The Hopes of Spiritual Parents

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

I. Spiritual parents hope for joy for their children.

A. The first hope that Paul expresses for the Corinthian church is in vs. 11: "Finally, brothers, rejoice." Much of 2 Corinthians doesn't seem to have a joyful tone. The letter is full of conflict, tension, and frustration. How then could Paul end his letter by saying that his greatest hope for the church would be that they rejoice? Notice in vs. 11 that Paul is not telling the church to rejoice when they feel like rejoicing. He commands them to rejoice all the time.

B. The feeling of joy often follows rather than precedes the actions of rejoicing. Make up your mind first to rejoice and the feelings of joy will follow. Where can I find joy today?" Paul answers that question in Philippians 4:4: **"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."** We Christians can always rejoice in Jesus and in what He has done for us. We can rejoice in His love for us.

II. Spiritual parents hope for love for their children.

A. Each of Paul's simple commands in vs. 11-13 has something to do with love. The first short command is to aim for restoration. Fix your broken relationships in church. Then, comfort each other when you observe hardship in the lives of others. Then Paul commands in vs. 11, "agree with one another." We can transcend our differences by finding a unity on issues that are of utmost importance. We love each other by focusing on the things that unite us.

B. Then Paul commands in vs. 11 that we live at peace. Avoid the behavior of 2 Cor. 12:20. How do we get a church of love and peace? Love and peace come by making sacrifices like the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. A final way that we can love each other is found in vs. 13. Paul writes there, "All the saints greet you." We Christians are not just from one place, one race, or one nationality. We Christians are from all over the world, and yet we are one.

III. Spiritual parents hope for dependence on God for their children.

A. Paul closes in vs. 14 with a prayer of blessing: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." It is the Triune God who lives in community that is the source of our community with one another in the church. We need to depend on this God to experience community. We're weak clay pots that easily break. So, the strength to live a life of grace, love and fellowship comes from God alone. We must depend on God if we want to live the Christian life that the Corinthians failed to live in their own strength.

Application:
Depend on God to help you live the Christian life.

Sources:
The Bible
Commentaries by Trent Casto, David Garland, and Gary Millar

Sermon Discussion Questions

1) What enables you to rejoice in difficult circumstances? What comes first - the rejoicing or the actions of rejoicing?
2) Which command of love in vs. 11-13 do you need to work on this week? Is there a relationship within the church that you need to restore?
3) How can we develop a greater dependence on God to live the Christian life? What does God possess that we do not have in our own strength (vs. 14)?