

## 2 Corinthians 13

Written by K B Napier  
Monday, 20 February 2017 19:27

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### “...prove your own selves...”

I am not partial to the effete nature of so many of the brethren. It seems that to be considered ‘genuine’ as a Christian, we should be weak and pale, with limp handshakes and no backbone. Is it any wonder ministers of God are caricatured with dark suits, constant goofy smile and slightly bent humble posture... when that is what many actually look like?

What annoys me about this is that if the traditional garb and stance are removed, these men would be just like anyone else! They might be strong and tough as old boots, but they insist on adopting the look and ways of their mentors. Where is the firm handshake and the manly bodily posture? Where is the deserved anger at times? Where is the ability to face-off unbelievers, if necessary, with tough talk?

I have no time for false characteristics. Frankly, I do not care if others think I am not the usual type of minister because I refuse to act as an effete caricature! Indeed, I would be offended if anyone thought I looked and acted like it! Paul is quite blunt in this chapter, as he is all along. Put your house in order, he warns, or I will come with anger and power, to knock you all into shape!

This is not entirely a product of my personality, because, left to my own devices, I would remain quiet and in the background. No, my tough stance is due to God’s calling and life itself. I am commanded to speak out and to use hard words at times, for the sake of the brethren, that they may grow and know spiritual reality – not that humanistic mish-mash taught by traditional churches and ministers.

I have much time for sinners who repent, and Christians who are teachable. But, I have very little time for, or patience with, those who know the truth and reject it, or who refuse to learn what God says, or put it into practice. These need the rod of Paul. They need to hear hard words. They must repent. That is, as Paul puts it, they must prove themselves to be what they claim to be.

All Christians must do this... they must back their claim to be saved with actions showing they mean it. Without this proof, we cannot take them seriously. And without this proof, other Christians can legitimately chastise and discipline them. After all, if a man claiming to be a

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Christian refuses to repent of his sin and change his ways, we can legitimately conclude he is not saved at all and must treat him as an infidel.

Paul demands the best from the Corinthians. He was instrumental in their salvation and he taught them himself. After he left, they allowed all kinds of heretics into their midst, and some of them slowly slipped back into their evil ways, causing Paul to become very concerned, as his letters illustrate. Paul was not better than anyone else. He applied the same constraints to his own life as well, just as any minister should. As we come to the end of the epistles to the Corinthians let us adopt Paul's unique ways: recognise sin, deal with it – toughly if needed – and yet love the Christians who need discipline, for we all fail at times. In this we are equal.

### Verse 1

1.

“This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”

This is the third time I have to come to you, Paul says. His mood is one of both consternation and annoyance, as he hears of the sins of some within that church, even though they received his teaching before and they have already known Paul's disciplinary actions. He thinks of them as his 'children' and, at the time of his writing, they are acting just like small children who become naughty when their father is away!

Do you sin because you think no-one is watching? Do you sin secretly at home, but not in public? Do you do and say things that are inconsistent with your claimed faith? It is a fact that significant numbers of 'Christian' husbands, for example, actually beat their wives, or treat them like vassals, objects to order-about and not to cherish. They think they get away with it (and their wives allow it, we must say), showing that their view of God is as deficient as their personal lives. God knows and will punish.

Christians do many other things that are not consistent with their claimed faith. But, the emphasis is not on their sins, but on their obedience. Once a Christian knows he has sinned he *must* repent. Even if that Christian does not fully realise he has sinned, he must repent, if another Christian shows him (scripturally) his error. He

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*must*

change his ways or face possible disciplinary action (IF the local church actually bothers with it!).

Paul, then, is warning the Corinthians – for the *third* time he must come to them and make sure they obey the Lord! It is a sad reflection on the Corinthians that Paul has to say that whatever he says is witnessed by two or three others. Christians amongst Christians ought not need to resort to this kind of security option. But, some of the Corinthians question his very apostleship, let alone what he says, so he has to protect himself against false charges.

### Verses 2-4

1.

“I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

2.

Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

3.

For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.”

Paul says, I told you before, **proereo**, I warned you before and predicted certain things, and now he “foretells” them, **prolego** – tells them beforehand, as though he were with them face-to-face on his second visit. He is warning those who have sinned. We may deduce from this, that Paul was not referring to those sins we commit daily in our hearts only, but to those sins witnessed publicly which cause the world to scoff.

The word used by Paul for ‘sinned’ is a special one, **proamartano**, referring to someone being guilty of the sins committed by Gentiles/heathen, or to ‘sin before’. Thus, we know he was

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talking about some Corinthians reverting back to their old ways of life and sins.

It surprises me when Christians think salvation is a kind of talisman stopping them from sinning! We can all commit sin, sometimes of the worst kind. To do so is to *deliberately* overcome conscience and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, refusing to obey God. We sin because we *want*

to. That is why Paul is angry, and says that if he has to witness such activity on his third visit, he "will not spare". That is, he will not

***pheidomai***

, abstain from his anger.

There is a peculiar modern Christian trend of 'counselling' and smiling even when someone is sinning deliberately. This is thought to be 'brotherly' and 'Christian'. Do not be misinformed: there are times when we *must* be angry and must act in a tough, hard manner. I do not mean 'harshly' but with a toughness that displays both love for the fellow Christian and hatred for his sin\*. We sometimes need a swift spiritual kick to the shins to stop us carrying out sin. (\* This is NOT the same as 'love the sinner but hate his sin'; see article on the subject).

Paul is now showing this toughness and is warning the Corinthians he will not hold back his anger if they continue in their evil ways. Paul is also speaking to "all other" - those who have not reverted back to their old lives - because Christians who allow sin to be enacted amongst them are just as guilty, for silence is the same as acceptance, and this is the same as actual enactment. That is, they are guilty by silent refusal to speak out.

Throughout the terrible time of the initial flood of the Toronto Blessing, thousands of Christians and their pastors remained silent about the obvious sins of charismatics and the obvious evils of their preaching. The idea, so they said, was to keep their heads down because it was 'just a fad' that would die out of its own accord. This did not happen, it was not a fad, and its influence is now worldwide! What was an obvious error is now mainstream, and real Christians continue to remain silent about it.

Remaining silent in the face of public sin is to be found guilty of the same sin. Not to speak out is a direct rejection of God's commands. They had no stomach for the fight, the fight they were called to prepare for when they became Christians, and so the blatant evil they ignored is now predominant in society and in their own churches.

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Like leeches, charismatic errors are sucking the lifeblood out of Reformed churches. They do it not through obvious sins, but by disseminating false doctrine, the biggest being an Arminian gospel. The current and ongoing success of the Alpha course is another route taken by Satan to lower standards within reformed churches. Meanwhile churches claiming to be true are being eroded. Paul's words apply to them, too! They have willingly and silently allowed charismaticism to breach the walls of Christ's Church... and so they sin.

Paul has to be 'covered' by witness testimonies, because those who deliberately sin can also deliberately misconstrue or lie about the intentions of God's ministers. Though they were saved through Paul's preaching and taught the truth by him, some now questioned his office and role (verse 3). They were strong in their salvation, through Paul, yet they now tried to make him seem weak. They wanted proof he spoke from God, even though he had proved this time and again before.

I remember one such man who, after learning many truths through my ministry and wanting to join me as a co-worker, suddenly starting to 'charge' me with many offences and to finally call me a 'Marxist'! He had started to attend a college part-time and took a course in sociology. Being unprepared for the lies that masquerade as truth, he imbibed the methods and argumentations used by humanists, and so I got the full blast of his new-found errors.

Like the Corinthians, he had been taken-in by 'academic' heresy and was now kicking the traces against God and His called servants. At that time I had no option but to speak in hard terms with him and then to give him over to his new found 'knowledge'. I have discovered he is now attending a sound church, but he has never contacted me to apologise or to put things right. Thus, his former sins continue, through his refusal to rectify his stark abuse. It was this kind of abuse that Paul faced.

Paul goes on to remind them that Christ was "crucified through weakness". Christ was **stauroo** – the word indicates destruction of the flesh accompanied by intense pain. Paul is pointing them back to the horror and degradation of this form of execution... Christ was a 'freeman' and so this form of killing, reserved only for the worst criminals, was particularly disgusting for Him.

*(The paintings of the scene do not tell the proper story, for Christ would have been stripped naked before being nailed to the stake, which was not just an implement to kill, but was also an*

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*implement of torture, bringing pain, dizziness, cramp, a raging burning thirst, starvation, fever, tetanus and the festering of wounds, which usually turned gangrenous. The arteries of the head and stomach became swollen, and limbs were dislocated.*

*Normally, it took about three days for a crucified man to die, especially after having his legs broken deliberately to assist death. Then, the body would have remained on the cross until it rotted and was eaten by birds, dogs and other animals. No-one was removed and buried. Therefore, when Christ was allowed to be removed from the cross, this was very unusual. Note that the Jews, not the Romans, imported this kind of death into Israel. It was also used in India, Egypt, Carthage, Persia, Assyria, Germany, Greece and other countries).*

Christ was crucified “through” weakness. The word, **ek**, can mean of, from, out of, by, on, with, or away from, and can be either literal or figurative. Thus, no reader may assume Christ was actually weak enough to be overcome by His circumstances, as some imply. To say this is to denigrate His power and supreme authority.

At no time was Christ able to be overcome by His circumstances or by people, or even by Satan. It is most likely the word should be interpreted as ‘with’ in this context. That is, His body was weakened physically by his beatings and by crucifixion, as the word ‘weakness’, **astheneia**, suggests. The word can also refer to weakness of soul, but this cannot apply to Christ.

Though killed by men, Christ was nevertheless alive by His own *dunamis* or power. This is because power of life resides within Christ and was not created in Him by God, as was, and is, done with all men. Christ had life,

**zao**

, because He

is

God. His life cannot be extinguished.

In the same way, says Paul, though he and the other apostles were physically and even perhaps, at times, mentally weak, they were strong in spirit. Their strength was ‘in Him’ not in their own selves. The same power they enjoyed was available to the Corinthians also, in spite of their penchant for sin, a penchant that is in each one of us to various degrees, and so none of us may boast of our status!

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The minister of God can boast only of his strength in Christ, not in his own strength or learning or gifts. All of us, whether great or lowly, are equal in Christ. None is better than the other, whether falling to sin every moment or falling only scarcely, whether highly intellectual or barely able to string plausible sentences together. The one who is presently strong must uphold and nourish the one who is presently weak. Then, when the one who is presently weak gains strength it may be *his* turn to uphold the one who *was* strong, but who then becomes weak. We are all equal in God's eyes.

### Verses 5-9

1.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

2.

But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

3.

Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

4.

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

5.

For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.”

**Peirazo!** calls Paul to the Corinthians. “Examine yourselves!” He wants them to test their lives and beliefs, to see if they are truly saved or not. And even if they are saved, are their lives consistent with their claim? Is the *quality* of salvation to be found in every part of their being?

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They were to put themselves on trial, **peira**, and to look at every aspect of their characters and actions. This carries the idea of piercing to the core,

**peiro**

, or to the 'farthest side',

**peran**

. Few Christians are this assiduous (or honest)! The idea was to see if they were "in the faith". Faith is a personal quality, but here it is used in an interesting way to speak of 'the' faith as an object outside of self, e.g. as in 'the' Church. In reality, faith is both outside of, and inside, a person. In this case it means "in the 'way' of trust in God". Are they, then, in the habit of trusting in God, because, if they really were, they would not act as they did.

If they failed their self-test then they would be reprobates, **adokimos**, castaways, not approved by God, not genuine believers. This, says Paul, is simply not possible if they are truly saved. His words, then, come as a direct challenge. Can they show themselves to be truly saved, or not? The proof would be in their obedience, humility, and repentance.

He trusts or hopes, **elpizo**, that the Corinthians recognise he and the apostles are genuine and not cast away by God or unproved as apostles. Having established the 'rules' for testing themselves and the apostles, Paul then goes on to say that he prays they do not resort to doing what is sinful, **kakos**, evil, bad or wicked, causing their own selves misery and harm.

This is not so much as to testify to the goodness of the apostles who were tools used by God in their salvation, but that they ought to know the honesty they should display. 'Honest' is **kalos** – what is beautiful, excellent, eminent, precious, useful, suitable, etc. These are the attributes we ought to see in any Christian. Without them we can question whether or not the person really is a Christian. His character should be fully good, lovely and noble.

Anything that takes away from this character must be cast aside, because, as **kakos** implies, whatever is left must be 'useful'. There is no room in a Christian life for things that are useless or that lower the tone of the character.

Paul says they, the apostles, cannot do anything that offends the truth – they can only work *for* and with the truth,

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### ***aletheia***

, what is true and godly and what is against pretence, falsity and deceit. This arises because they loved,

### ***alethes***

, the truth.

Those who do not have this inbuilt *alethes* will not really be bound by truth, and will twist it as they wish, or not be too bothered if it is not present. They will also present a case for their own sin, and may even give spurious 'Biblical' reasons for acting wickedly. This is because they do not love the truth, even if they formally and outwardly accept that truth exists and should rule their lives. Again, the words of Christ are very blunt: "If you love me, then do what I say!" Those who truly love Christ also love His truth, and those who inwardly love truth cannot act wickedly without then repenting and stopping what they do.

The apostles, says Paul, are only too happy to be weak bodily and mentally, if it means the Corinthians will be strong spiritually; ***dunatos***, mighty, able, powerful in soul and able to live holy lives even amidst adversity. They must excel in Christian character. This is the aim of the apostles – to see them grow in perfection. This is done by

### ***katartisis***

, being instructed in things of God and disciplining ones' life so that it conforms to what is learned. Thus, listen, learn and apply! In this way the soldier of Christ is formed and made ready for all things and battles. He is fully equipped in holiness and strength.

Christians, then, are not meant to sit passively in a local church meeting and then go out again, without being challenged to live out what has been taught. That is why the usual traditional meeting, where a preacher talks and everybody listens without interaction, is not useful or good. Listeners must interact and take part; they must listen and question; they must test what they hear against scripture; they must present their comments and doubts until all is made clear. Then they must determine to put into practice what they have taken to heart.

## **Verses 10-14**

1.

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

2.

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Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

3.

Greet one another with an holy kiss.

4.

All the saints salute you.

5.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

It is better at this time, says Paul, that I write what I have to say rather than be with you in person. If he was there in person he would have to “use sharpness”, **apotomos**, severity of speech, be abrupt in nature. By writing, Paul was giving them the opportunity to change their ways before he or the other apostles reached them. In this letter Paul commended them for what was good, but he was also castigating them for what was bad.

Paul had the right to castigate them, a right given by God. It is the same right given to all ministers who are called to preach and teach. This right includes the power to ‘cut’ right through excuses and reasons for sinning. Such are totally irrelevant and must be got rid of.

The power Paul had was “to edification”, **oikodome**, the building up of Christians so they grow in Christ and Christian virtues. It was not his task to bring them to ‘destruction’,

**kathairesis**

, to pull them down and demolish them totally. As we come to the end of this second epistle, I should mention that many think I have come to bring ‘destruction’ to fellow Believers when I oppose charismaticism so strongly. But, like Paul, I have not been called to do such a thing, and do not do it. I will not speak against fellow believers who are in charismatic error – but I

*will* speak against the unsaved who adopt charismaticism in opposition to God and His word, and I

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WILL destroy what they teach.

What I am doing is opposing charismatic error and destroying what is false and wicked. I am not destroying fellow Believers, but only those who pretend to be Believers, deceiving and spreading evil amongst Christians. I do this by refutation, **kathaireo**, just as Paul did and as all ministers ought to do.

Lastly Paul signs off with a farewell, a greeting of **chairo** or God-speed, with joy. He could only do this with fellow Believers. He calls on them to be 'perfect',

**katartizo**

, or restored and fit for their Christian status, joined together as one in Christ, of 'one mind'. This is at the foundation of praying together, by the way, and is hardly ever found today amongst Christians.

Of 'one' mind is to be as one or the same, **autos**. The 'mind' here is **phroneo**, of the same mind, like-minded, agreed together and harmonious in thinking and action, to strive after being so, to seek the interests of the others, based on a proper understanding,

**phren**

Paul continued by exhorting them to be of 'good comfort', **parakaleo**, consoled and strengthened. "Be of one mind", think the same way; "live in peace",

**eireneuo**

, or, make peace with each other and live in harmony. When they live like that, God will be present with them, for He is the God of love,

**agape**

– good will and affection, and the God of peace,

**eirene**

, harmony, security and salvation. Therefore, we cannot expect peace and love in our lives unless we first act out love and peace toward other believers.

We are to greet each other with an holy kiss. What is this? It means that when we visit each other or meet together, **aspazomai**, we should kiss each other on the cheek, **philema**, as a sign of our friendship,

**phileo**

. This ought not be pretentious, but restrained and 'natural'. Overall, it means to show our

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friendship with each other – the kiss was usual in those days. Today, perhaps a hug or handshake is an equal sign. The main thing is to show holy lives by greeting each other amicably.

Paul said that all the Christians he knew sent their greetings to Corinth and he wished the love and benefits of God and Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, to be upon them. Amen – so be it.

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