

2 Corinthians Ch13v1-14 - Body Building

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0:00] 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and Christine is going to come and read for us this morning.

So that's 2 Corinthians chapter 13, beginning at verse 1 and that's on page 1167, whether you've got the blue or the red Bible.

This will be my third visit to you. Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. 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, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me.

He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power.

[1:23] Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power, we will live with him in our dealing with you. 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. And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

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.

For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. We are glad whenever we are weak, but you are strong, and our prayer is that you may be fully restored.

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.

[2:36] 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.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All God's people here send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Thanks, Chris, for reading. Thank you. We come to the end of our studies in 2 Corinthians.

And if you've missed any of the talks along the way, you'll find them on the website. Most of them are there. And I encourage you to go back and look through some of the passages in your time.

It's been a great encouragement and help to us as we lean upon God's strength in our weakness. So let's pray and ask for God's help as we finish up in this letter this morning.

[4:01] The Apostle Paul writes, For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Father, you know our weaknesses. You know our struggles. And how we need to be strengthened and built up in our faith.

And so we trust that through your word and by your spirit, you will make us a strong church.

That together we would walk faithfully with you. So help us now, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So how strong are you? I don't mean how many kgs can you lift or how many chin-ups you can do on the bar at the back there.

[5:08] I mean, are you strong enough to stand against the blows and punches of false teachers? Are you working out?

Are you building up those spiritual muscles so that you remain strong in the faith? Because today we're going to see how we can be a strong church.

So this is going to be a workout session together as we look at God's word. Look at chapter 13, verse 1. Paul begins his conclusion with this by reminding us that he says, This will be my third visit to you.

If you remember back during his first visit, he had arrived in Corinth. He had preached the good news about Jesus, who had died, and how by trusting him we can have life. And all those who had believed were gathered together into a church. Then on his second visit, which was a lot more difficult, in fact, as described in chapter 2, verse 1, as a painful visit, Paul had to deal with some serious sin issues in the church.

[6:28] Now he plans a third visit. So look at verse 10 with me. He says, This is why I write these things.

So the whole letter. This is why I write these things when I am absent. That when I come, that will be my third visit, 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. So Paul's hope and desire is that when he visits the church, they will be built up.

Because being strong is vital, because there are those who will try to lead us away from Christ and the gospel. We were warned about this in chapter 11.

If you have a look back in chapter 11, verse 13. Remember the so-called super apostles had arrived in and were creating and causing havoc in the church.

[7:40] And we're told about these people in chapter 11, verse 13. For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

And no wonder for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. They were teaching things like, well, you've got God's word, but your word in your heart is more trustworthy.

Listen to what you want, what is best. Let's get back to chapter 13. So Paul is saying, look, when I come to visit you, when I come to you, I want you to be in good shape.

I want you to be working out so that you are built up. In fact, it's even stronger than that. He's saying, if you're not in shape, when I come, I will knock you into shape.

That's how forceful he is. Look again at verse 10. I wonder if you picked it up. In verse 10, he says, 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.

[8:59] He's saying, get yourself fit, or I'm going to get you fit. Well, who is Paul to talk with such authority?

Why should we listen to his words? Well, he has authority because he is an apostle. This is something he's been trying to teach them through the letter.

So jump back to chapter 12, verse 12. He says, I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders, and miracles.

So all the signs and wonders that the apostle Paul had done proved his authority. It was a mark of authentication that he was called by God to this special task.

And he uses that authority to build up the church. So chapter 12, at the end of verse 19, he says, and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.

[10:20] You see, Paul's words are not to be treated lightly. It's not just an opinion he has. They come with the very authority of Christ. So chapter 13, verse 3, he says, you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me.

Well, that's a big thing to claim, isn't it? To say that everything that I say and the words that I write is Christ speaking through me. But that's exactly what he is saying.

Because the words that we read here in 2 Corinthians, as we listen to these words, we are to listen to them as if they were the very words of Jesus Christ.

It's like Paul is their spiritual gym instructor. He is using his authority to build and strengthen the church.

Now, I hope we know that physical exercise is good for you and that if we don't exercise, then physically we get out of shape. we become unfit and those health issues arise.

[11:36] Well, in the same way, we need to be fit spiritually. We need to be strengthened together as a church and built up. Paul put it like this when he was encouraging a young pastor called Timothy.

I don't have it. You'll just have to listen to it. He says to Timothy, he says, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things.

In other words, he's saying to them, prioritize strengthening yourself spiritually. Prioritize strengthening the church.

Listen to and submit to the apostolic authority which is God's word which we are looking at right now today. This is God's word written down so that we can stand strong in the face of opposition of false teachers who may want to lead us astray.

So how are we going to do that? We've set the scene, be fit, be strong, let us be built up together. How is that going to happen? Well, we're going to go through four spiritual exercises to help us be strong.

[13:00] So get on your sweatpants and your joggers and let's get into the gym. Here's the first exercise. Deal with sin.

Verse two. I already gave you a warning when I was with you. on that second visit. I now repeat it while absent.

On my return, I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others. Sounds heavy-handed, doesn't it?

But these are words of deep loving concern for the church. Remember what he said in chapter 12 verse 21? he says, I'm afraid that when I come again on this third visit, my God will humble me before you and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented. sinned. He's tackling unrepentant sin, not dealing with those behaviours and attitudes that weaken us spiritually and can destroy the church.

[14:22] So he's saying deal with that unrepentant sin, sort it out. well how do we do that? Well we can summarise it like this.

We can summarise it like this. Christ is at work in his church to deal with sin by his spirit through his word.

Christ is at work in his church to deal with sin by his spirit through his word. Look at verse 3, the end of verse 3.

He, that is Christ, is not weak in dealing with you but is powerful among you.

Christ is present and active right now amongst us here as we gather. He is powerful amongst us.

How?

[15:30] Well look at verse 4. For to be sure, Christ was crucified in weakness. He was beaten and nailed to a cross with a crown of thorns crushed in his head.

Yet he lives by God's power. Christ's death on the cross was the means for defeating our sin once and for all and now the risen Jesus is present by his spirit amongst the church and the spirit applies the finished work of Christ to all who will turn in repentance.

So Jesus is saying come to me and I will forgive you now. Repent and I will remember your sins no more. I am powerful amongst you.

My word goes out to you and my spirit will enable you to turn and to repent. You see Christ is serious about sin.

He's so serious about it that he provided the means for defeating it. So let's start exercising that truth within the church. You see when we become a Christian we don't live in isolation God places us into a community of believers the church and God does that for our very good for our best because we need people around us to remind us of what Christ has done for us on the cross and people who will take us back to the cross to deal with issues in our life.

[17:14] That's exactly what he's saying here if you look at the second part of verse four. So it's not just Christ who is powerful amongst the church.

Look at the rest of verse four. Likewise we are weak in him yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you.

You see by ourselves we cannot deal with sin but Christ has given us the power of his spirit and the authority of his word given to his church so that we can help one another repent of the sinful behaviours and attitudes that are weakening our life and weakening the church.

you see Christ is at work in his church right now as we gather to deal with sin by his spirit through his word.

it's a serious thing. It's crucial that we get this spiritual exercise right.

[18:28] It's not our job to defeat sin. Christ has wonderfully done that on the cross. Our role the exercise we need to do is to bring God's word to one another and to be praying for the spirit to be at work amongst us.

And this is what all church members must do. We can't opt out of this exercise and go I don't like the idea of this. I don't think I want to do it.

That's like a little bit saying I want a six pack but I don't want to do any sit-ups. This is the way in which the church is built up and strengthened.

And as he concludes his letter he says deal with the things that need dealt with. Otherwise you will spiral out of control.

So let us together speak God's word and pray for the spirit to be at work and watch the body of the church grow.

[19:37] So exercise one deal with sin. second exercise has to do with our hearts.

Examine your heart. We need a healthy heart, don't we? Verse five. Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith.

Test yourself. when I go to the gym one of the first exercises I try to do is on the rowing machine and I have a target.

I click in the number of meters, 2,300 meters I've got to do in 10 minutes. That's the aim at least. I don't always get there, most of the time I don't, but at least it's a target to aim for.

I need to examine my fitness. Well, we are to examine and test ourselves to see whether we are in the faith.

[20:41] So how do we go about testing ourselves? Am I in the faith today? Look at the second part of verse five.

Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you unless, of course, you fail the test? Is Christ Jesus in you today?

You think, well, what would that look like? What would that look like for Christ Jesus to be in me today? Well, it should be two things, two related things.

If Christ Jesus is in me today, there will be repentance of sin, which we've just looked at, and a reliance on God's grace.

That's the test. Am I in the faith? Is Christ Jesus in me? Am I repenting of my sin, and am I relying on God's grace?

[21:49] Am I turning away from the behaviours and attitudes that weaken my life, or am I trusting wholeheartedly in the forgiveness of the grace of God?

That's the test. So, verse 5, examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.

Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you unless, of course, you fail the test? So, here's the question for us now.

Have you, have I, passed the test, or have I failed the test? Am I relying on myself, or am I relying on God's grace?

Well, there's two good news items for us. Good news if we have just failed the test. Good news if we've just failed the test.

[22:58] There is hope. Go back to chapter six with me. Chapter six. The good news is, if we have failed, there is hope.

look at verse one of chapter six. As God's fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

Well, what's this grace he's been talking about? Well, it's in the preceding verse. Chapter five, verse twenty one. God made Christ, who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God.

That is good news. That is great news. So, we urge you, chapter six, verse one, not to receive this grace in vain.

Verse two, for he says, in the time of my grace I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you, I tell you, now is the time of God's grace.

[24:18] Now is the day of salvation. You see, God's grace is available to us in bucket loads, and the opportunity is there for us to turn to him

now.

Today is the day of salvation. Listen to this wonderful free offer. Don't delay. Don't put it off. If you have not yet passed the test, and you are not in the faith, ask God to save you now.

Because where we fail, Christ has won and succeeded on our behalf. But maybe you are a Christian, and you're struggling, and you're thinking, well, am I in the faith?

Because I know I haven't been walking in obedience. Rather than dealing with sin, I've just been ignoring it. I hear the call to turn and trust, but I just resist it.

Well, the message is the same. Don't receive God's grace in vain. Act on it now. Being able to stand before God and be able to explain what grace actually means, but never having experienced it, act on it now so that we pass the test.

[25:50] So that's good news if we fail the test. Here's good news if we do pass the test. We have assurance and confidence. Look at this verse with me. Chapter 1 verse 21.

2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 21. Good news if we have passed the test.

Do you see it there? Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm. So God who called you will hold you. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us and put his spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing no doubts absolute assurance of what is to come.

Let's go back to chapter 13. So we should examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith and know that because of God's grace if we fail we can pass because of his grace and if we do pass there is assurance and confidence because of what Jesus has done.

We would do well to pray this prayer daily in our life. It comes from Psalm 139 search search me God and know my heart test me and know my anxious thoughts see if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

[27:42] So exercise two examine our hearts. Exercise three pray for restoration.

Look at verse seven. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Now jump down to the end of verse nine.

And our prayer is that you may be fully restored. A prayer for restoration. You see drift can happen in the life of the church.

When we don't deal with our sin and when we stop examining our hearts that's the very moment we become weak and not strong.

And the only right response for that is that we would pray for full restoration. In fact in verse eleven we're encouraged to strive for full restoration.

[28:53] Now when we stop our physical exercising our health can deteriorate but when we get out into the walking and do some running or whatever we do for our fitness then our body it almost restores itself doesn't it?

We're able to do things that we weren't able to do before. Our body is made useful again. Well that's exactly what the prayer is here. That we would be restored to full spiritual health.

That we would be made useful rather than drifting we would be in the service of God's people. Now let's be very clear being restored doesn't mean we reach a standard of perfection that we'll never ever sin again.

No being restored is that we will do the exercises God words gives us dealing with our sin examining our hearts that is what a restored Christian life is like.

The disciplines that God gives us for our good. You see this prayer is powerful. Look at verse 9. We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong and our prayer is that you may be fully restored.

[30:16] As we pray God's power is at work in our life. So let's commit ourselves to the exercise of praying for restoration in our own lives and in the lives of each other.

So that's exercise three. Then last exercise four. Encourage each other.

Look at verse 11. Finally brothers and sisters rejoice. You see church is brothers and sisters.

It's not an individual lived out experience. The Christian life is never to be lived alone. We need one another. So look what it says verse 11.

Finally brothers and sisters rejoice strive for full restoration encourage one another. Verse 12.

[31:28] Greet one another with a holy kiss or a fist bump or a handshake or a hug or whatever is culturally sensitive to you. Now I don't know about you but getting to do exercise is hard.

There's always easier things to do isn't there? Like just sitting on the couch. It's hard to motivate yourself to keep going to get out for that walk.

It's much easier if you have people around you to encourage you. Well here we are. Look around you. God has placed you into a community of people to encourage you and support us in our building up of the faith.

So what's encouragement of one another going to look like? Well we're just going to focus in on verse 14.

Look at the very last verse of this letter. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

[32:49] You see it's in our weaknesses that we commit to one another to pointing each other back to verse 14 God the Son God the Father and God the Spirit it's reminding each other of the sufficient grace of Christ it's teaching one another of the steadfast love of the Father and it's depending together on the strengthening fellowship of the Holy Spirit you see I need you I so desperately need you to tell me of Christ's sufficient grace that every time I fall or fail that you will tell me Johnny

God's grace is sufficient for you and in my struggles I need you to tell me and to remind me of the Father's steadfast love that when I want to give up or things have overwhelmed me so much I need you to come alongside and say the Father's love is unbreakable he loves you he will not let you go and in the days where I'm tempted to rely on my self sufficiency that I can go it alone and do it my own way I need you to come alongside and tell me of the Spirit's strengthening fellowship Johnny you're living a lie you cannot do it without the Spirit the sufficient grace of Christ the steadfast love of the Father the strengthening fellowship of the

Spirit this simple benediction is how we encourage one another and build each other up it's a daily exercise that we can begin with so that together we become a strong church and strong in the faith so that whatever challenge may come our way we will stand firm so exercise number four encourage one another God has told us to watch out for false teachers those who will lead us away from his word and away from Christ Christ but he has provided us with one another to encourage one another in these simple disciplines of dealing with sin examining our hearts and praying for restoration let's commit ourselves to exercising these things together well let's pray that we will do so father god thank you that you have given us all that we need to be a strong church so we come father and we confess our sin afresh we examine our hearts and we lean and rely afresh on the wonder of god's amazing grace we pray for personal restoration of our life and ask that you would continue to transform us into the likeness of christ and we pray father that you would do this with the help of one another brothers and sisters to encourage and support thank you for the family of this church and for each other today now may the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with us all amen well we're going to sing together