



POWER IN WEAKNESS!

The Epistle of 2 Corinthians

Stronger Together!

2 Corinthians 13:1-14

Message #17 of 17 – S893

Sermon given on May 3, 2020

remotely from Lancaster home



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Stronger Together!

2 Corinthians 13:1-14

Opening Comments

- Hey this is Rick Lancaster – coming to you remotely from my home office – thank you for tuning in
- Turn to **2 Corinthians 13**
- Today we conclude our journey through **2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness!**
- As Paul ends his second letter to the Corinthians Paul is going to tell us in strong language how to maintain unity in the church
- The fact that we are meeting remotely and may have to do that for at least a few more weeks makes it an odd topic, but it is Paul's point, and the quarantine will end eventually
- And if we are open to it, we will also see how what Paul says applies to our more intimate relationships & ultimately to all relationships
- And then Paul closes with a promise that makes it worth the effort
- Let's pray and then get into our text
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Stronger Together!**
- Paul's detractors, the 'super-apostles' – false apostles really – have been questioning his authority based on the fact that he worked to provide for himself, rather than charging the Corinthians to hear him speak
- They also despised his humble appearance and lack of eloquence when he spoke
- Paul didn't boast about his supernatural experiences and he didn't bring fancy letters of recommendation from prestigious organizations
- To Paul's detractors this all added up to someone who couldn't be an apostle of Christ
- The result was division in the church, some agreeing with the 'super-apostles' – and others siding with Paul
- Paul is planning on coming to settle the debate
- **2 Corinthians 13:1**

- Paul's standard approach with any church he was involved with was to be humble and gentle – fatherly – which his detractors considered weakness
- Paul is going to be looking for witnesses to what these guys are doing
- In essence – Paul is claiming the authority to put them on trial for creating division within the church
- **2 Corinthians 13:2-4**
- In a way this is a picture of Christ's first and second advents.
- Christ came the first time as a humble servant – Paul served in Corinth with humble servitude, not building himself up, but spending and being spent for the Corinthians.
- Jesus is coming again, but the next time will be in judgment – Paul is coming back and if necessary, to judge the rebellious in Corinth if they do not repent before he gets there.
- In that is a picture of God's mercy – God doesn't owe us time to repent from our sins – but He is so graciously patient **2 Peter 3:9**
The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
- Paul is warning the people of Corinth that he is going to take their sin seriously when he gets there
- Paul then gives all his readers a challenge
- **2 Corinthians 13:5-6**
- If the Corinthians examine themselves and discern that Christ is in them then they must also admit that Christ is in Paul because he was the one who introduced Christ to the Corinthians.
- Basically, Paul is saying that if you are saved, then Christ was and is working in me. If you are hypocrites, if you are not real Christians, then Christ did not work in me.
- Because a church exists in Corinth, Christ must have been in Paul and working through him
- Paul is prepared to do whatever he has to protect the church that he loves and its people
- Paul then tells them how he is praying for them
- **2 Corinthians 13:7-10**
- Paul did not pray for retribution or vindication

- He prayed that they wouldn't do evil – they were harming the church and Paul wanted them to stop – wanted them to repent – to do good!
- That is the heart of Christ – **Matthew 5:44-45**
But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- How we pray about or for our enemies says a lot about our heart
- Paul wanted them and the all the Corinthians to be complete – to be like Christ **Romans 8:29**

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- Paul is planning a trip to Corinth and he doesn't want to have to be harsh or severe with those who are sinning – wants his trip to be a blessing to them and an encouragement to himself
- Paul has the authority of an apostle – appointed by Christ Himself
- Paul has the power and authority to discipline the rebellious ones, but he doesn't want to
- And verse 11, Paul gives five imperatives, most of which are one word in the Greek
- If we are going to experience unity in the church, these five things must be present and growing
- Let's read all five and then go back and look at each one individually
- **2 Corinthians 13:11a**
- 'Finally, brethren...' Paul is speaking to the believers in the church in Corinth
- It is the responsibility of believers to work toward unity
- Unbelievers should always be welcome in the congregation, but chances are they will not add to unity – might even be a little disruptive until they come to faith in Christ
- First of five imperatives for unity – **Rejoice!**
- Where you see the word 'farewell' the NASB translates it as 'rejoice' – better translation
- Paul tells us elsewhere that rejoicing is a choice **Philippians 4:4**
Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!
- The church ought to be a place of joy – if it is not, there is a problem

- I said earlier, these imperatives apply to our most intimate relationships too
- Is there joy in your marriage? In your family? Your friendships?
- If there isn't, it means your relationship is in disunity
- Paul said something I skimmed over that I want to go back to
- **2 Corinthians 13:8**
- For Paul, the truth, the Word of God, was the foundation upon which he built his life, ministry, and the church
- When there is not unity in the church it is because it has drifted from the truth of God and is no longer focused on God's heart, mind, will for the world
- The same is true in our marriage, disunity is a sign we have drifted from God's truth and are following our own way or the way of the world
- Paul tells us in verse 11 – rejoice! – Imperative – command – do it
- Second imperative for unity – **Become complete!**
- Mankind was created to be in intimate communion fellowship with God and each other.
- We are completed through unity with God and with others
- Was going to require the Corinthians to bring things back together in their proper order.
- That takes reconciliation and restoration. Was going to take work on the part of the Corinthians
- When there is disunity in a marriage or family reconciliation and restoration are the tools God uses to restore unity
- That calls for humility and forgiveness **Ephesians 4:1-3**
I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- Notice 'endeavoring to keep the unity' – going to have to work at it
- Third imperative for unity – **Be of good comfort!**
- Could be translated – be encouraged! – the sense of the phrase is be encouraged and be an encouragement!
- Whenever you detect disunity in your relationships it is not a time to form battle lines, it is time to circle the wagons

- Your spouse, children, parent, or friend is not the enemy
- It would be very spiritual to say all you need is the Lord, but that is not how He created you – you need Him and the people He put into your life **2 Corinthians 7:6-7**

Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

- Notice that the comfort Paul received led to more rejoicing
 - Each of these imperatives is connected to the others, work on one and the others will grow
 - Fourth imperative – **Be of one mind!**
 - This basically means – agree with one another
 - Don't be disagreeable – don't be argumentative
 - This doesn't mean we have to agree on everything
 - I'll love Kelly until my dying breath, but I will not agree with her that mushrooms are edible
 - Seriously, we view some things differently, but in the end, we do our best to keep the main things the main things and don't get sidetracked by the unimportant things
 - And sadly, some couples are so focused on the unimportant things that there is no possibility for unity
 - Paul tells us what our minds should be like **Philippians 2:5-7**
- Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.**
- Think like Jesus, not like you, not like Rick, not like Kelly – like Jesus
 - If you are not in unity, it might be because one or both of you might not be thinking like Jesus – I always try to assume it is me first
 - Fifth imperative – **Live in peace!**
 - This is an imperative – a command
 - Something I have learned about God's commands – God will not tell me to do something I am not capable of doing through His Holy Spirit in obedience to His Word, the Bible
 - Usually, when we are struggling to do what God says it is because we are trying to do it in our own strength – only to find out we are not

strong enough – we are weak – Paul learned that **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- It is in your weakness that the power of Christ rests, not in your strength
- When you are struggling to live in peace and failing, lean back into the arms of Jesus – rest in Him and let His power rest on you
- Five imperatives for unity – Paul concludes verse 11 with a promise
- **2 Corinthians 13:11b**
- God is always with us, but this is special **R. Kent Hughes** “God imparts His unique inner qualities to His children as they actively do His will.”
- Unity ought to be the goal for every church, marriage, and family
- And because these are imperatives, they are possible – not through human effort, but through the indwelling power of the Spirit of God based on the truth of God and in the name of God’s Son
- Paul closes this letter with a encouragement toward familial unity
- **2 Corinthians 13:12-13**
- Only Paul encourages the ‘holy kiss’ – act like a family, you are one in Christ – our equivalent is the hug – something I am missing during the quarantine
- And then a benediction
- **2 Corinthians 13:14**
- Paul brings all three members of the Trinity into this final blessing
- Even though Paul has said some harsh things in this letter, he loves the people of the church in Corinth and wants God’s best for them
- That is my desire for all of you too
- We are all one in Christ and God has poured His love into my heart for you
- We are one family – let’s all strive to be in unity in our churches, marriages, and families – all our relationships – as much as possible
- **Pray!**