

2 CORINTHIANS: DEFENDING GOD'S SERVANT TO HIS CRITICS
Part XXI: Steps From Ungodliness To Spiritual Fellowship In The Church
(2 Corinthians 13:11-14)

I. Introduction

- A. 2 Corinthians was written "to defend the authenticity of" Paul's "apostleship and his message" to a church of believers who were susceptible to heeding false teachers who critiqued him, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552.
- B. In closing his epistle to this Church, Paul briefly summarized the steps needed for believers to go from godlessness to spiritual fellowship, so we view that passage of 2 Corinthians 13:11-14 for our insight:

II. Steps From Ungodliness To Spiritual Fellowship In The Church, 2 Corinthians 13:11-14.

- A. Paul began to close his epistle with the adverbial use of the Greek term, *loipos*, meaning "finally," 2 Cor. 13:11a; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 647; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 481.
- B. Thus, he provided briefly summarized steps to correct the ungodliness he had addressed back in 2 Corinthians 13:1-10, and we study these directives in detail for our insight and edification (as follows):
1. First, Paul urged his readers to "rejoice" (v. 11b), what occurs when the individual believer is right with God so that the Holy Spirit produces in him the attitude and expressions of joy, cf. Galatians 5:16, 22-23. [The KJV and NIV render *chairo* here as "farewell" and "good-by" respectively, but *chairo* also means "rejoice," a better choice as it likely aligns with Paul's Philippians 3:1 use of it in the exhortation, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." (Philip E. Hughes, The Sec. Epist. to the Cor. (NICNT), 1980, p. 486)
 2. Second, Paul urged his readers to "be restored, put into proper condition" (*katartizo*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 418-419), v. 11c, what is understood in the previous context:
 - a. In 2 Corinthians 13:9, Paul used a derivative of the verb *katartizo* in the noun *katartisis*, meaning, "completion" (Ibid., p. 419) to speak of his readers' "restoration" (ESV); Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 585.
 - b. The restoration in that context was the turning of Paul's readers toward accepting his apostleship and ministry versus the false apostles' efforts to the contrary lest when Paul arrived he would have to exercise severe apostolic discipline against the unrepentant, cf. 2 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ibid., p. 584-585: (1) Paul had warned that he was preparing to come to his readers the third time, and this time he would not spare those who were still unrepentant from punishment, 2 Cor. 13:1-2. (2) The unrepentant still doubted the spiritual credibility of Paul's ministry and sought for evidence of Christ's powerfully speaking through him (v. 3), so he was ready to prove it by exercising supernatural life-and-death apostolic discipline, v. 4; cf. Acts 5:1-11. (3) Paul had thus charged his readers to examine themselves as well as his ministry team to see if they or he were truly believers (2 Cor. 13:5-8), urging them to be restored to the proper position in Christ.
 - c. Thus, following their reliance on the Holy Spirit, Paul was urging his readers to make the necessary adjustments toward him and his ministry, being made "complete" or "restored" to spiritual health.
 3. Third, Paul urged his readers to "be encouraged" (*parakaleo*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 622-623), v. 11d, what would occur when the proper adjustments toward Paul occurred.
 4. Fourth, Paul directed his readers to "be of one mind," to be unified (v. 11e), a further result of a proper adjustment toward Paul and his ministry and following its resulting encouragement.
 5. Fifth, and finally, Paul told his readers to be at peace, and the God of peace would be with them, v. 11f.
- C. The resulting unity is suggested in Paul's added calls for his readers to greet one another with a holy kiss, what is culturally expressed by us today by means of giving warm hand shakes, and Paul added that all the saints with him sent their similar warm greetings to his readers, 2 Corinthians 13:12-13.
- D. Finally, in one of the great passages of Scripture on the doctrine of the Trinity, Paul wished that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to be with them all, 2 Cor. 13:14! [Since the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are distinguished in this verse from "God," we understand the term "God" here to refer to **another** Person of the Godhead, namely, "God the Father," cf. Matthew 28:19.]

Lesson: Paul summed that the steps to spiritual fellowship from godlessness involved (1) rejoicing, the product of relying on the Holy Spirit, (2) followed by rightly adjusting to him and his ministry (3) resulting in his readers' being encouraged, (4) of one mind and (5) at peace with each other that the God of peace might be with them.

Application: The steps to go from carnality to spiritual fellowship in a church occurs if (1) each confesses his sins to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, seen in his rejoicing, (2) followed by adjusting to the biblical offices and roles in the body, (3) resulting in all being encouraged, (4) of one mind and (5) at peace with one another and with God.