

2 Corinthians 13:1- "This will be the third time I am coming to you. 'By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.'"

Paul is preparing to visit the Corinthians again for the third time. His first visit was to establish the church (Acts 18), while his second visit was more corrective and was not the most pleasant (2 Corinthians 2:1). With this third visit, Paul was hoping the church had repented and would be prepared to receive him.

The phrase, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established," is a quotation from Deuteronomy 19:15. Under the Mosaic Law, a person could not be tried and convicted unless there was sufficient evidence confirmed by two or three witnesses. This requirement protected individuals from false accusations and ensured that justice was based on credible testimony rather than personal opinion.

I believe it is also important to consider who the two or three witnesses are that are bringing the accusation. Are they independent witnesses, or are they close friends who all run in the same circle? It is difficult to place credibility in testimony that comes from a group that is closely aligned and likely to share the same perspective. The biblical principle assumes independent, credible witnesses whose testimony can be trusted, not a coordinated effort to support a predetermined conclusion.

2 Corinthians 13:2- "I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare."

This verse continues Paul's discussion of his upcoming visit to Corinth. Paul had a pattern of reminding believers of truths they had already been taught. Repetition is one of God's greatest teaching tools because it helps establish truth in our hearts.

Peter followed this same pattern. In 2 Peter 1:12–13 he wrote that he would continually remind believers of these things, and in 2 Peter 3:1 he said he was writing to "stir up your pure minds by way of reminder." Mature believers should not become offended by repetition; they should recognize its value in strengthening their faith.

Paul is essentially saying, "We've already gone through this together. I've already addressed these issues, and now it's time for you to mature."

Spiritual maturity means moving beyond the stage where someone constantly has to correct, encourage, and remind us of the same basic truths. The writer of Hebrews makes this point when he distinguishes between spiritual infants and mature believers. Those who remain on milk are "unskilled in the word of righteousness" (Hebrews 5:13) and require continual care and instruction. Those who are on solid food are spiritually mature. They are able to chew, swallow, and digest God's Word for themselves, applying it to their own lives without needing constant correction (Hebrews 5:14).

Paul's desire was not to continually confront the Corinthians over the same sins. He wanted them to grow in Christ so that when he arrived, he could encourage their maturity rather than discipline their immaturity.

It is also important to note that Paul was not threatening them. Leaders don't threaten they inspire. This was a warning and warning always comes before destruction; we should take heed to what Paul is saying.

2 Corinthians 13:3- *"Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you."*

Their conversion, the gifts of the Spirit operating among them, and the church that had been established all testified that Paul's ministry was empowered by God.

It is ironic that the very person who brought them to Christ was now being questioned regarding his apostolic authority. This serves as a reminder that people can forget those whom God used to bless them.

You may be in a situation right now where you helped someone get a job or even a promotion, only for that very person to turn against you. Perhaps you have faithfully raised a child who now questions your character or your decisions as a parent. These situations are painful, but they are not unique.

Paul teaches us an important lesson. Our identity and confidence must never be rooted in the approval of people but in Christ. When others question your motives, misunderstand your heart, or fail to appreciate what you have done for them, remain secure in who you are in Christ.

2 Corinthians 13:4 - *"For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives 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 points to Jesus Christ as the supreme example of strength displayed through apparent weakness. From a human perspective, Christ's crucifixion looked like defeat. He was arrested, mocked, beaten, and crucified. To those watching, it appeared as though He was powerless.

Yet what appeared to be weakness was actually God's plan of redemption. The moment we get to the end of ourselves we get to the beginning of God (Galatians 2:20).

Almost everyone God used in the Bible appeared weak in the natural. God has always delighted in using ordinary people so that His power, not their ability, receives the glory.

The very woman chosen to give birth to Jesus was Mary, a humble young woman. Yet hand chosen by God to carry the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

When God called Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, Moses responded, "Who am I?" (Exodus 3:11). He did not see himself as a great leader but as someone inadequate for such a monumental task.

Likewise, when God called Gideon to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Midianites, Gideon replied, "How can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judges 6:15). Gideon focused on his limitations, while God focused on His power.

God is not looking for people who believe they are enough on their own; He is looking for people who are willing to depend on Him. The message of the gospel has never been that God uses the most qualified. Rather, He qualifies those He calls. Our weakness is not a disqualification—it is often the very platform upon which God displays His power and glory.

2 Corinthians 13:5- *"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified."*

God does not test people with evil. In fact, the only place I find where God invites people to "test" Him is in Malachi 3:10, where He is speaking about tithes and offerings and promises to open the windows of heaven in response to their obedience.

James 1:13 says, *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."* The words "tempt" and "test" in this context refer to a testing designed to cause someone to sin or fail. That kind of temptation does not come from God; it comes from Satan and from our own sinful desires (James 1:14).

Here in 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul is not saying that God is testing us. Rather, Paul is telling us to test ourselves. We are to examine ourselves to determine whether we are truly "in the faith." In this context, "in the faith" means asking, *Have I truly placed my faith in Jesus Christ? Have I received Him as my Lord and Savior?*

When Paul says, "unless indeed you are disqualified," he is not teaching that a believer can lose his or her salvation. Salvation is not something you lose the way you lose your wallet. Paul is challenging those who profess faith in Christ to examine whether their profession is genuine.

Before we examine everyone else's life, we need to first look at our own. Is your life more of a reflection of this world, or is it a billboard for the Kingdom of God?

2 Corinthians 13:6- *"But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified."*

The word "disqualified" comes from the Greek word *adokimos*, which means disapproved, rejected after testing, reprobate, or unqualified. It describes someone who has failed to meet the required standard after being examined.

Paul had just instructed the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether they were truly in the faith. Now he turns their attention back to himself. If they were truly examining Paul's life and ministry honestly, they would recognize that he was **not** disqualified. On the contrary, they would see that he was fully qualified to speak with apostolic authority.

The evidence was all around them. Paul had faithfully preached the gospel, planted the church in Corinth, endured tremendous suffering for Christ, and their own transformed lives testified that God had worked powerfully through his ministry. Rather than questioning Paul's qualifications, the Corinthians should have recognized him as God's appointed apostle to them.

2 Corinthians 13:7 - *"Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified."*

Paul had a pure heart and his heart was revealed in this verse. Was he perfect, no.. But his intentions were pure and genuine.

2 Corinthians 13:8- *"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."*

Here we see Paul's motives. He could do nothing against the truth; rather, everything that compelled him was for the truth. His desire was not to defend his own reputation but to uphold and advance the truth of the gospel.

Defending our faith should be a natural part of Christianity. If you cannot defend what you say you believe, it is likely that you do not fully understand or firmly believe it yourself. A faith that cannot be explained is a faith that will struggle to withstand opposition.

This does not mean we argue with everyone or try to win every debate. Rather, we should be prepared to give a reason for the hope we have in Christ, doing so with both truth and love (1 Peter 3:15).

2 Corinthians 13:9- *"For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete."*

I believe we are only truly complete when we come to the end of ourselves. This is the law of surrender. Everything in the Kingdom of God operates on this principle. Before we could enter the Kingdom, we first had to die to self and receive Jesus Christ as Lord. We came to Him acknowledging, "I am not enough, but He is more than enough."

The moment we are born again, we are made complete in Christ. Colossians 2:9–10 says:

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

Our completeness is not something we earn through performance; it is something we receive through our union with Christ. However, just as we received Christ by faith, we are to continue

living by faith. Colossians 2:6 says: *"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."*

We began the Christian life by depending completely on Christ, and we mature in the very same way. The Christian life is not about becoming more self-sufficient; it is about becoming more Christ-dependent. The more we surrender our own strength, the more His life is revealed through us. True completeness is found not in relying on ourselves but in resting in the sufficiency of Christ.

This centers around walking in the spirit and not in the flesh. The flesh says "I" while the spirit says "Him" (Galatians 5:16).

2 Corinthians 13:10- *"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction."*

The authority God gives us is not for embarrassment or destruction but to help people grow and mature in Christ. True spiritual authority is always exercised for edification, not intimidation.

Leadership is the capacity to influence others through inspiration, not manipulation or dictatorship. People may comply with manipulation for a season, but genuine influence is earned.

Jesus demonstrated this perfectly. Twelve men left behind their businesses, occupations, and families to follow Him. He did not threaten them or force them to become His disciples. He simply said, "Follow Me."

Why were they willing to follow Him? Because they recognized His authority. His authority did not come from coercion but from the integrity of His life. Jesus lived with a clear purpose that was fueled by unwavering passion. His conviction about His mission was so evident that others wanted to be part of it.

This is the essence of godly leadership. People are not inspired to follow titles; they are inspired to follow purpose. When your life reflects genuine conviction, humility, and love for God, your influence will naturally draw others toward Christ rather than toward yourself.

This goes along with the law of buy in. People will buy in to you before they ever buy into the vision.

2 Corinthians 13:11- *"Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."*

Paul closes this letter with a soft tone and a desire for the hearts of those in Corinth to become a channel of God's love. Remember, Paul opened this letter with speaking of comfort in chapter 1. He decides to close with this theme as well.

2 Corinthians 13:12- *"Greet one another with a holy kiss."*

This will dismantle the policy of staying six feet apart during COVID-19. Not only should you be near people, but go ahead and greet them with a kiss.

2 Corinthians 13:13 - *"All the saints greet you."*

Every believer is a saint.

2 Corinthians 13:14- *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."*

This verse is one of the clearest references to the Trinity in the New Testament. Paul mentions the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit together, showing that while they are distinct Persons, they are one God.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ reminds us that our salvation comes through the finished work of the Son. The love of God points to the Father's unconditional love, which initiated our redemption. The communion of the Holy Spirit speaks of the fellowship, partnership, and ongoing relationship every believer enjoys with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Although the word "Trinity" does not actually appear in the Bible, the doctrine is clearly taught throughout Scripture. There is one God who eternally exists in three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This is no different than water. Water can present itself in three forms; ice, liquid water, and steam.