

**The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe**  
**Week #29 – Adult Bible Study**  
**Study Notes**

**2 Corinthians 12:14 – 13:13**

**May 6 & 7**

1. 2 Corinthians 13 is a closing section of the letter where Paul emphasizes the need for self-examination within the Corinthian church and warns against those who are not truly believers.
2. Paul encourages the Corinthians to test themselves to see if they are "in the faith" and to mend their ways, emphasizing the importance of unity and peace within the community.
3. Paul encourages the church to mend their ways, agree with one another, and live in peace. The foundation of Paul's argument is Deuteronomy 19:15 "*By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established*"
4. Paul intends for his three visits to be understood as the equivalent of three witnesses.
5. Paul has in mind the two types of sin or fractures referred to in 12:20-21.
6. Some of those who were fracturing the community, particularly by being contentious, may even have been on Paul's side in what was going on. But if they struggle for Paul in a contentious manner, they are equally deserving of rebuke with those who oppose him
7. Paul uses the basic structure of their faith as the foundation of his argument; the fundamental Christological paradox of the weakness of the cross and the power of resurrection. The cross may look weak, but it possesses all the strength of God (1 Cor. 1:25)
8. The Corinthians may have thought him a spineless leader, but he was, in fact, displaying the weakness of Christ. If character is needed, all the strength of Jesus' character is in him. If he needs to speak, he believes, Christ will speak in him. Paul contends that he has the mind of Christ for Christ lives in him.
9. Paul must deal with the sexual immorality and contentiousness within the community for the sake both of the stumbling individuals and the good of the whole community. So, Paul must show strength, though if only he himself were involved, he would not take an action.

10. Paul's show of strength is not just about his opinions or ideals; it is for the sake of the building and sustaining of the community.
11. If the Corinthians are to examine themselves, along what lines should they do so? They should ask themselves if they are holding the faith (v. 5).
12. This doesn't mean they should
- examine their intellectual beliefs
  - or their power to move mountains and speak in tongues
  - or their ability to stand firm under persecution.
13. For Paul faith is primarily an attitude of trust and obedience towards God through Christ.
14. Because we live in a much more individualistic society than Paul, we tend to look on the question "Is Christ in you?" as summoning *each Christian* to an individual examination. Paul, however, is reminding *the church* in Corinth that as the body of Christ it is the temple of the Spirit and that Christ dwells in it.
15. Paul is more concerned about the possible failure of the Corinthians than his own. He prays for their reformation (7.9)
16. Paul longs to hear of their godly grief and because he has their true interests at heart, and for his own, because his work will not have failed
17. Paul believes that if the present appeal by letter is not effective, he will have to use his authority in a way he does not wish to use it; to discipline. Using his authority to discipline in Paul's eyes is destructive and represents failure.
18. Difficulties of various kinds concerning ethical behavior, worship, and belief had been present in Corinth from as early as 1 Corinthians. It is only in 2 Corinthians, however, that people appear opposed to both Paul and his views.
19. Scholars have great difficulty in identifying with any precision those who opposed Paul.

- They have been taken to be Judaizers who wished to fasten the Jewish law on the new converts,
- Enthusiasts who desired a wholly spiritual and charismatic faith,
- Divine men who believed salvation came through knowledge rather than faith.

We can at least say that Paul's opponents were Jewish Christians of some kind

20. Paul regularly concludes his letter with greetings from those who are with him when he writes.

21. "All saints," does not then mean that Paul sends the greetings of all Christians everywhere but only of those from where he is writing.

22. All Paul's letters close with some form of blessing. The blessing at the close of this letter is the most elaborate of Paul's writings.

## **REFLECTIONS**

1. Why do you think 2 Corinthians was included in the Bible?
2. Share what you believe to be three of the most important takeaways from this letter that would apply/benefit the church today.
3. How does Paul's teachings in 2 Corinthians better equip you as a Christian?
4. Paul mentions that the way we respond to contention is a source of judgment in the same way the protagonists are to be judged. Talk about the fairness of this idea and share your wins and/or struggles with dealing with contentious people and situations.

**Notes by The Rev. Janice Y. Cook, Interim Associate Pastor, The Village Church RSF**

## **RESOURCES**

1. Second Corinthians, Interpretation, Ernest Best
2. Second Letter to the Corinthians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Roy E. Ciampa and Brian Rosner
3. The Message of 2 Corinthians, The Bible Speaks Today Series, Paul Barnett
4. Feasting on the Word, David Bartlett, Barbara Brown Taylor Editors
5. C.S. Lewis, Paul and the Theology of Suffering
6. Second Corinthians, New Interpreter's Study