

"Paul's Defense of his Apostleship"

Part 12

2 Corinthians 12

Introduction: Tonight, as we continue our study of 2 Corinthians we are going to see another message which will again look at Paul's defense of his apostleship. The past two weeks we looked at the experience which Paul had when he was caught up to the third heaven and we looked at the "thorn in the flesh" which was given to him to keep him humble. In our study tonight Paul will point to several signs of an apostle which the Corinthians were permitted to see while Paul was with them.

Acts 18:1, 11

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

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

I show you these verses to remind us that Paul spent eighteen months with the Corinthians and in that time frame they learned much about him most of which they seemed to forget after the false apostles came to Corinth. In the text before us tonight Paul will refresh the memory of the Corinthians as he points to the signs of a true apostle.

I. The Signs of a True Apostle

Part 1

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:11

After Paul had recorded his previous experience he was almost embarrassed that he had brought the entire event to their attention. But they had compelled him to write of the encounter. It needed to be revealed because of the influence of the false apostles.

Application:

Let me just use this verse to point out that there are times as believers when we must do things that we would prefer not to do and there are times when we must say things that we would prefer not to say. When it comes to a defense of the Truth of God's Word we must say what is hard to say and we must sometimes do things which we would not prefer to do. The Truth must be defended! Let me show you something that will serve as a reminder to all of us.

2 Timothy 2:1-4

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

² *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

³ *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

⁴ *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

I show you this to remind you and me that we are soldiers in the middle of a war. As soldiers we must be willing to go and say what our Captain commands.

There will be times when we will be called to speak the Truth to people whom we know will not agree with it. They may become very angry and they may even choose to separate from us but the Truth must be defended.

Acts 5:26-29

²⁶ *Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.*

²⁷ *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,*

²⁸ *Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*

²⁹ *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

Galatians 1:10

¹⁰ *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

I am reminded here of the words the Lord spoke to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:4-10

⁴ *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

⁵ *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

⁶ Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

⁷ But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

⁸ **Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.**

⁹ Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

¹⁰ See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Jeremiah was told to speak the Truth and to NOT FEAR THEIR FACES. Sometimes people are hesitant to speak the Truth because they are face to face with someone they know will not accept it. But that cannot stop us from defending the Truth of God's Word. Let me give you one more thought to connect with this.

Remember the situation which Esther faced? Haman had issued a decree that all Jews were to be killed and she alone had the opening to step up and speak for the Jews. If the king chose to he could have her put to death. It was not easy. It was not what she wanted to do but it needed to be done.

Esther 4:13-17

¹³ Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

¹⁴ For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and **who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**

¹⁵ Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

¹⁶ Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink **three days**, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

¹⁷ So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

It is very interesting that Esther would go into the king on the THIRD DAY. This THIRD DAY is a picture of the resurrection day of our Lord. The spiritual picture here is that Esther would go into the king not in her own power but in the power of the Lord. We too

must face the difficult situations of life not in our own power but in the Third Day power in other words in the power of our Lord.

Philippians 4:13

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:11 again.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that THEY should have been commending him because he had given them proof that he was a true apostle. The next verse mentions the first proof they were given.

1. The Apostolic Sign Gifts

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:12

Here we see that the SIGNS of an apostle were worked among the people at Corinth. But what are the signs which Paul is speaking of here? Let me show you the Words of Jesus as spoken to His apostles.

Mark 16:14-18

¹⁴ Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

¹⁹ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

²⁰ And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

These signs spoken of here were the signs of the apostles. Jesus is NOT saying that everyone who is saved will possess these sign gifts. These signs were given to the apostles

as a means to show the authenticity of their doctrine. These signs were to separate them from the false apostles. What were the signs?

1. The ability to cast out demons.
2. The ability to speak in tongues.
3. The protection from deadly snakes.
4. The protection from deadly poison.
5. The ability to heal the sick.

In the book of Acts, we can see all but one of these demonstrated in Paul's life. We have no record of him drinking or eating anything that had been poisoned.

The point is these signs were manifested to the Corinthians by Paul but not by the false apostles.

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:11 again.

Paul says something here that should be the mark of every believer. He reminds the Corinthians he was not inferior to the false apostles. He was really far ahead of them for he had the apostolic sign gifts but he also tells them he was nothing. Let me word this so that we can get our minds wrapped around what he is saying.

Paul is saying that he lacks nothing as an apostle because Christ was working through him. He could do all things through Christ who strengthened him. But at the same time, he was nothing. This is the attitude of a man who gives all the glory to God when there was anything positive in his life. Because he understood that apart from Christ he could do nothing. Through Christ all things were possible but on his own he was nothing.

Application:

If we as believers could grasp this and apply it to our lives there would be much more accomplished by the church. On our own we are nothing but with Christ all things are possible.

John 15:1-5

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

² Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

³ Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

⁴ *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

⁵ *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

To apply this to our lives would be to understand that when we are summoned by the Lord to do something for Him no matter how difficult or how frightening the situation maybe we will not fail for with Him all things are possible. God will not call us to do something and then allow us to fail. As He works in and through us His plan will be accomplished. He will work His will through us. Satan often uses fear to keep God's people from serving. They will not step up because they lack experience or they lack certain skills. For these reasons they refuse to get involved in what God has laid upon their hearts. Let me show you what God can do when we are willing to step out of our comfort zones for Him.

Nehemiah 1:1-4

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

² *That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.*

³ *And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

⁴ *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,*

When Nehemiah heard of the conditions in Jerusalem his heart was broken and he began to pray. In the process of his prayers God did something that he may not have expected and that was he laid upon his heart to be the one to go to Jerusalem and lead the building project.

Nehemiah 2:11-12

¹¹ *So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.*

¹² *And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.*

Now let me remind you how God provided for this short-term mission trip.

Nehemiah 2:1-8

And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

² *Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,*

³ *And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?*

⁴ *Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.*

⁵ *And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.*

⁶ *And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.*

⁷ *Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;*

⁸ *And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.*

Now let me show you the result.

Nehemiah 6:15

¹⁵ *So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.*

Conclusion:

Mark 10:27

²⁷ *And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*