



**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

Lesson Leaders:

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

God is not an arsonist; He's a refiner

POEM FOR THE WEEK:

In the trials God may prove us
Just to bring us forth more bright;
He can never cease to love us—
We are precious in His sight. —
Anon

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ

(1 Peter 1:7 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Jan 28, 1997)

**Series: Responding to
God's Grace**

**UNIT: Faith Leads to
Holy Living**

NEXT WEEK

**Faith That Sets an Example
(1 Thess 1:2-10)**

Faith That Is Tested 2 Cor 13:1-11

Lesson Background and Introduction

Paul's first visit to Corinth occurred on his second missionary journey (Acts 18). Paul spent about 18 months ministering in the city of Corinth (Acts 18:11). Paul's initial stay resulted in a church that included Jewish and Gentile believers (18:1-8). Mixing those two groups was not easy, for each had a sense of cultural superiority over the other (compare 1 Corinthians 1:20-22). The Greeks remembered the glory of their philosophers and the military exploits of Alexander the Great and his successors, dating back to 334 BC. It was they who brought Greek culture (Hellenism) to much of the Mediterranean world. The Jews, for their part, identified themselves as God's chosen people, with an ancient law given to them by God himself (compare Romans 2:17-29). Yet Paul argued persuasively that they had a new, common identity as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 27), united under a common Lord and Savior (1:2). After Paul's departure in AD 54, outsiders arrived whom Paul sarcastically calls "superapostles" for their claim of authority greater than his own or that of any other apostle (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11). These "apostles" tried to discredit Paul (11:5-15; 12:11, 12). Paul was deeply hurt by the Corinthians' acceptance of false teaching, which signaled to be a betrayal of friendship. Before writing 2 Corinthians, he traveled to Corinth to correct this false teaching, to clear his name, and to restore his relationships. The setting for the writing of 2 Corinthians is quite different from the setting for his writing of 1 Corinthians. In the first letter, likely written about AD 56, Paul draws on his relationship with the Corinthians to give authoritative directions concerning many problematic issues in the congregation (see 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 5:1-6:20; 7:1-14:40). He does this with confidence, believing their love and respect for him will allow his voice to be heard even when he is not there (see 5:3-5). By the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in AD 57, the impact of the false apostles had poisoned Paul's relationship with his friends. Because of this, Paul had some bold, harsh words for the Corinthians, words designed to put their relationship to rights. His response came in the form of a harsh, sorrowful letter (2 Corinthians 2:4). Paul saw more than a friendship at risk. He feared that a church he loved would turn to false teaching in ways that endangered their faith (11:1-15).

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Get the Church in Order - When Paul traveled to Corinth on his second missionary journey, he established a church in the city. He prepared to revisit the congregation there, but first warned he would not hold back on his criticisms of the church. He was coming in apostolic authority and in the strong influence of God. The Christians could endure public denunciation of ungodly behaviors and suffer discipline. Paul strongly urged them to get things in order before he got there. Paul explained that the humility and weakness Christ displayed on the Cross was not what he was bringing to Corinth. The Lamb of God is now in a place of dominion. Paul assured them he was coming in the same power.

Get Yourself in Order - Paul laid before the Corinthian Christians a sobering command: test to see if you indeed are a Christian. Where do you really stand? The apostle challenged the entire church to rethink their position. Paul further said, if you are not sure, it's quite possible your profession of faith is worthless. Accuracy about Christ is of major importance, Paul said, and he would take what action was needed. Paul desired to see this church grow and become mature, strong, and complete in Christ. Just like a parent who anticipates a child will develop into a productive adult and good citizen, he wanted to use this upcoming visit with the Corinthian church to build them up, instead of spending precious time dealing with immaturity and disciplinary issues.

God Can Accomplish the Impossible - Could the church in Corinth accomplish what Paul was praying and commanding? Is it possible for believers today to come around the table and agree, with so many different ideas and understandings? Can there be good relationships that build up one another? The key phrase is in 2 Corinthians 13:11: "the God of love and peace will be with you." With the Lord, believers who are operating in His wisdom and strength can accomplish the impossible.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Tested Through Discipline (13:1-4)

Deal only in truth (1)

- Know the source of truth (John 14:6)
- Know that Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44)
- Beware of false prophets (Matt 7:15)
- Use God's word to distinguish between good and evil (Heb 5:14)

Beware of sin (2)

- Flee sin (1 Tim 6:11)
- Test the spirits (1 John 4:1)
- Don't give Satan a foothold (Eph 4:27)

Live in the strength of God (3-4)

- God is the provider of our strength (Ps 18:32)
- Because God is our strength, we will trust in Him (Ps 28:7)
- God's weakness is greater than our strength (1 Cor 1:25)

Tested Through Examination (13:5-8)

Examine self (5)

- Examining means to consider our ways and be sure they match God's word (Ps 119:59)
- Examining means to test our ways (Lam 3:40)
- Examining means giving very careful thought to our ways (Hag 1:5)
- Examining means to judge our ways (1 Cor 11:31)
- Examining means to be careful that we are doing what we should (Heb 4:1)

Evaluate results (6)

- To be sure every thought comes under the control of God (2 Cor 10:5)
- To be sure of the type and motive of the work (1 Corinthians 3:12)
- To be sure we are right before judging others (Matt 7:1-2)

Use God's Word as measure (7-8)

- God's Word is for teaching and reproofing (2 Tim 3:16)
- God's Word teaches us what sin is (Rom 7:7)
- God's Word is the perfection that we must strive for (Ps 19:7)

Tested Through Striving for Perfection (13:9-11)

Pray for perfection (9)

- Pray for mercy (Luke 18:38)
- Pray for the power to live a life worthy of the calling of God (Eph 4:1)
- Pray to live a life worthy of the Lord (Col 1:10)
- Pray that our thoughts and words are pleasing to God (Ps 19:14)

Follow the authority of God's leaders (10)

- Authorities are setup by God (Rom 13:1)
- God commands us to obey and pray for our leaders (1 Tim 2:1-2)
- Follow godly leaders because they are held accountable (Heb 13:17)

Live in unity and peace (11)

- Live in peace as much as it is up to us (Romans 12:18)
- Jesus prayed for the Church's unity (John 17:20-23)
- God is the only source of unity (Rom 15:5)
- It is the Church's responsibility to bring about unity of faith (Eph 4:13)