Text: 2 Corinthians 13:7-14
Title: Final Remarks and Purpose of 2 Corinthians
Truth: Paul wrote to sanctify the church members and see them built up in the faith, not to harm them.
Date/Location: 9/20/2026 at FBC (revised from 12/17/2006)

Introduction

The ending of 2 Corinthians contains a prayer, the purpose of Paul's writing, a parting exhortation, and a benediction.

I. Two-Fold Prayer, vv. 7-9

Notice that two times (v. 7, 9) the verb "pray" is used, which nicely indicates two specific prayer requests for the Corinthians.

A. That the Corinthians would not do any evil, vv. 7-9a

A. This is a wide-ranging and general request. Paul prays for them to avoid the evils that have plagued the church over the short time of its existence, most recently brought to our memories at 12:20-21.

B. Paul then gives a "non-reason" for this prayer request. He is not selfishly praying that they would behave in order that people would look at the Corinthians and think "those Corinthians are really behaving—that Paul is a pretty good apostle after all." It is like this: why do you want your kids to behave in public—so people think you are a good parent? Or so that Christ will be magnified through your home?

C. Paul is humble. He is not looking out for *his* reputation, but for their honorable conduct. They matter to him more than he matters to himself. Their godliness is what is important.

D. Rather, the positive reason given here is that Paul wants them to avoid wrongdoing as a matter of principle. This is always the real reason for doing good—not for external show, but because it is right.

E. In fact, Paul makes a concession. He doesn't care if the Corinthians do well that he may seem to "fail the test." He may not have to exercise his apostolic authority, boldness, etc. (which the Corinthians were demanding) in such a case. If they just do the

right thing, Paul will continue to look weak, and that is fine with him because they would be doing the right thing.

F. Again, to your children for an example. If they do well, you do not need any credit for it at all. No one needs to see you even in the background.

G. That is to say, this is not about Paul. It is about doing the right thing. He is concerned about promoting the truth of the gospel. He does not want to do anything against the truth, even if it means his personal reputation is not honored by others.

H. Paul is happy when he is considered "weak" and the Corinthians are "strong." That means that they are mature and doing the right thing. He may still seem to be a terrible public speaker, a wimpy guy, someone who is not really invested with the apostolic gift and all that. He would rather seem that way and have the church do well, than to seem like some great apostle and have the church do poorly.

B. That the Corinthians would be made complete, v. 9b

A. The second prayer request is that the believers would be made complete. *Complete* has to do with perfecting or becoming mature. Some translations use the word *restoration* which suggests that Paul is aiming for them to be *restored* to godliness. It is related to the idea of bringing into a suitable state, to be outfitted or prepared. Paul is praying for them to be mature, for their character to be perfected and their lives to be *mended* into a proper state of holy thought and conduct. Immaturity is not a state Christians should stay in very long.

B. While every Christian is "complete in Christ" (Col. 2:10), there is room for completion (Phil. 3:12, Col. 4:12). Sounds like a contradiction? To be complete in Christ refers to our perfect standing in Him. We are justified, declared right in God's sight because of Christ. That does not mean we are as mature as we ought to be. So, the Bible uses "complete" in two different senses—the Col. 2:10 sense of our perfect standing, and the Col. 4:12 sense of our need for continued growth toward holiness. If there seems to be a tension in your mind between these two

things, note that the second derives from the first. Without a proper standing in Christ, there is no basis or reason to pursue holiness. But that is what we are commanded to do. Paul prays that the believers would become complete.

C. This means that the Christian life is not a static one—"I got saved and that's it." Rather, it is "I got saved and God is continuing to do a good work in me all the time, and I am cooperating with Him." Christianity is dynamic, exciting, moving, not lazy or boring!

II. Purpose for Writing, v. 10

A. Paul prays for their good Christian behavior and maturity. To that end, he has written some things in the letter as means for them to attain holiness once again.

B. The reason that he wrote the way he did is so he will *not* have to come and discipline them sharply. He would rather have them learn the needful things "remotely" by learning from his letter rather than having to get bonked on the head by a disciplinary action.

C. If the latter is necessary, Paul has made clear that he will do it. After all, his authority and gifts are for the edification of the church, not for its destruction. He will use those abilities for the sake of the truth, not against it.

D. A quick word about authority. It is not just given to be given or to give you power. It is given to be exercised for positive purposes. Authority for authority's sake is corrupt and corrupting. Rather, the Lord gives authority for edification. So, if you wonder why there are fathers and husbands and pastors and all that kind of structure, Paul gives you a good clue here—for building up.

E. Christians can get themselves into remarkably difficult situations. They make choices and only later realize that those choices were very poor. We fairly frequently need restoring.

III. Final Farewell and Exhortation, vv. 11-13

Paul concludes his letter with five verbs of spiritual activity and one result.

A. **Rejoice**. In 2 Cor. 13:9, Paul said he was glad when the Corinthians were spiritually strong, even if it made Paul look weak. Then in verse 11, Paul uses the same verb in a command form to the entire church. He is saying "Rejoice!" He uses the same rejoice verb in Philippians 3:1. I am unclear to me why the KJV and NKJV translators translated this word as "farewell." The modern English translations are uniform in translating this as "Rejoice." I think the connection with verse 9. Paul is glad if they walk with the Lord. They ought to be glad too. Dump all the drama and criticism of Paul, and especially the sin in their midst. Instead, rejoice.

   If you are living in sin, true rejoicing is not possible.

B. **Become Complete**, v. 11. This is similar to the phrase in 13:9 about being made complete. It means to "put things in order" or "mend your ways," to be restored. In other words, that they should make sure they pass the "in the faith" test of 13:5 and be restored as a gospel church. Note that Paul prayed in v. 9 for them to be made complete, and he asks them to strive for that here. As in all of life, there is something to pray about, and something to get active about. This is not contradictory in the least—it simply reflects that God expects us to have an active role in our sanctification.

C. **Be of Good Comfort**, v. 11. This means to "be encouraged" or "cheered up." Not *everything* is falling to pieces in their church. They can be comforted instead of being in upheaval. Some translations treat this as "to encourage" because the verb can mean that as well.

D. **Be of One Mind**, v. 11. "Be thinking the same thing" is the idea here, instead of being disunified. How to implement this? We do not lose our unique thinking and abilities, but we do have a basic unity that arises out of our understanding of Christian truth. Remember: doctrine unites! If everyone has a different idea about basic truths of the gospel, no wonder we cannot get on the same page.

E. **Live in Peace**, v. 11. The Bible enjoins a harmonious coexistence of believers, not division and discord. If we are of one mind and becoming more and more mature in our faith, then this will come

more easily, even if there are personalities that we are not "in tune with." We must be diligent about keeping the peace.

F. After the exhortations comes an assuring promise that God will be with the believers. He is the God of love and peace and can bring love and peace to them.

Those who are evil, however, do not have God's promise of peace and harmony (Isa. 48:22, 57:21).

F. Greet One Another, v. 12-13

A. The kiss was a common greeting in Paul's day. Here we see that it has been invested with Christian significance. Kisses of this sort were to be "holy," so any intimate or sexual overtones would be absent. This is a cultural greeting which would be approximated by a hearty handshake today, or a hug. We know culturally when a kiss would be appropriate.

B. One point to draw from this is that the greeting was to be a genuine expression of Christian love and fellowship in Christ, not a hypocritical greeting. If you are not genuine with someone, then you might apply this exhortation in one of two ways: a) don't greet at all; or b) get the right attitude and go ahead and greet folks. The latter is obviously the right answer. The former is simply selfish and exhibits a hard-hearted unwillingness to change.

C. Paul notes that all the saints send their warm greetings to the Corinthians. This genuine love extends beyond the Corinthian assembly to other ones as well.

IV. Trinitarian Benediction, v. 14

A benediction is a blessing or invocation of God's blessing or protection. In secular parlance, it would be defined as "an expression of good wishes." This benediction is unique because it has three elements, each reflecting a person of the Trinity. Like Matthew 28:19 which mentions all three members of the Godhead, this verse shows that God exists in three persons. Each is equally worthy of a prayer request for a blessing. Paul often ends his letters with this sort of closing. In general, it has to do with the spiritual well-being of his readers.

A. **Grace from the Lord Jesus Christ**. Specifically, Paul desires and trusts that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ—his unmerited, unsought favor, will remain with the Corinthians. As Spurgeon's book title says, our lives are truly "All of Grace" from beginning to end.

B. **Love from God**. The "love of God" is the love that comes from God. Again, Paul desires and trusts that God's perfect love will embrace the Corinthians. God does love—the world, sinners, you, and me. He cares for us deeply. Thank Him for that!

C. **Fellowship Produced by the Holy Spirit**. This is not the fellowship we work up, but that which the Spirit produces. The Corinthians needed this, their church having had serious sins and factions in it. Come to think of it, we all need this—continued fellowship with God and with our fellow believers. We must be cautious to maintain it (Eph. 4:3).

Conclusion

If I were to paraphrase Paul's prayer for you, it would go like this: "Dear Fellowship Bible Church, I pray to God that you would do not do any wrong, not that I want to look good as your pastor, but that you would be doing the honorable thing, even if that means I don't appear to be a great shepherd. I want to do things *for* God's truth, not against it. I'm glad when people might mistake me for a very simple shepherd, as long as they see you as a strong and vibrant body of believers.

"I'm also praying that you may grow toward maturity in your faith. In fact, I'm telling you all this to help you along in your faith, because I don't want to have to use pastoral authority for the unpleasant tasks of the ministry such as rebuke and discipline, even though those are for edification too."

"I want you to rejoice. Be mature. Take comfort, be of a unified mind, and live peacefully together. I trust the God of peace will be near to you. Greet one another genuinely. May the grace from the Lord, and love from God, and fellowship created by the Spirit be your portion. Amen."

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