

FPFWC Christian Development



Faithful vs. Faithless

March 2024

Spring Quarter

March 9, 2024

Lesson #2 – Testing Our Faith

SCRIPTURE TEXT –2 Corinthians 13:5-11

ICE BREAKER –

1. Why should we continually examine our lives to determine if we are in the faith?
2. How can believers “examine” their beliefs and actions to ensure they are “in the faith”?
3. What should you do to mend the relationship whenever you are at odds with another Christian?

*Key Verse: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”—
2 Corinthians 13:5a*

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul had established the church in Corinth during a personal visit to that city in about AD 52 (Acts 18:1–18). We are not certain how many letters he wrote to that church, but there were at least two—the ones we call *1 & 2 Corinthians*.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in preparation for a return visit (2 Corinthians 10:2; 12:20–21; 13:10). While the church in Corinth had, in general, responded favorably to Paul’s previous letter (see chapter 7), he knew some problems remained (12:20–21).

At least part of the reason for those problems was that some doubted that Christ was speaking through Paul; they wanted proof (2 Corinthians 13:3). Was he a true apostle of the Lord Jesus, or was Paul a con artist? Some Corinthians thought that Paul’s weaknesses—his weak presence and suffering-filled ministry—meant that the answer was *no*. But Paul proved earlier in the letter that such weakness and suffering proved the opposite (much of chapters 6; 10; and 11).

Weakness was how Jesus came into the world, and He suffered on the cross to display God’s power (2 Corinthians 13:4). Paul’s apostolic ministry had been (and was being) tested and verified through suffering rather than by avoiding it. The power of God seen in Paul’s suffering was also seen in the life of Jesus. In like manner, through Paul’s suffering and weakness, God’s power gave life through Paul’s ministry. Therefore, it wasn’t Paul’s credibility that was on the line. Instead, it was the credibility of the naysayers in the church at Corinth that was at issue.

LESSON COMMENTARY

13:5–6. Instead of examining Paul, the Corinthians were to **examine** themselves to see if their conduct was in harmony with the content of their faith. Paul expected this **test** would reveal that **Jesus Christ is in** them—that they were genuine believers—although he

entertained the possibility that the actions of some might indicate that they were not true Christians. Paul insisted that Christian profession must be evidenced by Christian conduct. When they passed the test, they would **realize** that Paul, their Christian father, passed the test as well. Their true conversion testified to the truth of Paul's apostleship.

13:7–8. Lest the Corinthians think that Paul's only concern was his own vindication, his prayer was only that they might reject the **wrong** and do the **right** (i.e., that they might repent and reject the false teachers)—even if they continued to reject him as an apostle. Ministry is about other people, not our own status. Paul's concern was with the **truth** of the gospel message (v. 8). His actions—whether stern discipline or rejoicing over repentance—would be in harmony with this truth.

13:9–10. Paul would **rejoice** during his arrival in Corinth even if he was viewed as **weak** by not exercising discipline. He would **rejoice** because the Corinthians were **strong** in the Christian life by means of repentance. This would be an answer to his prayer and their **complete** restoration to Paul. The **reason** for writing this section was to challenge the Corinthians to repent. If this happened, Paul would not need to exercise his apostolic authority in severe discipline. Instead, he would exercise his primary function to build them up.

E. Conclusion (13:11–14)

13:11. Five terse commands summarize the message of the book: (1) **rejoice** in spite of difficulties, (2) make full restoration with everyone, (3) **be comforted** in suffering, (4) live with the same attitude toward the truth, and (5) promote **peace**. To accomplish this, they would have the help of God who is characterized by **love** and **peace**.

LESSON NUGGET – Some church members have never been born again, and that is why they create problems. Paul urges us to examine our hearts to be sure we are in the faith. The true saints are the people who love one another and promote the peace and purity of the church. They are the mature ones in the fellowship who encourage spiritual growth. To which group do you belong?

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary