

2 Corinthians 13:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

Analysis

This is the third time I am coming to you—Paul announces his impending third visit to Corinth, invoking the legal principle from Deuteronomy 19:15 that **in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established**. The Greek *martyrōn* (μαρτύρων, "witnesses") establishes judicial authority. Paul frames his apostolic visits themselves as witnesses against persistent sin—each visit providing testimony requiring action.

The threefold pattern echoes Christ's three predictions of His death and Peter's three denials, suggesting both judgment and restoration. Paul's application of Torah legal standards to church discipline demonstrates continuity between Old and New Covenant authority structures, with apostolic authority carrying judicial weight comparable to Mosaic courts.

Historical Context

Paul's relationship with Corinth was tumultuous. His first visit established the church (Acts 18), a second "painful visit" addressed serious sin (2 Cor 2:1), and now this third visit approaches. The Corinthian church struggled with factionalism, sexual immorality, and challenges to Paul's apostolic authority, necessitating this final confrontation with judicial authority.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's appeal to 'two or three witnesses' demonstrate the biblical pattern for church discipline?
2. What does Paul's persistence in visiting Corinth despite opposition teach about pastoral care?
3. How should church leaders today balance patience with accountability when addressing persistent sin?

Interlinear Text

Τρίτον	τοῦτο	ἔρχομαι	πρὸς	ὑμᾶς	ἐπὶ	στόματος
is the third	This	time I am coming	to	you	In	the mouth
G5154	G5124	G2064	G4314	G5209	G1909	G4750
δύο	μαρτύρων	καὶ	τριῶν	σταθήσεται	πᾶν	ῥῆμα
of two	witnesses	or	three	be established	every	word
G1417	G3144	G2532	G5140	G2476	G3956	G4487

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 18:16 (Word): But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Deuteronomy 19:15 (Witness): One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

Deuteronomy 17:6 (Witness): At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

2 Corinthians 12:14 (Parallel theme): Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

Numbers 35:30 (Witness): Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

1 Kings 21:10 (Witness): And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

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