

2 Corinthians 13 Commentary-Wayne Barber

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2 Corinthians 13:11-14 Evidence of Rejoicing

The book of 2 Corinthians chapter 13. It's like saying goodbye to an old friend. We're going to talk today about evidences of rejoicing. Let me read the text. Verse 11 of chapter 13 says, "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

You know, it's hard to bring across what comes out in Scripture of the love that the apostle Paul had for the church of Corinth that had caused him so much pain. But God in Paul had given him a love for them that's incredible. In verse 1 of chapter 13 he told them, "Yes, I'm coming to see you. It's going to be my third time." He writes them to tell them basically to get things ready. "Be ready for my third return."

But his heart, and this is what you've got to see, his heart is not just that they do what is right because he's coming and they're afraid of him. Oh, no. You see, Paul understands what we need to understand: obedience in the believer's life is never for the sake of men. Obedience is for the sake of the Lordship of Jesus Christ living in us and the loving response; it's our loving response to who He is in our lives.

Paul has already said in verse 7, "Listen, even though we may appear to be unapproved, that shouldn't alter your obedience. You never obey because someone else is or someone else isn't. You obey because that's what's right before God because of what He's done for you." You see, obedience in the believer's life is the simple reflex of faith working in the believer who loves the Lord. It's just a reflex. It's the heart of God beating within us. It is the instant willingness to do whatever the Lord says no matter what it costs us.

You know I love young people, but one of the things that always impresses me—and I love to be around young people because they're so quick to hear and they're so quick to obey—I remember one year a little gal came forward weeping and she said, "God's told me I have to give up being the captain of the cheerleaders at our school." And I thought, "Why?" And she said, "I've fallen into temptation, I've fallen into sin, I cannot handle. I'm not strong enough to handle that. And God put on my heart and I've got to resign that so that I can be what God wants me to be. And God has so impressed that upon my heart."

Well, that's exactly what obedience is. It doesn't matter if anybody else agrees, it doesn't matter if anybody else claps when you obey, it's what God thinks. That's what obedience is all about. And this yielded attitude of being willing to surrender, to present yourselves to God on a daily fresh basis, that's the key. And this is something that I want us to hear, to experiencing the fullness of what Christ offers us in our life.

You see, people say there's a secondary experience. No, there's not a secondary experience. We have the Lord Jesus living in us in the person of His Holy Spirit, but there is in a sense a deeper way in which we can walk with Him. But it only comes at the willingness that we have of being willing to say yes to Him. Without this yielded obedience in our heart to Christ there is no rejoicing. You cannot rejoice unless you're walking with Him in obedience to Him. That's the fruit of His Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, a joy that you've never had before. A joy that can overwhelm you and it doesn't mean your circumstances change. It means that you're being changed in the midst of your circumstances.

Now with this in mind, knowing that the only people that truly rejoice are the ones walking in the fullness of what God offers to them, we need to understand that as we read Paul's final words here beginning in verse 11 when he says, "Finally, brethren, rejoice," we have to understand where that rejoicing comes from. The word "brethren" is a very affectionate word and again shows you the heart that Paul had for these believers there. And it really sets the tone for the whole epistle and particularly the last few verses that he writes.

The word "rejoice" was commonly used in a farewell salutation to a letter that someone would write. I understand that. But the

meaning of the word rejoice should not in any way be lessened simply because many people used that as they finished a letter. Oh, no. It bothers me so badly when people study epistles and they get to the last few verses or they look at the first few verses of chapter 1 and they tend to write them off because they think he's just greeting them or he's just signing off the letter. No, no. All Scripture is inspired by God and so we have to remember that there's a message in each word.

It's in the present tense. Present tense means to keep on rejoicing. Rejoice and keep on rejoicing. And it's in the imperative mood. Paul didn't give them a suggestion. He said this is a command that you walk this way and he puts it in the active voice which means you make this your choice. Be intentional about this. Wake up in the morning and be intentional: I'm going to live rejoicing in the Lord today no matter what happens in my life. Once again, rejoicing is the fruit of walking in obedience, loving obedience to the Lordship of Christ. It's not like the Pharisee would have of a mechanical obedience trying to earn righteousness. It's a loving response of a believer who loves his Lord.

Paul wants them to experience this rejoicing of walking in the fullness of Christ and what he's about to say, there are five commands, one is to rejoice, then the next four that we're going to look at really are simple if you solve the first one. Almost every time Paul makes a list or Peter makes a list, the first thing they mention is so important because the rest of them tend to flow from that. Even though it's in a command form it seems to flow as a river.

I want us to look at the evidences of someone or a church that is walking in that rejoicing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want you to remember that the Corinthians could have been living this way but because of sin and because of self they chose not to. So nobody can take from you what God has given to you, but you can choose not to walk in it. And that's what I mean when I say the fullness of Christ. I can be intentional and choose to walk in that if I'm willing to do whatever God tells me whenever God speaks to my heart. You can do the same: it's for everyone.

A person who is rejoicing in the Lord will see what is out of order around them

First of all, a person who is rejoicing in the Lord, choosing intentionally to rejoice in the Lord, they will see what is out of order around them. For the first time they begin to see life as it really is from God's point of view. In verse 11, "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete." Now the words "be made complete," sometimes translated "perfection," is the word *katartiso*, and it literally means to put a thing in its appropriate position, to set things in order.

When my wife goes home to check on her Mom or see our grandkids and I'm home by myself, our house tends to get out of order. And when I know she's coming home the next day I want to immediately, intentionally, put things back in their appropriate place, set things in order. That's what the word has in mind. It's in the present tense, imperative mood again and it means to be about; it's not a suggestion, this is a command, be about setting things in order.

Now what was out of order in Corinth that they couldn't see and that's why Paul had to write his epistle to them? There are several things. You see, disobedient people cannot even see in a church what's out of order. They can't see it because they can't see beyond themselves. These things can only be seen when a person is rejoicing in the Lord. He's in the right relationship with the Father and the Lord as he walks day by day. There was the issue of church discipline for those who were unwilling to repent of sin in their life. That was out of order. They wouldn't deal with it in; verse 2 of chapter 13 he said, "I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone." So set things in order; you go ahead and deal with what you know is out of order now that you have seen it.

Secondly, there was the issue of identifying and silencing the false doctrine that was being brought into the church. This was a critical matter. They couldn't see it before. They didn't know the difference between what was right and what was wrong. In verse 13 of chapter 11 he says, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." There would also have been the issue of once you have dealt with a person and disciplined that individual, then bring him back up under the loving arms of the church and help him to be nourished and to grow. In 2:7, "so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow."

You see, this is what I want you to see. When believers choose not to walk in the fullness of who Christ is, not to totally yield in obedience to Him, what happens is a blindness sets in. It's like a dullness of hearing, they can't hear, they can't see, and what happens is that everything starts falling apart around them and they have no clue. They have no way of measuring it the way God will, or discerning it the way God sees it. Doctrinal deception, unconfessed sin, wounded brothers on the right and the left can be all around them, but again as I said a moment ago, they can't see beyond themselves.

So as a result things are out of order. And the witness of the church starts falling apart and they have no clue. But when one is rejoicing, which only comes in obedience and surrendered walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, his eyes seem to open and he begins to see what's out of order that needs to be put back into order. This is true in an individual's life: When God got hold of me years ago and began to show me all the things that were out of order in my life that I hadn't seen. It's true in a family when a family begins to

experience revival whether it be all of them or one or two of them, they see things that are out of order. And the same thing in the church.

I guess to apply this particular point would be to ask a question today. Are you walking in the fullness of the Spirit of God? Are you living in that intentional rejoicing in Him, in His will, and in His Word? Are you seeing things that are out of order? And here's the key: are you part of the solution or are you part of the problem? See, that's what was going on in Corinth and he was trying to get them to be part of the solution by dealing with these things.

A person who rejoices in the Lord has a changed attitude toward correction

But secondly, when one is rejoicing intentionally in the Lord Jesus Christ their attitude toward correction, being corrected, changes. It's amazing to me when I'm not living right I don't want anybody to tell me how that I ought to be living. Are you that way? When I've already got sin and I'm not dealing with it, don't you tell me about. I remember one night we were moving my wife's younger sister. I hate to move but particularly when it's somebody else and particularly when it's family.

And so I was reluctantly doing what I knew I had better do. We'd been carrying couches up and down the steps and chairs and everything else and they always put me at the heavier end of everything because I'm taller and I'm worn flat out. And my wife and her sisters, they thought they were turning the air on and they had turned the heat on. It's in August and it may be 160 degrees inside of this thing. I'm thinking if this is air conditioning something is wrong. They kept saying the doors were opened. I'm thinking it's worse than that. I'd lost 10 pounds by the time midnight got there and we finally got most of the stuff out and then my sister-in-law looked at me and I could tell by the look on her face I wasn't going to like what she had to say. She said, "Wayne, I just want you to know that there are some folks who gave us a couch and a chair and they said we could have it if we'd come get it. But they're moving in the morning and we have to go tonight.

And I knew better than to open my mouth because I'd immediately hang myself. I just kept my mouth shut. And my sweet daughter walked over and put her arm around me and she said, "Now Daddy, remember who lives in you." Get away from me! It's amazing when we're not living right, we don't want anybody to tell us what's going on. And especially when they use God's Word to come alongside us. We don't want to hear it. That's why people bail out of church a lot of times. They can't stand conviction because they're not going to deal with it and they don't want to hear it.

Well, when you're trusting Christ and you're living in that rejoicing relationship, you look at correction from the Word of God as an encouragement, as an act of love. You don't see it like you used to see it. Your whole mindset changes because you want to be accountable. We're actually comforted by it.

In verse 11, "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted." Puts it in the passive voice; it's interesting. When Paul says "be comforted," I believe he's saying "Choose to be encouraged by what I'm telling you to do. Don't look at it as something that is harsh." Translators confuse this in the very translation. Some of them translate the middle voice. This New American Standard translates it in the passive voice. I'm really confused as to why they do that. Because the word "comforted" is the word *parakaleo*, and it means to comfort or encourage, but it's in the present, imperative active voice. It's not in the passive voice; it's not in the middle voice. In other words, you make a conscious choice to do something here and encouragement is to me the root meaning of what he's talking about here.

You make a conscious choice encouraged by what you're hearing me tell you to do. Don't look at it as some mean old person trying to beat you over the head with something. Look at it as a way of being encouraged, someone coming alongside you. See, usually you'd look through the epistle and you'd find the word in the verb form that's in the imperative mood. But he uses it 17 times in 2 Corinthians and this is the only time he puts it in the command form. So you really can't be helped there to see that idea of encouragement. You have to look outside of that epistle and 1 Thessalonians 4:18 he puts it in the command form, just like it is here. "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

He uses it in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing." He uses it in Titus 2:6; Titus 2:15 the same way. So this is why I believe he's saying, first of all, it's present tense, "be continually;" imperative mood, that's a command; but it's in the active voice, which means "you make a choice here." You choose just like you choose to rejoice, you choose to accept what I'm telling you as a way of my encouragement to you because you know I love you. So therefore receive what I have to say to you in the right spirit.

A believer walking in the fullness of Christ, rejoicing in Him, immediately sees what's out of order and sets about to put things in order. But not only that, he doesn't hear correction, he doesn't hear the hard things of God's Word, as being harsh. Jesus said Himself, "My commandments are not burdensome. Take My yoke upon you. You're going to find rest. I'll give you rest when you get saved, but if you'll get up under My yoke and My wheel and My commandments, then you're going to find rest like you've never known before." So it's not bad to be corrected from God's Word. But the only people that can receive that or do receive that are

those who are rejoicing in the Lord always. They're living that way daily.

Well, I guess to apply this to your heart and your life today, how do you view someone who seeks to correct you from God's Word? What are your thoughts? What goes on when you hear what your ears pick up on that God is speaking to you about in your life?

When a person is rejoicing in the Lord there will be an appreciation of the purity of God's word

Thirdly, when a person is rejoicing in the Lord, intentionally living that way, there will be an appreciation of the purity of God's Word. He'll love God's Word. You don't have to stir up the hunger, you just feed it. It's a huge difference. When I worked at Precept Ministry for years, people would come in. They wanted to be there. They'd spent ten hours of homework during the week and when I got up in front of 400 people, for 14 years, it was a thrill in my life because I wasn't having to stir a hunger, I was feeding a hunger. And there's a big difference in trying to stir one and trying to feed one.

This is what you're looking for here in a church. You're looking for people that are rejoicing in the Lord. You don't have to stir their hunger. They're hungry and you just feed the hunger that's already there. How do you know someone loves and appreciates the Word of God? The only way I know how to really fully answer that would be that they're living it out in their life. If they're not living it they don't fully appreciate it. Oh, they might want to learn it to put in their brain and use it against other people, but the people that love God's Word are people that rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in His Word.

And in verse 11 it says, "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded." Now that's an interesting term. "Like-minded" is the word *phroneo*, which refers to a mindset towards something. It's to say the same thing about something, not necessarily every Scripture we have to agree on, but the fact that Scripture is God's Word and that we love it in pure form. With the assault of the false doctrine that's been on the Corinthian church, this is so open-ended here. He's not talking about uniformity so what is he talking about?

For the last four chapters all he's been talking about is the false doctrine that has come in and eroded the purity of God's Word. To be like-minded, I believe he's saying, in what you think about God's Word. Be like-minded that you love it and you want to see it in its purest form. It could be argued that he could be saying, "Be like-minded towards me. I'm an apostle and I'm who I say I am." I have no argument with that. There are a lot of things you could fit into this, but I believe the specific focus of this is towards the Word of God. They needed to all realize that Paul was who he said he was. That's a mute point but they also needed to realize what was happening to the purity of the doctrine they had within the church.

What was really sad was that the people that had perverted that doctrine had perverted the message of grace which is the very thing that sets people free. Who these people were we already know that. In chapter 11:22 it's pretty obvious: "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I." So we know that they were people that loved the law and they'd taken the law which had imprisoned all of us under its condemnation, and put it back into the equation, when the message of grace has freed us from the law. Jesus, who gave it, fulfilled it, died on the cross, paid its price, now comes to live in us. And when we say yes to Him, Galatians 5:14 says, the whole law is already being fulfilled just by our act of saying yes to him.

But they'd gone back to it. So he says, "Be like-minded." You see, when you're rejoicing in Christ then you cannot live under law and rejoice. So you have to be living under grace. And you begin to see what's out of order and you want to put those things right. You begin to understand that correction is needed in the Christian life so that God's Word can shape us to be what He wants us to be. But it also comes to a place that you absolutely fall in love with the Word of God, the purity of the Word of God. This is what Paul wanted for them. He didn't care if they like him or didn't like him. He wanted them to walk in the fullness of what God had for them and to do that you have to love the Word of God.

I had a guy say to me one time, "You love the Word more than you love God." That happens to qualify as probably the stupidest statement anybody has ever said to me. I love my wife, but you know I have a little book here of what men understand about women. Any man who says he understands a woman would lie about anything. So I have to talk to her. And I remember riding down the road and I'd say, "What are you thinking?" And she'd say, "Nothing." That's not right. I read somewhere you're thinking something all the time. "What are you thinking?" "Nothing."

In five stop lights we're in a fight over what she's not thinking. The reason I want to know what she's thinking is I love her, and if I can hear what she's thinking, then I will know better how to please her. If there's no love in your life for the Word of God today, if the purity of the Word of God, you just can't get enough of it in your life, I promise you and I'm just trying to be as kind as I can: you go back to your walk with God and you'll find your problem. If you love God you have to love His Word and you will do whatever it costs you to protect its purity, even whatever it costs.

Well, doctrine is very important to people who love God and walk under grace because they want to make sure they have the mind of God. With a person rejoicing in Christ they'll set things in order. A person rejoicing in Christ will accept correction as encouragement. A person rejoicing in the Lord will be like-minded about God's message of grace.

When a person is rejoicing in the Lord they will desire to live in peace with one another

Fourthly they will desire to live in peace with one another. Verse 11, "Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Now dissension abounded in Corinth and it's so fitting that Paul has something to say here. "Live in peace."

The only way that this will ever take place is if Christ is living His life through you. That's what the grace message tells us. And if we're living in that rejoicing relationship, the fruit of the Spirit is love and the result of that is joy and then comes peace. And, you see, peace always follows. It's not the first thing. You can't walk in peace until first of all you're walking rejoicing in the Lord Jesus. He'll produce a love in you for people that you didn't even know you had. It's Christ in you and out of that will come a joy that you've not known ever. It's a rejoicing relationship and then look here, here comes the peace.

Peace with God, first of all, but then peace with our brother. When God's people are walking with Him and obeying His Word, loving each other, it's so obvious. And I'll tell you what, I just want to pat the Lord on the back today and applaud you. Thank you, thank you for the peace that I sense in this congregation. I can't do anything else but just say what's on my heart. Thank you, thank you. If you haven't been here all these years you don't need to know what I'm talking about. Just thank you, thank you. The peace that is in this congregation right now, it just blesses me and brings me to tears every time I think about it. That tells me something about you and your walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. And we can walk in peace with one another. What a beautiful time and a beautiful day in our life.

He goes on and carries this thought. And this peaceful relationship, this family relationship, we don't do it like they did it in America today. We hug each other, but look what he says. He says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." Now, I know that there's a lot of my friends that say, "I've been waiting on that verses." No, no, no, that's not what he's saying. There's nothing sensual, there's nothing erotic about this. What he's talking about is that this was a formal greeting, not a formal, this was a greeting of their day and their culture and it still carries in the Jewish culture today and in many cultures over the world.

I remember the first time going into eastern Europe. I didn't know that they did that. The gal walked up to me and grabbed me and kissed me on one side of the cheek, kissed me on the other side of the cheek, and I'm standing there thinking, "Okay, now what do I do?" But that's a greeting that they had. It was a way of accepting you. It was a way of saying, "Yes, you're my brother, you're my sister in the Lord." And the key to the whole thing is the word "holy." Take that home with you. Remember that. Set apart unto God, it's a way of accepting other people. We do more shaking hands and hugging one another. That's very, very important.

Paul uses this in Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:26. Peter uses it in 1 Peter 5:14. What they would do is you would come up and they would grab a person, hug them, and they would put a light touch of their lips on one side of his cheek and then move over to the other side and kiss on the other side of the cheek and it was just a wonderful way of saying, "Welcome, you're accepted, you're my brother, you're my sister in the Lord." It meant that the church was the family of God. They were living in peace with one another. There was nobody at war with anybody in the family of God.

Paul continues and says, "All the saints greet you." Who does he mean by all? Probably all the churches in Macedonia. I mean, this was a tremendous amount of people he's talking about who they didn't even know and didn't know their names. But that's okay; it's the family of God. I love this going all over the world and preaching in different cultures and different denominations, I just love it because you meet brothers and sisters in Christ. The family of God is so awesome, and it's so big and they look different and they have different colored skin and they have different languages but it's the family of God. That's what he's talking about. When you're rejoicing you get the sense that family, that family.

Paul ends the message by saying that he gives a blessing to all of them. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy spirit, be with you all." I don't know how many times in conferences and places I've been, people walk up to me and say, "I don't see the name trinity anywhere in the Scriptures." Oh, it's everywhere. It's the three in one. You don't have to have the word "trinity" to prove the trinity. Here it is right here. First Corinthians 12 does the same thing. He says the Spirit gives the gift, the Lord Jesus give the ministry, and God the Father give the effect. Here it is again. The three in one, the awesome blessing that Paul brings upon the people.

Rejoice, keep on rejoicing. Wouldn't that be your wish for the body of Christ today? That's the heart of a teacher that loves God and wants to walk with Him. "Listen, I don't care what you think about me," Paul said, "I just want you to know I love you and I want you to walk in the fullness of Christ. Not because I told you to, not because I do or I don't. You live because in that you can rejoice and when you start rejoicing, you'll see things are out of order and you'll set them back in order."

You won't be a difficult person to correct because you want to be corrected. If you're out of order, somebody brings the Word of God to you, you welcome that. You'll be like-minded toward the Word of God, you'll protect it and you'll live in peace. That's what it's all about, isn't it? I just can't tell you enough how much Paul loved the church of Corinth. Regardless of how they treated him, God

gave him a love for them.