

ENCORE

Scripture Reading: Read 2 Corinthians 13

In our devotional on 1 Corinthians 16, we explored a number of brief, staccato-like commands that Paul gave the church at Corinth in that chapter: “*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.*” Although short in length, Paul’s commands were long on importance.

In the last chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul gives us an encore (to keep the musical analogy going) of staccato commands: “*Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace.*” His encore is intended to summarize his message to the believers in Corinth.

1. **Aim for perfection** – Although the church will never reach perfection on this side of glory, we are expected to aim for it. Given the sinful lifestyle that was so prevalent in Corinth, there was probably a temptation for the believers to compromise in their Christian lives and to make peace with their pagan surroundings. It’s also possible that rather than fully pressing in to God, many in the church had reached a point of satisfaction in their Christian lives that led to complacency. These two problems affect the church today too. Paul wanted to stir their hearts and ours as well to continue to progress in our Christian lives as we seek more fully to reflect the character of Christ and grow in our relationships with Him.
2. **Listen to my appeal** – Paul poured out his heart to the church. He challenged them, exhorted them, taught them, encouraged them and rebuked them. It would all be for naught if they didn’t take his appeal to heart and act on it. What was true then is true today. We can’t ignore his appeal either.
3. **Be of one mind** – The church had a history of disunity that was addressed in 1 Corinthians but still had to be addressed in 2 Corinthians also (cf. 12:20). They needed to learn to live as one body, united in truth and loving as family. The church’s need to be unified is just as important today in a fractured world as it was in Corinth and just as elusive. No wonder we need to be reminded to “*be of one mind.*”
4. **Live in peace** – One of the goals of being of one mind is so that believers could live together in peace. We know the church struggled with quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder; much of it related to their immaturity and the false apostles who brought the church into bondage. Their lack of peaceful living was affecting the church’s witness. Paul wanted them to walk in peace with God and with each other. His call to live in peace, by the way, has not been rescinded (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-2).

Action Step: Go through Paul’s encore and identify which one is weakest in your Christian life. Reflect on what Paul had to say about it in his two Corinthian epistles.

Prayer Focus: Take the staccato command the Lord’s shows you is lacking in your life and commit it to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to begin developing it within you this week.

Take-a-way: *Paul’s encore is worth hearing and obeying!*