

2 Corinthians 13:1-14

“Become Complete”

That’s the exhortation found in Vs 11 and to me that seems to be an overall emphasis found in these 2 letters to the Corinthians that we’ve spent the last yr of our time together on Sunday mornings studying. That was Paul’s heart toward them and surely it’s God’s heart toward us, that we *become complete*. Not lacking in any way as believers, not overly emphasizing one area of doctrine to the neglect of another, but finding the balance, being solid, spiritually mature and well rounded; that is grounded in the faith. **Not excusing various areas of the flesh, or neglecting areas that need attention by saying, “Well, that’s just who I am,” or “I’m not that person.” Perhaps you have a hot head, you’re temper gets the best of you, “Well, I just have a bad temper, but other than that I do pretty good. That’s just sorta the way I’m wired.” Really?** The bible says, *“The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.”* Prov 17:14 It says, *“It is honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel.”* Prov 20:3 and Again, *“... a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all,”* 2 Tim 2:24 You see the bible doesn’t allow for the justification of our flesh, but rather it commands us to crucify it, deal *with* it and repent of it, *become complete*. **Maybe that is the one area that really has the best of you; everything else is in good order. Well, take it to the Lord; let God reconstruct your heart in that area that you might become complete, not lacking in any way.**

“Well, I don’t really struggle with anger or my temper but lustful thoughts are always entering my mind, but I figure it’s not really hurting anyone it’s just something I guess that’s apart of who I am.” Really? Jesus said, *“...whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Matt 5:28 We read in the book of James, *“... when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”* James 1:15 **You see lust, or unhealthy desire originates in the mind, that’s where it all begins; from there it permeates into my heart and plays out into the physical reality. So what goes on in my mind is critical. What then am I to do to get a grip on an unhealthy thought pattern?** Gal 5:16, *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”* Place your priority on the things of the Spirit, occupy your mind with the things of God, His word, His plans, His purpose, prayer, don’t occupy your mind with the things of the flesh. *“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”* Rom 8:5 **So Don’t down play areas in your life that are in need of attention, submit them, surrender them to the Lord, become complete, you’ve come this far why slow down or stop now? Give God the *fullness* of who you are that you may become complete.**

The Corinthians had some areas that had been neglected and were in need of attention. and Let’s not call them “struggles” let’s call them what they were, “sins.” and Paul was dealing with the need to deal with them as our time came to a close last week. and Just so that there was no confusion or ambiguity with regard to the areas he was referencing he simply spelled it out.

“Contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath (hot headed), selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults,” God forbid that those things should be threaded throughout *this* body. Pray that God give us proper inward motives and the accompanying outward actions that accommodate the proper motives. How many of us want things like contentions, jealousies, hot headedness, self-centeredness, and backbiting to define our own life, much less our home church? Let’s pray for purity in the body, that God would be magnified/glorified in us both individually and collectively in the community as a body. He mentioned uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness, and he said, “When I come to you I don’t want to have to deal with you on these matters, but rather I want to find you repentant and refreshed, renewed, restored in Christ.

Vs1

Now he’s quoting from Duet 17 which is set in the context of how judges were to assess a situation and delegate a sentence concerning the circumstance. So the essence of what Paul is saying here is that he’s *heard* enough, he’s *had* enough now he’s coming to “lay down the law” he’s coming to judge the situation and dole out church discipline as necessary. **Now at this point people want to get very defensive and say things like, “Jesus said, ‘Judge not lest you be judged.’” and “Who are you to judge me?”** and It’s true, Jesus did say that, and I’m *no one* to judge you. But the context in which Jesus said that was that of hypocritical judgment that allowed one standard for me but held out another standard for you. He said, “W/the measure you judge it’ll be measured back to you.” But Jesus also said, “*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*” John 7:24 He readily conceded to the fact that there were times when judgments needed to be made, and the bible *nowhere* says that we’re not to call sin “sin” and deal with it accordingly. There are very clear instructions in the bible regarding church discipline regarding a brother or a sister who is in willful rebellion to God’s Word and refuses to repent.

It’s true God is longsuffering toward us, but if we refuse to repent of our sin eventually He *will* deal with us. and Back to the 2nd question, “Who am I to judge you?” or “Who are you to judge me?” We’re no one to judge each other, completely incompetent and incapable, that’s why we’re not called upon to decide the standard of right and wrong, all we’re called to do is to come in agreement with the standard already set in the Word of God and simply uphold what **God has said regarding a particular situation.** You see it doesn’t matter how *I feel* about contentions, or backbitings, what matters is what has *God said* about those things? How I feel about getting drunk is irrelevant (though I agree with God’s Word) but what’s relevant is what God’s Word says. We’re simply called to uphold God’s Word, and when a brother or a sister is in willful rebellion (not struggling yet longing to be right with God) when they know what God’s word says but simply don’t care or have any desire to honor it. That’s when the church leadership is to step in and deal with the non-repentant person in their midst. **Paul is saying, “I’ve been there twice already, I’ve poured my heart out to you over and over again, I’ve told you the heart of God concerning your sin and when I come again if I find that you have yet to repent of your sin it’ll be the 3rd witness against you and the hammer is going to fall.”**

Vs2-3

Can I just say that demanding “proof” of an apostle’s authority probably isn’t the wisest decision a person could make. I mean this is the guy who was ministering on the isle of Paphos when a certain sorcerer with stood him seeking to set the proconsul against him. and Paul, (the bible says) filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” And immediately (we read) a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. You didn’t want to get in Paul’s face; remember when Ananias and Sapphira told Peter they’d given all that they had when in reality they were holding some back but because they wanted to look spiritual they lied about it? and Peter said to Ananias, “Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” (Acts 5) and When Ananias heard that he fell down dead on the spot. A few hours later his wife came in not having heard what happened and Peter gave her a chance to come clean but she lied to (they were in cahoots).

and So Peter said, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” and She fell down dead on the spot as well; my point being that you really didn’t want to test the authority of these guys because God was backing them up. So when Paul says, “You want proof? I’m telling you now that when I come I will not spare—” That has a tendency to raise a lump in your throat, because the kind of proof they were going to get wasn’t the kind of proof they wanted. They wanted proof in the form of revelations, miracles, visions, signs and wonders. But what they were going to get was that which they would’ve been wise to avoid and that is the proof of his ability to discipline non-repentant offenders in the body of Christ. and Exactly what form that discipline would take, be it the Ananias and Sapphira style, or the “Delivering such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” style, or whatever I’m not sure. But whatever was going to happen Paul said that he wasn’t going to spare, he was going to pull out all the stops in purging the leaven from the lump that they might be a new lump undefiled from the leaven of sin in the midst of the body there. He says, “Christ is not weak toward you, but rather He is mighty in you.” He’s more than competent to deal with the situation.

Vs4

We touched on this last week, how that the power of Christ is made perfect in weakness. and How that the cross of Christ though obviously a manifestation of weakness in that it doesn’t show someone’s strength when you grab them and beat them beyond human recognition and nail them to a cross. It’s a display of weakness, yet through His weakness the power of God unto salvation was made available to all who would call upon His name. The bible says that the cross is foolishness to them that are perishing, but to us who are being saved it’s the power of God.

So we read “...*Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*” 1 Cor 1:22-25 Crucified in human weakness, yet resurrected through the overruling power of God, so though He displayed weakness, He now reigns by the power of God.

and Paul is saying here that that’s the way the ministry operates, there is an apparent human weakness, remember he spoke of boast of his infirmities, those things that made him weak, why? Because human weakness was the vehicle through which the strength of God is made manifest. In his 1st letter to them he told them how that God chooses the weak and base things of the world so that no flesh should glory in His presence but that as it is written let him who glories, glory in the Lord. and So though he appeared weak among them they’ll realize the power of God at work in him when he comes again. You see they seemed to misinterpret humility and meekness for a lack of authority and a spiritual weakness. But even as Christ manifested Himself in weakness so that the power of God could rest upon Him and flow through Him, so to Paul is saying that we err to look to the outward appearance. **Because Christ was crucified in weakness, yet the power of God displayed through that is like none other, nothing compares. Even so Paul recognizes his weakness before God in Christ, but through his weakness the power of God is upon and flowing through his life. and As a believer the more you’re aware of and sober concerning your human frailty and weakness, the more the power of God will flow through you and rest upon you.**

Vs 5-6

Now there are a couple of perspectives on this particular Vs, both of which are worth consideration.

Some say that Paul is saying, “Hey we’ve been scrutinizing who I am and my legitimacy for quite some time now, why don’t you try examining yourself, as to whether or not *you’re* in the faith, test *yourselves*.” The idea being that we’re to stop and probe our own heart as to whether or not we’re really even Christians... **and I think a good heart check now and then is certainly healthy, and if you don’t trust your own ability to evaluate (which is generally wise) then do as David did, ask God to evaluate your heart, search your heart, to try and test your heart and see if there be any wicked or ungodly way in you that He might lead you in the way of everlasting life.** David said, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.*” Ps 139:23-24 It’s just spiritually healthy to be open to the Spirit’s probing of your heart, affirming and reaffirming the fact that you’re in the faith. Now there are those who have an unhealthy paranoia, that’s not what this is talking about. **and They’re always 2nd guessing their salvation, if they’re really saved and they simply have a lack of confidence in the work cross toward them. and We certainly want to reassure those brother’s or sister’s of the fact that when Jesus said, “It is finished” that’s what He meant, because the enemy will challenge us occasionally in this area, “You don’t really believe this stuff do you?” and He’ll seek to plant doubt in your heart and in your mind regarding your position in Christ.**

But on the other side of that coin there are those who *assume* or *presume* that they're Christians and that they're alright with God when in reality *they're not*. They base their assumption upon some upstanding moral position, or the fact that they're religious, they've gone to church all their lives, or they were baptized when they were of such and such an age so of course they're Christians. **The fact is that going to church or being baptized, being a good ol boy that does right by people doesn't save anyone. You see what's the measure of approval, how do you know you're in the faith? Peter said that we should be *diligent* to make our calling and our election *sure*. Don't assume that things are ok based upon something you've done, or you do.** and There are all kinds of things that people say that verify whether or not we're in the faith, and certainly there could be an extensive or exhaustive study on the issue. The bottom line is what Paul says here, "Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?" How do I know if I'm in the faith? **Have I had a personal encounter with Christ whereby I've humbled myself *before* Him, opened my heart *to* Him, and believed *upon* Him for the forgiveness of my sin? Have I asked Him into my heart, have I welcomed His Spirit into my heart, into my life, do I walk with Him, do I abide in Him and does His word abide in me? It's not about religion, it's about a relationship, is Jesus Christ in me? Of course if He's in me the bible says the basic acid test for that is that I'll love God, and I'll love God's people.** Jesus said, "If you love Me you'll keep My commandments." So is there a desire in my heart to obey the word of God? You see you can keep following that trail and there are all kinds of fingerprints readily apparent in the person's life who's in the faith. But it's all built up, and finds it's roots in this right here, "Jesus Christ is in you--"

and Let me re-emphasize this part, "Examine *yourselfes*" we're generally all too eager to examine others in order to determine where they're at but the exhortation is to consider myself. It's kind of like making sure the log is out of my eye before I help you with the speck in your own. These guys were scrutinizing/criticizing Paul but weren't examining their own position. I'm to start with myself, and again when I'm considering the fruit of another's life I want to be careful to not hold one standard for myself and another standard for them. We all want to run true to the plumb line of the Word of God.

and If you've not received Christ, if Christ isn't in you then you're disqualified for eternal life.

Satan came to kill, to steal, and to destroy; Jesus came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. It's Christ *in* you, that is the hope of glory; apart from Christ we're disqualified.

The other train of thought is that Paul is saying, "The evidence of the power of God toward you through us is the fact that Christ is in you." As if he's saying, "You're questioning us, examine yourselves; is Christ in you? If so then how can you question us because it's through us that you came to Christ, so if you count us out, then what's happened in your life through us is irrelevant." So that Paul is saying that Christ in them is sufficient evidence of God's work through his life. I suppose that may be as well but God has brought people to the saving knowledge of Himself through all kinds of things that aren't necessarily godly. So just because someone comes to Christ through a circumstance (perhaps a drug overdose, or a life and death type experience) doesn't mean God condoned or qualified the experience.

It only means His grace is immeasurable and He is greatly to be praised! The bottom line is the fact of Christ in you, that's the key, if He's not make sure you do something about that today, don't let another day go by whereby you're taking the chance of life with out Christ, it's not worth it, why wait?

Vs7-10

God had vested a lot of authority into Paul's life (now whenever we resist the authority God gives to someone we're not resisting them, we're resisting God who gave them that authority) but Paul wanted to use his authority in ways that were constructive, not destructive. In ways that built people up, not tore them down; yet he realized that sometimes that in order for something to be made right there has to be a tearing down of what's wrong in order to reconstruct it in a manner that's right. So he was willing to do that but he'd rather them just repent so that he didn't have to. I know that's always my heart, nobody likes confrontation. and When there's a situation kinda "brewing" on the horizon whereby I know confrontation will be inevitable unless they hearken unto God's Spirit regarding conviction and repentance 1st. I'm always praying for that, I want to use whatever authority God has given me for edification; it's tough to administer that faithful wound. I'd much rather be an instrument of edification, and Paul makes it clear that it's his heart's desire that they do the right thing not because it'll make him look good, but because he just genuinely wants to see them excel in godliness.

Vs7

You see, "The concern isn't about us looking one way or another, it's about our desire and prayer for you that you do no evil (to the negative), but that you *do* (to the positive) what is honorable." To the Ephesians he put it like this, "...you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." Eph 4:20-24 Hey, do the right thing, quit all this sinning and walking in the flesh, crucify the flesh and walk in the Spirit, do no evil but rather do what is honorable."

and There in Vs 8 he's not saying that he can't lie or deceive or seek to in someway combat the truth. He's simply acknowledging the fact that ultimately lies will disintegrate and the truth will prevail, there's nothing gained in a lie, but truth in love will promote godliness. That's the context in which he operates. We're to speak the truth in love, liars just hurt people and hinder progress, be honest, be honorable.

Vs11

"Finally brethren, farewell," or more literally, "rejoice."

Paul has been pretty straightforward here, but it's been to the end that they might enjoy the joy of walking in a right relationship with God. That's really the intent of it all, as I said when we opened our time together; his heart toward them, God's heart toward us is that we might be able to rejoice being found in a right relationship with Him. and So the encouragement, the exhortation is what? "Become complete," back in Vs 9 Paul mentioned that it was his prayer for them, here he expects that they act upon it in a practical way.

It's not that we just deal with every weak point in a moment of time, we realize that if God were to show us every area in which we're incomplete we'd feel as though we were drowning in a sea of need. But the question is where is your heart? Do you have a heart that desires to be complete, to be all that God desires you to be, He wants to mold you into the very image of His Son, is that what you want in the deep recess of your being; to be like Jesus? If so God will have access to every nook and cranny of your heart and He'll be working *on* you, and *in* you and *through* you to that end.

“Be of good comfort, of one mind, live in peace.” We generally think these things depend on the way others are toward us, but Paul places the burden upon us to facilitate these things in the midst of others. “We'll be of one mind as soon as they see it as I do!” How I see it, how you see it is irrelevant, how does God see it, let's come together there and live in peace.” Blessed are the peace makers, not the peace breakers (remember that). We're to do our part, and not worry about their part, let God worry about their part. and I'm not saying that these things are a walk in the park, but they bring with them a good reward, “The God of love and peace will be with you.”

Vs12

This was obviously cultural, today a holy handshake will do just fine. But make sure that it's holy and not hypocritical, you shake someone's hand and then turn around and say, “I can't stand that guy” or something to that effect, there was nothing holy about that at all, it was hypocritical.

Vs13-14

What a beautiful benediction, the only place in the NT we find the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit mentioned together in this fashion, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” and Of His goodness we've all received and grace for grace. “The love of God,” For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever would believe on Him would never perish but have everlasting life. “and The communion of the Holy Spirit” the fellowship, the relationship we have with God, the intimacy we're able to experience with God through the work of the Spirit in our lives. Oh how we need them all that we might become complete, the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful for the richness of Your Word, how practical it is and how it meets us right where we're at. God I pray that all the information we've received throughout our studies in this epistle would bring illumination to our hearts and application to our lives that we might become complete, enjoying the fruit of a right relationship with You.

If you don't know Christ you know the feeling of being incomplete, lacking and empty. Today you can be made whole in Him, God has loved you with an everlasting love, and it's His heart that none should perish but that all should come to repentance. Why not allow the sacrifice of Christ to be accredited to your eternal well being today? Call upon the Lord, and He'll receive you, forgive you, and make you a new creation, whiter than snow in His sight.