

2nd Corinthians 13:1-5

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. "Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses." 2 I warned those who sinned previously 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 be lenient 3 since you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. 4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. 5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test!

The crisis at Corinth was a serious problem. They quarreled over several issues but the main problem was that the leadership of the Apostle Paul was challenged by self-proclaimed apostles that denied the apostleship of Paul. However, we know that Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles that was personally sent by Jesus. The Apostle Paul put his own life on the line for the sake of the gospel. This is evidence that he was authentic while his opponents did not suffer as Paul did. So, the sacrifices that he made show that he was a true minister of God. Paul was a trailblazer. He did not travel for pleasure; he traveled to establish communities that were devoted to Jesus Christ. His results were highly impressive, the amount of territory that he covered, and his endurance in the face of hardship. God empowered him and God empowered the growth of the faith.

The instruction from the Scripture is to examine yourselves to see if you are indeed living by the faith. It is not about examining or judging others. Perhaps the biggest challenge to faith has always been about the individual getting right with God as opposed to assuming your own righteousness. Once you assume that you are right with God, then you take a stance of pride and no longer live a life of humility. People stop seeking when they think that they are already righteous.

There is parallelism between the problems that Paul faced and the problems that Jesus faced. It is the consequences of self-righteousness. Their position was more about their selves than it was about God. They want to control, judge, and condemn others and as a consequence they ended up rejecting God's servant. Christ was crucified in weakness. His body weakened and died on the cross. He shared weakness with humanity where everybody withers and dies. Paul was in union with Christ. His life was shaped by the power of God. He also shared in the weakness of humanity by dealing with the opposition in Corinth but he lived by the power of God. Paul's position was that he was buried with Christ in baptism and raised with Christ for a whole new life. He was raised from the death of sin to live by the power of God.

Apostle Paul insists that you examine yourselves because of the hypocrisy of his opponents. They were not living by faith but by selfish ambition. Being self righteous they were hostile instead of living by the teachings of Christ. They did not have the love of Christ. The Christian church must live by the rule of love. Jesus was very specific "Why call me Lord and not do as I say" (Luke 6:46). Do not judge the other person. It is your own position that is in danger. Following Christ means following completely, not only by the rule of the law but also by the rule of love.

The word *dissonance* refers to when musical notes clash. Some musicians have a pitch perfect ear that can instantly pick up on any dissonance. I was watching a musician that would make subtle tuning adjustments in between songs. I could never tell a difference but she could hear the slightest dissonance of pitch. She could fine tune a guitar by ear. I could never do that. The performer that has perfect pitch hears and instantly knows that the sound is or is not correct. I have to rely on a tuner to keep me in the correct pitch. A form of dissonance occurs in our daily lives when we get ever so slightly off track. The Bible is our guide and we need it daily to prevent any dissonance in the life that we live. We might think that we are living in harmony with God when actually there is this slight dissonance that can gradually pull us off track. So, it is very important to have the daily tuning of Bible study because the American society is full of selfish ambition that is masquerading as righteous.

We need to examine ourselves on a regular basis so that we can live in harmony with God and with one another as best as possible. The more knowledge you have, the more you seek. The more love of Christ that is in your hearts, the more compelled you are to seek his word, presence, love, and to commune with him. When Christ dwells in your heart you are full of gratitude and love, and you desire to live in union with him and the Holy Spirit. The self-test is an occasion for repentance. The main thing that God looks for in all of us is repentance. It is the change in one's hearts and ways that is an opportunity for improvement and growth. Our Sunday morning worship is prime time to examine yourself but anytime is good. It is not just a matter of living by commandments and worshiping God, believers have the responsibility to care about one another and care for one another as Jesus did.