

**GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES**  
**Part VI: Gems From The Ending Of 2 Corinthians, A. D. 56**  
**(2 Corinthians 13:1-14)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. The epistle of 2 Corinthians was written around A. D. 56 during Paul's second missionary journey (Bible Knowledge Commentary., New Testament, p. 434).
- B. The believers at Corinth were prey to false teachers who opposed Paul's apostolic authority so as to dominate the church (2 Corinthians 11:20). Paul thus defended his apostolic authority in 2 Corinthians 10-13 (Ibid., p. 1656), and 2 Corinthians 13:1-14 that ends this epistle reflects this defense in a way that wonderfully proves his true apostleship and testifies of the doctrine of the Trinity. We view it for our application and edification:

**II. Gems From The Ending Of 2 Corinthians, A. D. 56; 2 Corinthians 13:1-14.**

- A. In 2 Corinthians 13:1-10, Paul decisively defended his apostolic authority:
  - 1. Paul defended his apostolic authority with a strong proof of it in 2 Corinthians 13:1-3a:
    - a. God gave the apostles power to heal and raise the dead (cf. Acts 5:12-16; 9:36-42 with Peter; Acts 20:7-11 with Paul) or to punish with physical harm (Acts 13:9-12 with Paul) or death (Acts 5:1-11 with Peter).
    - b. When Paul then wrote that when he came he would take the testimony of two or three witnesses as the basis for punishing the sinful (2 Cor. 13:1-2), he claimed apostolic power to punish with physical severity!
    - c. Paul noted that some of his readers sought proof that Christ spoke in him, so they were going to get that proof in the form of an undesirable and physical discipline if they did not repent, 2 Corinthians 13:3a!
    - d. The fact that the early church included this epistle in the canon of Scripture is evidence that they accepted Paul's claim to be a true apostle as being a claim he indeed could prove by exercising apostolic discipline!
  - 2. Paul then clarified the distinction between a believer's human weakness and his spiritual power as based on the experience of Christ as being crucified in weakness but being raised in power, 2 Cor. 13:3b-4 NIV:
    - a. The apostle claimed that Christ was not weak in dealing with his readers, but powerful, 2 Cor. 13:3b NIV.
    - b. Indeed, Christ Himself was crucified in human weakness, but now He lives by God's power, v. 4a NIV.
    - c. Paul added that he and his ministry team were likewise humanly weak in Christ, but by God's power they would live with Him in dealing with Paul's readers at Corinth, 2 Corinthians 13:4b NIV.
  - 3. The apostle then applied this truth to his readers and to himself and his ministry team to get his readers to do what was right in accepting his apostolic credentials and avoid his discipline, 2 Corinthians 13:5-10:
    - a. The Corinthian believers had questioned Paul's apostolic credentials, so in 2 Corinthians 13:5-6, Paul urged them to test themselves to see whether they were in the faith. He did not doubt that his readers were believers, but that would not be the case were they to fail this test, 2 Corinthians 13:5!
    - b. Paul added that he trusted that his readers would not doubt that he and his coworkers passed the test, v. 6.
    - c. He expressed his concern that his readers at Corinth would not do anything wrong in their evaluation of him and his ministry team (2 Cor. 13:7a), not because he wanted people to see that his ministry team had passed the test but that his readers might do what was right in accepting the credibility of Paul and his ministry team even though it might seem that they had humanly not passed the test, 2 Corinthians 13:7b.
    - d. Paul and his team could not do anything that was against the truth, but only what was for the truth, 2 Cor. 13:8. The apostle expressed his joy that whenever he and his team were humanly weak his readers were spiritually strong, and he prayed that his readers might fully be restored to spiritual health, 2 Cor. 13:9.
    - e. Paul explained that he was writing in such a direct manner while absent so that when he came he might not have to be harsh in using his apostolic authority that God gave him to build up and not to tear down, v. 10.
- B. In his closing, after giving a call that his readers strive for full restoration to spiritual health, to encourage one another, to be unified, to live in peace for the God of love and peace to be with them, to greet one another warmly while sending greetings from fellow believers (v. 11-13), Paul added that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with" them all, v. 14 NIV. This statement is an "early witness to belief in the Trinity" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 Cor. 13:14), a gracious addition to a letter of correction to a carnal church!

**Lesson:** *In great grace, Paul closed 2 Corinthians to a carnal body of believers with proof of his apostleship and a clear and early witness to the doctrine of the Trinity.*

**Application:** *May we accept Paul's apostolic authority and believe in the doctrine of the Triune Godhead.*