

POWER HOUR

3/10/2024

Lesson Text:
2 Corinthians 13:5-11

Background Scripture:
2 Corinthians 13:1-11

Devotional Reading:
Psalms 139:13-18, 23-24

“TESTING OUR FAITH”

NLT TRANSLATION

Learning Facts: To identify criteria for being “in the faith.”

Biblical Principle: To explain how the imperatives of 2 Corinthians 13:11 are interrelated

Daily Application: To examine yourself and create a test question that reflects Paul's challenge in the Key Text (2 Corinthians 13:5a).

2 Corinthians 13:5-11 NLT

5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. **6** But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified. **7** Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. **8** For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. **9** For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. **10** Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction. **11** Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

INTRODUCTION

Self-Testing

Social media is filled with opportunities to test ourselves. We can test our knowledge of history, the Bible, government, and even our personalities and tastes. Self-testing is part of modern culture.

We test ourselves to gain insight into our capabilities. Such testing is sometimes quite valuable. At other times, however, we may focus on such tests narcissistically by interpreting personality defects as strengths. And some self-evaluations are designed to

form or influence us as consumers.

Despite these potential problems, testing can often serve productive and valuable ends. We all take tests, need tests, and benefit from tests. This includes, as we will see, the benefits of Christians and churches testing themselves.

LESSON CONTEXT

Paul had established the church in Corinth during a personal visit to that city in about A.D. 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 (see verses in 2 Corinthians 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 2 Corinthians 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.

QUESTION(S)

- How can believers “examine” their beliefs and actions to ensure they are “in the faith”?
- How can believers eliminate hindrances that prevent life with “one mind” and “in peace” with other believers?
- What aspect of spiritual self-examination seems the most difficult for you in your current season of life?

CONCLUSION

Taking Inventory

Many congregations are in turmoil, and the times in which we live are perilous. Faith is under attack from within and from without. In such times it is important to take inventory and examine ourselves. The contents of Paul's prayer indicate the sort of life that passes the test. Avoiding evil is not enough in and of itself. Evil must be replaced with doing what is right. To avoid evil without replacing it with good is to leave one open to the situation described in Matthew 12:43–45. An unexamined faith, some have said, is not worth living. Paul calls us to submit to a process of discernment by which we try our hearts (compare Psalm 139:23–24). Are we seeking to do good? Are we seeking to avoid evil? Are we pursuing maturity in Christ? Are we seeking to be equipped to do good and participate in the ministry of reconciliation?

This process will be painful but will build us up, not destroy us. We pursue this self-examination with the confidence that we are loved by God and with the assurance

that the gospel is true. God is for us rather than against us. We pursue love and peace because God is the God of love and peace. Some have called this goal “the ability to think God's thoughts after Him.” God responds to the prayers that ask for the strength to do good, the courage to avoid evil, and the power to participate in the ministry of the gospel as fully equipped disciples of Jesus.

This necessary self-examination requires a familial bond, a desire for maturity, a striving toward perfection, mutual encouragement, a shared commitment to live out the meaning of the gospel, and peaceful practices. An examined faith can flourish in that kind of church. Without such a community, faith will suffer and perhaps die spiritually. The process begins by asking whether we know ourselves. Do we?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we ask You for the courage to examine ourselves with unvarnished honesty so that we may discern Christ in us. In the name of Your Son Jesus, who gives resurrection life, we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Testing yourself is not optional.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is “*Defending Our Faith*” where we learn how to maintain our faith in Christ even in dire circumstances. Study 1 Peter 3:8–17.