

"Paul's Defense of his Apostleship"

Part 14

2 Corinthians 12

Introduction: Tonight, as we return to our study we will close out chapter 12 and Paul's defense of his apostleship. In the last 3 verses of this chapter Paul will appeal to the Corinthians to repent of their sin. When he arrives at Corinth he desires to find them living in a way that would glorify the Lord. Paul was very careful however about being too optimistic. While he was dealing with believers he also knew they still had within them sinful hearts. He knew that it would take effort on their part to turn the situation at Corinth around. The bottom line was he knew that to be the church that God desired them to be they would need to take the path of humility and surrender. They would need to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

I. Paul's Appeal

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:19

Paul knew how the critics worked and he knew that they would accuse him of making excuses but he had nothing to make excuses for. He was doing what he believed the Lord would want him to do. He had no reason to apologize nor to make excuses. Paul tells them that he is speaking before God in Christ. This means that Paul was under the control of the Spirit and his conscience was clear before God. The critics may have said, "There he goes again trying to justify what he has done." But Paul did not need to justify anything for he was completely in the will of God and he would call God to be his witness. The entire defense of his apostleship was not to glorify himself but it was to EDIFY the believers at Corinth.

Application:

Let me remind you and myself that when we speak the Truth we do not need to make excuses nor do we need to apologize. The Truth MUST be spoken and we can be sure there will be people who are going to be offended.

Remember the response to Stephen's sermon in Acts?

Acts 7:54-60

⁵⁴ *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.*

⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

⁵⁶ And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

⁵⁷ Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

⁵⁸ And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

⁶⁰ And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Stephen was killed because he spoke the Truth. We see why man despises the Truth in the Words of Jesus as recorded by John.

John 3:19-21

¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

²⁰ For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

²¹ But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

The Word of God exposes the sin within people's lives and it makes them very uncomfortable when the Truth is spoken.

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The Word is a sharp twoedged sword. It cuts some leading them to repentance and others it cuts leading them to condemnation. Those who accept the Truth repent but those who

refuse the Truth become bitter and so they are condemned by the Truth. Regardless of the response we MUST speak the Truth and make no excuses. We MUST allow the Bible to do what God intends it to accomplish. Paul was not making excuses for there was nothing that needed to be excused. He spoke the Truth and he did it for their edification. Before we leave this thought let me remind you that when we speak the Truth into someone's life it is for their good. People have been under the deception of Satan and the deception of their own hearts and they need to hear the Truth.

John 8:23-24, 30-34

²³ *And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.*

²⁴ *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

³⁰ *As he spake these words, many believed on him.*

³¹ *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

³² *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

³³ *They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

³⁴ *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

We need to be reminded that people are enslaved to sin and it is only the Truth of the Word that can set them free. Let me refresh our minds on something we looked at previously in this letter.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁴ *(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)*

⁵ *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

The STRONG HOLDS are fortresses which people become trapped within through false teaching or Satanic deception. It is only the Word of God which is the Sword of the Spirit

that can break down the fortresses. This is exactly why the Truth is needed in people's lives.

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:20

Here we see why Paul said what he said. He desired to find them moving toward spiritual maturity when he visited. He desired to find them growing and he did not want them to find him upset if they had not repented. He lists the sins within this verse that were present within the Corinthian church when Titus visited. The list here is alarming and sad. These sins are found in many churches today and when this happens it ruins the testimony of the church. Let me show you what Paul wrote concerning the church at Thessalonica for they were a model church.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-8

⁵ *For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*

⁶ *And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.*

⁷ *So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*

⁸ *For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.*

They had received the Word in joy and were examples to all those around them. Their testimony was widely known by many. Let us now look at the list of sins that had existed within the Corinthian church.

1. **Debates** - This referred to arguments or quarrels. Considering the Corinthian's love for intellectualism along with the influence of the false apostles and their legalistic teachings we can just imagine how they argued with one another and quarreled over the Truth against the false teachings. There were those who had choose to follow the false teachers and there were those who stood for the Truth of what Paul had taught. This combined with their love for debating led them into some very heated arguments.
2. **Envyings** - This refers to jealousy and in the church at Corinth there was a great deal of jealousy over spiritual gifts. We can see a glimpse of the jealousy in 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:25-31

²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

²⁷ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

²⁸ And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

²⁹ Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

³⁰ Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

³¹ But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

The Corinthians all seemed to desire the speaking gifts and they placed the greatest importance upon the gift of tongues. They view those without speaks gifts as being less important in the church. Therefore, there was considerable jealousy in the church.

3. **Wraths** - This refers to outbursts of anger. The quarrels which started with small disagreements would eventually lead to outburst of anger in meetings where the emotions were out of control.
4. **Strifes** - This word refers to factions or cliques. This spirit was seen in the first letter.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

¹⁰ Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

¹² Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

¹³ Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

5. **Backbitings** - This was the sin slander also known as "evil speaking".
6. **Whisperings** - This refers to a secret slander. Talking about someone behind their back.
7. **Swellings** - This refers to people swelled up with pride. Pride within the Corinthian church was a major problem.
8. **Tumults** - This was a word used for actual "war". There were some real heated battles existing within the church at Corinth.

These sins are a sign that a church is not Spirit led.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

²³ *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:21

Here we see 2 more reasons why Paul was so straight forward when he spoke the Truth. He did not want to experience shame and he did not want to experience sorrow. From this verse there seems to have been another false teaching group that influenced the church at Corinth. They would have been the Libertines. They taught that grace was a license to sin and to live to please the flesh. The people who were involved in the sins of the flesh listed here had not repented when Paul had last heard from them. This means they had bought into the false teaching of the Libertines and were somehow justifying their sin. Corinth was a very immoral city as we have considered in the past and so immorality was everywhere within the city. These Corinthian believers were expected to separate from these immoral practices.

Application:

We too live in a society that is extremely immoral and the immorality is paraded in the open today. There seems to be no modesty in people at all today. We as believers are to be completely separated from the immoral practices of our day. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ and so we must be totally separated. This means that we must be very careful where we go and who we spend time with.

1 Corinthians 15:33-34

³³ *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*

³⁴ *Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

¹⁴ *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

¹⁵ *And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*

¹⁶ *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

¹⁷ *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*

¹⁸ *And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

Conclusion:

Notice 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 again.

Paul was not looking for a perfect church when he arrived but he was looking for a REPENTANT church. They had made many mistakes and forgiveness and fellowship awaited them if they would only repent.

Application:

Paul is not coming to visit us but Jesus is coming to call us home. We must therefore live our lives in a way that we are not ashamed and full of sorrow when He returns. He MUST find us watching.

Romans 13:11-14

¹¹ *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

¹² *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

¹³ Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

¹⁴ But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.