

Dealing with Personal Sin

(2 Corinthians 13:1-14)

With personal sin, we have only two choices: deal with our sin or face God's judgment. Even after becoming Christians, we still have to deal with personal sin. What do we read in 1 John 1:8?

Because we continue to sin after becoming Christians, we must learn how to deal with personal sin. In this lesson, we will discover **three** biblical principles. First is ...

Avoid delay (13:1-4).

Paul begins this chapter: *This is the third time I am coming to you* (13:1a). Paul's first visit to Corinth lasted 18 months (Acts 18:11). However, his second visit was a very painful and brief experience (2:1).

He is warning them that on his third visit he will use his apostolic authority to discipline any sin in the church. However, *every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses* (13:1b). Paul does not want to deal with rumors or unsubstantiated accusations.

Paul's insistence on *two or three witnesses* indicates he intends to deal strongly with sin in the church. Therefore, he writes, *I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again, I will not spare them* (13:2). Paul is warning those who are sinning about the disciplinary measures he will take if they do not confess and forsake their sin. He doesn't specify what the discipline will be, but it will not be pleasant. Those who are sinning may think they can continue without consequence. However, Paul will be God's way of fulfilling the warning given through Moses in Numbers 32:23c. Write it below:

Influenced by false prophets, some Corinthians are continuing to question Paul's apostolic authority. Therefore, he writes, *since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me* (13:3a). If the Corinthians are looking for proof, they will have it on his next visit.

Paul will present evidence of his apostolic authority, but it will not be what the Corinthians are expecting. They want to see and hear of miracles, signs, fascinating visions, spell-binding oratory, etc. Therefore, Paul writes, *He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you* (13:3b). Instead of demanding all kinds of *proof*, they should be preparing themselves for apostolic judgment.

Paul explains by writing that Christ was crucified *in weakness*, but He lives *by the power of God* (13:4a). Likewise, Paul and his associates are *weak in him*, but when they deal with the Corinthians' sin, they will do so *in the power of God* (13:4b). Jesus was *crucified in weakness* because He was obedient to His Father's will. Therefore, He did not assert His awesome power. Instead, what do we read in Philippians 2:8?

In the same way, Paul came to the Corinthians in weakness because he was submitting to God's will. Since he has suffered sorrow, persecution, and pain, the false teachers think he is weak. But, when Paul makes his third visit, God's power will be evident in his life. He will deal with them as Christ will deal with all unrepentant, sinful people when He returns (2 Cor. 5:10). However, Paul is encouraging his readers to avoid any delay in dealing with personal sin, so they will not have to experience God's discipline. To deal with personal sin, **avoid delay** and ...

Administer self-examination (13:5-10).

Because Paul is coming with judgment, he exhorts his readers: *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves* (13:5a-b). How do we *examine* ourselves to see if *we are in the faith*? What is the proof of genuine, saving faith? Is a simple prayer or being baptized enough? No! What about joining a certain church? No! Is believing in God and Jesus enough? No! The Bible teaches that even demons believe in God and tremble in fear (Jas. 2:19).

The true mark of genuine faith is repentance. Saving faith begins with a deep sense of sinfulness and a desire to forsake sin. The word translated *repentance* (METANOEO, meta-no'-oh) in the New Testament means "a change of mind and purpose" that results in a change of lifestyle. It is a radical turning from sin to God. How is *repentance* described in Proverbs 28:13?

To encourage his readers to follow through with self-examination, Paul writes: *Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you fail to meet the test!* (13:5c-d). Christ is **in** all true believers in the person of the Holy Spirit. When we seriously examine ourselves, He spotlights any sin in our lives so we will repent.

Paul continues: *I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test* (13:6). As the Corinthian believers examine themselves, Paul hopes they will recognize he and his associates have not failed the test of apostolic authority.

Paul adds that he wants his readers to *do what is right* and not refuse his correction. Then, he will not have to demonstrate his authority when he arrives. He wants them to *do right* before he comes, even if that makes it appear, he has failed to demonstrate his apostolic authority (13:7).

In verse eight, Paul explains why he must administer discipline for their continued sinful behavior. What is his reason (13:8)?

The *truth* refers to the whole truth of God's Word. When he arrives, if the Corinthians are living in obedience to *the truth*, Paul will not discipline them.

Next, we read: *For we are glad when we are weak, and you are strong* (13:9a). Paul knows if the Corinthians are spiritually *strong*, and he fails to mete out tough discipline, he and his associates will appear to be *weak*. Paul adds: *Your restoration is what we pray for* (13:9b). The word *restoration*, or "perfection," could be translated "maturity" or "complete."

As Christians, our responsibility doesn't end when people come to a saving faith. We must also help them grow and mature as believers. How does Paul explain spiritual maturity in Colossians 1:28?

Concerning his third visit, Paul is praying for the best. He writes, *For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down* (13:10). By delaying his visit to Corinth and sending Titus instead (2:1; 7:6-8; 8:16-17), Paul is giving them time to put their church in spiritual order. He will only discipline them if this letter fails to cause them to deal with their sin. He prefers to be kind and gentle, but he is ready to do whatever is necessary to put the church on the right track.

To deal with personal sin, **avoid delay, administer self-examination**, and then ...

Anticipate the result (13:11-14).

Paul gives five exhortations in verse 11. First, *brothers, rejoice*. The word *rejoice* is also translated "farewell" (KJV, NKJV), since the Greek word was sometimes used as a greeting and a goodbye.

I prefer *rejoice* (ESV, NASB, HCSB). The Corinthians should *rejoice* because they have opportunity to judge themselves before Paul arrives with Christ's judgment. What has he previously written to them in 1 Corinthians 11:31?

Second, *Aim for restoration*, or "be perfect" (13:11b). The word translated *restoration* (KATARTIZO, kat-ar-tid '-zo) usually means "be made complete." However, in this passage it means to "put things in order" or "mend your ways."

Third, *comfort one another* (13:11c). The word *comfort* (PARAKALEO, par-uh-ka-leh'-o) means "to console." They should comfort each other because Paul is coming to put things in order in the church.

Fourth, *agree with one another*, or "be of one mind" (13:11d). They must *agree* on accepting Paul's apostolic authority.

Fifth, *live in peace* (13:11e). When there is agreement and submission to the Word of God, there will be *peace*. That's how we obey what command we find in Romans 14:19?

However, that peace can never be at the expense of compromising God's Word.

Paul reminds them, if these exhortations are obeyed, *the God of love and peace will be with you* (13:11f). This means they will remain in fellowship with God. When we sin, we don't lose our salvation; however, we do lose our fellowship with God.

After confessing his horrible sins, what does David pray to God in Psalm 51:12a?

Paul also encourages his readers to greet each other *with a holy kiss* (13:12). The western equivalent of a holy kiss is a friendly handshake. Both symbolize forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity.

Next, Paul writes: *All the saints greet you* (13:13). This refers to *all the saints* in Macedonia, from where Paul is writing, send their greetings.

Finally, Paul ends with one of my favorite verses (13:14). It is sometimes called the "Trinitarian Benediction" because it includes all three persons of the Trinity. This is a great verse of comfort. Write it below:

This is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ displayed on the cross (Rom. 5:6 & 1 Jn 2:2), which demonstrates the love of God (Jn 3:16; Rom. 5:8) for us. As a result, we have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as He indwells every believer (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19).