

2 Corinthians 13

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[3 : 42] Amen. cry upon each other or to say he was doing this she was doing that and here's somebody else to testify to it and if there is all this strife and all this perhaps immorality or wrongdoing or whatever then it will need to be sorted is what he's saying now in a sense this is what the lord says to us he gives us his word his written word just as paul is giving this written epistle to the corinthians god gives his entire written revelation to us earthlings us human creatures here during our brief time on earth and he warns us both of the judgment on sin and its consequences and he offers us the grace and opportunity of forgiveness and he does this whilst he is giving us time just as the apostle here is giving corinth time to put its house in order to repent of sin if their sin needs to be repented of to get back together in unity and in brotherly love and so on to get their house in order basically he is giving them time he says i've been before and i'm coming again and when i come i'll be sorting everything out now isn't that in a sense like the lord jesus except although he's only been once to the world to earth and he's going to come again of course when he comes he's going to be sorting everything out one last court hearing one final judgment from which there is no appeal but he is giving us his written word now that we might know both the opportunities of blessing and forgiveness and grace if there is repentance in his name and also the threatenings of judgment and he doesn't make idle threats it is the statement of certainty of what will befall if we depart this life without christ if he comes and finds us outside of his grace there will only be one sentence we have his written word in advance and he desires to be gentle but if he comes and finds us in a state of sin then we know what the outcome will be see it's so so much reflecting so much mirroring as it were what we find here in miniature with this final chapter of second corinthians it's the apostle saying i've been before and you know what happened and you know how i was amongst you now i'm coming again this is the third time i'm coming to you and when i come this is what i'm going to do in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established so that's the context he intends to hold an apostolic assize he intends to as it were hold a disciplinary court and and to put right what is wrong and to to establish proper disciplinary procedures to perhaps buy heads together a bit if there's different strife and factions and so on and to make sure that those who are guilty get duly disciplined those who are penitent may serve their time of whether suspension or whatever is required of them and then be reconciled he intends to put things right and to do so with the authority the lord has given him i told you before verse two and four tell you as if i were present the second time and being absent now i write to them which here to four have sinned and to all other that if i come again i will not spare since you seek a proof of me i will not spare you see if you remember in chapter 12 uh verse 12 truly the signs of an apostle will walk among you in all patience in signs and wonders and mighty deeds when he was there before he had all patience with them you know he allowed for the fact yes they were just coming out of pagan sinfulness perhaps they needed to be able to walk before they could run perhaps he had to make a certain allowance for them

but there's no excuses now when they are supposedly so mature in the faith when they are supposedly so replete with spiritual gifts there is no excuse now for the falling away into sin that they have been clearly so guilty of if i come again i will not spare it will no longer be with all patience like in chapter 12 verse 12 since you seek a proof of christ speaking in me which to you word is not weak but is mighty in you in other words what he's saying here is you've been uh giving great credence to all these super apostles these false apostles because they've been harsh with you one of the reasons you've been trembling at their word is because they've been harsh with you well if you want proof of an apostle i've got all the authority i need to say you want a proof of christ speaking in me you want to see authority exercised if it's strong leadership you want strong leadership you're going to get in that sense which to you word is not weak but is mighty in you now he's not talking about look how mightily i'm going to unleash my apostolic math what he means is christ has spoken through me in the past he said that's the whole reason why any of you corinthians have been converted at all the only reason there's a corinthian church is because you accepted and received the gospel of jesus christ which i paul brought to you which to you word is not weak but it is mighty in you look at the change it wrought in you look at how it it completely altered your lives how it how it redeemed you now from from what you were before it changed the people that you were it changed the lives uh that you lived you know when he writes to him in first corinthians chapter six he says know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of god be not deceived neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor abusers of themselves of mankind nor thieves nor covetous nor drunkards nor revilers nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of god and such were some of you but he doesn't leave it there but ye are washed but ye are sanctified that is made holy ye are justified in the name power the strength of the lord jesus and by the spirit of our god they had been all these things some of them had been steeped in vice and criminality but from the depths of that depravity the good news of jesus christ had washed away their sins and enabled them to become new men and women this was the power of the gospel as he wrote the romans i'm not ashamed of the gospel it is the power of god unto salvation and this is the proof which to you word is not weak but is mighty in you for though he that is jesus was crucified through weakness in other words he became weak although he was god the son that filled the heavens and the earth he became a mere human not a mere human being but you understand he became human with all the human limitations that a human being a human body has and he became in that sense weak and he was crucified through weakness he became human so that he could die as humans die he was crucified through weakness yet he liveth now through the resurrection by the power of god we also are weak in him just as he was made weak for us we follow where he leads we yes we may be weak yes i may be contemptible in your eyes and in your sight says paul but that doesn't matter we are weak in him but we shall live with him by the power of god toward you we i.e. you and me true christians in corinth paul is saying if we're going to live with him it's only by the power of christ what he's done in us just as the as he was raised on the death he won the victory over death and he transformed your lives that's why we're going to be with him because it is a power of god toward you

in corinth see this is this is part of the thing with the gospel in a sense it's only kind of academic as long as it's something that's happening to other people this is that we could sit in church for years and maybe many of us did and lots of sermons may have been preached and people may have been converted or gone forward or whatever and we may have known some of them but as long as it was happening to somebody else it was kind of out there sort of academic it was outside of us it wasn't penetrating my life my heart my mind my head it wasn't changing me my life until it becomes personal and once it is made the power of god toward you once it has changed your life once it has changed your heart then it is not only personal but it is transforming of every aspect of your life of your home life of your employment of your relationships with other people it affects everything the way you do business everything is affected by it it leavens it transforms it changes you and everything your life touches but only are you conscious that only has it come alive in that way when it becomes personal to you and so this is why it says that the power of god toward you and part of that is we become aware of our own weakness we become aware of our own helplessness the world in the unconverted person he thinks he's pretty good thinks he's pretty strong well not as bad as other people but you know i'm quite strong in myself i have my own opinions i do my own work and i i'm a comparatively strong character i like to think a decent person and and he is he's blown up in his own eyes when someone is converted and they see how gracious and good and holy christ is then christ increases in their eyes who might have only been set at the carpet of nazareth or somebody who appears in the bible not very important to me personally in my life he becomes exalted and we ourselves become diminished and we see just how weak and insignificant we are we are weak in him but we shall live with him by the power of god toward you that is what makes it alive that is what makes it personal when it is changing you in your own personal heart otherwise yes you can see some of the benefits of yes outward religion and how yes it maintains law and order you could say to an extent there are outward benefits to the practice of remission but it will not save until it transforms you within until this changed your heart until god puts his spirit within you and causes you to be born again examine yourselves he says whether ye be in the faith prove your own selves and this is a contrast here with verse three you know since you seek a proof of christ speaking in me says my faith is not in question my apostolic authority is being questioned by you but you know prove your own selves he's saying you know examine yourselves whether you be in the faith and the sense of it here really is examine yourselves not whether you're you know belonging to the church or whether or not you're yes you're saying with your lips the things that you should be examine yourselves really in the sense is whether you are still in the faith whether you are you be in the faith when you're ongoing in the faith that's the sense of it here know ye not your own selves how that jesus christ is in you except he be reprobates you know if you are in the faith christ is alive in you and if christ is alive in you that will have certain effects and when then of course that's going to get all get depressed oh well of course if christ is alive in me then i'd be doing this better and i'd be doing that better so i can't possibly be a christian but

look at your heart and look at what you love look at what you desire look at how you feel if you were to hear somebody say on the street absolutely pouring scorn and blaspheming against your savior jesus christ how would that make you feel would it make you think that quite right i couldn't give it a cost you know i'm not bothered or would it grieve your heart and offend you because of the honor and love of christ who is your savior how do you feel about jesus what think you of christ what do you think of his cause what do you think of his word what do you think of his day what do you feel about his people because if these things are as they ought to be it hasn't happened by nature it is because christ lives in you and none of us is doing as well as we should none of us is being the kind of christian we ought to be but if christ is in you then you are not reprobates now reprobates is a word that we tend to use almost as a pejorative term that we think oh it just means a sin means somebody who is you know cast off god and they're not interested in the lord it's it's not quite the sense of it it is but it's not the whole story if you think of it break the word down reprobates you know re-probate what is probate well if something is probate it's it's to do with like you have our will and testament if something is in probative writing then it's it's legally acceptable and provable probate is uh and you know think of a probationer one who has has is on trial or for the first year maybe in a new job because they are being proved that's what probate and probation and probation means it means being proved the evidence and if something is re-probate it means that it didn't stand up to the evidence and therefore must be retested you know if you have a if you have an exam and you have a re-sit it's not just because you like being in that posture so you're sitting again and again and again you're having a re-sit because you didn't pass the exam the first time if you are being re-probate it's because you didn't satisfy the probate the evidence uh the first time you didn't stand up to the evidence therefore it must be retested and retested because it is reprobate reprobate it doesn't stand up to the burden of proof the implication is that it should have done or that it claimed to that outwardly looked as if it was but then when the evidence or the proof was the man that it didn't stand up to it so it must be retested reprobate that's the sense of the other there are some instances of this in there uh throughout we'll just look at one or two you think in terms of jeremiah there's the the metal imagery here in chapter chapter 6 verse 30 they're described as the israelites are described as reprobate silver the bells are burned the lead is consumed the fire the thunder melteth in vain for the wicked are not plucked away reprobate silver shall men call them because the lord hath rejected them and the sense is something which looks like it's silver but in fact when you test it for impurity it's not pure it's not real silver it is that which does not stand the burden of proof it is reprobate it is fit to be rejected because it doesn't stand up to the burden of proof romans chapter 1 verse 28 even as they did not like to retain god in their knowledge god gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient reprobate now again reprobate the senses are being tested again why because the implication is that there was a time when there was at least the outward appearance whether of silver or whether of christianity there was an outward appearance

there was a claim upon it but it proves not to be able to stand up to the evidence second timothy chapter 3 verse 8 now as janice and jambres withstood moises so do these also resist the truth men of corrupt minds reprobate concerning the faith in other words they claimed to have it or perhaps they did have it but turned away from it they had it but have gone from it likewise titus chapter 1 and verse 16 we read they profess that they know god again this is the sense here it with reprobate reprobates if they're in current it's because the reprobates claimed to follow the lord said they followed the lord gave an outward appearance of following the lord buds they did not sustain the burden of proof they profess titus chapter 1 verse 16 they profess that they know god but in works they deny him being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate they have gone back from the truth remember the timothy one we just quoted second didn't we chapter 3 verse 8 you know the the reference there is to having a form of godliness but denying the power of it all there is the appearance like the reprobate silver in jeremiah there is the appearance of being a christian but it doesn't stand up to the burden of proof jesus christ is in you except he be reprobates unless you are fakes those who claim to be christ those who gave some outward show but actually christ wasn't in you at all but i trust that you shall know that we are not reprobates now that's not paul saying we are better than you we're apostles you're just ordinary plebe christians we are much more important than you i trust you know that we are not reprobates no the sense of what he's saying here is if any of you are true believers at all it is because we ourselves must have been genuine channels of that gospel we can't be reprobates and you be genuine christians if you are genuine christians we must have genuinely brought the gospel to you i trust that you will know by the fact of your own genuineness in the gospel genuineness in the faith that we as apostles we're not fakes we're not reprobates now obviously there is a sense in which one has to be slightly careful here because of course it is entirely possible that somebody may have the outward shell and sound and voice and appearance of a genuine messenger of the lord what they speak may be perfectly orthodox of the truth and people may receive it and believe it and be converted under the sound of it and yet it may not itself be the voice of a genuine follower of christ a charlatan may yet speak the truth and that truth may yet be used of god to convert somebody i mean the example one sometimes is cited from the old testament is that the ravens which were unclean birds nevertheless brought elijah uh uh meat and uh bread and so on and fruit and day by day and he was sustained by that which the unclean birds brought even though they themselves were unclean so it is possible for somebody who may not be genuinely born again to speak sufficiently the truth that somebody receives it lays hold of it believes it in response to it genuinely even though the channel used may not be entirely clean might be reprobate but paul's argument here is it would have been impossible to plant an entire church of believers here in collins especially in a place like collins if it wasn't the genuine article that was brought

[23 : 59] through the genuine messengers i trust that you shall know that we are not reprobates now i pray to god that ye do no evil not that we should appear approved but that ye should do that which is honest though we be as reprobates but we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth what does he mean it's a little bit difficult to understand there um but the sense of it is not well be sinless of course that would be the ideal when he says do no evil not that we should appear approved the reason we're saying this to you corinthians is not so when we come everything in the garden is rosy everybody's getting unwell everybody's repenting of their sin and we look good as the apostles who are in charge of you so we are made to look like that like the teaching is really approved of all our class of straight-a students and uh you know uh anybody who has taught or trained the body of people looks good and they do well he says it's not for our sakes not that we should appear approved but that ye should do that which is honest though we be as reprobates even if i end up looking like i'm just shooting my mouth off this ball if i'm doing all this threatening and saying i'm going to exercise my apostolic authority i'm going to exert discipline when i come and then when i come i don't need to because everything's as it should be and you're all repentant you know right getting on with each other and you're all following the lord faithfully and then all my threatenings will look empty and i'll look as if i am the reprobate or the empty sounding gong well that's fine he says i don't mind if i end up looking like that the only bs reprobates although we look like we're just banging the gong and it's all it's all fake because we don't end up having to exercise that disciplinary authority if what's going on is the truth we can't do anything against the truth we're not going to try make examples of people who aren't actually guilty we can do nothing against the truth we're glad if we end up looking weak and we turn up and there's nothing for us to actually do discipline wise if there's no a size needs holy because everything is as it should be because you've heeded the warnings you've repented you've got back together you're in unity you're loving one another yeah you're seeking to follow purity and if you're strong in the faith and we end up looking weak that's great and this also we wish even your perfection you might think well that's a bit of a tall order isn't it a bit ambitious there perfection as we have it translated into english here it doesn't mean sinlessness the sense in the greek is uh of how can i put it perfect restoration the sense is of a limb that was out of joint being fitted back into the socket let's say you're in a dislocated shoulder and somebody says right look away and i'll sort and they do something i'll wrench and i click and you think ah and then then it's all clicked back and i'll say that's it oh that's great that's so much better now the sense is of a loom that was out of joint being clicked back into place so that it works again it is perfectly restored and this is what we wish even your perfection the restoration of that which was out of joint to be put back so that it works again and that's the same sense of it in verse 11 we'll just jump ahead there verse 11 finally brethren farewell be perfect it means be joined together like the limb that is back in its socket again but we'll talk about that in a minute therefore i like these things being absent less being present i should use sharpness according to the power which the lord has given me to edification and not to destruction when i come i don't want to have to break people down i don't want to have to hold disciplinary assizes i don't want to have to punish wrongdoers i'd rather there weren't any wrongdoers i'd rather i could just build up that's what edification means building up as in the sense of constructing an edifice edification and not to

destruction i don't want to have to chastise i don't want to have to punish i will if i need to but i'd rather just be encouraging and building you up therefore i use i'm using sharpness just now in the letters so that i don't want to have to use it so i won't have to use it when i come so that things will be sorted out i'm giving you warning because i am going to come he says and i will exercise this authority just like jesus says to us he's coming again and when he comes he will hold the judgment and when he sits on the throne there is no appeal from his judgment we have been given a certain amount of time to put things right with one another and with the lord according to the power the lord it's given me to edification and not the destruction finally about farewell senses of rejoice you know do well hope you fare well in your journey in your travel in your your life together farewell be perfect fit back together be of good comfort that strength be of one mind live in peace notice the emphasis here of verse 11 it is on unity it is on the different factions in corinth getting back together again it is of the unity of the spirit binding them together once more and the god of love and peace shall be with you we'll come to that also in just a minute if they are going to be one in the spirit if they're going to be bound together again in this way then the lord will be amongst them then but he's not necessarily going to be amongst them and bless them if they're at each other's throats and if they're in factualism so in first corinthians chapter 1 verse 10 this is one of the first things he writes to them in the first letter i beseech you brethren by the name of our lord jesus christ that you all speak the same thing that there be no divisions among you that you be perfectly there's that word again perfectly joined together in the same mind again the sense of the limb being back in the socket perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment and this is what he's pleading for now as he signs off this second and last survival letter that we have to the corinthians be perfect be of good comfort be of one mind live in peace and the god of love and peace shall be with you greet one another with a holy kiss all the saints salute you now this final verse which some take as being you know a scriptural example of the trinity here it's a it's not a perfect example of the trinity really it would be better if it said the love of god the father because otherwise it implies that god is distinct from the lord jesus christ and the holy gods god is not god is in all three persons that's why you know i regret that even in italics they didn't put the father after god but never mind the grace of the lord jesus christ and the love of god and the communion of the holy ghost be with you all these are all things which if they were not fellow persons of the trinity could not be mentioned by an apostle in the same breath as the name of god the fact that jesus of nazareth is described as the lord jesus christ the lord is a term which a jew would only reserve for jehovah himself the lord god almighty to call jesus the lord the lord jesus christ the messiah the anointed one it is effectively to say he is co-equal with god he is god the son and the love of god i.e the father and the communion of the holy ghost which is only holy as a spirit because it is of god the spirit of god that first moved all the waters and before creation and so on be with you all what does this tell us then about god about the

trinity tells us that the trinity is a trinity in unity this is the emphasis he has been making at the end in verse 11 finally brand be perfect be of good comfort be of one mind why should the christians be of one mind in unity because this is what god is like just as he says in the old testament be he holy but i the lord your god and holy jesus has been constantly trying to teach his people during his earthly ministry this is what you should be like because this is what god is like this is what i am like this is what you see me being like because this is what god is like paul is able to say with confidence that would see me away beyond any of us you know be followers of me as i also am with christ no there is no disunity in the godhead the grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god the communion of the holy ghost be with you all it is trinity in the godhead and in that trinity there is unity there is that perfect harmony god is saying this is what i am like perfect in that unity and this is what i want my children to be like perfect in their unity finally brethren farewell be perfect be of good comfort be of one mind live in peace and the god of love and peace shall be with you this is the message to colin this is the message to all of us we have to be what god is like we have to be like this because this is what he is like we have to be like him you know first john tells us of course you know uh finally you know reverend uh behold what will the manner of love the father has for us that we should be called the children of god the sons of god and it does not yet appear what we shall be like but we know that when we see him we shall be like him but we shall see him as he is we will be like this we will be like him we will be perfected in him this is the the state for which we are ripening lord willing which we are being prepared and groomed and made more and more ready and fit for glory because when we are in his presence we shall be like him in the sense we shall be we shall be sinless we shall be holy we shall be purified from all sin we shall be immortal we shall be perfect redeemed souls who in the fullness of time will be united with their resurrection bodies and we shall be with them forever and ever in that sinless perfect harmony and unity this is what god is like this is what god wants his children to be like this is what he wants them to be like in scampi this is what he wants them to be like in scotland this is what he wants them to be like in corinth and this is why paul writes what he does but not just for them and not just for that day but for us too and for all the church in all the world for all the time