

“Three Marks of Integrity,” 2 Corinthians 1:15-24 – July 24th, 2016

- I've titled today's teaching, "Three Marks of Integrity."
- The passage before us at the end of this chapter records for us the integrity of the Apostle Paul in the face of false accusations.
- Sadly the Corinthian Christians were falsely accusing Paul of not being a man of his word in not doing what he committed to do.

1. Their yes is yes and no is no (Verses 15-18)

15 Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice. 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me on my way to Judea. 17 Was I fickle when I intended to do this? Or do I make my plans in a worldly manner so that in the same breath I say both "Yes, yes" and "No, no"? 18 But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No."

- v15 Paul says that because he was confident of this, he wanted to visit them there in Corinth first in order to benefit them twice.
- v16 He tells them he wanted to visit them on his way to and from Macedonia that they might then send him on his way to Judea.
- v17-18 He says he is not fickle nor are his plans worldly but as surely as God is faithful, their message is not both yes and no.

- In order to better understand what Paul is saying here, I think it would be very helpful to first provide a little bit of the back story.
- While Paul fully intended to come to Corinth he was unable to for a number of reasons not the least of which was for their sake.
- This because, were he to see them on his way back from Macedonia a second time, it would have been riddled with sorrow.

2 Corinthians 2:1-4 (NKJV) — 1 But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. 2 For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me? 3 And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. 4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

- It's believed that there was much in the way of conflict during Paul's first visit to Corinth while he was on his way to Macedonia.
- As such, Paul deemed it prudent to change his plans and not visit Corinth the second time because there wouldn't be a benefit.
- It seems Paul created the very thing he hope to avoid such that he's falsely accused of speaking out of both sides of his mouth.

Matt 5:34-37 33 "34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

2. They're filled with the Holy Spirit - (Verses 19-22)

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silas and Timothy—was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." 20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him we speak the "Amen" to the glory of God. 21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

- v19 Paul says Jesus Christ, who was preached among them by Silas, Timothy, and himself wasn't yes and no, but always yes.
- v20 He goes on to say that no matter how many promises God made, they are yes in Christ through whom they speak "Amen."
- v21-22 He says we stand firm in Christ, who anoints us, and guarantees his seal of ownership on us by putting his Spirit in us.

- Couple of thoughts here on what Paul is saying, the first of which has to do with all of the promises of God being yea and amen.
- What Paul is saying is in effect, like the Jesus He preaches, he himself is a man of his word and can be relied upon and trusted.
- In other words, the messenger must have the same integrity as the message, and his message has the integrity of the Savior.

- It's this second thought that I would like to take a closer look at having to do with what Paul says about the Holy Spirit's work.
- More specifically, the threefold work of the anointing, the sealing and guaranteeing of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian.
- First, the anointing Paul speaks of carries with it the idea of preparing, equipping and especially empowering one for service.

- Second, in addition to the anointing of the Holy Spirit there's the sealing by the Holy Spirit, which is that of a seal of ownership.
- Third, it's not just the anointing, and the sealing, but it's also the guaranteeing by way of the Holy Spirit as the down payment.
- We often refer to this as an earnest money deposit to guarantee the final purchase, which will take place when Jesus returns.

- Here's where I'm going with all this, what characterizes a man or woman of integrity is that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- I suppose the opposite is true that what characterizes one who has no integrity is the conspicuous absence of the Holy Spirit.
- Simply put I cannot live a pure and holy life absent the Holy Spirit indwelling me anointing me sealing me and guaranteeing me.

3. They're secure in the Lord (Verses 23-24)

23 I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. 24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

- v23 Paul calls God Himself as his witness staking his life on it, that it was in order to spare them that he didn't return to Corinth.
- v24 He then says that it's not to lord it over their faith but to work with them for their joy because it's by faith that they stand firm.
- You'll forgive the abrupt close, but let me say what marks a person's integrity is that they will not be insecure about themselves.