

“We Do All . . . for Your Edifying”**Lesson Scope:** 2 Corinthians 12:14 through 13: 14*References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise***Lesson Focus**

Paul continues to share his heart of love and concern for the brethren at Corinth in the closing chapters of this letter. It seems Paul was still somewhat unsure of their commitment to Christ. They were still grappling with acceptance of Paul’s apostolic authority. He reminded them that “we speak before God in Christ” (12:19). There were still some in the church not experiencing victory in Christ. With pointed questions, he urged them to perfect their life in Christ, lest he would need to use sharpness in dealing with sin when he came again (12:14; 13:1).

Paul’s farewell salutations and benediction speak in a nutshell his true prayer and goal for them (13:11-14). These were written not only for their blessing but also for the blessing of the true church of Christ to this day.

The church’s role in preserving the believer’s spiritual life places a grave accountability on her leaders. By the enabling grace of God, faithful leaders diligently apply Bible principles and exercise love and selflessness.

This lesson focuses directly on sound administration, which obviously is the result of sound leadership. Sound leadership not only includes the ministry, but also Sunday school teachers and superintendents, Christian day school teachers and school board members, parents, and others. Evaluate your own life (13:5; Psalm 26:2). Are you appreciating and promoting soundness in the administration you are a part of?

Lesson Aim: To present principles for sound church administration.

Theme Verses: Ephesians 4:11-12. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Lesson Text

Serving in Love

2 Corinthians 12:14-19

¹⁴ (KJV) Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. ¹⁵ And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. ¹⁶ But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. ¹⁷ Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? ¹⁸ I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps? ¹⁹ Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

Dealing With Sin

2 Corinthians 12:20-21

²⁰ (KJV) For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: ²¹ *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

2 Corinthians 13:1-4

¹ (KJV) This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. ² I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: ³ Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. ⁴ For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

Praying for Perfection

2 Corinthians 13:5-14

⁵ (KJV) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you,

except ye be reprobates? ⁶ But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. ⁷ 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. ⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. ⁹ For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection. ¹⁰ Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction. ¹¹ 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. ¹² Greet one another with an holy kiss. ¹³ All the saints salute you. ¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.

Questions for Study

Serving in Love

1. Identify the clauses that indicate Paul's love for the brethren at Corinth.
2. What prompted Paul to ask the five questions in 12: 17-19? What are the answers?
3. What does it mean to "spend and be spent"?

Dealing With Sin

4. What details surrounding the word *lest* reveal Paul's apprehension in about the spiritual status of the church of Corinth?
5. How are Witnesses a safeguard when dealing with sin?

Praying for Perfection

6. What elements are essential as steppingstones toward perfection in the body of Christ?
7. Is there any hope for a reprobate?
8. How are peace and unity to be realized in a Scriptural brotherhood?

Analysing the Passage

The words the third time (12:14; 13:1) seem to indicate a third visit planned by Paul (see Acts 18: 10-11 and 20:2-3 for his prior visits), but no Scriptures indicate that it materialized.

Parents should lay up for the children and not vice versa (12:14). Paul was their spiritual parent, and he was not seeking to be showered with

their wealth but sought rather to be a blessing to them through their acceptance of his leadership.

“Being crafty, I caught you with guile” (12:16) seems to be what some were accusing Paul of. But Paul’s motives were pure; he was not attempting to make a gain of them (12: 17-18), but working for their edification (12:19).

Lest, used three times in 12:20-21, indicates Paul’s uncertainty of their freedom from sins of the spirit (12:20) and sins of the flesh (12:21).

He also was preparing himself for God’s humbling work in his own life because of their unfaithfulness (12:21). Even so, Paul was ready to deal with sin (13:2) by the power of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was crucified through weakness because He chose to be, for our sakes (13:4). He lives by God’s power (1 Peter 1:21), with whom He is one (John 10:30). To stand the test, we must also crucify the flesh and live by His power. Honest self-examination before God is essential (13:5).

Reprobates (13:5-7) means “those not standing the test, unapproved.” Its use in 13:7 seems to indicate the Corinthian church’s mentality of disapproval toward Paul.

Perfection (13:9) implies a process leading to completion.

Sharpness (13:10) signifies “abruptness; severity in manner.” Paul endeavoured to be honest and straightforward in helping the church go on to perfection (13:11-14).

Principles and Applications

Serving in Love

1. A willingness to give oneself to others is necessary for sound administration (12:14-15). As godly parents give of themselves for their children, so spiritual leaders “spend” themselves in the care of their people. Sound administrators are ready to listen, to give needed counsel, and to serve in love, even when it may seem that their service is not appreciated. But though “men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not; / The Master praises:—what are men?”

2. Sound administration is considerate, cautious, and convincing (12:16-18). Faithful church leaders endeavour to see spiritual potential in every member. Caution must be exercised to avoid using the knowledge of another’s weakness for one’s own personal gain. Sound

church leadership calls for men “in whom is no guile” (John 1:47). Faithful men follow the principles and authority of God’s Word in every situation.

3. Sound administrators labour for the spiritual stability of those under their charge (12:19). Those in leadership should be stable themselves and be able to give Scriptural answers for life’s questions. Spiritual stability can be realized when people respond to sound Scriptural instruction for leaders that administrate in the fear of God without apology.

Dealing With Sin

4. Sound administration deals with sinful attitudes and actions (12:20-21). “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. . . . Observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality” (1 Timothy 5:20-21). While faithful leaders find no pleasure in public announcements of sin in the church, it is still their duty. They should humbly, firmly, and clearly state the facts without undue explicitness, accusation, or condemnation.

5. Sound administration is careful to establish the facts before taking administrative action (13:1). “That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16). Multiple witnesses give added credence to church decisions. When discipline is needed on any level, witnesses give support to the one in charge, help to maintain propriety, and give a backup person to consult when questions arise. Carefulness in this area of administration helps to build confidence in the leadership.

6. Sound administration labours under the power of God’s authority (13:2-4). Church leaders are called of God through the church. God has given them, as under shepherds, the power to exercise authority under Christ’s authority (Matthew 18:18; John 20:23). The Holy Spirit is their guide in these weighty matters. What lesser power would anyone desire to be under?

Praying for Perfection

7. Sound administration calls people to evaluate their stand in the faith (13:5-6). Self—examination before God calls for solemnity, humility, and honesty. The psalmist says, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psalm 26:2). We should rejoice in teaching and preaching that stimulates our minds to honest confession.

8. Sound administration is careful to avoid causing offense (13:9-10).

Faithful leaders guard against the attitude of using their authority “to set others in their place.” They rather seek to edify by dealing with sin redemptively, and they rejoice when their people excel in the grace of God.

9. Sound administration labours for the unity and peace of the brotherhood (13:11). “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). This is the unity of the Spirit and not the spirit of unity alone. Keeping the unity of the Spirit results in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

10. Sound administration leads people to a satisfying relationship with God and His people (13:12-14). A relationship with God is their first concern, and is the result of justification by faith, through the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). When one has a genuine relationship with God, a satisfying relationship with His people, the church, should follow, where all believe the Bible to be the “only infallible rule of faith and practice.” Deviations bring unrest and can lead to divisions. Particularly in focus in these verses is the Christian salutation and the benediction. A greeting by name and a firm handshake along with the holy kiss, with all propriety, meets the Scriptural criteria. The benediction, appropriately chosen, serves as a God-honouring capstone at the conclusion of our services and will continue to be a blessing as the Scriptures are used.

Important Teachings

1. A willingness to give oneself to others is necessary for sound administration (12:14-15).
2. Sound administration is considerate, cautious, and convincing (12:16-18).
3. Sound administrators labour for the spiritual stability of those under their charge (12:19).
4. Sound administration deals with sinful attitudes and actions (12:20-21).
5. Sound administration is careful to establish the facts before taking administrative action (13:1).
6. Sound administration labours under the power of God’s authority (13:2-4).

7. Sound administration calls people to evaluate their stand in the faith (13:5-6)
8. Sound administration is careful to avoid causing offense (13:9-10).
9. Sound administration labours for the unity and peace of the brotherhood (13:11).
10. Sound administration leads people to a satisfying relationship with God and His people (13:12-14).
11. Sound administration is honest with the truth and labours in truth (13:6, 8).

Answers to Questions

1. Identify the clauses that indicate Paul's love for the brethren at Corinth. '

"I seek not yours, but you" (12:14). "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you" (12:15). "Though the more abundantly I love you" (12:15). "We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying" (12:19).

2. What prompted Paul to ask the five questions in 12:17-19? What are the answers?

He was questioning their commitment to follow him as He followed Christ. In light of Paul's and Titus' God-given authority, he says, "We speak before God in Christ" (12:19).

Knowing Paul's life and testimony as seen in the Scriptures, the answer to the first question is no. Knowing Titus's life and testimony from the Scriptures, the answer to the second question is no, and the answer to questions three and four is yes. The answer to question five is no. In spite of the Corinthian brethren's challenge of Paul's authority along with their sin and shortcomings, he did not hesitate to call them to perfection in Christ.

3. What does it mean to "spend and be spent"?

The Scriptures are full of answers. Consider the two greatest commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39). Consider also Paul's testimony in 11:16-33 and 2 Timothy 4:7. For a leader it means a willingness to serve, to do all within his power to bring his people to an understanding of the way of surrender to Jesus Christ. Perhaps the answer could be summed up by considering what Jesus did for

us. He surrendered to the will of God (Hebrews 10:7) and died that we might live. We also, as disciples of Christ, must continue to surrender to Jesus Christ and to do all we can to help others understand what it means to surrender to Jesus Christ.

4. What details surrounding the word *lest* reveal Paul's apprehension about the spiritual status of the church of Corinth?

In the first place, Paul was concerned that when he came to the Corinthian brethren, they would not be what he hoped to find, and that he would need to deal with them in a way that would be hard for them to accept.

In the second place, he was concerned that he would find them in bondage to the sins of the spirit.

In the third place, Paul had formerly boasted of the Corinthian church to the Macedonian brethren (9:2). Now he was concerned that he would be humbled before God because of their sin and lack of repentance of the sins of the flesh.

5. How are witnesses a safeguard when dealing with sin?

Jesus said, "That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every Word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). When discipline is needed on any level, witnesses give support to the one in charge, help to maintain propriety, and give a third-person reference source should questions arise. Carefulness in this area of administration helps to build confidence in the leadership and glorifies God and His Word.

6. What elements are essential as steppingstones toward perfection in the body of Christ?

Self-examination (13:5); the indwelling Spirit of Christ (13:5); saving faith (13:5); abstaining from evil (13:7); the practice of prayer (13:7); standing for the truth (13:8); finding comfort and hope in the Scriptures (13:11); being "of one mind" (13:11); being in the unity of the Spirit of God rather than only in the spirit of unity (Ephesians 4:3).

7. Is there any hope for a reprobate?

A reprobate is one who has not stood the test of crucifying the flesh. Thus he is a failure, being unapproved of God. But, yes, there is hope for him. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4). Confession of sins is needed (1 John 1:9) and so is

“repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

8. How are peace and unity to be realized in a Scriptural brotherhood?

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:1-5).

Summarizing the Lesson

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

Research Guide

1. Study Paul’s life. He spent himself for the church with perhaps more zeal than he had shown in persecuting the church. Passages that cover this include Acts 9:1-31; 11:25, 28:31; and 1 and 2 Corinthians.
2. Read Colossians 3. Compare the lists of the sins of the flesh and the spirit and the lists of the fruits of the new man in Christ with what is listed in our lesson text.
3. Discover the meaning of the adjective sound as used in the Lesson Aim, in the Principles and Applications, and in Scriptures such as 2 Timothy 4:3 and Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1-2, 8.