

## 2 Corinthians 13

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] And we read the word of God from 2 Corinthians chapter 13 starting in verse 1. Paul says, this is the third time I'm coming to you.

Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. 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 since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me and who is not weak toward you but mighty in you.

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 live with him because of the power of God directed toward you.

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 you fail the test?

But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. Now I 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.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] For we can do nothing against the truth but only for the truth. For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak, but you are strong. This we also pray for that you be made complete.

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.

Finally, brethren, rejoice. Be made complete. Be comforted. Be like-minded. Be like-minded. Live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for the opportunity of gathering together. Father, we thank you that you call our attention not to one another but to yourself.

[ 2 : 1 5 ] So, Lord, as we have read your word, we pray that our hearts and minds will be fixed upon you. That it is you that we seek with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our mind. And, Father, we pray that we may allow you to speak to us in clarity and in truthfulness.

And may the word of God have its impact upon the people of God for the glory of God. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Paul has been writing to the church at Corinth throughout the letter, which we refer to as 2 Corinthians, encouraging them to live out an authentic faith.

Wanting them to live out their faith in a measure which would be an attractant and acknowledged by a watching world. With the assurance that you are not living in isolation.

As a matter of fact, he has called the church to live in such a way that the world would take notice and respond accordingly. And scripturally, this is the admonition of God to his people throughout the entire Bible.

God calls his people to himself not so that they can isolate themselves and live comfortably with their newfound faith. But rather, he calls people to himself so that he may position them in a world that they could live out their faith in a manner in which the world would take notice.

[ 3 : 34 ] And the world would be attracted and drawn to the relationship which they see being lived out in the lives of others. Paul knew that Corinth was a strategic city, at least at that time in history.

He knew that the people had great opportunity, but he knew that that opportunity, too, could be hindered, according to the first letter, by the sin that was present within the church. Therefore, the church needed to repent.

And according to the second letter, by living out a faith in an unauthentic manner. That is, by living in a way that is kind of lukewarm, not really living it out in every aspect of your life.

So Paul has written these two letters to urge the church, if you will, to live in such a manner that people may come to know Jesus Christ to the glory of the Father.

See, friend, it's never about the glory of the church at Corinth. It's about the glory of the Savior who has redeemed the believers at Corinth. And it is that encouragement to live in such a way that Christ would be glorified that Paul is writing.

[ 4 : 39 ] He has taken some moments in this letter to defend his apostleship. Not because he felt like he needed to, but because he ought to. As was the custom much of the time when Paul went into a new territory and laid the foundation of Jesus Christ, not building upon anyone else's foundation.

People would inevitably follow him and begin to build on that things that were not worthy of the gospel. That is, he would lay a foundation of faith in Christ alone and they would come and say, Well, since you have faith in Christ, that's good, but be sure you do this.

Don't eat this food. Do these laws. Be sure you're circumcised. Be sure you have all these rules and regulations. And rules and regulations, as he would say in another letter, give great appearance on the external, but they do very little on the internal.

That is, you will never keep every rule and regulation that you find in scripture, and therefore you will always be beating yourselves up because you know you are not good enough. Friend, if you want to know that you stand in desperate need of a Savior, open up the Old Testament and find every reality that God shows us.

And we do not need a greater list of do's and don'ts. We do not need a greater list of rules and regulations. We need a perfect Savior who came while we were yet sinners and paid the ultimate price for us to redeem us and restore us and renew us.

[ 6 : 00 ] And therefore we live out according to our faith, not in order to gain our faith. So it is here that Paul has defended himself, not because he cared what anybody thought of him, but it was absolutely important on what they were basing their salvation.

See, undermine the messenger and you undermine the message. If you can cut the feet out from under Paul and discount the apostleship of Paul, then you can discount the message of Paul and all of a sudden you get back to legalism.

And we don't get very far in legalism before each one of us are stoned. We were reading a Bible devotional last night, my wife and Braden and I, and we got to that great story when the people of Israel marched around the walls of Jericho, how God brought great deliverance to the city of Jericho, but yet there was but one man named Achan who saw the gold and the silver and the scarf, and he took that mantle and he took that gold and that silver and he hid it in his tent.

And the devotional spoke of the reality that the people of Israel suffered because of the one man's sin. But as I was reading, Braden kept asking one question, but how did Achan die?

Because in the devotional it says, well, they went to battle and a number of people died in battle. And Braden kept saying, but how did Achan die? And I said, give me a minute. We finished it and he looked at me and said, Dad, how did Achan die?

[ 7 : 25 ] I said, they stoned him. And he looked at me. Now that's hard to tell a 10-year-old, right? Because he sinned against a holy God. That's all the law does for us.

It gets us under a big pile of rocks. Paul says, but we have one who bore our sin, who bore our guilt, who bore our weakness, and has given us the power to be raised in the newness of life, and that is Jesus Christ.

So now he closes this book with the encouragement and the admonition to be a well-equipped saint. I almost titled it well-equipped believer, but I have gotten a lot more cautious in my word choice, at least it seems to be, because the Bible tells us that even the demons believe and tremble, but they're not saints.

So we find here what it looks like to be a well-equipped saint, one who is called to Jesus Christ as their Savior, not just one who believes in Jesus, but one who knows of Jesus Christ.

So what does it look like to be a well-equipped saint? You say, Pastor, where do you get that admonition? Well, we get it, and I'll go ahead and show it to you, and then we can get into the text and see what it takes to be one.

[ 8 : 45 ] Verse 9, Paul says, I pray that you be made complete. And then down in verse 11, he says, finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete. You need to know what this word complete means, because it is of absolute importance.

The word complete means to be well-fitted and well-equipped for a coming journey. It is the imagery of a ship that is about to embark on a grand journey, and before the ship leaves port, has everything on board to accomplish the journey before it.

It is to be well-stocked, well-fitted, and well-equipped for the task that is at hand. And what Paul is saying, I want the believers to be well-stocked, well-equipped, and well-fitted to live in the world in which they exist.

Paul wants us to be well-equipped, because the world, let's just be honest with one another, the world doesn't need any halfway-fashioned believers anymore.

It's seen enough of that. What it needs is a well-stocked, well-equipped saint who can live out their lives for the glory of the Savior. What does it take to be that? Paul tells us, I'll go ahead and let you know, there are four things we see in this passage.

[ 9 : 55 ] Number one, we see to be a well-equipped saint, they, number one, walk according to conviction. They walk according to conviction. What does the Word of God say?

It says, This is the third time I'm coming to you. Bible scholars, let's just go ahead and put it out there, because we seek to be those who study the Word of God, not just read the Word of God, go back and forth, because scripturally the only other reference we have to Paul being in the city of Corinth was when he originally planted the church of Corinth.

We find it in the book of Acts. Other than that, we have no other mentioning of him going a second time. Yet Paul refers to here that when he was there the second time. So there's all this question, when did Paul go?

We are mindful of this reality, that there's also a letter somewhere between 1 and 2 Corinthians, which we do not know. It is not a lost letter. It's just not part of Scripture, right?

What we have before us in the 66 books of the Bible, we need to understand this, is not the complete history of mankind. This is not everything that man has done. This is the revealed history of God's interaction with man.

[ 10 : 58 ] This is all God wants us to know of himself. We are not studying man. We are studying the Lord God Almighty. Whether or not Paul has been once or twice prior to this, we don't know.

But we do know this reality. He says, this is the third time I'm coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. So he quotes a passage from Deuteronomy, which is a reference to how one should judge the accuracy of an accusation.

This is telling because we need to understand that it is this very matter which held up the courts, if you will, in the trial of Jesus Christ. They could not find a testimony of two people that would be in agreement when they were seeking to bring a conviction against our Savior until they found what Scripture says, two worthless men who told the same lie.

And then all of a sudden, based upon that testimony, they say, oh, here we go. We've got it. And then it was what they claimed was the blasphemy of his own voice. It really doesn't matter because it was all of the Lord God Almighty anyway.

But what we find here is Paul quotes this passage with reference to how one should bring an accusation against another because of what follows. Paul says, so when I come, he speaks with the conviction of his soon coming and his soon departure.

[ 12 : 18 ] So when I come, he says, I will find out the truthfulness of the matter regarding your sin. He says, if you are repented of your sin, that's all well and good.

If you continue to live in your sin, he says, then I will bring about discipline. Matter of fact, he says, I will not spare anyone. Paul says, I'm coming down.

You want to know the authority that I possess because the accusation was, Paul is very boastful in his words, but he's very humble in his presence. So it was Paul's nothing but a windbag.

He's all barking, no bite. Paul says, well, when I come, I'll find out. And when I come, I'll base this upon the testimony of two or more witnesses. And when I find out the truth of the matter, then the authority of Christ within me will serve as reason to bring about the judgment upon those within the church.

Notice what Paul did not say. Paul did not say, I'm going to go stand at the town square of Corinth and find out how the people in Corinth are acting. Paul did not say, I'm going to go to the temple of Artemis and see how the people and the false goddess of Artemis are acting.

[ 13 : 33 ] Paul did not say, I'm going to go to the local courts and see how the judges of the world are acting. Paul says, I'm coming to the church and I'm going to find out how the saints are acting. See, this is the conviction.

Paul says he is walking according to conviction. Paul bore the conviction that the church was the bride of Christ. And that is the bride of Christ.

The church should be holy as God is holy. That's not just an Old Testament principle. As a matter of fact, we find be holy as I am holy repeated in the New Testament as well.

Paul knew the reality that man is not perfect. Holiness does not mean perfection. Right? Being in a right standing with God does not mean one is perfect.

When we open up our Old Testaments, we find David a man after God's own heart. But we also find David a man with a lot of problems. Right? We find David a man who makes some huge mistakes.

[ 14 : 33 ] But every time he makes a mistake, what does he do, my friend? He repents. He laments. He mourns. He cries out to God. His greatest sins are followed by his greatest psalms.

And those greatest psalms are psalms of penance. And they cry out, renew me, O Father. Create in me a clean heart, O Father. Cleanse me. Why? So that no shame may be brought to your name.

See, there is this reality for the glory of God that David possesses. And therefore, he cries out. Paul lived with the conviction that the church should live in holiness and rightness.

Paul also lived with the conviction that the truth would be fully known. That the truth could be known. Paul did not want to operate and bring judgment and discipline upon people based upon other people's opinions.

But rather, he wanted to base it upon the testimony, as he says, of two or three witnesses. There is the conviction that the truth can be absolutely known.

[ 15 : 33 ] Friend, listen to me. To be a well-equipped saint, we need to live and walk according to conviction. There ought to be convictions in our lives that we know these things are so.

And those convictions ought to be based upon the clear truth of the Word of God. That it is the reality of what God has said. If we walk according to circumstances, or if we walk according to opinions, or if we walk according to desires, then we will stumble.

But we ought to walk according to the conviction of this says, or thus says the Lord God. And we ought to walk according to the conviction that the truth can be fully and accurately known.

There are matters of which we ought to do. And it is to walk according to conviction. Second, we notice that the well-equipped saints does not only walk according to conviction.

They realize an assurance of conversion. The fully well-equipped saint realizes the full assurance of salvation.

[ 16 : 41 ] He says, to test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Verse 5.

Again, test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Admittedly, most of our testing and examining is related to the salvation of anyone but ourselves.

We long to look around and say, well, surely that person's not a believer. Oh, did you see what they did? Oh, did you hear where they went? Most of our examination is the examination of others.

Now, let's not be misled here. Paul says that we have not only the ability but also the responsibility as brothers and sisters in Christ, as fellow believers.

Paul says, I do not judge those outside the church, but I judge those inside the church. So, he is not saying this as casting out to eternal judgment. But Paul says that he does have the responsibility to hold accountable other brothers and sisters in Christ.

[ 17 : 51 ] We have that responsibility. You have the responsibility to hold me accountable. I have the responsibility to hold you accountable. But when the examination begins, we start with examining ourselves.

Jesus doesn't say you should not tell your brother to take the speck out of his own eye. But he says, but before you tell your brother to take the speck out of his own eye, take the log out of your own eye.

Right? He says, don't have a log in your eye and tell your brother that he's got a speck in his. He says, first, take the log out of your own eye. Then you can see clearly to aid your brother.

That is, before you hold anyone else accountable, you must first stand in the mirror or in front of the mirror and say, Lord, search me. Know me.

Help me to know who I am before you. He says, test yourself if you are in the faith. And then just to reemphasize that, he says, examine yourselves.

[ 18 : 52 ] See, the greatest danger that the enemy of our souls can ever do, the greatest harm that could ever become a church, and we're seeing and we're reaping if we're going just to be honest for a moment.

In today's day and time, in the church age in which we exist in America, we are reaping the fruits of this great harm that could be done to the church. And that is a false assurance of salvation.

It is the greatest harm that the enemy of the people of God can ever do. It is to give one a false assurance of salvation. As a matter of fact, the early church fathers of our own land, not the early church fathers like 100 A.D.

I'm talking about let's go forward a little bit more in time and come to our own land. Let's just kind of regulate it to our own denomination. You say, well, I'm not any denomination. Well, currently you're sitting in a Southern Baptist church, so let's just regulate it to where we're at presently.

That way we're not casting and pointing fingers at anyone else. Let's just keep it to ourselves here. Let's just confine it to the early stages of even the Southern Baptist denomination, or if we want to bring it back a little bit further to the 1700s, we can get it to the Baptist.

[ 20 : 03 ] Because of Southern Baptist, we didn't show up on the scene until the 1860s. We can go back to the 1700s and we can get to the Baptist. We can go back a little bit further to the 1600s, but we've got to go across the other side of the pond and we can get to the Baptist in England.

But if we want to go back as far as we want to in the Baptist world, there was such a concern in the early stages about the reality of one's salvation that they sought never to interfere with the conviction that was going on with another individual.

That is, they would leave you to yourself. And they would let you work out your own salvation. You say, oh, that's harmful. I'm saying, almost.

I'm just telling you the history. You would be at the altar. You may be at the altar for an hour. They wouldn't touch you. They wouldn't walk over there to you because they did not want your salvation based upon the opinion of an individual telling you you were saved.

You went home and you wrestled with it. Maybe for a week. Maybe for a month. Maybe for a year. Maybe for three years. But the moment, they say, when the Spirit of the Lord fell upon the heart of the man, that individual woke up and he says or she would say, the world was a new place.

[ 21 : 25 ] All of a sudden, the sky was a brighter blue. The birds sang a louder song. The flowers were a sweeter smell. The sun was a brighter shade of golden yellow than it had ever been.

All of a sudden, all things had been made new. And one thing you don't find moving forward from that was they would ever, ever doubt the seriousness and the reality of their conversion.

Because they had worked it out with fear and trembling. Oh, but we didn't think that was fair. We wanted to speed up the process a little bit.

We said, well, if God has put us here now, we've got to balance it. I understand it. We can depend on them in the badness. We're confined to ourselves. We can swing a little too far.

And we can do it in a number of things. We would say, well, let's speed up the process. Let's walk with them and disciple them. That's a good step. I'm thankful that the church began to do that.

[ 22 : 24 ] Let's not make them work it out on their own. Let's show them the scripture. And we'll let the word of God speak to them. And the word of God would speak through this discipleship process, which, by the way, is a biblical model.

And God would use the discipler and the disciplee. And he would use the two people that were there that were ministering. And the word of God was speaking to the people. And God was saving. And the Lord was redeeming.

But that wasn't enough. We wanted more results because we're counting budgets and noses, right? I know this can get a little preachy. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have went that far. But anyway, we wanted to speed it up a little bit further.

So we said, well, what if we bring them into an inquiry room? And it was still good. We would get a conversion that day in an inquiry room. Great testimony because the saints of God would gather. People would be asked to leave the service.

And it was one thing to make an emotional response. It was a whole other thing to go into an inquiry room where people could genuinely walk with you and talk with you. And the Lord was still moving. And we said, well, we can speed it up a little further. What if we just ask people to raise their hand and repeat a prayer after me?

[ 23 : 25 ] And all of a sudden, we've taken away the sweat and the toil and the turmoil. We've taken away the conviction. We've taken away all the uncomfortableness. And we've made it easy. And we wonder why there's such a lack of assurance of salvation.

Friend, I am so convinced in the reality that God is the God of salvation and is not the man I believe. I'll just go ahead and I can affirm it. I affirmed the invitation call that if the Lord is drawing any individual, that today is the day of salvation.

I affirm it with all of my heart, with all of my mind, with all of my soul. I believe God can save you in an instant. I believe he can redeem you in a moment and he'll take a lifetime to sanctify you. This is kind of a side right here.

I want you to know where I'm at. In a moment, I do not mind, but I'm so assured of the reality that it is God who draws the men and women, that it is God who leads the individuals, that it is God who is the God of salvation and that the spirit blows where man knows not.

That's Jesus. As a matter of fact, I think he said that in John chapter 3. I believe so assured of that, that God does not necessarily have to have my help in the matter of saving, but at times I am so glorified to be used of him to be of a help, right?

[ 24 : 41 ] I believe that it is God who redeems and saves in God alone. If he uses me, praise be to the Father. If he doesn't, praise be to the Father because it's not about you and me, it's about him.

I am so certain of the reality that if God is calling an individual, that if he's calling them to himself, that nothing will happen to that individual until the Lord saves him and redeems him or her until that day of salvation.

Now, I'm settled in those matters because if I believed that the salvation of man was dependent upon my own faithfulness, I'll be honest with you, that baptismal pool behind me would be full every Sunday and if you had not gotten wet, I would call you for it and I'd get you wet today.

But I believe that those whom God calls, he will lose not one. And I believe that it is when man is left to the word of God with the people of God that the salvation that is result is a settled matter.

Now, I say these. This is a complete aside. I had the grand privilege of working with teenagers and youth for a number of years. This is my 20th year in pastoral ministry.

[ 26 : 03 ] Actually, last week marked my 20th year in pastoral ministry. I worked with teenagers prior to starting pastoral ministry and even into the pastoral ministry about 15 years or 14 years.

I had the opportunity of working with teenagers alongside at times with pastoral ministry. And much like everybody else that's worked with teenagers, one reality that I saw is that after event, after event, after event, after event, after event, the same people would raise their hands, same people would stand up, and the same people would go home and live the same life.

I saw that. And I would spend the majority of my time as a youth leader discipling and getting into the word of God until it finally came to the point that I'd say, don't raise your hand and don't stand up.

We're making decisions in the youth room, not in the stadium. Why? Because the moment of momentum is so telling.

And one of the great dangers that the enemy of our soul has is to give you a false assurance of your salvation. I speak from personal experience.

[ 27 : 12 ] I got wed at 15. I lived my life how I wanted to until almost the age of 21, and but for the grace of God, it was the word of God that captured me and put me on my face at the foot of my bed with no man present but him.

And then he redeemed me. But prior to that, I thought I was okay. See, Paul says, test yourselves to see if you're in the faith. What did Jesus say on the parable of the souls?

Do not assume you are the good soil. Test yourselves. Examine yourselves. The second great harm that the enemy can do, the greatest harm that he can do is to give one a false assurance.

The second great harm the enemy can do is to give a lack of assurance to the genuine believer. This is why you have to have it. If the greatest thing that the enemy can do is to cause one to think they are saved when they are not saved, the second greatest thing that he can do is to cause you to doubt it because the moment you doubt your salvation, the moment you deem yourself worthless or useless for the sake of the kingdom.

If you are saved, I mean genuinely saved, according to the word of God, not according to the opinion of man. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then my friend, take the holy boldness that comes with it and stand in the assurance and go forward because the enemy wants to deem you useless and unfit for the sake of the kingdom and he wants to cause you to doubt your salvation.

[ 28 : 40 ] Look at what it says. But do you not know this or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? You say, well, how can I recognize this? Well, thankfully, the word of God is clear.

The word of God is full of the traits of the Savior that are exhibited in the life of the believer. Is there love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control being exhibited in your life?

Do you love one another, care for one another, bear one another's burdens? Do you have a concern for people that are not like you? See, those are testimonies. Do you have the mind of Christ and the spirit of Christ dwelling within you?

When someone slaps you on the right cheek, do you turn the left also? When someone asks you to go one mile, will you go with them two miles? Will you put these things off? I'm not asking if you're perfect. I'm just asking if you're willing.



I'm asking because, see, by nature, self-love is a very easy thing. Jesus says you love those who are like you. That's good. Even the unbelievers do that. But can you love those who have nothing to give you?

[ 29 : 39 ] Can you give to those who have nothing to give in return? Can you host a meal and bring somebody in who will never call you back to their home? See, there are all kinds of attributes of the believers that are in Scripture.

Get into the word of God and say, Lord, is this me? Lord, is this me? Lord, is this me? And let the assurance of salvation rest within you. Surely you'll get there and you'll say, Lord, I'm failing here. But then you go back and say, but what does it mean to be a believer?

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior? You say, yes, I believe Jesus is my Lord and Savior. I'm not trusting in my own words. I'm not trusting in what I've done.

I'm trusting in Jesus Christ alone. Well, then, friend, he says, then you're saved. Okay, take that and then say, now, Lord, it also tells me that if the Spirit lives inside of me, then these things will be present. So, Lord, search me.

Remove these things in me that keep me from it. See how this self-examination happens. Because, just to be honest, there's a log in each one of our eyes too often. And it takes me forever to get the log out of my eye.

[ 30 : 35 ] And by the time I've got the log out of my eye, the speck in your eye is gone. And I'll work this out and I'll work it out with fear and trembling. People tell me, say, well, Pastor, you brought a lot of conviction to my life this week and you really stepped on my toes.

I say, well, I'm not so sorry to hear that. I've been stepping on my own toes all week long. And that's the truth. When I go to Scripture, I don't know if I say, Lord, what are you saying to your people? I first say, Lord, what are you saying to me?

And now, Lord, since you're saying it to me and since you've called me to be the pastor, that must mean you have to say it to them as well. I've restarted this new habit because I got out of it.

And I know I'm getting a little preachy on you this morning, but you'll bear with me. And I'm so thankful. I began reading devotionally again. Now, I know I've always read devotionally, but for a while there, I got to where my devotional reading was just let's move through the devotional reading so I can get to the study reading.

Now, when I read for studying and I read for studying Scripture to preach, I always have a notebook beside me and I'm always making notes. But I've gotten into this habit in the last few years of reading devotionally without a notebook beside me.

[ 31 : 35 ] Essentially, what I was saying is in my devotional time, I don't expect the Father to say anything to me. If you can ever read your Bible without something to write on besides you, you're saying, God, you're not going to say anything to me.

You say, well, that's not what I'm saying. Maybe you're marking your Bible. Good. I'm thankful because I changed Bibles and I don't mark in my new ones anymore. My other ones got so marked up I couldn't really read them.

So if you're marking your Bible, great, but you have something to write with and you have something to write on, then you're expecting to hear from the Father. But if we just open up our Bibles, we're saying, you're not really expecting them to speak to us, then we're not really writing anything down.

I did that. Just full confession. God brought that conviction to me. So I had to change that. You know how he brought that conviction? And then I said, everybody started giving me notebooks. I said, why are so many people giving me notebooks?

I don't need notebooks. But everybody started giving me notebooks. Every time I turn around, there's a notebook. And I said, maybe I do need a notebook. Maybe the Lord's got a lot to say to me still. Right?

- [ 32 : 32 ] So we understand this. The greatest thing the enemy can ever do is to give a false assurance of salvation. The second greatest thing the enemy can ever do is to give a lack of assurance to the genuinely saved.

This is why the fully and well-equipped saint realizes the assurance of their conversion. Do you know that the moment you have a sweet assurance of your salvation will be the moment you never look back with doubt and you can be used of your heavenly father for the glory of the kingdom moving forward?

Because until you get that matter settled, you will not go any further. You have to have it. Then, only then, can you begin to labor for the sake of the king and the kingdom.

Number three, the well-equipped saint not only walks according to conviction, realizes an assurance of conversion. Number three, they respond accurately to correction. They respond accurately to correction.

Paul says, Now I pray to God that you do no wrong, but that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved.

- [ 33 : 48 ] See, Paul is stating here, it doesn't really matter how you see us, whether you see us as approved or unapproved, those who possess Christ or those who don't possess Christ. How you judge us really is of little concern to me.

What Paul says, My greatest concern is that you do no wrong and that you may do what is right. He says, For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.

For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak, but you are strong. And this we also pray for, that you be made complete. See, Paul's great concern was that the rebuke that he had written to them would not really elevate who he was, but it would really elevate them.

Paul's grand concern was that the people would respond accurately to the correction that had been given. And he says that he wants them to be made complete, well-fitted, well-equipped, well-staffed, well-possessed of all that they need.

He says in verse 10, For this reason I am writing these things, while absent, so that when present I need not use severity. That is, he doesn't want a discipline of severity. And he says, In accordance with the authority given to me.

- [ 34 : 52 ] So, Paul is in a position of authority. But it is not the authority appointed by man, it's an authority appointed by Christ. He says, According to the authority given to me by the Lord.

But notice why authority was given. And in this notice, we see here, this is the biblical calling of all legitimate authority.

See what it says? But not in accordance, or he says, He does not want to speak with severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.

True biblical authority is an authority that builds other people up. It never seeks to tear them down.

True biblical authority that which was given of the Lord from the Lord is for the sake of building others up.

- [ 36 : 08 ] Even in our secular society, if you are in a place of authority, then God has blessed you with that position of authority for the purpose of building others up.

never for the purpose of tearing others down. Paul is writing this, realizing he is given some of the sternest rebuke and strictest standards to the church at Corinth.

I mean, to the church at Corinth, he said, he's handed one over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh and the preservation of his soul. To the church at Corinth, he said that the whole church ought to cast them aside.

To the church at Corinth, in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, he said that a number were taking the Lord's Supper in such a manner that they were dying. They needed to repent of that, go home and eat and go home and drink and come back and let's do it accurately.

Paul had given some of the strictest and sternest rebuke to this church, but notice here what he says. He said, but I didn't do this to tear you down. He said, my rebuke and correction was so that inevitably, in the end, you would be built up.

[ 37 : 17 ] It's the Old Testament passage where God strikes to heal. Sometimes correction has to come. Sometimes rebuke needs to be in place.

Church discipline for, for instance, Matthew 18, the whole second mentioning of the church is for church discipline. Again, something that we've shied away from in our new age and time, but in latter days was really a stalwart.

It's the spark of Baptist doctrine. Church discipline was never for the purpose of tearing people down and kicking them out. Church, church discipline, scripturally, may hurt for a moment, but it builds them up in the end.

It is seeking the benefit and the welfare of the individual that you are ministering to. All authority, biblical authority, is for the sake of building others up.

There are moments in every one of our lives where we have to be corrected. Praise God that he puts people around us to correct us. Praise God that he puts people around us to challenge us.

[ 38 : 25 ] Praise God that he puts people around us to admonish us. Praise God that he puts people around us that don't always agree with us because sometimes in those disagreements, we find our own faults to the greatest and it is then that we can move forward and we can be built up.

I told each one of our children as they were growing up and even Braden is still at home, I'm not here to make your life easy. I'm here to enable you to be a mature either man or woman.

Sure, I don't want to be just a hard guy all the time and I don't want to be just this hard disciplinarian doing things the wrong way, but I want to do my job to know that what the world needs are mature men, mature women.

They need these individuals to live in reality and sometimes that means I have to do the uncomfortable. Sometimes that means I have to hold you to a standard that you don't want to be held to, not because it's going to benefit you now.

You would feel much better if I didn't discipline you, but you will be much better in the end if I do. Why? Because the role of biblical authority is to build others up and unfortunately what has happened again in our day and time, we want to make the home more a place of convenience than we do a place of correction.

[ 39 : 38 ] We're more concerned about what's easy today as to what would be better tomorrow. Discipleship is messy and the messiest discipleship I've ever found is the discipleship of your own children.

It's hard. Why? Because they see you all the time. They know who you are. When you're sitting at home in your leisure clothes or your feet up, they know who you are.

They know all your ugliness. And they know all your beauty. It's hard. But it's worth it. Because you've been given that place of authority to build them up. Finally, number four, the well-equipped saint lives in authentic community.

You are never well-fitted and well-equipped alone. The well-equipped saint lives in authentic community.

He says, finally, brethren. He refers to them as his brethren. Right? Paul, one thing I've noticed this past week is that Paul and the other authors of the New Testament are consistently bringing up the familial aspect of the believers of Jesus Christ.

[ 40 : 53 ] they're always writing according to the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father. They're always reminding the believers they write to he's our Father.

Not just your Father. Not just my Father. He's our Father. And they're always referring to the saints as the brethren. And they're doing this because the family connection matters. It was the greatest connection of that day and time.

It was the building block of society. It meant something to people in history at that moment. And it means something today. It is this consistent bringing up of the familial connection that reminds them that they are living in an authentic community.

That they are living in community with one another so much so that the Lord Jesus says that if you do not love your love me more than you love your mother and your father and your sons and your daughters then you cannot be my disciple.

And Jesus calls us to that greater love. But what we found is that when we love him greatest we love others more. As a matter of fact Paul writing to the church at Thessalonica in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 some of you have read it today some of you will read it today Paul speaks of their increasing faith in the church at Thessalonica.

[ 42 : 05 ] Side note every chapter in 1 and 2 Thessalonians has a reference to what? The second coming of Jesus Christ. Note it every single chapter has a reference in it to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Paul is looking for the coming of Jesus Christ. Right? So he writes to the church there he says I have heard of your increase in faith. And you say praise God their faith is increasing but then he follows it and you're growing love for one another which means the more your faith increases the more your love for the people of God increases.

It is just a natural byproduct of the relationship because you do not live and exist in isolation. He says finally brethren rejoice be made complete be comforted be like minded live in peace do you notice every one of those have the implication that you're doing it with other people.

You cannot be like minded when you're by yourself. If you have to convince yourself to be like minded with yourself we call that a problem. I won't give it a title but you got a problem.

If you can't get along with yourself you got a problem. But you only seek to be like minded when you are around people that are different than you. So that is the familial aspect. You do not have to worry about being and living at peace when you're by yourself.

[ 43 : 24 ] You only have to be concerned about living in peace when you are around other people. Then you have to pay attention to that. Each one of these imply the reality that you will be living in community with other people that may not necessarily be like you.

Other than the fact that they have been saved and redeemed by the same savior that you have been. Therefore they are your brethren. They are your brothers and sisters and you can rejoice.

You can then be made complete because your deficiencies are filled up by their sufficiency and your sufficiency fills up their deficiency.

And all of a sudden you are well equipped because see a ship has more than one thing in its cargo. It may be hauling grain but it takes a lot of other things to keep the crew alive.

Right? So you have to have all these other parts, all these other portions to be made complete. And then he goes on. Hey, this isn't one we have to do but it's one that was done there. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

[ 44 : 24 ] I say I do good with a holy handshake and a hug. You don't have to kiss me when you see me. But in that day and time that kiss was a sign of deep commitment to one another. It was a holy kiss of community.

This is why it's so sad when Judas Iscariot went up to the savior on the night he betrayed him and he kissed him. He betrayed him with a kiss because the sign was to be a connection and community and he was not living in community with the savior at that moment.

He was rejecting the savior at that moment. What Paul is saying here is that you ought to live in such an authentic community that when you see one another you ought to be happy that you see one another.

You ought to be glad that you see one another. That you ought to be able to greet one another with a holy kiss. And he says this has direct implications to the isolated community of people of God but it is not restricted there because then he says and all the saints greet you.

Our community extends beyond what we see here. My wife had a text message this morning from some of the saints of Wartrease who are worshiping in North Carolina.

[ 45 : 37 ] It was we have to forgive them for this. I will admonish them when they get back. They took the picture. They had their cell phone out during service. They took the picture of the inside of a church service.

According to the picture I don't think anyone noticed. And they said we are not in Kansas anymore. The church looked a little bit different than this one. It was a little darker in the room. A little bit more lights on the stage.

A little bit more action going on. I am not saying it is wrong. I am just saying. But you know what they were doing? They were living in community with saints that aren't! But it was community nonetheless.

See it is not isolated here. It extends all the saints greet you. It's been a joy of mine throughout the years that no matter where I am across this land I can go into a church and I can meet the brethren and I can be in deep community relationship with people that are not of our denomination not of my nationality and not really even of my region.

They don't have my dialect but all of a sudden I am in community with them. Why? Because all the saints greet you. And he says the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

[ 46 : 51 ] You notice the whole Trinity is mentioned there. Be with you all. all. Don't leave off that last word all.

In the south we'd say be with y'all. Because he's not saying that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Singular. He's writing to a community of believers. He said be with y'all. How do you experience the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit?

Through an authentic community of believers called the church. Friend, the well-equipped saints, walks according to conviction, realizes the assurance of their own conversion, responds accurately to correction, and lives in an authentic community.

The question would be how equipped are you for the journey God's got before you for his glory and honor? Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for this day.

[ 47 : 59 ] So thankful for the opportunity we have of gathering with each one. Thankful for your presence. Thankful for your word. Lord, may it search us and try us. May we know who we are before you for your glory and yours alone.

We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.