Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – October 7, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s ***Second*** letter to the ***Corinthians***

how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 12:14–13:14 “There will be a test. . .”

The Background: This is serious! Life is not a game.

Paul has defended his apostleship and methods by showing that he merely followed Jesus in laying down his life for the Corinthians, asking nothing of them. The manipulative, prideful “superapostles” had shown themselves to be self-serving hypocrites, only pretenders to the true faith. Now, which would the Corinthians choose: divine righteousness or worldly pride? The whole book is an explanation or “apology” for the gospel, the condescending love of God for His creatures. But just as a parent might issue a final warning, “Don’t make me come down there!” Paul warns this church that before his third visit, they had some soul-searching to do. They needed to repent of sin and set things right with one another, and with him.

Humility: The Cross establishes us under the full authority of Jesus.

Paul explains that his extended argument and speaking “as a fool,” was only about demonstrating the true power and authority of the gospel. Unlike the superapostles, Paul wants the Corinthians’ love, not their money, and has done what he has for their benefit. But while Jesus came first as a Lamb, He will return as a Lion, judging the unrepentant and setting things right. Paul, too, now will return in strength, but for now there is time to end the gossip, impurity, disorder, and slander. The Cross SHOULD change us.

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not-so-hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(14) This will be my third visit to you, and, as before, I’m coming to give, not take from you, just as a parent provides for his children, and doesn’t rob them. You know that even the men I have sent have not taken advantage of you. Crafty of me to trick you by my subtlety!

( 19) So you would be wrong if you think that my main point has been to defend myself personally: it’s all been about explaining why we have appeared to you as weaklings. Now, if you don’t “get” what I’ve been saying, I’m concerned that things will get even worse between us, resulting in my further humiliation and your shame, since there are those who still have not repented of their immorality and disorder.

(1) Yes, finally, it’s nearly time for that third visit, and that visit will be a sort of trial, complete with witnesses and Judge Jesus, who was crucified in weakness, but now lives by God’s power! In both weakness and strength, we represent Him and work for Him.

(5) So the real test is not about my faith, but your own. Examine yourselves and how your church is functioning, not me! You have professed to be followers of Jesus, and now you must behave like you are His. You have professed to be strong. So be righteously strong. Get your act together as Christ’s body, rebuke where necessary, love at all times, and be at peace among yourselves. See you soon. Your Apostle, Paul.

The Challenge: Has the Cross overcome my pride?

Memory Verse: James 4:6b

Paul clearly is drawing a line in the sand, telling the Corinthians enough is enough. How do we know when to do that?

Why does Paul spend so much time pointing out his gentleness and the meekness of Jesus in the gospel before he draws the line?

What are the implications of Paul’s challenge, “Examine yourselves”? Are the Corinthians true believers? How and when should we examine ourselves? What did this church need to set right?