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- Good morning.
- My name is Todd Misfeldt.
- I and my family were part of West Valley for some two decades before until leaving to serve another church in Milpitas.
- I think of West Valley as my home church.
- It is great to be with you again today.
- You have been studying the New Testament book of 2 Corinthians.
- Today I would like to bring the study to a conclusion by examining the 13th and last chapter of the book.
- Let us read 2 Corinthians 13:1-10.

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13 This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." ² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, ³ since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴ For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

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? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. ⁹ We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. ¹⁰ This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.

(2 Corinthians 13:1–10, NIV)

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Introduction

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- In the 1984 movie *The Terminator* Arnold Schwarzenegger famously said – "I'll be back".
- This line is not said in anger but as a statement. If you have watched the Terminator movie series, the Terminator does come back, and back, and back...
- It is no idle threat.
- Paul sounds about the same in 2 Corinthians 13
 - In v. 1 he announces his 'third visit' almost as a threat!
 - For those members of the Corinthian church who opposed Paul or did not repent of their sins, it was a threat that he would hold them accountable.
 - It was a threat they had to get their act together or else they would pay for their sins.
- When we hear 2 Corinthians 13, who do we picture ourselves as in the conversation?
 - Do we see ourselves as Paul threatening the Corinthians?
 - Do we see ourselves as the 'good' Corinthians who have faithfully listened to Paul?
 - Or do we see ourselves as the Corinthians who Paul is warning?

Who Do We Identify In Ch. 3?

- In the past, I pictured myself as one of the 'good' Corinthians who has done everything right.
- This is not the only way to hear this passage.
- What if we are the people in the congregation that Paul was threatening coming to deal with?
- What if we are members of the Family of God, the Church, who have not been behaving as Christ would.
- What if we are the people that have accused Paul of being weak or of not being a real Apostle or questioning his authority or what he says.
- What if we are the 'good' Corinthians but haven't stood up for Paul or our beliefs and have been silent as others have attacked Paul and Jesus' teachings?
- What if we don't know what group we are in?

- This is why Paul says in v. 5:

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⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.

(2 Corinthians 13:5, NIV)

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- Paul's threat to come back soon, to visit a third time, should be our motivation to
 - step back,
 - examine ourselves,
 - get our house in order,
 - change our behavior,
 - and to repent of our sin.
- Paul's threat is actually a blessing because we can use it to motivate ourselves to change while we can, before Jesus returns and our final judgment when it is too late to change.

Jesus: I'll be back

- We know that Jesus will come again to judge us.
- Jesus teaches us how to behave.
- Jesus gives us the answers to the test of life that results in our adoption as children of God and results in eternal life with God.
- We know from Matthew 25:31–46 (Goats and Sheep parable) that we cannot always see how well/poorly we are doing.
 - In fact, we may argue with Jesus about his judgement of us.
- It is easier to see that if we weren't a Christ-follower how we might question Jesus.
- Nowhere does it say that Matt 25 applies only to non-believers.
 - It actually fits believers better than non-believers.
 - It fits people who should have known better but who haven't accurately examined themselves.
- Back to 2 Corinthians 13.
- There is no doubt that Paul is talking to church members. Us!
- Specifically, Paul is talking about how we have behaved in the Family of God, the Church.

- Paul is not the only one who observes that 1st Century churches were not always in sync with their faith.
 - Consider the 7 churches of Revelation.
 - Jesus speaks well of the churches in Smyrna, Philadelphia.
 - The churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Laodicea all have challenges.
 - Worst of all is the church in Sardis which is 'dead'.
- If you do the math, only 2 of 7 - or 28% - of churches are doing well.
- With odds like that we cannot assume that the members of any church today can sit back and assume that they are doing well.
- If a doctor told me that I had a 28% chance of recovery, I would start putting my affairs in order.

False Accusations

- In v. 1, Paul writes:

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13 This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."
(2 Corinthians 13:1, NIV)

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- Paul's reference to two or three witnesses implies there is an accusation of wrongdoing. It also implies:
 - First, any accusation must have proof.
 - Deuteronomy 19:15 says two or three witnesses must testify to a fact before a conviction can be made.
 - Second, this is a matter between Christians.
 - Jesus says in Matthew 18:15–16 that if a brother or sister in Christ has done wrong, "take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'"
- Today we see people making accusations without substance, evidence, or truth.
- For example, we are in an election season.
 - I guarantee you that we will see many examples of unchristian behavior.
- Social media is filled with these accusations.
- These accusations hurt and injure people.
 - In sports, upcoming tennis star Rebecca Marino of Canada told the NYT (Feb 17, 2013) that cyber cruelty caused her to drop out of tennis for seven months.
- Even the Olympic Committee recognizes the damage that this does.

- On August 5th, 2024, the BBC news reported “During the games, Threat Matrix (based upon AI technology) will scan social media posts in over 35 languages in partnership with Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X. The system will identify abusive comments directed at [athletes, their entourages and officials](#) at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.”
- In politics we are often told of what the other candidate “may” do without any basis.
 - We are surrounded by these speculative predictions, and we can begin to do the same thing.
- This used to be known as gossip on a small scale, but the ease of being heard by many people has raised this to a whole new level.
- From a biblical perspective, this is lying or the murder of a person’s reputation.
- For us, we must test ourselves whether or not we falsely accuse others or if we pass on these types of accusations.

Accountability

- In v. 2 Paul writes:

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² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, (2 Corinthians 13:2, NIV)

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- In Paul’s earlier letter, he pointed out many things that needed correction.
 - In 1 Corinthians 1:10–17 Paul appealed for unity and not division within the church.
 - This is speaking against church leaders or others in the church.
 - In 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 Paul condemns them for allowing sexual immorality to exist/remain in the church.
 - This is where we stand by silently and watch others wrong doing.
 - And many more.
- Once we realize our sin, we must repent.
 - By confessing our wrong action to Christ
 - By asking for forgiveness to those we have wronged.
 - In the case of a public sin, this may require a public confession.
- With true repentance, we change our behavior so that we do not repeat our sin in the future.
- This is all repentance. From ch. 13, it sounds as if this has not been done.

Questioning Leadership

- In v. 3 Paul writes:

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³since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me.

(2 Corinthians 13:3, NIV)

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- Someone is questioning the authority of Paul to preach the Gospel.
 - This is the same Paul who founded the church in Corinth.
 - Who visited the church and corresponded with the Church.
 - Who-sent representatives to the church.
 - This is the same person that some now doubt.
- I would imagine that if someone is questioning Paul, they don't have history with Paul.
- I would also suspect that they have an alternative gospel to be preached.
- After what Paul has suffered for the Gospel, these accusations and demand for proof must be hard for Paul as a person to hear and damaging to the Church.

Weakness in Response

- The world values strength and boldness.
- People get caught up with strong leaders who will put existing leadership down so that they may be raised up.
- Paul does not respond as a worldly leader would respond, that is in strength.
- Rather, to them, he seems weak.
- Paul had heard similar criticism before.
 - In ch. 10:7–11 he was accused by "The Judaizers in the church had accused Paul of being a weak man."¹

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#) (vol. 1; Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 678.

- In ch. 10:3–5 Paul explains why he responds the way that he does. He says:

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³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NIV)

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- Instead of fighting back with the weapons of the world, Paul depends upon divine power.
- He offers correction and then allows for repentance.
- We do not usually see repentance in worldly leaders.
- We should see repentance in Christians.
- We should see repentance in us.

World Standards or Godly Standards

- Not only does Paul depend upon divine power, Paul realizes that if he speaks the word of Jesus, any rejection is not a rejection of him but a rejection of Jesus.
 - As Jesus said in Matthew 10:20 when speaking to his Apostles about what to say.

²⁰for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.
- For us we must ask ourselves (or test ourselves), do we question church leadership/teachers because of what we read in the bible or because of some person who talks a good talk?
 - Do we evaluate ministries with the world's standards or God's standards.
 - Do we assess whether or not they have the Holy Spirit in them
 - or only an excited human spirit – that of this world and not God's kingdom.

Strength in Jesus

- Paul continues in vv. 3-4:

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He (Jesus) is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

(2 Corinthians 13:3-4, NIV)

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- Jesus never came into this world according to human standards.

- He was not born into a royal household.
- He did not command legions of soldiers.
- But He let himself be punished for our sins.

- Ultimately, he is God - with all the power that there is.
- That is the power that Paul counts on.
- That is the power that we as Christians count on.
- When faced with a question of authority in the church or a new teaching - we must depend upon God's power - not our power or our allegiance to a human leader.
 - We must depend upon God's power to bring us to God's truth.

- It is so easy to get caught up in a powerful movement or organization.
- It excites us and we feel as if we are in control.
- Being in a group that thinks like us feels good.

- However, it is God who is in control.
- We must always pray for God's will to be done – not our will.
- It is God we must serve, not a group, a movement, or a person.
- We must always pray for God's will to be done, not our will.

Test Ourselves

- If we take a step back and look at this entire passage, what is interesting, Paul does not directly counsel the Corinthians about what they should do toward the rivals.
- Rather, Paul wants us and the Corinthians to reassess our own standing in the faith, to return to their roots in their faith.²

- In our lives, we must continually test ourselves to ensure Christ is in us. As Paul writes in vv. 5-6:

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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? ⁶ And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

(2 Corinthians 13:5-6, NIV)

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2 J. Paul Sampley, "[The Second Letter to the Corinthians](#)," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander E. Keck; vol. 11; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 1116–17.

Anger

- Recently I was speaking with a couple from Vietnam. Their background was Buddhist. They asked what do I do as a Christian with my anger?
- I think that how we behave when we are angry is a good test of whether or not we have Christ in us.
- How would you answer that question –

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What do you do with your anger?

- Do I let anger give me the power to make things right.
- Do I give my burden of anger to Jesus and ask him to change my heart.
- Do I let God handle any question of justice which caused my anger.
- Do I pray for those who caused my anger.

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Answer a) Do I let anger give me the power to make things right.

- This is what the world tells us to do. This is what some in Corinth were doing.
- This would be failing the test.

Answer b) Do I give my burden of anger to Jesus and ask him to change my heart.

- This conforms to Jesus' teaching. In (Matthew 11:28–30) Jesus says:

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

- If a church leader is practicing this, then they are also passing the test. This is in spite of the impression it can give others that they are weak.

Answer c) Do I let God handle any question of justice which caused my anger.

- acknowledges we are often tempted to take matters into our own hands and be what we think is the mighty arm of God - whether God wants us to or not.
- When we take matters into our own hands, the situation becomes a worldly conflict.
 - It can become our will and strength versus the will and strength of the other party.
- Letting God worry about justice, ensures that true justice is achieved.

Answer d) Do I pray for those who caused my anger.

- This also conforms to Jesus' teachings. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:44–45:
⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven.
- This models Christ. This test shows that Christ is in us.
- I find that this choice gives me peace in my heart, and grows my trust in God.
- To deal with your anger not as the world does-but as Jesus teaches us, is to pass the test.

Other Harms

- There are many other things that we can do to harm the church.
- We don't have time today to cover every possibility.
- What we can learn from ch. 13 is that we must test our behavior against Jesus' teaching.
- Instead of seeking strength or conflict, we seek submission to God and his word.
- Instead of depending upon our own strength we depend upon Jesus' power.
- If we do this, we will pass the test and Christ Jesus will be in us.

Challenge This Week

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- My challenge for you this week is to test yourself.
- If you disagree with the idea that you need to test yourself, consider some indicators that suggest you should test yourself.
- These are:
 - a) Anger at some event, person, or group of people.
 - Consider who will see justice done.
 - b) A rise in your adrenaline or when we feel your heart start to race.
 - Consider who has the power.
 - c) A feeling of superiority.

- Consider who we are giving glory and praise to - is it God or some idol?
 - d) Desire to put things off - Have we repented from our prior sins? Knowledge of our sin is of no benefit to us without repentance. It still weighs on us. This is our chance to cast it off and be prepared for Jesus' return.
- You may think of other strong emotions as an indicator of the need to test yourself.
 - Our goal is to have Christ in us so that when Jesus does return, he will find no fault in us.

Closing Prayer

- Let me close in prayer.

- Dear Jesus,
- Thank you for Paul's words and warning to the Corinthians.
- Send your Spirit upon us so that we may see our behavior from a different perspective.
- Help us to test ourselves and examine our behavior to see whether or not we have you in us.

- Dear Jesus, we pray that we do have you within us, but if we find a faulty belief or practice, forgive us, and give us the strength to repent from our ways and to show the world what it means to have you in us.
- Thank you for giving us the opportunity to repent before you return again to judge us all.
- We give ourselves to you, now and forever more.
- Amen.

Benediction

- From 2 Corinthians 13:11–14

Final Greetings

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God's people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.