

Lesson Thirteen

(12:19 — 13:14)

SECTION XX 12:19 — 13:10

19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. 20 For I fear that perhaps I may come and find you not what I wish, and that you may find me not what you wish; that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and have not repented of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced.

13 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 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 — 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 shall live with him by the power of God.

5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed. 7 But we pray God that you may not do wrong — not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. 8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement. 10 I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

V. 19 — Paul's efforts throughout this book might have been viewed at first glance as primarily a defense. In reality, he stated, the primary thrust had been to make them better Christians. In truth, if they accepted what he had written, that result would accrue (even as it does for us) just as he stated. Indeed the book is a defense of Paul's apostleship, but the higher aim and intended result was more perfect disciples, then and now. The fact is, he was innocent, they were guilty, and both parties knew it.

upbuilding — edification, as in 13:10. This time is seen throughout Paul's epistles, all of which were for this express purpose. Sometimes edification may take a negative tack in the sense of direction "away from" certain things (as in Romans 13:11-14; II Corinthians 6:14 — 7:1; Colossians 2:20 — 3:17) but often in a positive sense, as in the above texts, or as in Hebrews 10:18ff. Consider Acts 9:31; 20:32; Romans 15:2; I Corinthians 3:9; 8:1-10; 10:23-33; II Corinthians 10:8; Ephesians 4:12-16; I Thessalonians 5:11.

V. 20 — This verse and v. 21 zero in on the major difficulty in Corinth: the un-Christian attitudes and actions of its members. This makes the point all the more relevant in v. 19 about the purpose of his epistle: to give them both time and instructions needed to rectify what was lacking before he arrived, or they would see a "side" of Paul they wouldn't want to see.

It was for these reasons that Paul had planned a visit, 1:23, but had not come. Now he was ready again to come, and they were yet unprepared. The following list of things shows just how unprepared

STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS

they were.

quarreling — *ἔρις*, the party spirit, "I'm of Paul," etc. Check Romans 1:29; I Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:20; Philippians 1:15; Titus 3:9.

jealousy — *ζήλος*, in a bad sense, such as Acts 5:17; Romans 3:13; James 3:14, 16. It was fine to be zealous in a good cause, but they had crossed the line.

anger — *θυμός*, can be of God (Rom. 2:8; and other places in O.T. and N.T.) but most difficult for man to handle. Thus, as in Ephesians 4:31, it is to be put away, and replaced with kindness and long-suffering.

selfishness — *ἐριθειά*, the "selfish ambition" of men, condemned in Romans 2:8 and Galatians 5:20. Paul found people preaching Christ in this way, Philippians 1:17, but directed the Philippians to do nothing from such motives, 2:3.

slander — *καταλαλιά*, the one who speaks against another, attempting to ruin reputation and character. The Christian is not to be known for such things, James 4:11; because God gave up on some who had such traits, Romans 1:30. In fact, the Christian is to live in such a way that when others speak against him, I Peter 2:12; 3:16; the accuser will not be believed.

gossip — *ψιθυρισμός*, what every congregation suffers from, and the scourge of all communities! The gossip and tale-bearer is condemned, Romans 1:29, and truthful speech coupled with care for another's good name (Titus 2:8; Prov. 12:22; 13:5; 22:1) enjoined.

conceit — *φουσίωσις*, the windbag that needs no attention! The preacher or anyone who "puts on airs" is to be pitied (*his/her ego is out-of-hand*) and not imitated. The one who loves is not so, I Corinthians 13:4; because "puffedupness" is a greased slide that leads to pride and destruction. Consider I Corinthians 4:6, 18; 5:2; Colossians 2:18; I Peter 5:6.

disorder — *ἀκαταστασία*, the opposite of things of God, I Corinthians 14:33, 40, the one who brought a "cosmos" out of "chaos." This term described the person who was like the waves of the sea, James 1:6; and was an outgrowth of jealousy and selfish ambition, James 3:16. Indeed, such a characteristic is descriptive of a tumult, Luke 21:9, and one of the things Paul had had to endure, II Corinthians 6:5. Hardly what ought to be known of a Christian!

V. 21 — **humble** — In the sense that God would put "Paul the apostle" in their midst, and do through him what needed done (as had been done by letter on an earlier occasion, I Cor. 5).

not repented — The never-ceasing necessity in the Christian life: the "putting away" of the mind of the flesh and the "putting on" of the mind of Christ (i.e., the maintenance of the pilgrimage from the

mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ, as Eph. 4:11-13 shows).

Some had not had a transformation about such things as the above in v. 20, and the following threesome — no wonder Paul had trouble!

impurity — *ἀκαθαρσία*, a lack of cleanness, holiness in life. Demons were like this, Mark 1:23 and the things in the great sheet, Acts 10:14. Tombs were filled with such, Matthew 23:27; immoral people were like tombs, Ephesians 5:15, whose lives reflected this matter, Galatians 5:19. So, God gives up (Rom. 1:24) on people who continue this manner of living and fail to become "changed" in mind.

immorality — *πορνεία*, the bane of civilization: If any people should have known better than to be so, the very antithesis of godly living, it should have been the Corinthians. They had firsthand knowledge of the matter, I Cor. 6:9-11, in their own lives and/or city. No word is more removed from godliness than this one, since it describes lack of spirit-controlled living, stems from selfishness and results in never-ending trouble, mentally and physically.

licentiousness — *ἀσελγεία*, the loose-living playboy/playgirl syndrome. It indicates a bad mind, Mark 7:22, not like Christ but rather like those in Sodom whose lives vexed a righteous man, II Peter 2:7-8. False teachers and prophets promote such living, II Peter 2:1ff. Christians beware!

13:1 — **third time** — In conjunction with verse 2, we understood Paul had made two separate visits to them, and had planned a third visit (cf. ch. 1) but had not gone there. Now he is again planning to go. Thus it will be the third actual visit.

any charge — As in the Old Testament law (Deut. 19) God had stipulated laws of good jurisprudence, so also in the New Testament age. It is both protection for the accused and for the court. This may happen if repentance is not forthcoming, 12:21-22; or if the church doesn't do its needed house cleaning before he gets there, or both.

There is no compelling reason to suppose that a legal proceeding was to take place — just that things were to be established and handled properly. The matter of having two witnesses to establish a matter is seen in Matthew 18:16; 26:60; Romans 8:16; I Timothy 5:19; I John 5:6ff.

V. 2 — The ones who needed to straighten up their lives could not plead ignorance, since Paul had either instructed them personally or now by epistle as to their need of repentance.

V. 3 — **desire proof** — The reason for the "not sparing" of v. 2: their challenge of his authority and/or their un-Christian living.

V. 4 — This verse, coupled with verse 3b, presents the real problem in the thinking of those who were problems: their idea/concept of Jesus, and Paul who served Jesus as a divinely-appointed representative.

STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS

They had implicitly accused Paul of weakness. He concurred, but qualified just "how" he was weak. Then he pointed out that Christ was also "weak" in some respects. The fact remained, however, that God's power was manifested in Christ (i.e., his resurrection), despite the "weakening." Paul shared in the "weakness" but also in the power; and would exhibit the same when and if he needed to do so. Had they thought clearly at all, they would have been able to see that God's power had been abundantly displayed in Paul's life, and as such needed no further display.

V. 5 — **Examine** — The common Greek word for test/tempt, *πειράζω*. See it in Matthew 4:1; 16:1; John 6:6; I Corinthians 10:9, 13; Hebrews 2:18; 3:9; 11:17; James 1:13-15; I Peter 4:12; II Peter 2:9; Revelation 2:2; 3:10.

test — From the word meaning "to examine" or "to check," *δοκιμάζω*. See II Corinthians 8:2 and references there. It means to check by some standard and either approve or disapprove of the product being tested. Here, the standard had been laid down by Paul's authority as given by God, and they were to ascertain their status in that light. The prime "test" (same word again) would be their willingness to obey Christ's apostle: Paul. They were so willing to "test" Paul but should have been more eager to do a bit of self study.

These two words simply but lucidly spell out the idea that we are personally responsible for our relationship to Christ; that there is an objective standard by which we may compare ourselves; and that we are to do so.

V. 6 — **we have not failed** — Evidently this means: when you examine yourselves, you should find Christ in your life. If you do, then we (Paul) have not failed. If not, then we (and you) have failed.

V. 7 — Paul loved them enough that his desire is for them to "pass" even if it might appear to some that he had "failed." He was really willing "to spend and be spent" on their behalf (12:15) and to build up all in Corinth. Exercise of his authority in such a way as I Corinthians 5 or as implied in v. 2 was not what he wanted. So then, he will be glad if they will "shape up" and be found in Christ, quite apart from his own vindication.

V. 8 — No verse contains anything more important than this one. God is the ultimate truth, revealed in Jesus Christ (John 14:6), expressed by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Truth, John 16:13) through the revelation given by means of the apostles, etc. Hence, even Paul's authority as an apostle would be powerless against truth, whether in any particular case or generally. So it would be for any and all men: if life here does not bring this point to their attention, life hereafter will do so. The more one meditates on this verse with all its ramifications, the more it will be emblazoned on one's thinking, and in

life. It is a verse at once both exhilarating and sobering. In the case before us, they needed to "do the truth" (John 3:21) as well as give lip service to it, and the special point at issue was their acceptance of Paul's apostleship; God's representative, as that related to truth in the larger sense above.

This verse ought to cheer the heart of every Christian who sees truth so often rejected and replaced by evil. The same sentiments are true for all of us at times (witness the song, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day") and we wish for a reckoning. This verse says that God lives, and all is well. Now recall the book of Revelation and its message of God's triumph (him whose ways are just and true) over evil.

QUESTIONS:

101. What had been the primary purpose of Paul's writing? The secondary purpose?
102. What was Paul's fear?
103. Who had not had a mind-change?
104. Had some in Corinth neglected to see Christ's power?
105. Could Paul display both "weakness" and "power"?

SECTION XXI 13:11-14

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways, heed my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13 All the saints greet you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

V. 11 — **farewell** — The Greek term is commonly rendered "re-joice." It is, thus, sort of a general salutation.

mend your ways — Some translate "Pull yourselves together" or "be perfected." The term was in v. 9 ("improvement") and in such texts as Matthew 4:21; 21:16; Mark 1:19; Luke 6:40; Romans 9:22; I Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:12; I Thessalonians 3:10; Hebrews 10:5; 11:3; 13:21; I Peter 5:10. It has the general idea of finish or complete.

heed my appeal — This translates just one Greek term, which was seen in ch. 1:4ff., 7:13; and has a wide variety of meanings (which are reflected in different versions), often with the idea of "exhortation"

STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS

or "beseeching" or "comfort."

agree with one another — An appeal to think alike, together. See this concept in Philippians 2:1ff.; 4:2; Romans 12:16, 18; 15:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Peter 3:8.

live in peace — Be reconciled, not only with me and each other, but also with God. The idea is that of having correct relationships, not tumult and strife.

If the above exhortations are obeyed, then the result will be that the God of peace would be with them, not against them.

V. 12 — **Greet one another** — The idea of "greet" or "salute" often appears in the salutations (16 times in Romans 16). The common custom (which I think is not binding upon us today) was kissing, regardless of sex. It seems to me that any cultural equivalent will do, though there are problems with such an interpretation, and some therefore practice otherwise.

V. 13 — Some versions combine 12 and 13.

V. 14 — Note here the distinctness of the three personalities enumerated, and the particular idea mentioned in regard to each "person." In other scriptures, of course, differing qualities are attributed to each, as the grace of God, power of Christ, Spirit of truth, etc. We may not understand the exact relationships of each personality mentioned, but we need not, on that account, refuse to accept the idea of three distinct beings, each with the quality of deity.

QUESTIONS:

106. Do Christians have an objective standard by which they may judge themselves?
107. What do you see in v. 8 in regard to your life? The lives of others?
108. What did Paul expect the Corinthians to do?
109. What three personalities are mentioned in v. 14, and how are each characterized?

WORD STUDY — *ἀσθενεία*, WEAKNESS, etc.

The word *ἀσθενεία* and its derivatives occur some 83 times in the New Testament. Because of its importance in such texts as Romans 14, the following is presented. Many of its occurrences are in reference to physical sickness, of whatever nature (perhaps even caused by demon possession). All those that are of this nature are listed under the representative verse, John 5:3. All others not so clear are listed

separately, and the reader can decide just what is meant in each case, or how broad the term is. It seems to be clear that it represents a deficiency of some sort, and often is placed in a comparative sense to some other concept, such as healthy, well, sinless, strong, etc. The word is in small capitals in each citation.

John 5:3 — In these lay a multitude of *INVALIDS*, blind, lame, paralyzed. Matthew 10:8; 25:36; 36; 43; 44; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; 5:15; 8:2; 9:2; 10:9; 13:11, 12; John 4:46; 5:3, 5, 7, 13; 6:2; 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 6; Acts 4:9; 5:15, 16; 9:37; 19:12; 28:9; Philippians 2:26, 27; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20.

The remaining texts are given to allow consideration of the word in its context. The reader may decide, then, how it is used, and what connotation it may have.

Matthew

8:17: "He took our *INFIRMITIES* and bore our diseases."

26:41: ". . . the spirit is willing, but the flesh is *WEAK*."

Mark

14:38: ". . . the spirit is willing, but the flesh is *WEAK*."

Acts

20:35: ". . . by so toiling one must help the *WEAK*, . . ."

Romans:

4:19: He did not *WEAKEN* in faith when he considered his own . . .

5:6 : While we were yet *HELPLESS*, . . . Christ died for . . .

6:19: . . . , because of your natural *LIMITATIONS*.

8:3 : For God has done what the law, *WEAKENED* by the flesh, . . .

8:26: Likewise the Spirit helps us in our *WEAKNESS*; . . .

14:1 : As for the man who is *WEAK* in faith, . . .

14:2 : . . . , while the *WEAK* man eats only vegetables.

14:21: . . . or is made *WEAK* (Textual variation).

15:1 : . . . bear with the *FAILINGS* of the weak, . . .

I Corinthians

1:25: . . . , and the *WEAKNESS* of God is stronger than men.

1:27: God chose what is *WEAK* in the world to shame the strong.

2:3 : And I was with you in *WEAKNESS* and in much fear . . .

4:10: We are *WEAK*, but you are strong.

8:7 : . . . , and their conscience, being *WEAK*, is defiled.

8:9 : . . . become a stumbling block to the *WEAK*.

8:10: . . . , if his conscience is *WEAK*, . . .

STUDIES IN SECOND CORINTHIANS

- 8:11: And so by your knowledge, this WEAK man is destroyed . . .
8:12: . . . wounding their conscience when it is WEAK, . . .
9:22: To the WEAK I became WEAK, that I might win the WEAK.
11:30: That is why many of you are WEAK and ill, . . .
12:22: . . . which seem to be WEAKER are indispensable, . . .
15:43: It is sown in WEAKNESS, it is raised in power.

II Corinthians

- 10:10: . . . , but his bodily presence is WEAK, . . .
11:21: I must say, we are too WEAK for that!
11:29: Who is WEAK, and I am not WEAK?
11:30: . . . boast of the things that show my WEAKNESS.
12:5 : . . . I will not boast, except of my WEAKNESSES.
12:9 : . . . for my power is made perfect in WEAKNESS."
12:10: . . . content with WEAKNESSES, . . . I am WEAK, . . .
13:3 : He is not WEAK in dealing with you, . . .
13:4 : . . . crucified in WEAKNESS For we are WEAK . . .
13:9 : For we are glad when we are WEAK and you are strong.

Galatians

- 4:9 : . . . again to the WEAK and beggarly elemental . . .
4:13: . . . because of a bodily AILMENT that I preached . . .

I Thessalonians

- 5:14: . . . , help the WEAK, be patient with them all.

Hebrews

- 4:15: . . . sympathize with our WEAKNESSES, . . .
5:2 : . . . , since he himself is beset with WEAKNESS.
7:18: . . . because of its WEAKNESSES and uselessness.
7:28: . . . appoints men in their WEAKNESS as high priests . . .
11:34: . . . won strength out of WEAKNESS, . . .

James

- 5:14: Is any among you SICK?

I Peter

- 3:7 : . . . honor on the woman as the WEAKER sex, . . .