

Sermon Notes on II Cor. 13:5-9, Trinity XXI

1. Some of the Corinthians had treated Paul very badly. II Cor. 1:15-22 reveals that Paul had been accused of fickleness, of changing his mind without reason or cause. For Paul's answer to that see the sermon study on that text in this series. Furthermore, some of them accused Paul (chapters 10-12) of being inferior to the other apostles. He defends his apostleship in the name of Jesus. They said his words in person were weak but, when absent, he was sharp and sarcastic. Read II Cor. 13:1-5. Paul warns them that he's about to come to them. If they have any more accusations they should have two or three witnesses. He will not spare the false accusers. And, if necessary, he will speak strongly.
2. The false accusations were hurting the accusers and the congregation, not Paul. That is why he begins by saying in our text: "Examine yourselves whether you are in the true faith. Test yourselves." Before we go on with the text, let us speak about this. Paul said at I Cor. 11:28 "Let a person examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." When a true believer examines himself he finds that he needs to repent of his sins and flee to Jesus for forgiveness. And, when going to communion, to remind himself that he is receiving the body and blood of Christ. If he does not repent, does not believe, he becomes guilty of Christ's body and blood. In fact, Christians should examine themselves every day. They must confess their sins, believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, and amend their sinful lives. Paul told the Corinthians to examine themselves because their frequent false accusations betrayed lack of repentance and faith. That is why he spoke so sharply to them. When a member of the church is living in unrepented sin, the pastor must confront him, for his good.
3. Paul goes on in vs. 5: "Don't you know that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless you fail in your test?" Paul means: "Christ and unrepented sin cannot live together." On the thought of "Christ in you" read Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:17. We quote Jn. 17:23 where Christ says to the Father: "I in them (the Christians) and You in Me." Christ lives in Christians by faith. The Father lives in Christ because both are God. By faith Christians are as close to Christ as Christ, the God-man, is to the Father. But Paul is warning the Corinthians: "Unless you fail in your test." If they are living in unrepented sin, Christ has left them. They are unbelievers.
4. In vs. 6 he says: "I hope you'll see that we have not failed in our test." He means: "You can see that Christ lives in us. And if that is so, your false accusations are sin."
5. In vs. 7 Paul prays that they won't add sin to sin by accusing Paul of not having Christ. Paul says he'd rather have them do what is right even if Paul seems to have failed the test. Paul is making every effort to make them repent of their sin and make amends.
6. Vs. 8 means: "Your repentance, faith and new life are the truth. We will never work against that."
7. In vs. 9 Paul tells us that he would prefer to be weak, not to use his apostolic authority, and for them to be strong, that is, repent of their sins, believe in Jesus and amend their sinful lives. He ends by saying: "And we pray that you may grow to be complete." That means to repent of sin, believe in Jesus and produce the fruits of faith, love toward God and neighbor.
8. In this text Paul shows clearly that his highest concern was the life of his hearers. He was fearful that their unrepented sin might lead to loss of soul. He would not yield where there was impenitence but he was very yielding where there was repentance and faith.

Sermon Outline on II Cor. 13:5-9, Trinity XXI

Theme: PAUL, THE MODEL PASTOR

Introduction: We know from the thirteen epistles of Paul that he was a great man of God. God used Paul to bring the Truth to the Christian Church. He was truly an instrument of the Holy Spirit. But he was also a great pastor. He wanted to teach the people the truth. And he wanted them to live the truth. The congregation at Corinth contained quite a number of troublesome people. The two letters to the Corinthians show us that Paul is truly the model pastor.

I-He Could Do Nothing Against the Truth but Only Work for It. Vs. 8

A-There was a group in Corinth who were working against the truth. We know from II Cor. 1:15-22 that some of the Corinthians accused Paul of fickleness, of changing his mind frequently. This caused them to doubt his preaching. They thought his preaching could not be trusted. When they were attacking Paul, they were attacking the Gospel, the truth. At II Cor. 10:10-11 we are told that some of the people despised Paul in person when he spoke. Actually, they were attacking not Paul but the Gospel, the Truth. At II Cor. 12:20-21 we read that some of the Corinthians were living lives not in keeping with repentance and faith. There was quarreling, jealousy, angry feelings, selfishness, slander, gossip, proud and disorderly behavior. They were working against the Truth which Paul was preaching and teaching.

B-Paul tells the Corinthians that he could work only FOR the Truth. He tells the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they really believed. Vs. 5. He said that they should test themselves. How were they to do that? He asked them: "Don't you know that Jesus Christ is in you--unless you fail in your test?" To have Christ in oneself means to be repenting of one's sin and believing in Christ. Christ lives in the sinner's heart by faith. Eph. 3:17. Unless they had fallen away from the faith, this question from Paul would truly make them examine themselves. Then Paul adds: "I hope you'll see that we haven't failed in our test." In other words: "I and my helpers have Christ and His Word in us. That is why we speak as we do." Truly, Paul could do nothing against the Truth but only work for it. To bring a wayward and wandering believer back is not easy. It causes the pastor to suffer.

II-Paul Was Praying That the Corinthians Would Grow into Maturity. Vs. 9

A-The meaning of Christian maturity. It does not mean that they become sinless. Even Christians will remain to be sinners until they die. The flesh which they carry about is the home of sin. The Christian sins unwillingly, but he sins nonetheless. By Christian maturity (vs. 9) Paul means that all Christians must think and do as he did: They must do nothing against the Truth but only work FOR it. That means to live in constant repentance over sin. That means to maintain one's faith in Christ at all times for "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." Paul was simply trying to wake these wayward Corinthians up to true Christian faith and life.

B-Paul did this in true Christian love. He says: "We are glad when we're weak and you are strong." Vs. 9. He also said: "We want you to do what is right even if we may have seemed to fail." Paul was concerned with the people, not his own reputation. At II Cor. 12:14 Paul said: "I don't want your things but I want you." Paul truly was concerned about their welfare not his own desires or reputation. He was doing everything in his power to make them stand tall before God with a clear conscience. Paul will always be a model pastor to all pastors.