

"Paul and His Critics"

Part 3

2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

Introduction: Tonight, as we come back to our study in 2 Corinthians we are stepping into a section which has been a real challenge for me to develop a message from. But through prayer and reading 2 Corinthians 10:7-18 it has turned out to be quite a blessing to me and I trust will be the same to you.

In the passage which is before us Paul is going to address the believers at Corinth who had given attention to the Judaizers who had made their way into the church. If you remember these Judaizers had come in shortly after Paul had left the church. When they came in they began to cast doubt upon the integrity of Paul. Satan was behind these people and it was his mission to cause many to doubt the words of Paul. As we have talked about many times, it was Satan's mission to turn the church away from the Truth of God's Word. These false teachers had succeeded in gaining listeners at Corinth and Paul had addressed this issue in the LOST LETTER which some refer to as the SHARP LETTER. Titus delivered the SHARP LETTER which called them away from mutiny and back to Paul. Second Corinthians tells us of the return and the news which Titus returned with.

2 Corinthians 7:5-9

⁵ *For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.*

⁶ *Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;*

⁷ *And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.*

⁸ *For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.*

⁹ *Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.*

Paul was full of joy because of their repentance. So, the question then comes up, "Why did Paul need to write the section which we are currently looking at?" The reason was because

there were still some who were giving their attention to the Judaizers and we must understand that since the SHARP LETTER had brought the Corinthians to repentance the reconciliation was still fragile. Paul knew the false teachers would not give up very easily and so in the section before us tonight Paul addresses his critics and those who were still listening to his critics and leaning toward their side of the argument.

In this section (10:7-18) Paul defends his apostolic authority and as he does he teaches us how to discern between True Bible teachers and those who are used of Satan to deceive.

I. Discernment of Bible Teachers

1. Research his background!!!

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:7a

The question set forth here can really be seen in two ways:

- a. It may be a question that is meant to cause the Corinthians to step back and look at what they have been doing.
- b. It may be a command which would be commanding these believers to stop and look at the facts.

I believe it is applicable in both ways so let us see it in the light of both.

a. They needed to look at the mistake they were making.

Those who bought into the lies of the critics were making a judgment call based upon only what they could see with their eyes. They knew nothing about the Judaizers who had come in. They were from out-of-town and they came with letters of recommendation but no one checked them out. They came into Corinth proclaiming to be true apostles with a different message than the message of grace which Paul preached. Notice what Paul states about these people in chapter 11;

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.

So, these false teachers came into the city of Corinth with their signed letters of commendation from Jerusalem and they were probably forged signatures, claiming to be apostles of Christ and no one in Corinth knew them personally. They began to listen to their teachings (whatever it was) and these false teachers being servants of Satan knew exactly what to say. They gained the attention of the Corinthians with their eloquent speech and they began to sell their lies about Paul and the sad part is the Corinthians accepted the lies like it was ice water on a hot summer day. The problem was they never searched these the background of these teachers.

Application:

There is so much application here so we are going to slow down and consider as much as we possibly can. When any church looks for a Pastor or when church is considering bring someone in to teach a class they MUST research the background of the individual. Letters of commendation are nice but they can be bought for a fee.

2 Peter 2:1-3a

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

³ And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you:

False teachers do not come in carrying a sign that announces they have arrived. They will slide in while blending in with the crowd. Let me show you what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:13-15

¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

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

I find it very interesting that Jesus gave the warning about false teachers after His teaching on the WAY OF SALVATION in the previous verses and I believe there is a definite connection here. The false teachers will often attempt to soften or round the corners of the DIRECT NARROW teaching of our Lord. But what I really want you to see here concerning false teachers is they will come as WOLVES in sheep's clothing. In other words, they will dress as other shepherds dress meaning they will blend in with the TRUE Bible teachers. This brings to my mind something which Jesus had spoken to His disciples.

Matthew 13:24-26

²⁴ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

²⁵ But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

²⁶ But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

Let me get you back to the thought again. The believers at Corinth were only looking at the letters of commendation and were only listening to the eloquent speech of the false teachers and so they had been deceived. They never took the time to search the background of these men who had come rolling in from Jerusalem. This is often one of the mistakes which a church will make when search for a Pastor or when inviting a special speaker to come in. Let me show you from the Old Testament what can happen.

In Deuteronomy 20 God gave to Israel a military manual explaining how to approach the people of the land of Canaan.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

¹⁶ But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

¹⁷ But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

¹⁸ That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

Then in Joshua we read of a mistake which Israel made under the leadership of Joshua.

Joshua 9:1-16

And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof;

² That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

³ And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

⁴ They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

⁵ And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.

⁶ And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

⁷ And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

⁸ And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?

⁹ And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,

¹⁰ And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroath.

¹¹ Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.

¹² This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

¹³ And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

¹⁴ And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.

15 And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them.

16 And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.

Joshua and the leaders of Israel made a league with the Gibeonites and it was based COMPLETELY what they could SEE WITH THEIR EYES. There was no searching of their backgrounds. Israel had been deceived by the Gibeonites. Now there would be some who would say that it really did not cause any harm. But it did cause much harm but not right at the time. Let me show you what happened 400 years later.

2 Samuel 21:1-6

Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

2 And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

3 Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

4 And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you.

5 And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,

6 Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them.

Seven innocent men of the family of Saul were hanged because of Joshua and the leaders making a choice based upon what they could see only with their eyes.

When a church does not do the research on a pastor or a teacher there can be major problems years down the road as false doctrine is slowly introduced to the body of Christ.

It can be so slow and subtle that many never realize it is happening. It is like placing a frog in a pan of water and turning up the heat, he will slowly adjust to the temperature until he boils to death. That is the very way in which Satan will present false teaching.

So, the Corinthians were listening to men they really did not know.

Let me show you briefly another way this question can be taken in verse 7

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:7 again.

- b. They needed to look at the evidence which was right before their eyes and that was Paul's testimony.**

They had surely failed to research the teachers who had come in from out of town and at the same time they were ignoring the obvious. Paul had proven himself while he was with these people. How sad it was that they took the words of strangers and allowed their words to make them question the integrity of Paul.

Acts 18:1-4, 11

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

² And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

³ And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

¹¹ And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Paul had spent 18 months with the Corinthians so they knew him and his testimony but when they heard the words of the Judaizers they seemed to forget all of that.

Application/Conclusion:

Be very careful about WHO you listen to. Do not allow someone's words to blind you to the obvious. That can go both ways. DO NOT ignore the obvious about something which you see in a false teacher. Do NOT ignore the positives which you know to be true about a TRUE SERVANT of the Lord.