

Text: 2 Corinthians 13:1-4

Title: Uncomfortable Discipline Ahead

Truth: The apostle Paul resolved that he will powerfully deal with the sin in the Corinthian church, for the sake of the church.

Date/Location: 9/13/2026 at FBC (previously 11/26/2006)

Introduction

Despite the apostle's misgivings about his upcoming visit, he has to carry through for the good of the church. He is not inclined to give up on them.

I. Witnesses Establish the Condition of the Church, 13:1

- A. Paul reiterates that he is about to come for the third time (see 12:14).
- B. The mention of "two or three witnesses" comes from Deut. 17:6 and 19:15 in the Law of God that He gave through Moses. One witness was not allowed to condemn a man, because he could easily be lying. More than one independent witness has to testify about a person's crime. In fact, Deut. 19:16-20 teaches that a false witness was to be punished with the same punishment he was hoping the innocent man would get! That would put a quick stop to lying when under oath! (See also Heb. 10:28, Num. 35:30).
- C. Using the two or three witnesses idea, Paul is telling the Corinthians two things.
 - 1. First, he is going to deal with things in a just manner. He will not be dealing with un-corroborated accusations.
 - 2. Second, in this case, he applies his visits like the principle of the two-or-three witnesses law. He applies the law in a different fashion. The visits of the apostle are like witnesses. Of course, he is a single witness, and no one can be disciplined on just Paul's testimony. But he encounters the same behaviors and same attitudes every time he comes to the church and so he knows it is a true pattern and there is a severe problem. The situation is clearly established: the Corinthians are guilty, and one way or the other they will together get to the bottom of things when Paul comes.

- D. Notice how Paul has turned the tables: they have been putting Paul under the microscope to examine if he really is an apostle or not. But using this courtroom language, Paul is saying that it is *the Corinthians*, not *him*, who are the issue here. They are the ones who are in trouble and who are doing wrong, not Paul. In fact, in v. 5, Paul will tell them to examine themselves—and stop examining him, something that has required him to write the better part of three chapters (10-12) to address.

II. Warning of Powerful Discipline, 13:2-4

- A. The translation of verse 2 is a bit difficult, but the idea is that Paul warned the sinners in the church before, and now in writing he is giving another warning. After two or more warnings, Paul was justified in handing out discipline. Titus 3:10-11 says, “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”
- B. Discipline is unpleasant and often unpracticed in modern churches. But when Paul says, “I will not spare,” he is referring to dealing seriously with those have been sinning in the church. To *spare* someone means to save a person from loss or discomfort. At this point, there would be no reduction of discomfort or loss. Honor or shame will be ignored; pleasantries dispensed. He includes those who sinned before and the rest, so that no one escapes from his evaluation.
- C. This would include removal from the church but could also involve some powerful apostolic action that we do not know about. They may now see the spectacular proof of Paul’s apostleship which they doubted before, because truly Christ is at work in Paul.
- D. And though Christ was crucified in what the world considered weakness, he was raised by God’s almighty power and shares that power with God the Father. Similarly, Christ’s servants may have seemed weak in the world’s estimation, but they also had access to the power of Christ. This kind of apostolic power is not available to us today, but we have Christ’s resurrected presence by His Spirit along with God’s word. The word of God is powerful, sharp, and

cutting to the spirits of people. And His Spirit is within the believer, guiding and guarding as God sees fit.

Conclusion

Earlier, 10:8-11 shared the idea of exercise of apostolic authority for edification of the church. Paul was concerned about using his God-given apostolic office to strengthen the church, not to harm it. **The point of this section is that through Jesus Christ, Paul will do a powerful work in the church to purify it, regardless of how uncomfortable that becomes. He hopes this letter will head off the most unpleasant parts of this work, but he will do what is needed with the Lord's power and in accordance with sound principles of Biblical justice** (like two or three witnesses to sins in Corinth).

Now that we have been through almost the whole book, we must recognize that Paul is indeed an apostle, and that God used him to deliver much of the New Testament revelation to us. If we throw out Paul, we throw out Jesus too, because Jesus wants us to hear His word through Paul.

One application from this text is church discipline, which at this point in our church's history we have learned about and, unfortunately, have had to put into practice a number of times. It is Biblical—consider Matt. 18:15-17, 1 Cor. 5:4-5, Rom. 16:17-18, Titus 3:10-11, 2 Thess. 3:6, 14. Sometimes people have to be removed from our circle of fellowship to protect the church from sin, and to convey to the offender the importance of purity. Corinth needed a round of cleaning like this to get it into proper order, and Paul was going to see to it.

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