

# THE MINISTER: HIS FINAL WARNING, PRAYER, CHALLENGE AND BLESSING 2 CORINTHIANS 13:01–14

## *Introduction*

This is the concluding passage of Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. He has done all he can to lead the false teachers, the critics and those who are in sin to repent and turn back to the Lord. His final words include a warning, a prayer, a challenge and a blessing.

- I. The minister's warning (vv. 1-6).
- II. The minister's prayer for a carnal church (vv. 7-10).
- III. The minister's challenge (vv. 11-13).
- IV. The minister's blessing (v. 14).

## **I. 2 Corinthians 13:01–06 *The Minister's Warning***

There was the minister's warning. There were some in the Corinthian church who were teaching false doctrine, criticizing and making false accusations against Paul. Paul was soon to visit the church, so he issued three warnings to the church.

1. The first warning was that he would demand proof of the charges against him. He had put up with the criticisms, rumours, accusations and divisiveness long enough — for over a year. Now it had to stop. It was time to deal with the problem face to face. It could not be allowed to go on, for many in the church had already repented of their sins and experienced revival (see 2 Cor. 7:2-16). If the false teachers and critics who refused to repent were allowed to go on, they would again affect the whole church. Paul just could not allow that to happen again. He could not allow the renewed spirit of the majority within the church to be destroyed. He had to confront the false teachers and critics: it was now time for them to either repent or be disciplined by him and the church. Therefore, when he arrived, he would do exactly what Christ and Scripture say: he would demand that two or three witnesses be presented to prove his guilt or innocence (Dut. 19:15). The critics and false teachers had to repent or else leave the church before he arrived. If they refused, they would have to face him and prove their criticisms and rumours.

**Mat 18:16** *But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'*

**Deu 19:15** *One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

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**John 8:17** *“In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid.”*

2. The second warning was that he would not spare; he would exercise his spiritual authority and discipline all offenders when he arrived. There were three reasons why he would take this action.
  - a. First, there were some in the church who *had sinned and others who were thinking about sinning*, thinking about giving in to the sinful ways of the world. This warning was given to those who were guilty of the sins just mentioned (cp. 2 Cor. 12:20-21). They were those who were guilty of...
    - arguments and contention
    - wrath and fiery anger
    - uncleanness and indulgent living
    - debauchery and uncontrolled lust and passion
    - strife and a factious spirit
    - whispering and gossip
    - sexual immorality and immoral sexual vice
    - envy and jealousy
    - a swelled head and pride
    - backbiting and open slander
    - disorder and confusion

Paul had warned these before; now, he warned them again. Such sins did not belong in the church. Therefore, when he arrived, he would deal with all those who were guilty of divisiveness and immorality.

- b. Second, Paul said that he would not spare the false teachers and critics, those who demanded proof that he was a true apostle and minister of God. They wanted proof that Christ was in him and spoke in him. His ministry and appeals to them were not enough to convince them; therefore, when he came to the church, he would give them proof of his ministerial call and authority.
- c. Third, Paul would deal with those who lived in sin because he lived by the power of God. Note that Paul used Christ as his example. When Christ was on earth, He appealed to men time and again, doing all He could to reach and save them. By so doing, He appeared weak in that He allowed men to abuse and crucify Him; but today Christ lives by the power of God. So it is with the minister of God. He does all he can to appeal to men, and by so doing the minister appears to be weak in that he accepts rejection and abuse time after time. But this is not the whole truth. The minister not only lives in the weakness and forbearance of God; he lives by the power of God, and that power is to be exercised under certain circumstances. In the case of the Corinthian church, it was now time for a demonstration of God’s power, time for the disciplining hand of God to fall upon the false teachers, critics and sinners in the church.

**2 Tim 4:2** *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.*

*1 Tim 5:20 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*

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

*Titus 3:10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.*

3. The third warning was that the believers must examine themselves to make sure they were in the faith.

=> They needed to make sure they were genuine. Living in sin makes a person's faith suspect. Some were living in sin: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves."

=> They needed to make sure that *Jesus Christ was in them* and that they had passed the test (adokimoi). The word means to be tested and disqualified and rejected; to be found unfit and disapproved; to be doomed and condemned to perdition (see *Disqualified*, 1 Cor. 9:27 ).

=> They needed to know that he had passed the test.

The only way the Corinthians could know these things was to examine themselves.

*Lam 3:40 Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.*

*Mat 7:5 "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

*1 Cor 11:28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.*

*2 Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test?*

## II. 2 Corinthians 13:07–10 Minister's Prayer for the Church

There was the minister's prayer for a carnal church. He made three very specific requests.

1. He prayed that they do no evil. He wanted them to stop their sinning, their attacks against him, their divisiveness and their immorality. Note a significant point: his reason was not selfish. He was not seeking to be approved by them, but that they might do the right thing (tokalon). The word means right, noble, good, pleasing. Paul was under attack, and suffered the tension and pressure of the attack, but that was not the reason he wanted his critics to repent. His purpose was not selfish or self-centred: he wanted his critics to repent for the sake of righteousness, that the good and right thing might be done. He wanted this despite the fact that they treated him as a reprobate. They might not love him, but he loved them and wanted only the best for them. He did not want to discipline them; he wanted them to repent before he arrived.

**Rom 12:9** *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

**1 Th 5:22** *Avoid every kind of evil.*

**1 Pet 3:11** *He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

2. He prayed that they might all stand for the truth. Most commentators understand this verse to be referring to Paul, but it is probably best to see it as part of Paul's prayer, that is, as applying to everyone involved, to both Paul and the Corinthian church. The verse is certainly applicable to every believer and should be a part of our daily prayer:

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

The truth would refer to the gospel in its broadest meaning — the fullness of truth. The truth is to be lived and proclaimed under any and all circumstances.

**Thought 1.** No minister and no people should ever act against the truth...

- in the way they treat each other
- in their morals
- in their church
- in the way they speak about others
- in their behaviour

**Eph 4:25** *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body.*

**Eph 6:14** *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.*

**Zec 8:16** *These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts.*

**Mal 2:6** *True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.*

3. He prayed that they might be strong and perfected. Paul was glad when the believers were strong in the Lord and he was able to appear weak, that is, when he did not have to be exercising authority and discipline. At such times, the believers and the church were growing toward perfection (katartisis). The word means to repair what is broken and to restore it to a more perfect condition. What the Corinthian church needed was to become strong and perfected, that is, repaired and restored, to have its fellowship cleansed of critics and false teachers.

**Mat 5:48** *“Be perfect [growing, maturing], therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

**2 Cor 13:11** *Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.*

**Heb 6:1** *Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.*

**Eph 4:13** *Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

**Col 1:28** *We proclaim him [Christ], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.*

Note Paul's reasons for praying and writing these things:

=> to prevent his having to confront those who were sinning and having to use sharp, severe discipline.

=> to have the opportunity to edify and build up the sinners and not to be forced to destroy them. He did not want to be forced to tear them and their lives down in order to save the church and its ministry.

**Rom 14:19** *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

**Rom 15:2** *Each of us should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up.*

**1 Cor 14:26** *What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.*

**2 Cor 12:19** *Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.*

**Eph 4:29** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

### III. 2 Corinthians 13: 11–13 *The Minister's Challenge*

There was the minister's challenge. The challenge was encouraging.

1. "Aim for perfection": restore, reform, correct, mend yourselves and your ways. Stop your sinning: criticism, divisiveness, immorality.
2. "Listen to my appeal": be assured, consoled and helped by repenting and turning back to God. The word appeal (parakaleisthe) could also mean "be exhorted"; that is, listen and heed what I have said.
3. "Be of one mind": in faith, belief, purpose, mission and ministry.
4. "Live in peace": love, care, forbear, be long-suffering and concerned for each other. Have nothing to do with criticism, divisiveness, snobbishness, pride or feeling superior.

If the believers of the church would do these four things then the God of love and peace would be with them. Note that God is the author, the Giver of love and peace.

Therefore, if a man wishes to know true love and true peace, he must accept the challenge and live accordingly.

Note: Paul expected the church to follow through. He challenged them, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” It was the practice of early believers to show their love and communion by greeting each other with a kiss.

Note also that Paul attempted to stir the Corinthian believers by sending greetings from “all the saints.” Just the mention of the word “saints” would be meaningful to the Corinthians, for it means *those who are set apart from the world to God*.

#### IV. *2 Corinthians 13:14 Minister’s Blessing*

There was the minister’s blessing. This is one of the most used blessings in the Bible. Note how clearly the Trinity is seen in this verse. The blessing includes three parts.

1. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ: Paul wished them to experience all the favour and blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted them to know the saving power of the Lord’s death and His day by day deliverance which is to be consummated in the glorious day of eternal redemption.

*2 Cor 8:9* For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

*2 Cor 12:9* 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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

*2 Tim 2:1* You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2. The love of God: Paul wished them to experience all the love of God, ranging from the gift of Christ to save the world over to the day by day provision of necessities.

*John 3:16* “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

*Rom 5:8* But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*Rom 8:38-39* For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Eph 2:4-5* But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

**1 John 3:1** *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

3. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit: Paul wished them to experience the presence and power of God's Spirit as they walk in fellowship with the Father and the Son and with other believers.

**Rom 8:15-16** *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

**1 Cor 6:19-20** *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

**Gal 4:6** *Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."*

**1 John 1:3** *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ■*