

# 2 Corinthians 13

Sunday 6/23/2013

Well, if you have your Bibles today, I want you to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 13. Today we are going to begin our final leg of our study of the book of 2 Corinthians. We will finish it up today, and next week I am going to take a couple of weeks and do a kind of a mini-camp series on leadership before we get into the book of Proverbs.

I forgot to tell you that Dean from Rockman's School, who teaches down there and works in the bookstore, he and his wife are going to be here next week. They are coming in on Tuesday and they are going to be here all week. So we are going to kind of plan some things. We haven't formalized what we are going to do on the 4th of July yet, but we will include all of them, and he is going to preach to you next Sunday. There will be Bible study this week, but there won't be any on the 4th of July, and he is going to preach Sunday morning. That will be a great blessing. He is a good preacher. We really enjoy having him around here. Then we will get into that mini-camp on leadership, and then we will get into the book of Proverbs. Just as the book of 2nd Corinthians is the handbook on ministry, the book of Proverbs is the handbook on leadership. It contains, as far as I am concerned, the mind of God and gives you the principles that every leader ought to operate by in every scenario. We will go into it in great length. But today we are going to begin the final leg, and we are going to look at 2nd Corinthians chapter 13.

## I. The Contrast of First and Second Corinthians

You remember that the way we did the two books of Corinthians, I wanted to show you the contrast. We took 1st Corinthians first, and we talked about how it is a great picture of the church today. We saw in 1st Corinthians where there were a bunch of spiritual babies. They were arguing and fighting and bickering among themselves. They were fighting and jockeying for position and power, and nothing ever really was getting done. We talked about that, and then I showed you in the book of 2nd Corinthians how it got turned around, and then we studied and have been studying the growth process.

Paul loved this church. If anything is evident to you at this point, and you should have all your notes in your Bible now in these two books and should have a little outline about each one of them so you can better understand it when you teach somebody else, but it is obvious how much Paul loved this church. It is one that he himself started on his first missionary trip when he went to Corinth, and he tries to help them in the book of 1st Corinthians by addressing their issues. We went through it in great detail.

I showed you in chapter 1 how they are arguing about who baptized whom. They are tagging some spiritual significance that if you were baptized by me, and then somebody who is a nobody baptized you, that you would be more prone to be more spiritual because somebody of notoriety baptized you. In that case, Paul, of course, that is ludicrous. But they are fighting about that. They are not going by the book. They are using worldly wisdom instead of godly wisdom.

In chapter 3, they are actually arguing about who won whom to Christ. That you are more spiritual if someone of prominence won you to Christ than just some nobody out there that

opened a Bible and showed you how to be saved. Chapter 4, he tells them that they are not being good stewards of the mysteries of God. They are not teaching the Bible the way that they should. Chapter 5 shows us that there is sin in the church, and there are problems with that that they are not dealing with. Chapter 6, because there are issues in the church, instead of taking it to the church body and letting the pastor or the deacons deal with it, no, no, no. They are going to court. They are taking it to court, and they are suing each other over issues that they shouldn't be suing each other over. Chapter 7 is the great chapter that they are messed up on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. They got that out of whack. In chapter 8, they are eating things that have been sacrificed to idols, and that is causing a big problem in the church. Chapter 9, they are all messed up on their liberty in Christ. Chapter 10, he talks about how they are forsaking the Old Testament principles of examples and ensamples. Remember, I told you that an example is something that you do, but an ensample is something that you are, and they are all messed up on that. Chapter 11, they are messed up on the Lord's Supper and the authority of the church. Chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14 are the great three chapters in your Bible on spiritual gifts, and yes, you are right, they are messed up on that too. Chapter 15, they are messed up on the resurrection of the saints, and in chapter 16, they are messed up on the collection of the saints. They have a lot of issues. This church is a mess. It shows you what always happens when a church forsakes its roots and gets out of the Word of God and stops doing things, as I said, by the book.

Now, you will remember that within this church was a bunch of disgruntled people, and that is what happens in churches where people don't grow or they quit growing. They get contented. They get disgruntled, and this is what happened here. A group of people had come to the place where they thought they knew more about building a church than Paul did, and they gave him problems. It is just like all disgruntled people; they don't like being told that they are wrong, and it caused an issue. This crowd gives Paul problems all through his dealing with this church, not just in 1 Corinthians but also in 2 Corinthians. But at some point in time, the majority of the people recognized that Paul is who he says he is. They understand that he has the authority by God to do what he says he does, and they accept it, and that brings us into the great book that we just finished or are about to finish on 2 Corinthians. But I want you to remember, there was always an element of that church, as there will be in every church, that did not agree and did not like Paul, and all of this makes for some great lessons for any church, no matter where you are at in the history of the world. It is just some great stuff. That brings us up to the book we are about to finish, which is 2 Corinthians.

## II. Second Corinthians: A Handbook on Ministry

Now, in this book, as I already said, it is just the opposite. In this book, where in 1 Corinthians chapter by chapter he dealt with them on issues that they were messed up on, in this book, because an element got right, now he begins chapter by chapter to begin to teach them the aspect of ministries. I have often thought of the Charles Dickens book many years ago that he wrote, called *\*A Tale of Two Cities\**, and you could take these two books and talk about the tale of two churches because they really represent two different types of churches. The 1 Corinthians represents that book shows us a worldly, baby-filled church that is full of disgruntled people who can't get anything done. 2 Corinthians shows us the other side of what a church should be, and it

shows us people who have God's power and blessing in their life and God is getting some things done. For us, 2 Corinthians is a great book to teach us ministry.

You remember we came through each chapter, and I took time with each chapter showing you each one portrays a different aspect of the ministry.

- Chapter 1: The suffering of the minister.
- Chapter 2: The forgiving spirit of the minister.
- Chapter 3: Proof of your ministry.
- Chapter 4: The definition of our ministry.
- Chapter 5: The great perspective of our ministry, the Judgement Seat of Christ.
- Chapter 6: The fellowship of our ministry.
- Chapter 7: The promises that are given to the minister.
- Chapters 8 and 9: Two great chapters that we talked about lay out the heart of the minister.
- Chapter 10: The mind of the minister.
- Chapter 11: The wisdom of the minister.
- Chapter 12: The humility of the minister.
- Chapter 13: The brokenness of the minister.

You know, in the last 40 years or so of my ministry, I was trying to think about this the other day, I probably put out somewhere around 30 guys that we sent out in the course of my life that went out and started churches, maybe more than that, but certainly at least 30 young men and their wives that went out. Some went to the mission field, some went out to start churches. A couple of weeks ago on Thursday night, Kenny Stadler was here, and I introduced him. Kenny is a young man who came out of my ministry about 25, 26 years ago, went up to Monmouth, Illinois, to start a church, and was there for a while, and now he is pastoring a church down in Arkansas.

My birthday was a couple of weeks ago, and on my birthday, I always get two phone calls from two people out of my past. One of them is Richard Zars, who called me, and I had lunch with him yesterday, by the way. The other is a friend of mine that I won to Christ a number of years ago; his name was Greg McClintock. Greg McClintock lives in Monmouth, Illinois. Years ago, when we started a church up in Monmouth, Greg was the prosecuting attorney in that little town, just a small little town up there in Illinois, and I was going up there helping his church. In fact, I preached a revival up there, and in the course of time, Greg got saved, and we became great friends. He went then from being a prosecuting attorney to being a judge, and he just retired a

year ago. He always calls me on my birthday, and so he called me on my birthday this year, and we talked for a while, and then he dropped the bomb on me. He told me that he retired from being a judge last year. He didn't have anything to do. There was a little Baptist church in a town down the road, about 50, 60 people. The pastor resigned, and they asked him if he would be the pastor. So now he is pastoring a church there. Here is another one that got sent out.

I tell you that when I would go to these guys, and after they would go out, I always tried to help them get established, and I would go up and I would spend some time with them. When I went up there, and they would get whatever people they had together, I would always teach two books. I would always go up, and in some cases, I would go up every month, and I would spend time up there, and I would help them. We would get their little people together, and I would try to pull it all together and show them and try to help them, much like what Paul did with the churches that he started. There are two books that I always taught them. They are the only two books that I really cared about them understanding at that point, at the beginning of starting a church, and I would teach them 1st and 2nd Corinthians. When I would go to preach for them and to help establish them, I would always teach these two books, and the reason is because these two books are the foundation on which a church has to be built today. You have to understand the difference of a wrong church to be able to build the right church. I would go up there and spend, in some cases, a year, two years, helping them get off the ground, helping them understand, and these would be the two books that I would deal with.

### III. The Burden of the Minister

Now today, we are going to look at the final chapter, chapter 13, and we are going to talk about the brokenness of the minister. This is another great one that contains one of, I think, the greatest sermons that you could ever give your people. For those of you who are ball captains, whether it is softball or whether it is volleyball or whatever, this is a great devotion. It is a great, great little three-point concept that really puts it all together for you.

When it comes to Paul, you cannot read his books or study his life and not see Paul's love and burden for the churches that he started. He worries over them like a mother hen. He knows what is out there. He has the abundance of the revelation that God gave him. He wants to impart that to them, and he has a real burden for the people and the churches that he starts. We now know from our study last week that, as I just said, God revealed the body mystery to him. He got the whole picture of what the church age was, what God intended it to be, and how to relate it back to the Old Testament, what God was doing with the nation of Israel. He understands now the complete plan that God has put forth, and you see it in his life and you see it in his writings. When he tries to show people what God is doing, and he tries to get them to see how absolutely important it is for them to be involved, and yet he finds people like the church at Corinth that he invested, boy, how many years of his life in, and he sees and they reject what he has to say. They reject God's plan. You can see in his life that it becomes a real burden for him.

Now, I have to say that in time, many people in this church got it, and they started to fulfill God's plan for this church, hence the book of 2 Corinthians. But as in all churches, and some of you boys down the line will get out and pastor on your own, and you will find this to be true: as in all

churches, as in any time period, you will have people who simply will not do anything and resist the plan of God for themselves. The burden that Paul feels is simply the burden that he sees in people that he sees great potential, but he also knows that they are wasting their life. As a pastor, I don't know of any more tragedy in a person's life than to see somebody who you truly have saved, somebody who truly has the ability to be something for God, and yet just simply refuses to do that.

Paul is a great example for us in so many things that he accomplished. There are so many areas that we can glean from, but one of the greatest areas that I ever learned, one of the greatest things I ever learned from him in studying his life, one of the greatest areas that I ever gleaned from him was on how to build a church. Paul taught me by watching what he does, and you have heard me say it many, many times; this is not some great revelation that I am going to drop on you today. You have heard me say it, but I am telling you where I got it from. I saw in his life and understood how he built churches that Paul never built buildings. Paul built people. The key to building a church is not building a building because the building is just four walls and a roof. What makes a church a church is the people. You have heard me say it many, many times that when you build a church, you build it one person at a time. You build it one couple at a time. You build it one family at a time, and that is the way you have to do it, and that is what I saw in my life many, many, many years ago by watching Paul.

You know, in comparison, all parents worry. I watch you parents; your kids are just basically two or three years old, who are already worried about who they are going to marry down the line someplace. I have actually had couples tell me, "Well, we want to have kids, but I don't know if I want to bring kids into this world. It is unstable and all that." It is, and I understand that. I don't think that is a good philosophy of life, but I think that God can take care of your kids like He takes care of you. But I understand that fear, and many parents worry and fret over their children to do well. What parent doesn't get a little queasy in your stomach when you go to teacher-parent conferences at school? I have never met a parent in the world that was looking forward to their son being a drug addict, a drunk, and populating the world with illegitimate children. I never found a parent that said, "That is my boy." We want our kids to be successful, and we want to hear the teacher say, "We don't want to hear the teacher say, 'Well, he is not really applying himself.' We don't want to hear the teacher say, 'He is not doing well.' We don't want to hear the teacher say, 'He should be doing better; he is not reaching his full potential.'" Those words flow off my lips because I heard it so many times when the parent-teacher conferences many, many years ago. We want our children to marry somebody good. We want our children to be a success. Parents know that very in the early years, the skills of self-motivation will either make or break them as being successful in life. Most parents, I think, maybe I am wrong, but I don't think so, most parents want their kids to be better and have more and be more successful and not make the same mistakes that we all made. I think that is true. Like I said, I never saw a parent that wanted their kid to not succeed. No parent ever said, "I want my kid to grow up to be a bum."

Well, if you can understand that as a parent, try to put yourself in Paul's place. He builds these churches. He is an evangelist in the biblical sense of the word. He goes in, he gives birth to these churches, he wins these people to Christ, and you as a parent who wants your child to be

successful, him as a minister wants these churches to be successful and the people in them. I understand that. I feel the same way as a pastor. I want all of you to be successful. Again, the greatest burden that I feel many, many times is watching you waste your life because I know the potential that some of you have. I know the potential that some of you could reach and what you could do. But you know what? It is those things where you know your children, your children don't like you hovering over them and always telling them that they could do this better or do that better. They don't appreciate it in most cases, and just like your children don't appreciate it, as a pastor, most people don't appreciate it. But it doesn't relieve the burden. It doesn't take away from the fact that Paul, like you with your children, wants them to do well.

#### IV. The Brokenness of the Minister and the Corinthian Church's Resistance

Now Paul, in this last chapter, he simply brings all the material together, and he kind of sums it up. You have to remember now, he has given them a lot of information. He has held them accountable in a lot of things, and now we have come to the place where he kind of brings it all together, and the theme of this chapter will be the brokenness of the minister, his burden for his people in the church of Corinth that he founded, a brokenness over the plan of God being rejected by people, God's people to do God's work.

Now I am going to read for you here the first five verses in chapter 13, and then we will come back and we will make some comments on it here this morning, and I will show you the greatest sermon that you could ever give anybody, and it is a good one.

*2 Corinthians 13:1-5*

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

*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.*

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

*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.*

*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?*

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

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Help us to work through this passage today, and as we close out this great book, let us not lose sight of all that we have learned and all that we have come through. Help us, as Paul intended today by this great passage, to pull all of this together and to come away with a common understanding of some things that might make us better for You, and we will thank You now and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

Paul says in verse 1, "This is the third time I am coming to you." He had come to them now for three times trying to get some people in his church to understand what God wanted them to do. If anybody, as I said last week, does it by the book, it was Paul. He quotes Deuteronomy chapter 19 verse 15, which is a great principle in itself, where it says, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses let my word be established." Three times Paul has poured his heart out to them, and three times they have rejected him and shown indifference to him, and now he follows a basic principle.

Titus 3:10-11 is a great principle that you can use in many things in your life.

*Titus 3:10-11*

*A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;*

*Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*

The Bible says the principle is this: if you deal with somebody who is a heretic, somebody who is absolutely against the truth, somebody who just wants to argue and fight and bring up everything that has no relevance to what you are trying to do, he says, "Give it to him once, give it to him twice." After the second time, you can be done with it. Now Paul goes the extra mile and goes the third time, and there is always an extra mile clause when you are dealing with people to be used at your discretion. But fundamentally, the Bible says you give a man the truth once, you give it to him twice, and if he is a heretic and he rejects it, it is on him and it is on his own.

There are some great lessons to learn in this great passage, and some of you already are well aware of some of the things I am going to talk about today, and you have to realize that as Paul is pointing out here, that it is very clear there are some people that God puts into your life that you are simply not going to be able to reach. You are going to have to come to terms with that. One of the things I tell people when they start working with people is to never take anything personal because there will be people that you try to help, people that you have relationship with, who will pretty much turn around and do some pretty terrible things to you, and if you wear your feelings on your shirt sleeve and you take things personal, it is going to knock you out of that thing. At some point in your spiritual growth, you have to realize that you can't help everybody. Not everybody you are going to give the truth to is going to accept it, and there will be some people in your life, and I am not just talking about unsaved people, I am talking about saved people, there will be some people in your life that you are just never going to be able to get to. You are never going to be able to reach them. People whose lives are such a disaster, and yet in

the midst of their broken lives with all of their problems, you see a very indifferent attitude of self-righteousness that you can't ever break through.

You see it down on the street with the people that you work with in the homeless ministry. I don't care how low a guy gets if he doesn't have anything. I have seen drunks on skid row who had absolutely nothing left, and yet they were self-righteous and bragged about the fact that they knew where to find a meal, that they bought their own drinks. I am telling you, self-righteousness has no bottom line to it. You will find in the midst of people whose lives are an absolute disaster, people's lives who are losing their families, they are losing their kids, their kids you can almost look on a projected chart and see those kids out in the world, one, two, three, four, five, off they go. Their life is an absolute mess in every aspect, but yet they reject any truth that comes their way. You have to learn to deal with that. You have to understand that you really do.

Now, that is what Paul faces here, and so will you when you start to work with people. Verse 3 says, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me." Really? This is the Apostle Paul. This is the man who just had the revelation of God, that God revealed to him the whole church, and there is some idiot in the church of Corinth, or group of idiots, that are so disgruntled when they see Paul because they don't like Paul, that they are saying, "Okay, Paul, we seek some proof of Christ in you." Really? Paul is probably, in the New Testament anyhow, probably my favorite character, and I can sympathize with him so much, and I have learned so much from him. I know you can't go back in a time capsule, but I would love to go back and defend Paul. I would love to go back knowing what I know now and take on these disgruntled people that wanted to bring charges against Paul. I think that for me, just because of what I have got from him, I mean, I think I could do a good job of it knowing what I know about Paul and what I know about the church. I would have loved for God just to let me go back in time and walk in that door when he is in that meeting and they are all coming on him, and I just say, "Guys, I know I am dressed different than you are, my hair is a little different than yours, but I have something I want to say to you in response to your last question. Let's see now, hmm, looking for a proof that he is really God's man, are you? Well, let's start with this: how about the abundance of the revelation that God gave him that He never gave you? Oh, I know, I have another one coming through here, give me a minute, I am a little jet-lagged, I just came back 19 centuries. Oh, I know, how about what God is doing in his life in people and starting churches that He has never done in your life? Hmm, yes, I got it now, all of my beaming up, all my microorganisms are now coming back together, I got it. How about the fact of this, guys, how about the fact that you people who don't like Paul, who are criticizing him and saying, 'Can you give me some proof that you are God's man?' How about the fact that you are the proof? How about the fact that you would not even be saved and be here if it wasn't for Paul?" I would love to defend him. I would love to defend him.

Years ago, I had a young guy that, and he was a nice kid, but you couldn't teach him anything. He wanted to go be a missionary. We all told him, "You are not missionary material," and this is probably 30 years ago, maybe longer than that, and some of you would remember this guy if I said it, so I won't bring it up because he is still in Kansas City and he is pastoring a church. He went to the mission field, failed there, came back, and about 22, 23 years ago, he started. This

kid was the most, you couldn't teach him anything, and he was the most self-righteous guy I think I ever met in my life. He thought that he had the truth that I didn't have and all the other pastors, and he would get up in front of his church, which was six people, and he would tell them, he would tell them that God showed me things that He never showed Bob, that He never showed Jeff, that He never showed Mount Savoca, and I have all these great truths, and you come to my church and we will have a great deep spiritual relationship like nobody you ever had. One time he got me and another pastor, took us out to lunch. Now, at that time in my Sunday school, I was running about 1400 people, a long time ago. He was running six. So he took me and Pete, the other pastor, took us to lunch, and I didn't know what the lunch was about, and during the course of the lunch, he said, "I would really like to help you guys." He says, "God has shown me some things that I think I could really help you in your ministries." Now my buddy, he was kind of, didn't know what to say. I always know what to say. I said, "Now, what do you have?" And he started to list some things, and I said, "Oh, okay." I said, "Kevin, let me see if I got this straight." Not my Kevin over here, another Kevin, never this one. I said, "Okay, and I want you to know from the bottom of my heart, I appreciate you coming in and sharing all that God has given you because we obviously are in need. So you want me to do this, you want me to do this, you think I need to change this and change this and then do this, is that correct?" He says, "Yes, that is right." And I said, "If I do all of those, you are guaranteeing me I can run six like you?" And I was on a good day. I couldn't believe it. I mean, I don't claim to know everything, and I have a lot to learn, I am sure, but you know what? There are some people, man, like when Paul was faced with it, they want proof of Paul. Really? Now you have the abundance of revelation. You have never built anything. He has come in and built this whole church, and now suddenly you know more about it than he does. This is what he was faced with.

Now, this is what the church of Corinth was all about. You see, I don't care, you find these things in everybody and where they are at, and a great principle taught here for ministry is simply this: people who do nothing for God are always criticizing the people who are. It is just that simple. In doing so, Titus 3:11 says, "are condemned of themselves," because the bottom line is Paul was doing it by the book. Paul was going by what God gave him to do. The church at Corinth was so screwed up they couldn't figure anything out, and there are people in the church. Oh, I would love to go back and defend him. I would really like to be back at the crucifixion. There would have been a fourth cross up there if I had been there. I would have loved to stick my foot in that thing, man. There are many places in the Bible that I read, and you know, I have an imagination like anybody else, I would just love to go back. I have always been fascinated about going back in time anyhow, and I would have absolutely loved to have been dropped in the places in the Bible where somebody needed to stand up for the guy that was taking a shot, man. Of course, the reason why God didn't have anybody stand up to take a shot is because the guy got stronger through the shot. I understand that. Paul became who he was because of the burden that he had. I understand all that, but it just boils my blood that somebody would look at Paul, the man who changed my life, the man who taught me everything, and then say, "Give us some proof of Christ being in you." I will give you a proof, man. I am going to drop that one right there.

## V. The Christian's Maintenance Program: Self-Examination

Now, in this chapter, in his closing remarks, he leaves them with one of the greatest teachings he could ever have given them, just three simple points. It sets up one of the greatest sermons you will ever put together, and certainly one of the greatest devotions that you ever have. You know, a devotion is something when you are a ball captain or you get asked to do it or you are in the prayer groups, you know, it is a very short thing. It is something as you take a verse, you want to take a thought, you want to take something, you don't want to give them three out points and a poem, you just take some thought and a concept and leave it with them, and boy, this worked. But it is also a great sermon. What an ending to a great book and what a message to all of us today. Sometimes you just have to move on. You can't make somebody do what is right. You will waste your time with indifferent people and never get to the ones who you can really affect, you can really affect their lives.

Now, in verse 5, he gives them three points, and this little outline for them to follow, and this is as good as it gets for us if we follow them in our own lives. This is great for if you are a young Christian, it is great for if you are a medium Christian, or if you are great if you are a well-done Christian. It works for you, and it is what I call in Christianity, in your walk with God, a maintenance program, and everybody needs one.

He says in verse 5:

*2 Corinthians 13:5*

*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?*

Let's just take those and break those three points down for just a few minutes, and then we will be out of here.

1. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. I cannot tell you this morning how important it is for God's people to do self-examinations. It is one of the reasons for the church. It is one of the reasons for the preaching of the church. People examine, we examine ourselves all the time. My wife has a constant fear of ticks getting on her body. Most women do. She will go out in the yard, take Otis out, and Otis will come back, and she will be looking in the mirror to see if she has got any ticks. It is a thing where we all examine ourselves. If something, we want to look in the mirror to make sure our makeup is okay. If it is hot out, the first thing a lady does when she goes into a restroom is to excuse herself and go to the restroom, make sure her mascara is not running, make sure her face is still on, make sure her hair is done right. I see people at the gym all the time; they get on the scale, they are always weighing themselves, they are checking themselves. We check ourselves about everything. We really do. I have seen people who had a sore throat, and they looked down my mouth and asked, "Do you have any white stuff in the back of my throat?" All the time, all the time. Bug bites, oh man, you know, you have a bug bite on your leg. I was out there, I sat down in the grass last night, had our devotions, chiggers, I got them everywhere. I was only down there for 10 minutes, but you see them little chiggers, they get everywhere. I don't want to tell you, man, checking yourself, looking everywhere you go. Every church, you know, you should never go to a church that always makes you feel uplifted and you have to. I understand that, but you

just go to one of these feel-good churches. A church should force you to self-examine yourself. It really should. What you hear, you look at yourself in light of that scripture, and then you fix what is wrong. Sometimes on a daily, sometimes on an hourly, but it is the reason why God gave the concept of the church and the preaching and the teaching in the Bible. God would rather have you come to church on Sunday morning and He preached a fire out of you and you self-examine yourself and get right than me to make you feel good, you go out of here and God has to deal with you on His own. All my life I have had people in my ministry or come through my ministry that, and they are your friends as long as you don't have to correct them, and at the moment you do, you are the bad guy. I have had people over the years come into my church, you know, that the women ran the family. When she found out she couldn't run me, I was the bad guy. You always have people who don't want to self-examine themselves, or in some cases, if you have to deal with their children. You remember back when he was dealing with them in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 over the Lord's Supper? Remember what he told them? He says, "If you come and take the Lord's Supper and you do all of this," he says, "before you do it," he says, 1 Corinthians 11:28-31

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. You see that? He is saying, "Before you take the Lord's Supper, examine yourself. Understand what the Lord's Supper is about." It just isn't a cheap meal of a little piece of bread and a glass of grape juice. It commemorates the broken body of Christ. I don't think there is any more holier time in all of the church than when the church comes together to take the Lord's Supper, but we go in it like we are eating a McDonald's, and there is a time when we have to examine ourselves, and a Christian should have that maintenance program. Now it says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." This verse has always been used, and I understand it in a way that you examine yourself to make sure you are saved. I am not taking that away from it. I understand that, but there is more than that here. He is first of all talking to a church of saved people. The faith is more than just accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior. The faith would represent the full body of Christian doctrine. What he is saying is to be in the faith means you are saved, sure, but also well established in what you are supposed to believe as a Christian. That is what he is talking about. He is not just saying, "Examine yourself to make sure you are in the faith." This church for the most part is saved people. He is saying, "Look inside you. Do you live what you believe?" That is what he is saying. Are you in the faith? That is a great question. Salvation, "Well, I am saved." Can you explain what happened the day you got saved? Can you take me to the Bible and show me the actual process that took place? That is what he is talking about. We have a lot of people that believe they can lose their salvation. You know why? It is because they cannot explain number one what happened the day they got saved, because if you understood that, then you know you never could lose your salvation, and they struggle with that. Spiritual gifts, do you understand them? Pre-millennialism, why do we believe that? Why do we stand on that? Can you explain it? Are you in the faith? It is more than just, "Yes, I am saved." It is, "Are you grounded? Do you

understand what you are supposed to believe?" The Bible issue, why we believe the King James Bible is the Word of God. Don't you have any grasp of manuscript evidence at all? Church history? Your roots? The Bible says there are seven things a Christian is not to be ignorant of. I guarantee you 99% of God's people are ignorant of them today when the Bible says we are not to be ignorant of it seven times. I am a Baptist. You know why I am a Baptist? I know there are a lot of goofy Baptists out there, and I wouldn't give you two cents for most of them, but I am a Baptist because down through church history, there were seven Baptist distinctives that those people, long before they were called Baptists, and they are the same things I hold to. Do you know what they are? See, when it talks about examine yourself to see if you are in the faith, it is not just talking about being saved, and yes, we should examine ourselves where we are at with God every day, but examine yourself, are you growing? Do you know? Somebody says, "I am saved." Big deal. If you don't even know what you believe, what you are supposed to believe, what does it prove? He says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

2. Prove your own selves. Romans 12:2 says that we are to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God in our life. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, I tell people this all the time, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Somebody tells you something about the Bible or tells you something about somebody or something, don't just believe what they say. Take them and prove what they say. That is what the Bible says. What is so hard about that? Now, in Judges 3:1, I gave it to you last week, he said that He left, after all the battles they fought, that He left some nations there for them to fight that would prove them. God wants to prove you and me. But I have to tell you this, God wants to prove you, but He wants you to prove Him. You know what He says in Malachi 3:10? God says, "You need to prove Him." It is an incredible verse. God says, "Don't take Me by faith. Prove Me. Prove Me out. Find out if I am who I say I am." Now, if God allows you and me to prove Him and suggests we should, you can bet your bottom dollar He is going to prove you and me. Now, how does He do that? How does a person prove themselves? I mean, when you go to, you go someplace and you want to get on an airplane, you have to prove you are who you are, so you have a driver's license. I guess we get John 3:16 cards. I had a cop pull me over years ago, and I was on my way to the hospital. Somebody had been in a wreck, and I was, you know, and he pulled me over because I was going too fast. Okay, that was an emergency, you know, and he walks up to the car, and you know, and I have my Bible laying on the seat and everything, and he says, "Excuse me, sir," he says, "You were going fast." And I said, "Yes, sir, I was. No question about it." He says, "What is your hurry?" He said, I said, "Well, I am a pastor. I am going, I am going to the hospital. A person of mine was in a hospital, an officer. I was going too fast. Just, you can give me the ticket, I am guilty." He says, "You got any proof you are a pastor?" I looked up and I said, "I can quote John 3:16, would that work for you?" It didn't. How do you prove it? Do you have a Christian card on you? I mean, you go to Costco, there is a guy standing right there looking at your card. Everybody get your Christian card out, let me see it. How do you prove it? I mean, how do you prove it when the Bible says to prove all things? How do you prove it when Romans chapter 12 says, when he says that you prove with that good and acceptable word of God? How do you prove it when he says, "Prove your own selves"? How in the world do you do that? It is real simple. It is

real simple. It is not hard at all. It is real easy. It comes down to this: does what you say and what you do in your life match up? It is not hard. If what you say in life and what you do in life, do they match? Is it by the book? Do you claim to be a Christian here, but you operate outside the book here? It is simple. It is not hard. You remember when you came through 2 Corinthians chapter 3, way back in verse 2, it said that you and I are a book, an epistle written on our hearts. That is what, remember, read of all men. You are a book. Romans 14:7 says, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Somebody is always reading your book. How do you prove who you really are? How do you prove you are who you say you are? Do you live what you say? It is that simple. Not hard. Somebody showed me online the other day that you can go buy a book now that has that you can put your face on the cover of the book with a title, any title you want, and they will take a book and like you wrote the book, you know, "My Life Story," you know, with your name on it, Bob Alexander on it, in color, and it is a book about that thick, but when you open it up, the pages are blank. One of them gimmicks you get on the internet. Remember, everything is true that is on the internet. You remember that too. I often saw that the moment I saw that, I thought to myself, "Boy, that ought to be exactly what most of God's people get. They could get that book, put their picture on the front, and title it, 'My Relationship with God.'" When you open it up, it is all blank pages. You are a book, and people read you, and you don't prove yourself by just what you do. You prove yourself by two aspects: what you say and what you do. What you claim to believe and what you do. "Well, I claim to believe this," but when you do it another way, outside the Word of God. Read the book. Read the book. Read the book. Somebody had a T-shirt on here, I think it was a teacher, said, "Read." Last week, was it you? Yeah, you are a teacher. That is a great one. You had to read, you had to read books. He says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." He says, "Prove your own selves."

3. Know ye not your own selves. Sure we do. The issue for you and me, let's be honest today, the issue for you and me is the fact that we don't know who we really are. The issue for both of us is the fact that we don't want to be honest about who we are. There is a fundamental reason for everything that goes on in people's lives. I am going to show you the fundamental reason. You want to mark this down. I want to find a fundamental reason why people quit going to church, found in James chapter 1, verses 22 through 25. It is not hard. It simply says this: James 1:22-25

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. Now, the first thing he says in verse 22 is, "Don't deceive yourselves." That is what most people do. Most people deceive themselves. You see what the Bible does when you go to a church that preaches the Bible, any church, what the Bible does is play that game that we all played when we read the fairy tale many, many years ago, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" When you go into the church and open up the Bible, and I have told you

many, many times, the Bible is the only book when you start reading it, it starts reading you, and what you are faced with and what you are forced to face is who you really are, and you look at your natural face in a glass. He says, "A hearer of the word," that is on Sunday, "not a doer of the word," that doesn't match Monday through Saturday. See how simple it is? Now, our church has been exceptionally blessed with naturally beautiful women, so what I am about to say doesn't really affect any of you here, but you and I both know that there are women in the world, saved women, unsaved women, not women of the world, women in the world who you never, when you meet them, you never see what they really look like. You are looking at them under five pounds of Revlon, Max Factor, Avon, and silly putty. You are looking at them not as they really appear, and we don't have that problem here because all of you could wear no makeup at all, and if you walked into a dark room, it would immediately light up. I believe that with all my heart. There are churches that you go to to see what you can do, that part of their church covenant and doctrine is women don't wear makeup, can't wear it, it is against the Bible. If you went to those churches one or two times, you would have to decide if you were in a \*Creature from the Black Lagoon\* movie theater or you were in a church someplace. As old Bob Jones Sr. used to say in those cases, "Nobody here, the barn door needs painting. Go ahead and paint it." I understand all that. Men are the same way. I have seen some of your kids in the restroom. Real men are waiting to go to the bathroom. Your little kids go in there, lock the door, and comb their hair, fix their hair, make sure the part is just right. I was in there one day, one of those little guys came in, and he stood in front of that mirror, and somebody was out there banging on the door, and he was in there, he was just, they get this stuff and it makes your hair stick up like pointed stuff. I am not sure what that is all about. We were someplace a while back, and it was this guy who had his hair all shaved, and up the middle of his hair, he had real stick bristles just come up like a mohawk, but it was about that high, and it was green, purple, and yellow. It was all colored up really nice. I looked over at my wife and I says, "Where is he at when you need to clean your battery terminals?" But this kid was, and he was, and I was standing back there kind of watching him, and we just had it all right. I went up behind him and just went, "Who missed it all up again?" Open the door. Guys do the same thing. My point is all this: if there is a point in any of this, you wouldn't dare, a woman wouldn't dare climb out of bed in the morning, come to church with her natural face on. Come to church with her natural face on. Most guys would neither. We have to fix ourselves so we are presentable. I am not against that at all. I am really not. I am making a point. A lot of people do that spiritually inside when they come to church on Sunday morning. They prep it up, prop it up, they get it all ready to go. By the same token, people cover up the worldly ways in their life that they look one way on Sunday, and you see the problem is, and why people don't go to good Bible-preaching churches very much anymore, is because all that gets stripped off. I think the most humiliating thing that could ever happen to anybody is a strip search because they look for anything you can hide anywhere your imagination could think you could hide it. If we had down here where when you come down the steps that there was two deacons there, and two female deacon wives, and the deacon men would take the men into a room and the deacon women wives would take the women into the room and say, "We have to strip search you to come into our church." Do you think anybody would come to this church? I guarantee they would. Who

would? Oh, Darren. Darren said he would. Okay, I am surprised that Dagle didn't have his hand up too. Yeah, okay, Darren, thank you, more information than any of us needed to know. But you know, we laugh and have a good time about that and how stupid that we never do that, but you know, in a sense, every time you come in here and sit down and open up the Bible and the Word of God gets preached, you get strip-searched. You actually think you can hide some things from God in places He can't find them. Now, that is why people don't like churches that preach the Bible because you can't hide anything. It forces you to look in that perfect law of liberty, and it says that when a person does that and they don't like what they see, did you notice the verse that says that he goes his way, not God's way, his way? You see, the Bible forces us to look at ourselves. The Bible forces us to know who we really are, and we all do, we just don't want to admit it. When you come to a church where they don't make you feel good all the time and they are always fluffy about things, and they get right down to business because they understand God's business, and when that Holy Spirit of God walks up and down this aisle and in between these aisles, brother, you ain't got a stitch left on. The Bible says all things are naked and open unto Him and the eyes of which we have to do. I am telling you, that is why they don't come to church. That is why they don't like churches. If we had the lights down this morning and a praise band over here and a drummer in a cage back here and a crystal ball of the disco and the lights were off and I came walking out and talking to you, we would pack the place out. You see, when you know yourself, you not only know your strengths but you know your weaknesses. When you know yourself, you are honest with yourself. You are honest about yourself. You don't try to go all through your life blaming your issues and your problems on somebody else or something else. You know, at the end of the day, it is me and it is you, you and me, and you and me alone control who and what has access to us, and there comes a responsibility and accountability of what we let in and what we don't. We are responsible for the circumstances and situations we find ourselves in through the bad choices that we have made, through the bad relationships that we have had, through the dumb things that we have done. When they are not out of our control, when we didn't do anything wrong, and we find ourselves in those situations, we are still responsible to do what the book says. Those three points are the greatest maintenance program you can check yourself on. They really are. They are three things that you can carry with you the rest of your life.

## VI. Conclusion: The Importance of Maintenance and Paul's Farewell

You do maintenance on your house, don't you? You do maintenance on your car, don't you? We spend money maintaining our pets. We maintain our boats if we have them. We maintain our trucks if we have them. We maintain our lawn. We maintain our shrubs. Why would we not, why would we not do maintenance on our own Christian life? I will tell you why, it is simple: because it is easier to accept the fact that your car is filthy dirty and needs a good wash job than it is our own lives. That is why. My advice: sell the house, sell the car, kill the dog, sink the boat, get rid of the truck, pave the lawn over and paint it green, burn the shrubs out, and just spend all that time examining yourself. That is my advice. Forget the car.

Do you know what would happen when you would drive your car a hundred thousand miles without needing maintenance on it? Some of you probably do. That was a pretty stupid thing to say. I am sure many of you do. When that little red light on the dash that says "oil" comes on, it means something. You never change your oil for a hundred thousand miles. You never change the air filter. You never check the transmission fluid. You never check or rotate the tires. You never have the spark plugs changed. I don't even know if cars have spark plugs today, but you never check. You never change the wipers. You never mess with the electrical system. You never check the headlights or fix them with the taillights. Your whole car would fall apart, and you know it. It is the same way with your house when you stop and think about it. If you never cleaned it, ladies, if you never dusted, if you never, guys, replaced the rotted wood around the windows, if you never changed the furnace filter, I mean, if you never checked the air conditioning and the gas and the freon or the electrical stop, if you never scrubbed the floor, you never cleaned the carpet, you never washed the windows, you don't want to be like it would be just like so many of God's people's lives today. It would be an absolute mess to live in. It would be miserable, a total mess. Remember, you have to remember this: it can get to the place where it is impossible to get fixed. You can let your car go so long that you can't do anything with it anymore. You can get your house in such disarray that nobody will buy it, and you are stuck with it. We can get our lives, because we won't do maintenance on it, in such disarray that it is impossible to fix, not because the Bible says it is impossible to do it, it is the fact that you put yourself in a situation that is impossible to do it. You can bet on it, maintenance in it. That is where some people get. You see it all the time. You see it all the time.

Now, in his life, Paul has many lessons for us, and this is one of the greatest is found in this chapter. It is the fact that we can't reach everybody. There are some people, saved and lost, who just are untouchable. Some people will never change because at the end of the day, bottom line, fundamental, foundational problem, they simply don't want to. So in this final chapter, he simply tells the church, "I have done all I can do." Sometimes you get to the place in your life that that is where you are at, and in people's lives, there can come a time when you have done all that you can do. He says, "Three times I have come unto you, one more than I should have, and three times I have met resistance to God's plan and God's Word." He says, "I have shown you how to do the ministry, and now you have to take responsibility for your own life, and you have to do it." He says, "I must move on because there are other people who want to hear the truth, who if I stay here with you and spend and waste all of my time, I will never get anything done with you, but I will never reach them who want to do something with the Word of God. I have a commission to God to teach the Word of God to people."

He leaves them in verse 14, and the last thing he says is a great thing. It says:

*2 Corinthians 13:14*

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

I think that is one of the greatest things that he could have said toward the end because those are the three main things in your life you have to have. The three most important aspects to your

relationship with Christ is simply that: it is the grace of God, understanding the love of God, and having the communion with the Holy Spirit of God. The way that you guard those three things in your life is by the little outline that Paul just gave us: by constantly examining yourself, constantly proving yourself, constantly knowing who you really are. Next week, we will begin to look at leadership. Leadership will demand of you this three-point outline. Leadership will demand that a man or a woman understand these three things. They understand how the daily maintenance of himself. There is nothing special about leaders. They are not made out of special flesh and special blood. They don't have bones made of another element that common people have. Leadership is based on basically a man or a woman coming to the point where they understand what God has done for them. They understand the importance of it, and then they undertake a maintenance program in their life to never get out of step with being in step with where God wants them to be. We will start that next week. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You and praise You for this great book and for that great chapter.