

2 Corinthians 13, 1-4, 8-14, “Powerful Warning to the Disobedient”

11.14.21



Take a look at this image from the Star Wars movie: “The Empire Strikes Back.” Does anyone know the line in the movie that is being spoken at that moment? Be careful? I got it wrong. I thought Darth Vader said to Luke Skywalker, “Luke, I am your father.” He didn’t say that. He just said, “I am your Father.” I learned that this week. Nonetheless it was a shocker! No one could have guessed that! Vader protected his son. That’s what father’s do...

And that’s how Paul felt about the people in Corinth. Over and over, we’ve seen through our study of this second letter that he said, “I feel like your father.” And as father (as we learned last week), he just wants the Corinthians to grow spiritually. He wants them to be strong! And to prove this point, I want to take you to the last three verses of the letter. Because it’s in these last three verses we see Paul’s aim for writing the letter in the first place. Watch verse 11.

2 Corinthians 13:11-14

¹¹ Finally, brothers,^[a] rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^[b] 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.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to get along...to be family... Like a father, he cares...AND he’s coming back to check on them. For the third time. In my neck of the woods...three strikes and your out. Truth is...Paul’s patience has grown thin. (That ever happen to you mom and dad?) Paul (like a father) is going to have to address the ongoing problems in Corinth and he’s going to be in Corinth in a matter of weeks...so this letter is a head’s up. Daddy’s coming home...better straighten up. Because you see, when Paul gets there, if he finds sin that continues to be practiced by the members of the church, he’s going to call it out and address it.

The Title of this morning’s message is: **“A Powerful Warning to the Disobedient.”** See verse 1.

2 Corinthians 13:1-4

¹ This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established 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—³since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you,

but is powerful among you. 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.

Jump down to verse 8.

2 Corinthians 13:8-10

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. Your restoration is what we pray for. 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.

Paul said (in verse 10), “use of my authority.” What authority did he have? Well, it’s a fancy term, but he had “Apostolic authority.” He had the authority of an Apostle...a hand-picked man to lead the work of Jesus. Paul was chosen by Jesus on the Road to Damascus...appointed by Jesus to take the Good News that Jesus saves to the Gentiles. And Paul did just that.

Now as you know, it is now around 56 AD, and Paul has been establishing churches and appointing elders for about 12 years. He had established this church in Corinth about six years earlier and unfortunately, as time has gone along, they’ve devolved into a mess. Many are living in overt sin and they’ve allowed false teachers to come in teaching false doctrine and these teachers have been doing all they can do to discredit Paul and get the Corinthians to believe that Paul is shyster! Therefore, Paul has spent this entire letter seeking to set the record straight before he comes again for the third time... Now watch verse 1.

2 Corinthians 13:1

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

What does that mean? It means Paul is going to bring in those who are continuing practice sin...based on the evidence of 2-3 witnesses, with the desire for restoration and healing. Paul is very clear...when I get there, I’m going to have to address the sin. I don’t have a choice. Remember the sins from last week...

2 Corinthians 12:20-21

²⁰ For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, 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 earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.

Many are still practicing a lifestyle of sin and he has to address this...just as a parent does with a disobedient child. And Paul will do this by establishing 2-3 witnesses against those in the church who are practicing sin. Church family, do you know what this is called? We don’t hear much about these days...but, this is called: “Church Discipline.” And it’s Biblical concept. It’s no different than what a parent does to an obstinate, disobedient child. There must be discipline to correct and bring back to righteousness.

Church, may I be bluntly honest this morning? The Church (big C, in America) has lost interest in holiness. It’s lost interest in purity. Churches have become content to be little more than clubs where members have minimal accountability to God, and even less to one another. We forget that one of the first events that happened in the first church, recorded in Acts chapter 5, was the death of a couple named, Ananias and Sapphira because they lied to the Apostles...and they fell over

dead. Why? God killed them to show the church that sin and unrighteousness will not be flaunted in the face of God and He will not be mocked with it.

Sadly, the world has crept more and more into the Church in America. And the **worldliness** of the Church is the reason for its lack of power today! So many churches today just entertain...they're not concerned with holiness...they're concerned with getting bottoms into seats...dollars in plates; and so we've become shallow...much of the music of our day has become shallow...and the preaching even shallower...and so congregations are anemic and dying. The Church is unholy. So, what do we do about it? Well, we have to be like Paul...we must bring accountability to the body for holiness.

And yet this is very hard in our culture. Why? Well, watch the screens...Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary, says this:

“Individuals now claim an enormous zone of personal privacy and moral autonomy. The congregation, redefined as a mere voluntary association, has no right to intrude into this space. Many congregations have forfeited any responsibility to confront even the most public sins of their members. Congregations are consumed with pragmatic methods of church growth and congregational engineering. And most churches just ignore the issue of sin.” Dr. Albert Mohler, President, Southern Seminary

Mohler is right...that's true today and it was certainly true in 56 A.D. in Corinth. So, Paul told the Corinthians he's coming back and he's going to have to address the sin. How will he do that? Again, by calling it out...but, only if there are 2 to 3 witnesses to corroborate the sin. This is not a witch hunt...this is not personal vendettas...this is to restore the person to right relationship with God.

Listen, the Old Testament law says that no one can be held guilty concerning sin, unless it could be substantiated by two or three witnesses. That's Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15. In fact, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:19...

1 Timothy 5:19-20

¹⁹Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

I've taught this passage many times, but it's critical...Jesus affirms the principles we're speaking of...it's where Paul got the principles he's using. Jesus says:

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. ¹⁶But 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. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸Truly, 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. ¹⁹Again 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. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Listen, we're the family of God and we're to hold one another accountable to God's standards of righteousness, found in the Bible. Bible scholar, Carl Laney in his book: “A Guide to Church Discipline,” says this. This is profound:

“The church today is suffering from an infection which has been allowed to fester. As an infection weakens the body by destroying its defense mechanisms, so the church has been weakened by this ugly sore...the toleration of sin. Thus, the church has lost its power and effectiveness in serving as a vehicle for social, moral, and spiritual change. This illness is due, at least in part, to the fact that there are little to no expectations for church members any longer.” Carl Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline*

Church family, what should be expected of church members, one another? Should you come to church when the doors are open? We don't say, “That's not my thing...or my family's thing.” Yes! Just when it's convenient? No...you come even when it's hard and you are tired, because Jesus is worth it and it's that important. Look, if we can't come to church when we're tired, if we can't come to church when it's inconvenient, then we won't stand for Jesus when the persecution is hot and heavy.

You see, according to Scripture, members of a church...are members of the family of God, and we should be expected to be serious about commitment, holiness, holding one another accountable, because we're not going to have any power, and be blessed, otherwise and we certainly can't be living in sin and be blessed by God, because He can't bless sin! Oh, how many spiritual blessings are we missing...how many profound, deep things are we forfeiting because we don't seek Jesus in holiness?

Oh, Church when we're not seeking the Lord and choosing to follow Him in His paths of righteousness, it's like trying to get full off crumbs on the floor; and unfortunately, that's much of the church in America today...licking crumbs off the floor, when Jesus has us a seat at a banquet table where a feast has been set before us. But we can't get to the seat at that banquet by living in sin...we'll have to stay with the crumbs. Cheap grace doesn't get you that seat.

I told you last week that the message was heavy...well, this is the consummation of it. After all, what did we expect Paul to say here in this last chapter? The hard truth is: If he comes back into Corinth and finds disobedience, then he has to address it...there must be disciplinary action.

You see, we read it earlier...the church has been given authority to care for **and when needed**, DISCIPLINE its church members. And I get it...all this talk about obedience and holiness and discipline can leave us squirming in our seats and do you want to know why? Because we're not used to hearing it. We're spoiled and pampered as American Christians and we want everyone to feel good about themselves...we don't want to hurt anyone's feelings or their self-esteem.

But, as one of your pastors, Pastor Dale and I take it very seriously about the responsibility that is ours to keep watch over your souls. I really can't describe to you that weight. I didn't understand it until I became a pastor. Watch this...

Hebrews 13:17

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

You see, for Pastor Dale and me, one of our jobs, as your shepherds is to protect you, the church, like a shepherd does his sheep. This is why we have “new member” meetings before a person or family joins the church...we want to make sure folks understand what it means to be biblically saved and that we're on the same page doctrinally.

You see, church, as members of this family of faith, we're responsible for one another...because we're a family...this isn't a country club or the YMCA...it's the gathering of God's family and He desires for us to grow and to care for one another and that means, if we're living in sin, it's got to be addressed. AND that's what Paul was doing in Corinth so as to try to get the church back on the right path. AND **this is precisely** why Paul told the church in the first letter in 1 Corinthians 5 to call out sin...remember the guy who had committed adultery with his step mother?

1 Corinthians 5:1-2

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

Be removed? Yes...that's church discipline...you're to take this guy and put him out of the church and let him feel what it's like to not have the umbrella of the church protecting him, so he might come to a place of repentance. Never forget this...Jesus wants us to experience His presence and we can't do that living in sin, that's the story of the Prodigal Son and it's why Jesus said these words to the "Lukewarm Church" in Laodicea:

Revelation 3:19

¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

Jesus says, "I'm going to rebuke you because I love you!" That's what parents do! And church, think about it...what happens when we're reprov'd...it humbles, right? And shouldn't we even feel some shame? Shame? Oh, that's a nasty word in our culture today... "shame." **We don't want to feel shame**. But let me tell you something...shame is a gift from God, because it's shame that brings us to a place where we can see that we're wrecked in our sin and need repentance. We're like that prodigal son in that way...who, you remember, while eating pig slop in shame, finally comes to his senses, repents and goes home. You understand...without repentance...you can't be saved.

Oh Church, Jesus is zealous for righteousness? And Paul was for the Corinthians. Are you? Most aren't. And therefore, strong, authoritative teaching from pulpits, which brings the Word with conviction and challenge are not popular. Why is not popular? Because it's goes against the spirit of this age...the age of "anti-authority." We live in a society where many want to buck all authority at every level.

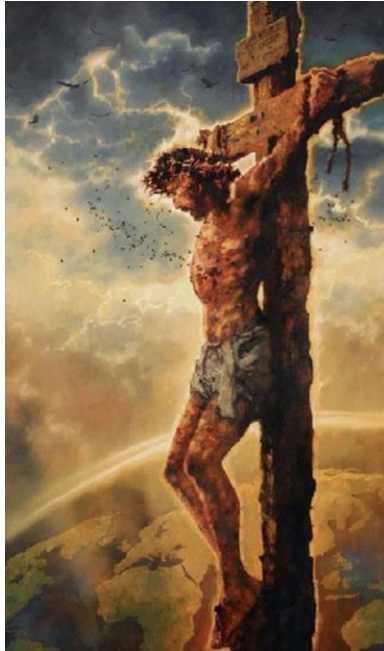
And Church, let me tell you why people resist authority: it's because they don't want anyone telling them what to do. **I'm my own authority**. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes! No! The police isn't going to tell me what to do, teachers aren't going to tell me what to do, my parents aren't going to tell me what to do, and FOR SURE...God, through His Church, isn't going to tell me what to do. That's the culture of our day, and it was the culture of the church in Corinth, and so Paul says this...

2 Corinthians 13:2-4

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 seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. 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.

Listen, the Corinthians had been believing the lies of the False Teachers...lies that said, "Paul is not the real deal...he's not an Apostle...so, he has no authority to say anything to you." That's why

Paul said in verse 3, “You seek proof that Christ is speaking in me.” Well, he turns to the example of Jesus and His weakness. Jesus weak? Look at this...



to the world that's weakness...but, that's what secured our salvation...that's not weakness, that's POWER! To the world, that looks like defeat as Jesus hung on the cross...executed and humiliated by His enemies in the most shameful manner possible. Yes, Jesus was so weak that He died! Yet, three days later He rose and at this moment He lives in POWER!!

Thus, Jesus is our pattern. He was weak...weak to the point of death; and yet, He's alive because of the power of the Holy Spirit, which raised Him from the dead. The same power that lives inside of you!

You see, for 2 chapters Paul has been talking about his weakness as compared to these “blow-hards...” these proud, arrogant false teachers and he says, “Jesus looked weak too, but he wasn't...and that's the truth.” See it, verse 8...

2 Corinthians 13:8-9

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. Your restoration is what we pray for.

Church famiy, this is so simple, if the Corinthians would have simply repented...it would have solved all the problems, right? Their godliness and their obedience would have eliminated the necessity of Paul using his authority to discipline them. You don't have to discipline the kids, if they obey, right? Paul is more than glad **NOT to have to exercise** his authority. And that was Paul's goal all along!

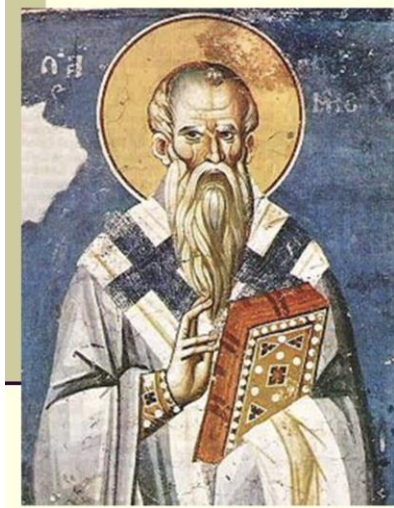
2 Corinthians 13:10

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.

What's the point? “Better to be rebuked by this letter and repent before I get there, than for me to arrive and see you still haven't repented.” In essence, he's pleading, “Please, please deal with

these issues before I get there...clean up the room kids...and we're going to rejoice together in your obedience!"

Well, do you wonder what happened to the church in Corinth? The New Testament doesn't give us any further information about the church at Corinth; however, an early church father...



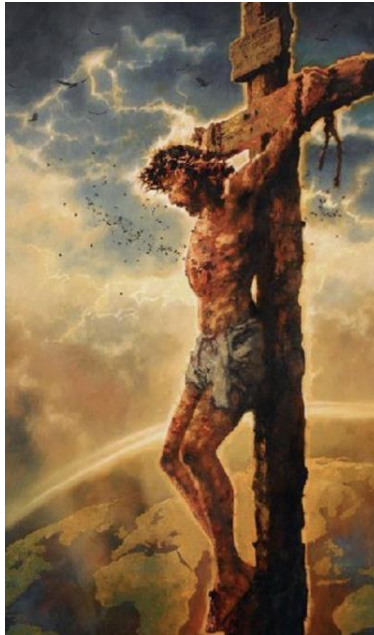
Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome, who was a contemporary of the Apostle John, wrote a letter to the Corinthians near the end of the first century, (which was over 40 years after Paul's time of ministering there). And in that letter, sadly, he had to deal with the same issues that Paul had to...particularly an internal dispute regarding church leadership. In the letter, Clement encouraged humility and for the church to look to Jesus as their example and the letter ends with a call to repentance and an encouragement to pursue holiness. Sound familiar? 4 decades later and they're still dealing with the same stuff!

Over the years following, Bible historians tell us, the city of Corinth began to decline in size and influence; and yes, so did the church. And by the time we get to the latter part of the third century, there is no mention of the Corinthian church and Corinth itself has crumbled. How sad! Oh may we learn from the failure of the Corinthians...may we be warned today so that we might live for Jesus in righteousness. No, this has not been a message about Star Wars...



and Darth Vader saying to Luke Skywalker, "I am your father." Instead, it's been a message where we are once again reminded about our gracious and good Heavenly Father, who was willing...NOT to save His Son, but allow Him to be butchered...



for you and for me, so that we may be able to have eternal life and while here...have an abundant life...living in righteousness. Are you? Are you living for Jesus? Do you love Him? If you do, you'll do what He asks you to do. So, I lovingly warn and encourage you...drop the sin...if you need to...feel shame...because it's shame that leads to repentance...and then you can see the Savior...and submit to His authority and feast at His banquet table in joy!
