

March 10, 2024

“Testing Our Faith”
Lesson 1

2 Corinthians 13:5-11

Intro

On social media, it is possible to find all kinds of tests. You can test your knowledge of subjects like US History or the Bible. You can even take tests regarding your personality and tastes. When we take tests, we are doing two things. We are finding out what we already know, like a test on US History; or we are gaining insight into some aspect of ourselves that we need more understanding of. Testing can often serve productive and valuable ends. This includes the benefits that come from individual Christians and the Church testing themselves.

Read 2 Corinthians 13:5-11

1. vs. 5: Paul here instructs the Corinthians to “examine yourselves”

This is similar to 1 Cor. 11:28 to examine one’s life during the Lord’s Supper
A time of self-examination is always valuable to keeping our lives on the right path
They are to examine whether they are “in the faith”

This doesn’t mean to think about whether or not they have faith in Christ as Savior
This means to consider how much trust they have in the teachings of Christianity
He says both before and after this idea to “examine yourselves” and “test yourselves”

This test is a Pass/Fail test: no letter grades, no grading on the curve

Either Jesus is in you or He is not

This is what passing or failing the test means

Some in Corinth were dismissive of Paul, unconvinced of his authority

Paul encourages them to examine whether they are in the faith, not if he is

2. vs. 6: Paul speaks to those who doubt him here

He is confident that he has passed the test of being in Christ

He is sure that if his life is examined, the doubters will see this is true also

3. vs. 7: Paul says that he prays for the church that no one will do anything wrong

Paul wants the church to be acting rightly for the church’s benefit

Since he started the church in Corinth, his concern for their behavior could be self-serving

But he says, “not so that people will see that we have stood the test”

He doesn’t want their success for his reputation, but for the church’s benefit

He wants the believers in Corinth to have good reputations for themselves

4. vs. 8: Paul describes here a principle of the highest importance to him

He says that all they do is for the truth—the gospel message above all other things

He notes that “we cannot do anything against the truth”

He can’t do anything that is contrary to the truth

It would be like someone who is committed to honesty saying, “I can’t lie; I won’t”

5. vs. 9: Paul says he is glad to be weak

This has been one of the accusations against him by those pretending to be apostles
Paul has said before that he spoke in weakness, not in strength

Instead of that being a weakness, Paul says it is a strength

Paul didn't seek power or wealth, and he didn't deceive the church

He lived a genuine life, one that conformed to the message he presented

This included willingness to suffer and to place himself lower in weakness

He was willing to suffer hardships to help strengthen the faith of others

He was willing to be self-supporting rather than to ask for money

He also says that he prays for the church to "be fully restored"

This seems to mean that the church would regain the unity in Christ it should have

He seeks the repentance of rebelling believers

This restoration no doubt includes a desire to see them grow in their faith

He would like to see them be "equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17)

6. vs. 10: This verse is Paul's acknowledgement of his reason for writing this second letter

"This is why I write these things when I am absent"

He is currently absent, but wants them to listen to his corrections as if he is there

They know he is an apostle of Christ, and has the authority of that position

He will use that authority if necessary when he returns to visit them

He would prefer they take corrective actions now instead

Paul's tone is sharp, rebuking unspiritual behaviors and attitudes being practiced

He wants them to make the corrections needed based on his words

Paul notes that his authority is intended to help them grow, not to "tear" them down

He again notes that this authority was given to him by the Lord

He does not claim to be anything special, except as Christ is using him

If disobedience toward the gospel continues, Paul needs to be harsh

7. vs. 11: The last verse of this section shows Paul's desire to be affirming rather than corrective

"Rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace"

These are words of encouragement

He calls them "brothers and sisters", a term of endearment

They are part of his "family", and he wants what is best for them

Paul's words here are also challenges to be met

He wants them to be "fully restored", to return to fully living by Christ's words

He wants them to "encourage one another"

He has mentioned comforting others at least 3x earlier in this letter

He wants them to "be of one mind"

Divisions and contentions cause the church to split, not be united

This could include both doctrines and a life of humility toward others

He concludes by telling them to "live in peace"

If that goal is sought, it will eliminate many of their problems

His final words are a blessing for God's love and peace to be present with them

Application: This passage highlights the value and importance of the church to collectively and individually examine their spiritual lives. The process can be painful at times as we find things that are contrary to what Scripture calls us to do. Are we seeking to do good? To avoid evil? Are we pursuing maturity in Christ? Are we seeking to become equipped to participate in the ministry of reconciliation? The good news is, that though this might be difficult or painful at times, God is with us and for us. God desires for us to be people who do good and avoid evil, so He gladly answers our prayers for strength and help to accomplish His will. The more we treat each other like family, the easier we make it for each person to self-examine and make corrections, knowing they are loved and accepted as family members despite imperfections. We all need this, and we all desire this type of community in practicing our faith.

Prayer: Father God, give us the courage to examine ourselves with complete honesty so that we can make corrections where needed. Help us to strive for a life that build others up, especially those who are of the household of faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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