

"Paul and His Critics"

Part 3

2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

Introduction: This past week I received the magazine Israel My Glory and the letter from the editor was something which fit very well with our studies on Sunday evening. The letter is very alarming for it tells of the SATANIC movement happening today in an effort to confuse the church and to lead the church away from the Truth of God's Word. Before we read the letter from the editor let me just say that Satan has no specific false doctrine which he desires to be taught. Satan does not really care what we believe and what we stand for as long it is NOT the Truth of the Bible. Therefore, he will promote ANY false teaching that he can to confuse the church. Let us notice the alarming letter:

*"A minister once told me about a church that was having difficulty finding a pastor. Its doctrine was identical to that of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. The church used the literal-historical-grammatical method of interpreting the Bible; believed the Rapture will precede seven years of unprecedented tribulation on Earth; and believed Jesus will return afterward to establish a literal, 1,000-year Messianic Kingdom, when He will sit on the throne of His ancestor King David. So far so good. To the church's delight, it received hundreds of applications. But to its dismay, few applicants held the same doctrinal position—or so the pulpit committee thought. When the candidating began, the committee was in for an even ruder awakening. Under extensive questioning, some of the applicants who had appeared compatible with the church's doctrine admitted they did not believe in a literal Messianic (Millennial) Kingdom. Nor did they believe the Jewish people would receive the future blessing God promised Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures. In their view, God was through with Israel and had replaced it with the church. "So," I told the minister relating the story, "these men were liars. They lied on their applications and had no qualms about lying to the congregation." **Worse still, they thought truthfulness less important than steering the church away from its current doctrine and support of Israel.** If hired, they said, they had planned to change the church's way of thinking. Sadly, this wasn't the first time I'd heard such a story."*

Last week in our study of 2 Corinthians we were looking at 10:7-18. It is in these verses that Paul speaks to the Corinthians who were listening to his critics and he also is speaking to his critics. It is in this section that we can find help on how to identify a TRUE man of

God and we can also find the cautions which need to be exercised before accepting any teacher or pastor as a man sent by God. Now last week in our study we looked at a mistake which those who believed the critics of Paul had made. We are going to revisit that thought briefly tonight.

I. **Discernment of Bible Teachers**

1. **Research his background!!!**

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:7a

The Corinthians had made the mistake of accepting these men based upon what they were able to see. The Judaizers had come from Jerusalem with their letters of commendation but the Corinthians never researched their background. These false teachers looked good, they spoke very well and they even claimed to be TRUE APOSTLES of Jesus Christ but it was all lies. The Corinthians did not do their homework on these men and therefore they had made a very big mistake. They permitted these false teachers to get into the congregation and a little leaven leavened the whole lump.

Application:

Last week we applied this to any church who was searching for a pastor or who was looking to bring in a Bible teacher. The church MUST research the background of the individual. Letters of commendation are nice but they can be bought for a price.

There is another application here that is very important that we did not touch upon last week. This also applies to television preachers. So many people turn on television pastors and they absorb every word they speak while at the same time they know absolutely nothing about the man. They mail money to support their ministry but they really have no idea what they stand for.

Another mistake which the Corinthians had made was they neglected to look at the evidence in Paul's life which was proof he was a TRUE messenger of God. He had spent 18 months with them, they were aware of the suffering which he had endured to see that the Gospel was spread, and they knew all about his Damascus Road experience. But when the false teachers came in from out-of-town they seemed to ignore what was right before their eyes (Paul's testimony) and they chose to believe these men they did not even know.

So, the first lesson we learn is to research the person's background.

2. **Examine his testimony!!!**

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:7b

The statement "*if any man trust to himself that he is Christ's*" refers to their own personal statement about themselves. If someone would have asked the false teachers if they were believers they would have declared they were. If someone would have asked them how they knew they were believers they would have said "BECAUSE WE KNOW WE ARE!". They may have said, "BECAUSE WE SAY SO!". Let me get you to the thought in this verse. These Judaizers came CLAIMING they were believers in Jesus Christ. They had no testimony because they were not saved. Let me refresh our minds with what Paul will say about them in the next chapter.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¹³ ***For such are false apostles**, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*

¹⁴ *And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

¹⁵ *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

They could talk about Jesus and they could possibly say they listened to Him when He walked in Jerusalem but they had no personal relationship with Him. So, they came in DECLARING they were believers **and that Paul was NOT.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:7 again.

Paul was stating in this verse that just because they SAID they were followers of Christ did not mean they were. Paul had a testimony which he told many times of his Damascus Road conversion. These false teachers had nothing but their own opinion.

Application:

When a church searches for a pastor or plans to bring a speaker in they MUST be sure to ask the person about his testimony. There are many people today who claim to be Christians but they have no testimony. They cannot tell you about a time in their lives when they accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. They may claim to attend church, sing in a choir, hold a church membership, stand behind the pulpit and teach but they cannot tell you about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The reason is because they do not have one.

When a man is considered by the church to be their pastor the man's testimony must be known. There are no questions that should be permitted to go unanswered. A candidate's testimony must include in detail how he came to know Jesus Christ as Savior. A vague testimony is completely unacceptable.

I know of a situation where a pulpit committee interviewed a candidate and asked a certain question and the man side stepped the question and never really gave an answer. The committee was sorry they did not press the man to answer in detail for it came back to haunt them later.

Let me get back to the verse again; Paul was stating that if the Corinthians were going to make a judgment call based upon personal claims then Paul had evidence to support his claims but the false teachers had nothing to support theirs. Paul lived his life separated unto the Gospel and therefore there was an abundance of evidence in his life that he was Christ's.

Let me just say that any man who claims to be called of God should be a man who manifests Jesus Christ in his life.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

¹⁸ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Let us now move on to the next point.

3. Do they edify or divide with their ministry?

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:8

Now, when I read this verse I can see that these false teachers who came into the church at Corinth came claiming to have much authority. This is probably because they claimed to be Apostles. Here in this verse Paul reminds the Corinthians that Apostolic Authority was given for EDIFICATION of the church. In other words, the authority given to Paul as an Apostle was for strengthening the body of Christ and not to tear it apart by dividing it into cliques and factions. These false apostles had come into Corinth and they were dividing the church. That alone was proof they were not sent from God but were ministers of Satan. Let me show you how the entire LUMP was affected by the false teachers.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

² I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

³ For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

⁴ For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

Application:

We can be sure that anyone who comes into the church and causes divisions and strife is not of God.

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Pastor and teachers are gifted men of God given to the church to EDIFY the church and NOT to divide the church.

Let us notice what the Bible says concerning those who cause divisions.

Romans 16:17-18

¹⁷ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

¹⁸ For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Proverbs 6:16-19

¹⁶ These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

¹⁹ A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Let me get you back to the false teachers in Corinth again because there is something in this thought of DIVISION we need to see. Satan's ways are never new. From the beginning it was his desire to cast doubt upon the Word of God.

Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

² And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

³ But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

⁴ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

This is exactly what he was trying to do in Corinth. Paul had gone to Corinth, preached the Gospel and when they accepted Jesus Christ he then taught them the Word of God. Satan then sent the false apostles in to tear apart the foundational doctrine which Paul had established which they did by attacking the integrity of Paul. The Truths which Paul taught was the spiritual meat which would cause the church to grow and Satan did not want to see the church grow for that would mean more people would come to Christ. Let us

remember that Satan does not care what a church buys into as long as it is not the Truth of the Bible.

Therefore, it is so important that we guard and protect the Biblical foundation of this church. Satan would love to place someone on the inside who could teach a false doctrine that would slowly erode the foundation away. Let me also remind you that in the days we live in we must be diligent when guarding the Truth.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Conclusion:

Let me leave you with the words of Jude.

Jude 1:3-4, 16-19

³ Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

⁴ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

¹⁷ But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

¹⁸ How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

¹⁹ These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.