

“The Confrontation of Sin”

2 Corinthians 13:1-6

Theme: When Christ dwells within His people, the church will turn from sin and shine with His transforming power.

Introduction: The church of Corinth had all the outward signs of vitality—spiritual gifts, passionate worship, and active ministry. Yet beneath the surface, sin was eroding their witness, and love was tragically absent. Paul reminds them that without love—the very expression of Christ within—everything they do is empty noise. The presence of Christ in His people is not seen in how loudly they speak, how gifted they are, or how religious they appear, but in how they turn from sin and display His transforming power.

For Christ does not dwell among His people so that sin can be ignored, excused, or minimized. His presence demands holiness. His love demands purity. And His power enables us to confront what is unholy in ourselves and in the church.

That brings us to the heart of our passage: **When Christ dwells within His people, the church must turn from sin and shine with His transforming power.** And this happens as we learn that sin must be confronted from the *Perspective of Christ, in the Power of Christ*, and for the *Presence of Christ*.

I. Sin Must Be Confronted from the Perspective of Christ – *13:1-3*

A. The Certifying of the Perspective of Christ – *v. 1*

1. Paul picks up his informing the Corinthians that he is intending to come to them - *“This third time I am coming to you, ...”* – cp. *12:14*.
2. As he comes to the end of this epistle, he informs them that the time for mere dialogue is over – he is coming to hold those accountable for the destabilizing of their faith through their continued sin.
3. He then indicates that church discipline is in view as he has individually confronted those who were indulging in sin and in rebellion against the Gospel – *“Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”*
4. This is a quote from the Law – cp. *Deuteronomy 19:15*.
5. However, even more relevant is the instruction the Lord provided for the process of Church Discipline – cp. *Matthew 18:15-16*.
6. The church cannot tolerate sin among its members without confronting it, as it threatens the integrity of its Gospel witness.
7. In this way, the offenses that require harsh treatment – of public rebuke and appeals for repentance that, when unheeded, result in

the declaration that a person is not a believer – cp. [Matthew 18:17](#).

B. The Consistency of the Perspective of Christ – vv. 2-3

1. Paul has already exerted his apostolic authority in the discipline of an immoral man in Corinth – cp. [1 Corinthians 5:3-5](#).
2. He now warned them that he would discipline them again when he comes to them.
3. When he was with them in their last meeting – often called the “Painful Visit” when he came to confront their defections from the Gospel and their disrespect for the authority of the Apostle Paul – he warned them to straighten up or when he returns he will deal with them harshly – *“I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone ...”*
4. The standards of righteousness do not change simply because it is more common or standardized among sinners – just because a lot of people practice sin, it doesn’t change the standards of Christ.
5. Nor should it cause the ministers of the Gospel to become tolerant; in fact, the proof that a person is truly in Christ will be their siding with Christ and His perspective on sin.
6. This becomes the proof of Christ’s presence – *“... since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.”*
7. The most convincing mark of a true man of God is the uncompromising consistency in his perspectives on the mind of Christ, demonstrated through the proper handling of God’s Word – cp. [2 Timothy 2:15](#).
8. The proof they needed that Paul’s ministry was genuine was the miraculous transformations in their own lives through the message delivered by Paul about the glories of Christ – the power that is *“mighty in you.”*
9. If God is at work in them, it is because of the message preached by Paul, and if the message preached by Paul demonstrates the power of God, then Paul was likewise from God and cannot be dismissed or ignored – despite the assertions of the false teachers.

II. Sin Must Be Confronted in the Power of Christ – [13:4](#)

A. The Demonstration of the Power of Christ

1. Paul next speaks of both the weakness of Christ as well as His power – *“For indeed He was crucified because of weakness ...”*
2. *“weakness”* [ἀσθένεια] – describes the experience of limitation involved in the incarnation – that He became flesh in order to serve as our substitute under the wrath of God poured out on the cross.
3. Nevertheless, *“weakness”* was not ever His permanent plan – it was something that Jesus accepted in order that He might triumph over sin through the resurrection – *“... yet He lives because of the power of God.”*
4. .

B. The Delegation of the Power of Christ

1. We, too, know this *“weakness”* – even in our struggle against sin which so easily entangles us – *“For we also are weak in Him”* – that is, we have no ability to stand under the wrath of God, and our sins are punished in Christ Jesus.
2. Nevertheless, even as Jesus was raised by the power of God – so we too have the ability to overcome sin – *“... yet, we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.”*
3. This is the great consolation of sinners – that we will be victorious over sin and death ourselves – cp. ***Romans 6:4.***
4. Paul is here asserting that when the duly called and established spiritual authorities exercise discipline upon rebellious believers, it is the very *“power of God”* and authority of Jesus Christ – cp. ***Matthew 18:17-18.***
5. This does not mean that heaven responds to human authorities, but rather that human authorities are carrying out what heaven itself has already decided.
6. This is done as if Christ Himself were doing it – ***Matthew 18:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5.***

III. Sin Must Be Confronted for the Presence of Christ – 13:5-6

A. The Confirmation of the Presence of Christ – v. 5

1. This leads to what Paul states is the point – whether the person who is rebellious is truly in the faith.
2. Additionally, it raises the question of whether those in the church who tolerate or justify such behavior are truly born again.

3. He states, *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith ...”*
4. *“Test yourselves”* [πειράζω] – “to endeavor to discover the nature or character of something by putting it to trial¹”
5. There is to be no sense that when sin is present, a person who is professing faith can claim assurance or even eternal security if they are unwilling to confess and repent.
6. He says to them, *“Examine yourselves!”* [δοκιμάζω] – to evaluate something for genuineness or worthiness.
7. If Christ is in you, sin is incompatible and intolerable – *“Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you ...”*
8. *“... that Jesus Christ is in you”* - The hallmark of the Christian faith is the indwelling presence of Christ – cp. Galatians 2:20.
 - a) *There will be a desire to walk in the Light – 1 John 1:7.*
 - b) *There will be a disdain for wickedness – 2 Timothy 2:19.*
 - c) *There will be a devotion to obedience – 1 John 2:4-5.*
 - d) *There will be a determination in light of eternity – Colossians 1:27.*
9. If sin is tolerable, then it may indicate that you might not truly be in Christ – *“... unless indeed you fail the test?”*
10. I’ve known of some who avoid any questions regarding the sincerity and legitimacy of their status before God, but such an aversion is not consistent with the heart of true believers – cp. Psalms 139:23-24; Hebrews 2:1-3.

B. The Conundrum of the Presence of Christ – v. 6

1. As they examine themselves, they would have the ability to better assess Paul’s status – *“But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.”*
2. “If they doubted Paul’s apostleship, they would have to doubt his message. But if they doubted his message, they would also have to doubt their own conversion. The most convincing proof of Paul’s apostleship was the Corinthians’ own transformed lives; if they were

¹ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 792.

truly saved, then he had to be a true apostle.”²

3. Yet, Paul had confidence that most of the Corinthians were believers and would, upon consideration, *“realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.”*

When Christ dwells within His people, the church will turn from sin and shine with His transforming power.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., [*2 Corinthians*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 467.