

"Paul and His Critics"

Part 5

2 Corinthians 10:1-13:10

Introduction: We have been looking at the words of Paul as he addressed his critics in 2 Corinthians 10:7-18. In this section we have been able to see how to discern between a TRUE messenger of God and FALSE messenger sent out by Satan. The critics of the Apostle Paul who had penetrated the church at Corinth were Jews who had come from Jerusalem. They came into the church in an attempt to place the church under the Law. They were against the message of GRACE and so they attacked Paul to discredit his message which was really God's message. They were Judaizers who had been planted in the church by Satan. Notice Paul's words 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.

Today as we continue in this chapter we shall see 4 more characteristics of a TRUE messenger of God.

I. Discernment of Bible Teachers

1. There will be no self-promotion.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:12

Paul makes it very clear here in this verse that he would not include himself in the ranks of these false teachers who promoted themselves. These false apostles had come into Corinth with letters of commendation from Jerusalem. They were letters that were no doubt forged by the false apostles themselves. This "self-promotion" should have caused a flag to be raised in the minds of the Corinthian believers.

Paul had letters of commendation but they were not written on parchment or stone. Let me show you what Paul had recorded earlier in this letter.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

² *Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:*

³ *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*

Paul did not need letters signed by men stating that he was a true messenger of God he had LIVING epistles/letters that were signed by the Holy Spirit. His LIVING letters were the Corinthians and the Spirit of God had placed his "SEAL" upon the Corinthians marking them as true believers which was the evidence that Paul was a true messenger of God. Paul did not need to promote himself but instead he allowed God to promote him as the Holy Spirit worked in and through his ministry. The false apostles on the other hand placed great importance on their letters of commendation. They waved them around like a banner in an attempt to prove they were "messengers" of God and Paul was not.

Application:

This very thing happens far too much in our society today. Let me show you the words of Ray Stedman on this very thought:

"You quickly learn to recognize some of the terms that are used over and over: "dynamic speaker," "world renowned preacher," "internationally known," "universally acclaimed." I regret that kind of thing is happening. To me it is a mark that a man has not understood that his ministry is given to him by God, and only God's commendation counts. You cannot help what other people say about you. It is not wrong if praise and commendation comes from them, but it is a deadly thing in the church to allow literature that you have approved of to go out commending yourself. Men who commend themselves, the apostle says, are lacking in understanding. Now there is a great difference between information and promotion. You can give out information that simply identifies who you are, what your name is, what you are coming to do, or something like that. That is perfectly right. But to promote something, to publicize it, to propagandize and to blow it up in extravagant terms is absolutely out of order for a God-authenticated ministry. As some man once said in response to an overblown introduction "There are no great preachers. There is only a great God." That is what Paul would recognize."

No pastor, teacher or evangelist needs to promote themselves. God has a way of placing us where He desires for us to be and a man tries to put himself in the position God has for

him ahead of his time he can expect there is going to be difficulties in his life. Let me give you an example.

Acts 7:20-29

²⁰ In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

²¹ And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

²² And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

²³ And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

²⁴ And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

²⁵ For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

²⁶ And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

²⁷ But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

²⁸ Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

²⁹ Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

Moses seen himself as the man who would lead Israel out of Egypt and he was correct. But he did not wait upon the Lord and he tried to place himself in the position ahead of God's timing and he was then sent out in the wilderness as a shepherd for 40 years where God would humble him. Many men have run ahead of God in the ministry by self-promotion only to fail and cause many unnecessary problems which could have been avoided.

Let me show you a man who did wait patiently for God to place him where he was to serve.

Genesis 37:5-10

⁵ *And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.*

⁶ *And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:*

⁷ *For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.*

⁸ *And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.*

⁹ *And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*

¹⁰ *And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?*

Joseph knew from the two dreams that God had something special for him. He did not know it would take 13 years before he would stand before Pharaoh and be made Prime Minister of Egypt. He patiently endured the trials and the training and never once promoted himself. He allowed God to place him where he desired for him to be. Let us now notice another characteristic of a TRUE messenger of God.

2. **He will wait upon the Lord to open doors of opportunity.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:13-14

The statements "without our measure" and "beyond our measure" refers to beyond Paul's limits or regions. In other words, Paul only went into the regions where God opened the doors and where God led him. To better understand this, we must consider how the false apostles were attacking Paul. They most likely told the Corinthians that Paul had no business even setting foot within Corinth. They would have pointed to the fact that Paul had no letters of commendation and they would have used that to claim Paul was outside of his boundaries. They would have shown the Corinthians their letters and explained that Corinth was their region.

Paul however was not out of his region and he would never go through a door which God had closed.

Acts 16:6-9

⁶ Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.

⁷ After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

⁸ And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

We see two times in this text that Paul was stopped by the Holy Spirit. We do not know how this was communicated but we do know that God had shut two doors and He did not want Paul in these regions at that time. Paul accepted the closed doors and he waited for God to open another door. From the time the door was closed to Bithynia until the Macedonian call could have been an extended period of time. We are not told how much time passed but we are told that Paul never forced his way into any region where God did not open the doors. Don't miss the fact that Paul was guided by HINDERANCE.

Application:

When God's messengers are committed to serving Him, there is one thing they never need to do and that is force their way through any closed doors. I was taught years ago by pastor Ritchie that if God closes a door there is a very good reason it is closed and I can be sure that I want nothing to do with what is behind the doors which God has closed. A pastor's responsibility is to serve God in the region where God has placed him.

This application goes into every believer's personal life. God opens doors and He closes doors for all of us. There will be times that we have our hearts set on something and God may, at the last minute close the door. When that happens, our responsibility is to accept the closed door and trust God that He knows our future and He knows what is best. Now let me get you mind back to the TRUE messenger of God.

There have been many men who claim to be messengers of the Lord who have crossed over many boundaries as they have forced their way into places when they were not intended to be. Let me show you an example.

Numbers 16:1-5, 28-33

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men:

² *And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:*

³ And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

⁴ And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face:

⁵ And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

²⁸ And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.

²⁹ If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me.

³⁰ But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

³¹ And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:

³² And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

³³ They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

A TRUE messenger of God will wait stay within the borders which God has established for him.

A pastor does not need to travel the globe. He does not need to be a pastor of the world. He does not need to speak to numerous people groups. He only needs to stay within the regions which God has appointed to him. There is a desire among preachers today to be widely known, to preach in many different places, to write and publish their books and the desires go on and on. Those things do not matter. I can truly say that above all God wants a pastor to be faithful in the place where God has placed him. It is not about how MANY I preach to it is about teaching those whom God has placed under my ministry.

3. His goal will be to see spiritual growth in those he ministers to.

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:15-16

Let me explain what Paul is saying here. He is expressing his desire for their spiritual growth. He is saying, "It is our desire that you would grow in your faith and be able to stand on your own. That will then result in more opportunities for us even beyond you but when our region is expanded we will still stay within the regions which God entrusts to us. We will still operate within our rules."

It was probably the desire of Paul to go into Spain with his ministry based upon what he recorded in Romans.

Romans 15:23-25

²³ But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

²⁴ Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

²⁵ But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

It is interesting to know that Paul wrote the book of Romans while in Corinth. It was Paul's desire that the believers in Corinth grow in the faith to the point that they would no longer need to rely upon Paul. He would not let them on their own until they were ready but when they were he would move on to other regions that God would open for him.

The Judaizers were not interested in the spiritual growth of the church. They were focused upon the division and the destruction of the church.

Application:

One way to identify a true messenger of God is by his care for the church. He will make many sacrifices to teach and disciple the church to lead them in spiritual growth. It is not the true messenger's desire that the people entrusted to him always rely upon him but he desires to see them learn the Word of God and then be able to handle the Word of God. This is not his desire so that he can relax and have an easy ministry but he desires to see the church equipped for the spiritual they are engaged in. The true man of God understands the blueprint which God has given in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:11-16

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:

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

This now brings us to the final point. **When this growth takes place:**

4. **He gives all the glory to God.**

Notice 2 Corinthians 10:17-18

When there is growth within the church the man of God will be sure to give all the glory to God. He will understand that he is only a conduit through which God has chosen to work and it is God who gets all the glory.