

PRODIGAL

CHURCH II

A SERIES IN 2 CORINTHIANS



PRODIGAL CHURCH (SEASON 2) – Severe Mercy

Sermon Study Guide 2 Corinthians 13— Week of January 30, 2022

Lesson: Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. If you are, rejoice, aim for restoration, comfort one another, live in peace.

2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Commentary: Paul is coming to visit with the intention of putting the church in order. If there are any charges of unrepentant sin, the charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

“Evidence” = στόμα: literally means “mouth”. If Paul is going to bring God’s judgment into the church, it must follow God’s rules of order. Any charges against anyone in the church must be come from the mouths of at least 2 or 3 witnesses.

“Charge” = ῥῆμα: literally means “word.” If you have a word against someone, don’t speak about them behind their back (that’s the sin of gossip), go and tell them to their face. If they don’t repent, then you involve the 2 or 3 witnesses.

Cross references:

- Matthew 18:15-20 ¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”
- 2 Corinthians 12:14 Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.
- Deuteronomy 19:15 “A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.
- Numbers 35:30 “If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

BIG IDEA

Paul is concluding his letter with warnings and exhortations, prior to coming for a visit. If the Corinthian Christians heed his words, it’ll be a pleasant visit with joy and delightful fellowship. If they don’t, he is coming with harsh authority in the power of God. This is a reminder that God demands we lead holy lives. So, when Jesus returns, we’re ready to meet Him.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Baptism Seminar
Sunday, January 30, 1 PM
For more info and to signup,
brookline.mosaicboston.com/baptism

Members’ Meeting
Sunday, February 20, 1 PM
If you are a covenant member of Mosaic or being voted into membership, join us for our first quarterly meeting of 2022.

2 Corinthians 13:2 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—

Commentary: Paul has warned time and again, that there are ecclesiastical consequences for unrepentant sin (consequences in the church). If a Christian is living in unrepentant sin, it is the duty of the leadership and church membership to call the Christian to repent and leave the sin.

“I will not spare them” = the word for spare is φείδομαι, it’s used in the following texts:

Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock

Lesson: If churches “spare” unrepentant sinners, they open themselves up to not being spared by Satan, and his false teachers.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Lesson: God did not spare His Son to save us from our sins, not to give us a free pass to sin more. Therefore, church discipline is crucial for the purity and witness of the church, and for the power of God to pour out on the church.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment

Lesson: It’s better to not be spared from church discipline than to not be spared from hell.

Cross references:

- 2 Corinthians 10:2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.
- 2 Corinthians 12:21 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 earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.
- 1 Corinthians 4:21 What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

2 Corinthians 13:3 since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.

Commentary: Paul is preempting the criticism: “How do we know Christ is speaking through you, Paul? Who are you to judge us? Who are you to judge our church?” Paul’s response: don’t worry, Christ will let you know, with power.

δυνατέω = powerful, the ability to execute your will

Used in:

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Cross references:

- Matthew 10:20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.
- 1 Corinthians 5:4 When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,
- 2 Corinthians 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

2 Corinthians 13:4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

Power here is slightly different here than verse 3. Here it is not δυνατέω (verb) but δύναμις (noun). The power in question is the power of God.

It's the word used in:

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 3:12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?”

Pastor Jan's life verse:

Matthew 22:29 But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God

Commentary: To the untrained eye, Paul's ministry had a kind of “weakness,” just like Christ's—compassion, loving patience, bearing of reproach for sake of others, sacrifice of his wealth and health for others. But this weakness came with power, the same power by which Christ was crucified. This is power provided by the Holy Spirit. Only by the power of God's Spirit can those who were dead in sins be regenerated (resurrected) to new life. Paul is ready to exercise this power/authority to judge the unrepentant sinners in the church.

Lesson: Do not worship a Christ who is still crucified. Jesus is not on the cross. Jesus lives by the power of God. We are weak in him, which allows us to live with him by the power of God. Christian, do you live by the power of God?

Cross references:

- Philippians 2:7-8 ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
 - 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,
 - Romans 1:4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,
 - Romans 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
 - Romans 6:8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.
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2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

Examine = περιάζω = put to the test, tempt, used often in the context of temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 2:18, 4:15)

Lesson: Often a temptation from Satan is a test from God.

Commentary: The “super-apostles” had been demanding proof that Christ is really speaking and working through Paul. Here, Paul turns the tables, and calls these same teachers and the members of the church to examine/test themselves. If they pass the test, then this is verifiable proof of Paul's authority. What hangs in the balance? Eternity in heaven or hell. Take this seriously, and you realize nothing is more important than to be at peace with God through Christ.

Lesson: Are you a Christian? If so, you should be able to confidently say: "Christ is in me." How can you tell if Christ is in you? Do you trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins and peace with God?

"unless indeed you fail to meet the test" = too nice of a translation; the word here is ἀδόκιμος = disqualified, worthless, not fitting, debased

Used here:

2 Timothy 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.

Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Hebrews 6:8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

Romans 1:28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

If Christ is in you, then you should be able to point to spiritual fruit produced by God through you. Have I overcome the world as Christ says true believers will? Follow the data of your life.

Examine yourself. Examine yourself and your faith to see if it's genuine, prior to examining anyone else. Once you have developed spiritual discernment with yourself, now you can help others with their examination of their faith. Now the church is in a place where they can examine false teachers:

Revelation 2:2 "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

Cross references:

- Psalm 26:1-3
1 Vindicate me, O Lord,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.
2 Prove me, O Lord, and try me;
test my heart and my mind.
3 For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in your faithfulness.
- 1 Corinthians 11:28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
- Galatians 6:4 But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.
- Romans 8:10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Galatians 4:19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!
- Matthew 7:15-23 ¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will

say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

2 Corinthians 13:6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.

Commentary: Examine yourself before you examine another Christian (speck, log). Paul's been examining and disciplining himself for a long time, doing everything that he could to make sure he would do nothing to disqualify himself from the Christian race.

Cross reference:

- 1 Corinthians 9:27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.
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2 Corinthians 13:7 But we pray to 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.

Commentary: If the unrepentant sinners in the church repent and turn from their sin, Paul won't have to come with severe authority. "Though we may seem to have failed"—he may seem to have failed to prove his authority, but that's because he would rather come to them with weakness/gentleness than authority/power.

Lesson: Spirit filled spiritual leaders care more about what's best for the people under their care, than how those people esteem them.

2 Corinthians 13:8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

Commentary: In other words: "For we cannot do anything to oppose the truth but only to support the truth." These are tremendous words to live by, in the church and in the world. Paul is talking about truthfulness in the church, both in speech and conduct. When Christians are living in sin, they are not living for the truth, but against the truth. Whether wielding the rod or acting in gentleness, Paul is coming to reestablish the truth.

Lesson: Do you do anything against the truth? Is there anything you do that doesn't support the truth?

Cross reference:

- 1 Corinthians 4:18-21¹⁸ Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. ²¹ What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?
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2 Corinthians 13:9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for.

Commentary: The goal of church discipline is the restoration of the repentant sinner. When this is the goal of spiritual authority, it's not overbearing or domineering, but loving and compassionate.

Restoration = κατάρτισις = the process of perfecting, maturing, to make someone completely adequate or sufficient for something; to cause to be fully qualified

Used in:

2 Timothy 3:17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Lesson: Spiritual strength increases the closer we walk to the Lord. You get closer to the Lord by repenting of and leaving sin and pursuing righteousness.

Cross references:

- 1 Corinthians 4:10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.
- 2 Corinthians 4:12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.
- 2 Corinthians 12:5 On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—
- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- Ephesians 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
- 1 Thessalonians 3:10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?
- 2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

2 Corinthians 13:10 For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

Commentary: Paul doesn't want to use his authority “severely” = ἀπτόμως = harshly, rigorously, relentlessly.

Used in:

Titus 1:13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith

Although reluctant, Paul is more than willing to do so if gentleness doesn't work. Sometimes we need gentle authority. Sometimes we need severe authority. Both can be loving, depending on the heart and circumstances. The goal of all spiritual authority is to build up (edify), not tear down. To build someone up means to assist them with the construction/completion of their life.

Lesson: We all need to be under spiritual authority that seeks to build us up, and is willing to use severity to do so when needed (albeit this is the exception, not the rule).

Cross references:

- 2 Corinthians 2:3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all.
- Titus 1:13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith
- 2 Corinthians 10:8 For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed.

2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Commentary: Paul finishes the letter with a final charge consisting of 5 imperatives, and a promise.

Cross references:

- Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.
- Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.
- Mark 9:50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

- Romans 15:33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.
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2 Corinthians 13:12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Commentary: Christians need to develop such a level of camaraderie and agape love (commitment to another's highest welfare) in the church, that you do show physical affection when you greet each other.

Cross reference:

- Romans 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.
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2 Corinthians 13:13 All the saints greet you.

Cross references:

- Philippians 4:22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.
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2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Commentary: If you've got this, you have everything.

Cross references:

- Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
 - Jude 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.
 - Philippians 2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,
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Read 2 Corinthians 13.

1. What stuck you to you in a fresh way in the sermon or the text?
2. What is "severe mercy"? How does Jesus' death on the cross exhibit God's severe mercy?
3. **See verses 1 and 2 and 1 Corinthians 4:18-21.** Paul has warned time and again that there are ecclesiastical consequences (consequences in the church) for unrepentant sin. If a Christian is living in unrepentant sin, it is the duty of the leadership and church membership to call the Christian to repent and leave the sin. What is at risk if churches "spare" unrepentant sinners?
4. When we are entrusted with authority by God, how often shall we use the "severe" side of our authority in comparison to how often we use the "gentle" side?
5. Why is it important to include a "severe" side to our authority? Can you think of a leader in your life who utilized the "severe" side of authority well?
6. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. How does unrepentant sin practiced by members of a Christian church impact the power of the church?
7. **Read 2 Corinthians 13:5.** Have you examined yourself lately? Can you say with confidence that "Christ is in me?" Why?
8. How does examining yourself regularly affect your ability to examine other Christians and lead them?
9. **See 1 Corinthians 11:27-32.** Why is it important to examine yourself in preparation for Holy Communion?