

"Paul's Defense of his Apostleship"

Part 13

2 Corinthians 12

**Introduction:** As we continue our study of 2 Corinthians we are looking at Paul's closing words to the church at Corinth. In his closing words he is defending his apostleship. Last week in our study we looked at 12:11-12.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:11-12**

Paul had been forced to defend his apostleship and in so doing he was forced to speak of the experience when he had been caught up to the third heaven. Now he moves on and he reminded them of the signs that were worked among them. They were the apostolic signs which God had given to the true apostles to show the authenticity of their teaching. These signs allowed the people of Paul's day to distinguish between a true apostle and a false apostle. As we continue tonight we will see more signs of a true apostle.

I. **The Signs of a True Apostle**

Part 2

As we move on we will see not just the signs of an apostle but these are characteristics which should be found in every believer's life. We do not possess the sign gifts for they no longer exist. But the other characteristics found within Paul should be found in everyone who is saved for these characteristics are the result of Christ within Paul. Let me show you a few verses which point to Paul's character.

**Galatians 2:20**

<sup>20</sup> *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, **but Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

**Philippians 1:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

<sup>21</sup> *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

As we get back to our text tonight we see that the next sign of a true apostle.

A. Paul lived selflessly

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:13**

Paul had not received any money from the believers at Corinth for his own personal support. He received it from other churches but he would take none from the Corinthians. The false apostles had put a twist on Paul's selflessness and somehow convinced them that Paul was treating them as an inferior church. He had received support from other churches but he took none from Corinth so they came to believe (with the help of the false apostles) they were inferior to the other churches.

Let me stop here and point out something about the false apostles. They viewed the ministry as being competitive. Other churches had supported Paul so when Paul made the choice to receive no support from Corinth the false apostles were convinced this was a sign the church at Corinth was less important.

I point this out because there are many churches today who treat the ministry as a competition. If another church has more programs or more people they feel like they are inferior. This view leads to more programs and all kinds of gimmicks to lure more people into their services. So many churches have lost sight of the blueprint which God gave for how the church is to function. The blueprint is in Ephesians 4.

**Ephesians 4:11-14**

*<sup>11</sup> And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

*<sup>12</sup> For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

*<sup>13</sup> 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:*

*<sup>14</sup> 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;*

I am also reminded of the instructions which Paul gave to Timothy.

**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;*

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

<sup>3</sup> *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;*

<sup>4</sup> *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

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

The focus of the church is to preach and to teach the Word of God. We are not to get caught up in numbers or in an abundance of programs. Our focus must be to learn the Bible for that is what is needed within our lives. If another church has more people in attendance than we do or if they have more programs than we do it does not mean we are inferior. If there are churches that have less than we do it does not mean we are superior to them. Each church is to be faithful in what God has entrusted to that local body. The focus should be the preaching of the Word.

There is also an application here for our personal lives. The enemy will often whisper in our ear that because we are not like someone else there then we are inferior to them. When believers listen to the words of the enemy they can then get caught up in trying to be someone God has not intended them to be. We need to understand that we are all unique in Christ. God has saved you and He wants you to be led by the Spirit and be you. You do not need to be like someone else. There are many believers who try to live their lives imitating another believer. That is not what the Christian life is to be like. We are to be surrendered to the Spirit and then the life of Christ will be lived through us by the Holy Spirit. I have found in my own life that I do not need to be like other pastors. God has saved me to be me and to show forth the life of Christ not the life of another pastor. The same is also true for everyone here.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:13 again.**

Paul's request for forgiveness seems to be sarcastic. Paul had done nothing wrong but the false apostles put their twist upon it and had convinced the Corinthians that he had wronged them.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:14**

Paul had been to the church at Corinth two times. The first was when it was founded and the second was the quick trip he made to address the sin within. He was planning a third and when he came he would still not be burdensome to them. In other words, Paul would not take any support from this church. He did not seek what they had but he sought them, meaning their spiritual wellbeing. Paul viewed them as his children and it was the parent's responsibility to provide for the needs of the children. This was not a compliment by the way. They were still children in Paul's eyes but they should have been spiritual adults. They had not grown because of the sin within their lives.

### 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.*

*<sup>2</sup> 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.*

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

*<sup>4</sup> For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*

#### **Application:**

Let us never forget that if we permit sin to be a regular part of our lives then we can be sure there will be very little spiritual growth. We must live sanctified lives. We must learn to live under the control of the Holy Spirit for He is the key to overcoming sin.

### 2 Peter 1:3-4

*<sup>3</sup> According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

*<sup>4</sup> Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Let me remind you of how the sin in David's life hindered him.

### 2 Samuel 12:7-8

<sup>7</sup> And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul:

<sup>8</sup> And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

There was much more which God would have done for David but the sin caused him to lose that potential.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:14 again.**

The critics had criticized Paul because he would not receive support from the Corinthians and this seemed to become a major issue with the Corinthians. But when I read this verse I can clearly see something here we must learn for our lives. Paul would not be intimidated by the enemy. He knew what he needed to do and so he would continue to stand his ground and he would refuse to be intimidated into doing something that he knew was not right.

**Application:**

There are going to be times as we stand for the Truth or we walk in the Truth, that the enemy will do his best to intimidate us to either stop us or get us to compromise. Let me show you two examples from the Scriptures.

**Numbers 16:1-3**

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:

<sup>2</sup> 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:

<sup>3</sup> 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?

Korah and his followers wanted to have a part in the priesthood but that was not the will of God. Korah brought men of Israel who were very popular and very prominent among the people. These were people who had the power to intimidate even just with their presence. But Moses would not back down. He would stand for God even in the face of these intimidating men.

**Nehemiah 4:1-3**

*But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.*

*<sup>2</sup> And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?*

*<sup>3</sup> Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.*

When Nehemiah and his people were working upon the wall of Jerusalem the enemy sent two men, Sanballat and Tobiah to intimidate the builders. But Nehemiah knew how to keep up the spirit of the workers and so they continued with the work.

Let us now get back to Paul and the Corinthians.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:15**

In the previous verse Paul made it clear that he did not want their money but he wanted them. He desired their spiritual wellbeing. Here in this verse that he would give all he had to see these believers grow in the Lord. This was a mark of the True Apostle. The false apostles were not concerned with spiritual growth but only for personal gain. Paul was the opposite.

**Application:**

This is also the mark of a pastor who is led by the Holy Spirit. He will not be a man who is motivated by personal gain but he will be consumed with the spiritual growth of the people entrusted to him. The man who conducts his ministry is manifesting Christ to the sheep.

**John 10:10-11**

*<sup>10</sup> The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

*<sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

Notice the words Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica.

**1 Thessalonians 2:5-9**

<sup>5</sup> For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

<sup>6</sup> Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

<sup>7</sup> But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

<sup>8</sup> So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

<sup>9</sup> For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:15 again.**

The more Paul loved the Corinthians the less he seemed to be loved in return. This is a sad statement. The man would have given his life for them and some of them continued to question his motives and his apostleship.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:16**

Here we see what they were saying about him. The false teachers must have declared that when Paul refused the support it was really only a way to deceive them. Probably the false apostles convinced the Corinthians he was going to steal the money they gave for the saints at Jerusalem. But there was no evidence of that.

**Notice 2 Corinthians 12:17-18**

He and those who were sent all were of the same spirit.

**Conclusion:**

Let me leave you with a Truth that is hard to accept at times as a believer. There will be times when we serve the Lord out of the integrity of our hearts and someone will come along and put a twist upon our service in an attempt to discredit us. That is to be expected as we serve God and are used to advance His Kingdom. The main thing is we must not get caught up in the false accusations and chose to quit. That is exactly what the enemy wants. We are soldiers and there are going to be battles but quitting is not an option. Sometimes the battle is very trying but God has promised grace to sustain us in the heat of the battle.

