

Paul's Final Appeal to the Unrepentant
2 Corinthians 13:5-6
Part Two

We are back to our study of **2 Corinthians** and more specifically to the last major section of this epistle, which I have entitled "**Paul's final appeal to the unrepentant.**" And where is this last major section? This last major section can be found in **2 Corinthians 13:1-10**

And it is this section of Scripture that we are presently examining. And what is the question that we are now seeking to answer as we press forward in this examination? How did Paul minister to the unrepentant among the Corinthians in his final appeal to them in 2 Corinthians 13:1-10? This is the question that we are presently seeking to answer. So, last week, what was the first thing that we saw Paul doing in order to minister to these still as yet unrepentant Corinthians?

He warned them (2 Corinthians 13:1-4). And where did we find this warning? We found this warning in **2 Corinthians 13:1-4**. So now let me read these verses for you. "**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) 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, (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. (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 based on these verses did Paul, in his attempt to minister to these still as yet unrepentant Corinthians, warn them? And what is the answer? Yes, absolutely!

And what did Paul warn them about? He warned them about the judgment that was about to come to them, if they remained unrepentant. And what did we discover about that judgment? We discovered, based on Paul's citation of an Old Testament principle in **2 Corinthians 13:1**, that the judgment that was about to come to them was not a supernatural judgment but rather it would be a judgment that Paul himself would initiate and the church itself

would carry out, or in other words the judgment that Paul was referring to was the judgment that Christ spelled out for His disciples in **Matthew 18:15-20** and that we have come to know as church discipline.

So why would this judgment of church discipline have been considered so serious? It would have been considered serious for the simple reason that if the steps of church discipline were followed and these steps of discipline did not produce the hoped for repentance, this judicial process would ultimately result, based on the words of Christ to His disciples, in a separation between brothers and sisters in Christ, a separation which would have course been incredibly painful for the entire church. This is why this judgment of church discipline was considered so serious.

And because of the seriousness of this judgment, Paul in **verse 2** wanted these Corinthians to know that this was not the first time that they had been warned concerning this judgment. And because of the seriousness of this judgment, Paul in **verses 3-4** also wanted these Corinthians to know that the reason why this judgment was now upon them was because they themselves in essence had invited it when they, in perceiving Paul to be weak, asked for proof that Christ actually did in fact speak in him.

But warning them of this coming judgment was not the only way that Paul ministered to these still as yet unrepentant Corinthians here in **2 Corinthians 13:1-10**. There was still another way. And what was that way?

He exhorted them (2 Corinthians 13:5-6). So now let me read for you **2 Corinthians 13:5-6** and see if this is not so. **“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? (6) But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.”** So did Paul in seeking to minister to still as yet unrepentant Corinthians exhort them? Absolutely, this is exactly what he did.

So, what did Paul exhort them to do? Paul exhorted them to “test” themselves and to “examine” themselves. We see this in **2 Corinthians 13:5**.

These two words **“test”** and **“examine”** are synonyms. They mean the same thing. They convey the idea of putting something to the test to determine its

genuineness. And this is something that Paul very much wanted these Corinthians to do.

They had been testing him by asking him to provide them proof of his genuineness or in other words that Christ was speaking in him. He is now turning the tables on them by exhorting them to “test” and “examine” themselves so that they themselves might find the necessary proof to see what?

Paul asked them to “test” and to “examine” themselves so that they might find the necessary proof to see that they were in fact “in the faith.”

Let us go back to **2 Corinthians 13:5** and see if this is not so. **“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourself!”** So did Paul exhort these still as yet unrepentant Corinthians to “test” themselves and to “examine” themselves so that they might find the necessary proof to see that they were in fact **“in the faith?”** Absolutely!

So, what did Paul mean by **“in the faith?”** When Paul exhorted the Corinthians to “test” or “examine” themselves to see if they were in the faith, he was asking them to “test” or “examine” themselves to see if they were saved.

So did Paul provide them any criteria for this self-testing or this self-examination within the context of these verses to determine whether or not they were in fact **“in the faith”** or **“saved?”** No, he didn’t. He certainly had done this earlier, within the context of this epistle and other epistles that Paul had written to them, but here within these verses, that we are presently considering, he did not provide them any specific criteria to guide them through this exercise of self-testing or examination.

So after Paul exhorted these Corinthians to “test” themselves or to “examine” themselves to see if they were in fact **“in the faith,”** then what did Paul do? After Paul had exhorted them to “test” themselves or to “examine” themselves, what then did Paul say? Let us continue to read. **“Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”**

Paul by following up his exhortation with the question “or do you not recognize that Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” was like a personal dare for them to follow through on his exhortation.

So now let me ask you this question. After Paul exhorted these Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they were **“in the faith”** and then dared these Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they were **“in the faith,”** what did Paul say next?

Let us go on to **verse 6** and what does it say? **“But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.”**

Obviously, Paul hoped that after that he had exhorted and dared these Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they were in the faith, and that they actually did so, that they would actually realize something.

And what would that be? Not only that they in fact were “in the faith,” which he believed that the vast majority of them were, but more importantly Paul hoped that the Corinthians by passing their test would recognize that he had passed his test that Christ indeed was speaking in him, since it was through his work as a true apostle of Christ that they had been saved.

So how did Paul minister to the still as yet unrepentant Corinthians in his final appeal to them here in **2 Corinthians 13:1-10**? First of all, he warned them of this judgment that was about to come to them if they remained unrepentant. And then what did he do? He exhorted them “to test” themselves and “to examine” themselves to see if they are **“in the faith”** or in other words saved.

This is something that we ourselves can do and certainly within the Scriptures are encouraged to do. Let me read for you the words of the Apostle John in **I John 5:13** and what did he say? **“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”**

So can we know that we are **“in the faith,”** that we are **“saved”** that we have **“eternal life?”** Absolutely! This was why Paul was able to exhort these still as yet unrepentant Corinthians **“to test”** themselves, **“to**

examine” themselves to see if they were **“in the faith”** because they could do it.

This morning as we come to the conclusion of this message, I would like to provide for you certain marks that should characterize the lives of those possessing genuine saving faith.

Genuine saving faith will be marked by penitence or in other words an overwhelming sense of sinfulness (Romans 7:24).

Paul after his conversion in **Romans 7:24** expressed the attitude toward sin very well when he declared, **“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”** True believers desire what is right and pure and they understand that whatever is wrong in them is not the lack of self-esteem, mistreatment by other people, or childhood trauma, but sin. They hate their fallenness, because it dishonors the God whom they love and serve.

Genuine saving faith will be marked by righteousness (1 John 2:29 cf. 3:5-7, 10).

Genuine saving faith will be marked by submission to divine authority (Luke 14:25-35).

Genuine saving faith will be marked by obedience (John 14:15, 23-24; cf. 15:10).

Genuine saving faith will be marked by love of the brethren (1 John 4:7-11).

May God give us the grace to live our lives in such a way that we will know that we in fact are a child of God and have been saved by grace through faith.