ever talks about that.
- So – as I stated last week – this Fellowship required discipline.
 - 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 (as previously stated) – 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.
 - But the severest possibility or theory was something akin to what God did when He acted decisively and swiftly - in holding people accountable in the early church.
 - An example of that being – what He did with Ananias and Sapphira – when He took their life for lying.
 - Like that story – was the story in Acts – with “Elymas” “Eee-la-mas” the magician – where Paul said, he was going to be blind, and sure enough he was!
 - Then of course – we have Paul’s instruction in 1 Cor. 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, this church knew what He meant – and it was not going to be good.
 - Then we have the second theme of these verses.
 - Which was weakness.
 - Paul made it crystal clear – that weakness was the key to accessing the “Power of God”,
 - Another way to say that is:
 - Humility
 - Brokenness
 - Patience
 - Kindness
 - Love
 - These are the traits required to access Gods Power.
- Which – BTW – and just on a side note, I find this fascinating, because – that is not what the church has been saying for the last 20, 30, 40 or 50 years.
 - We have been told - we can access His power – through some transcendental state – which is generally facilitated through praise and worship.
 - Or through some super spiritual phenomena, which comes by way of an amped up service, facilitated through emotion.
 - This statement will not make me very popular with some, but it’s true.
- The church – has tried every avenue for accessing the “Power of God”, except for the one prescribed in scripture.
 - And why?
 - Because the one prescribed in scripture isn’t very appealing to us as humans.
 - And it isn’t easy, or quick or instantaneous.

- Instead, it's a grind!
- Just as we learned from Paul just a few weeks ago, where Paul said this in 2 Cor. 12:7-10 (A Thorn in the Flesh):

2 Cor. 12:7 Because of the extraordinary *greatness* of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

2 Cor. 12:8 Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me.

2 Cor. 12:9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

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

- God's power will be perfected in our lives when we become weak and humble.
 - There is no greater example - that could have been given to us then by – what Jesus endured on the Cross of Calvary.
 - Jesus – the Messiah of the world, the Son of God, lowered Himself to earth – allowed Himself to be beaten, scourged – crucified and eventually killed, and the whole time, by His own admission – He could have made one request to His Father in Heaven, and everyone standing there that day would have been wiped out and destroyed.
- But that's not what He did.
 - Instead, He endured – the most horrific punishment.
 - All so that – you and I could have an opportunity to be saved.
 - And this was the only way for us to be with God – was through the shedding of innocent blood – only then could we receive a covering for our sin – which then (as I said), could we access Heaven's gates.
- And last week – I asked you to think about that.
 - To think about how Jesus modeled for us - the ultimate display of weakness.
 - And how we through weakness could have access to the “Power of God”.
- And today – at the end of the service, as we take the Lord's supper, I am going to ask you to remember and consider – this very thing once more.
 - To meditate on this very fact – as you partake of the elements.
 - And through that meditation – we should examine ourselves.
 - Thinking about who we are,
 - Where we are in our spiritual walk.

- And we should never ever take that lightly.
- Instead, we must be honest with ourselves.
 - Not honest with others.
 - Or others being honest with us, but honest with ourselves.
- Asking ourselves the question, where are we in our walk with Christ?
 - First off – are we saved?
 - And the second, Is God proud of what He sees in us?
 - Are we humble?
 - Are we broken?
 - Are we self-centered and selfish, self-serving, looking out for number 1?
 - Are we giving Him our best?
 - Are we simply fitting Him into our schedule – when convenient?
- To be honest with you, I don't think – God could have orchestrated today's service any better.
 - With us finishing 2 Corinthians and then parlaying into communion.
- And so – with all that said, let's finish the letter to the Corinthian Church.

2 Cor. 13:5 Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

2 Cor. 13:6 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

2 Cor. 13:7 Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved.

2 Cor. 13:8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but *only* for the truth.

2 Cor. 13:9 For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak, but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.

2 Cor. 13:10 For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I *need* not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.

2 Cor. 13:11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

2 Cor. 13:12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

2 Cor. 13:13 All the saints greet you.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

- Paul begins this section with the statement, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the

faith”,

- Then he says, “Examine yourselves or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?”
- I want to try something a little bit different today, with Paul’s words this morning.
 - Let’s personalize it a little bit.
- Let me read it again.
 - Greg, (speaking of me) test yourself to see if you are in the faith,
 - Greg, examine yourself, or do you not recognize this about yourself, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?
- I want to encourage you to do the same. Insert your own name here.
 - If you do, I guarantee you – Paul’s words – will have a much different meaning when you personalize it.
 - Test and examine yourself – Terry – Scott – Dave – Mark.
 - Big difference, isn’t it?
 - But the question is - how do we do this?
- How do we test an examine ourselves, and what test is he speaking of?
 - Well, whatever it is, Paul says - he and the others have done this, and their findings have affirmed their faith.
 - And so, if that’s the case, then I want to know – what test, and or examination Paul is talking about!
- Where do I access such a test?
 - Well, it’s in the back of your Bible, did you know that?
 - Not really, but I had you thinking for just a second – didn’t I?
- Anyways, what test is Paul speaking about?
 - Well, unfortunately – there is no such test.
 - The key to Paul’s words – lie is the second half of his statement – when he says, examine yourself.
 - We must couple and tie these two words together to get our answer.
 - This test - comes by way of a thorough examination of our life.
 - Which can only be administered – when we know what we are examining our lives for.
 - Another way to say it is to ask ourselves, what does God expect out of our lives?
- Let me give you a more real-life example of what I mean.
 - If I am sick – and I don’t know what’s wrong, what will be the first thing the doctors will do?
 - They will do blood work,
 - From there – they will administer different types of tests.

- Depending on the test results – coupled with where my pain is coming from, they will know – what other types of tests to run.
- From there – they will process through the possibilities based on their medical training, experience - by way of logic, and thought.
- Then after running a series of test, they begin to narrow down what might be causing the issues.
- But there first must be a basis – for the testing and examination process – a starting point.
- The same holds true with us when testing ourselves and examining ourselves as it pertains to our faith – and our salvation.
 - We must begin with a basis, and to get that basis I want jump into the Book of Matthew where Jesus – gives us a base line for this spiritual test and examination.
 - Follow with me if you will. Matt. 12:46-50.
 - In this section of scripture Jesus is addressing the crowds, when someone says something to Him:

Matt. 12:46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

Matt. 12:47 Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.”

Matt. 12:48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?”

Matt. 12:49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers!

Matt. 12:50 “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

- Jesus tells us that whoever does the will of My father who is heaven, these are my brothers and sisters and mothers.
 - As you sit here this morning, think about what He is saying.
 - Are you saved?
 - This will be evident by your behavior – tied back to Gods Will.
- And what is Gods Will for your life?
 - The answer to this question is complex, but not really.
 - It can be summed up by taking the sum of His word in totality –
 - Where God's Word repeats the same theme, matter a fact – it shouts the same theme.
 - Your life is not your own.
 - It's been purchased.

- It's been ransomed.
- You have been grafted in.
- You work for the Master.
- You are not the ruler of your kingdom.
- You are not your own person.
- You belong to God.
- You are a slave – a bond servant.
- A possession of the God Most High.
- His will for your life is that you will bring Him honor and Glory!
 - That's it – there you have it and it will remain that way until the day you die!
 - So – the question is simple - how's that going for you?
 - If it were annual review time, what score would God give you?
 - Are you ready for that review?
 - Because it could be sooner than you think.
 - That is the sense of Paul's words and His words to this Church – they are the same words God places on all of us sitting here today,
 - Test yourself – Examine yourself and be honest with yourself.
 - You get the point – and so moving on,
 - And we will close with verses 11-14 this morning. Where Paul gives his final words, or his exhortation if you will.

2 Cor. 13:11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

2 Cor. 13:12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

2 Cor. 13:13 All the saints greet you.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

- Paul said, once you have tested yourselves / examined yourselves, rejoice with one another, be made complete, be complete, be like-minded, live-in peace and the God of love an (if you do that) peace will be with you.
 - And then – to top it all off, they should seal it by greeting one another with a Holy Kiss.
 - The Holy Kiss was a custom.
 - And it symbolized forgiveness.
 - Reconciliation – Unity and Fellowship.
 - And so there it is folks, 2 Corinthians – Paul's 2nd recorded letter to the church.

- We started it over a year ago, and we are finished.
- And today we memorialize our journey with communion!
- I want to ask the men to come forward and hand out the elements this morning, and as they are handing them out, I would ask you to do exactly what Paul ask this church to do.
 - Test and examine your life,
 - Forget about this past week, yesterday – tomorrow or whatever is burdening you.
 - Clear your hearts, heads and minds and focus intently on your own life.
 - Be introspectively focused for the next few minutes.
 - Be honest with yourself and where you stand with God.
 - Use this moment as a reset – a new beginning.
 - For today is truly the first day of the rest of your life,
- Amen – Amen!