

- I) V1-3 INTRO: Do we begin again **to commend ourselves**? Or do we need, as some
We closed our last study by looking at Paul defending his ministry
- II) He addressed the charge that he used the gospel **for personal gain**
The false teachers had said that Paul was giving a false gospel
2 Co 2:17 For **we are not**, as **so many**, **peddling the word of God**; but as of
sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ
- III) Peddling: A hustler; changing the message for personal profit
- IV) Paul made it clear that there **were many** false teachers infiltrating the church
Because he loved the church, he clearly identified them for what they were
2 Co 11:13 For such are **false apostles**, **deceitful** workers, **transforming**
themselves into apostles of Christ
CLEARLY
- V) He was not one of them, but their numbers were increasing (**so many**)
- VI) Many of his day mixed their **messages** with current beliefs to appeal to people
His teachings were **inspired by the Spirit** and not enticing words used to entrap
- VII) This is something he had made clear in 1 Co
1 Co 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with **excellence of**
speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to
know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in
weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not
with **persuasive words of human wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of
power, that your faith should not be in **the wisdom of men** but in the power of God.
- VIII) Paul was not a trained philosopher, skilled at disputing and persuading
This would be an accusation he later deals with
2 Co 10:10 For his letters they say are weighty and powerful, but his bodily
presence is weak, and **his speech contemptible**
AT THAT TIME
- IX) The best Greek philosophers were **polished in speech**, relying on human reason
Their arguments were based on human reason, genius, and **demonic** influence
- X) They could capture an unregenerate mind, but could not **transform it**

I) Instead of philosophy, **we preach Christ**: the **wisdom** and **power** of God
Spurgeon: I believe we slander Christ when we think we are **to draw the people by substituting something else** for the preaching of **Christ crucified**

PAUL SAID

II) We preach that faith in Jesus can produce **radical change** in us
2 Co 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; **behold, all things** have become new.

III) He was not **selling salvation** but presenting the truth of the Gospel
It has transformed us, and we preach it that it may transform others
1 Th 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because, when you **received** the word of God which **you heard from us**, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the **word of God**, which also **effectively works in you who believe**

HIS MOTIVES WERE QUESTIONED

IV) V17 He spoke with **sincerity**, as from God and in the sight of God in Christ
THOUGHT

V) He communicated only **God's pure word** to them, without mixing it with error, and did so knowing that God's eye was upon him...With this in mind, he only gave the words that were **given, approved of, and blessed** by Jesus

VI) His gospel message was inspired by the Spirit and not invented by him
2 Pe 1:21 prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as **they were moved by the Holy Spirit**

THE INFILTRATORS WERE THE DECEIVERS

VII) He was concerned because they were introducing false teachings about Jesus
it only takes a small amount of error to infect the church

VIII) **Error** always appeals to the hearer, and promises to produce great results
Ant poison is often sweet, but when taken back to nest it poisons the colony

IX) The fact is, bad bible teaching deceives the believer and undermines God's work

X) Paul made it clear that his ministry was one of integrity before God and man
2 Co 1:12 For our boasting is this: the **testimony of our conscience** that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and **godly sincerity**, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly towards you

- I) As a true minister he served with **purity** of heart and wanted them to know it
It was God who had made it possible for him to do such a thing: anointed
This is why he had asked: And who is sufficient for these things? (2 Co 2:16)
- II) This question was intended to set him apart from the false teachers
His ministry was sincere and from God, performed in the sight of God
He guarded his heart, and ministered from a clean conscience
THE TENTH CHARGE
- III) He now answers **the tenth charge** that has been leveled against him
The charge: He has no letters of commendation (proper ministry credentials)
- IV) V1 Do we begin again **to commend ourselves**? Or do we need as some others
Their question: Who gave him the authority to speak such things?
- V) Paul was teaching many things, and the false teachers were rejecting his teaching
This led them to question **his right** to teach the things that he taught
- VI) Their question about his authority was not unique
There were other times that his authority to teach was questioned
AN EXAMPLE
- VII) The Galatians had false teachers questioning his apostleship and gospel
This is why he opened his letter in the way that he did
Gal 1:1 Paul an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)
- VIII) He went on to write
Gal 1:6-7 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to **a different gospel**— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.
Gal 1:11-12 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I **received it by revelation** from Jesus Christ.
- IX) He identified the infiltrators in chapter 2
Gal 2:4 some **false believers** had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves

- I) **False apostles** had entered Corinth and were questioning Paul's authority
They literally were presenting themselves as super apostles
2 Co 11:5 I consider myself in no way inferior to the **super-apostles**
- II) They were literally representing themselves as **super apostles**
2 Co 11:5 I consider myself in no way inferior to the **super-apostles**
- III) It **may be** that the infiltrators had come with a **letter of recommendation**
THEIR QUESTION WOULD BE
- IV) If **they** needed letters of recommendation, why doesn't Paul have one?
Since they presented themselves as superior to him, where is **his** letter?
- V) He had earlier responded to their charge that he was self-appointed
2 Co 1:21 He who establishes us with you in Christ **and has anointed us** is God
Here, he takes it a bit deeper
LETTERS OF COMMENDATION
- VI) In the early church, false teachers entered in and brought bad doctrine
They were to be **identified** and were to be **rejected**
Ro 16:17 I urge you brothers and sisters to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. **Keep away from them!**
2 Jn 9-10 Anyone who runs ahead and **does not continue** in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and **does not bring this teaching**, do not take them into your house or welcome them.
- VII) Letters of commendation were used to safeguard the church against deceivers
Ro 16:1-3 **I commend** to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.
1 Co 16:3 When I come, whomever you approve by **your letters** I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.
WHY LETTERS OF COMMENDATION
- VIII) Letters of recommendation were intended to safeguard the church from predators
Paul had gone through the **proving process** and was already commended
This happened when he came to faith in Jesus

I) Ac 9:26-27 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! Then **Barnabas brought him** to the apostles **and told them** how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

II) Paul made this clear to the Galatians

Gal 2:9 when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas **the right hand of fellowship**, that **we should go** to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

THIS WEEK I GAVE A COMMENDATION

III) **Their question:** What is it that makes you think that he is the genuine article?
Why doesn't Paul carry a letter of recommendation?

ANSWER

IV) V2 **You** are our epistle **written in our hearts** known and **read by all men**
My accusers are asking for proof of my calling and fruit of my ministry
Your own salvation validates my message, establishing my credibility

V) **Clearly** you are a letter of God's love and grace and you are engraved in **my heart**
You are very dear to us, I am confident that your love for Jesus proves my ministry is genuine, and I have a strong confidence that you are truly believers in Jesus

VI) V2 This is known and read by all men
The fact that **you are saved**, and **a church** exists should be proof enough

VII) V2 This is not only a letter that is intended for me (in my heart)
It is also a letter that others can see, and read for themselves

VIII) V3 **clearly** you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink
You are clearly believers in Jesus, which is something he said in his first letter
1 Co 1: 5-8 You were **enriched in every thing** by Him in all **utterance** and all **knowledge**, even as the testimony of Christ was **confirmed in you**, so that you **come short in no gift, eagerly waiting** for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you **to the end, that you may be blameless** in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ

IX) V3 Not on **tablets of stone** but on tablets of flesh that is of the heart
The Spirit has engraved God's message of grace on the tablets of your heart

I) The 10 commandments were written on **stone tablets**

Ex 31:18 When the LORD had finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the Testimony **tablets of stone** inscribed by the finger of God

HIS POINT

II) The **law** was written on stone, but **grace** is engraved **on the heart**

Ezek 36:26-27 I will give you **a new heart** and put a **new spirit** in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will **put My Spirit** in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep My laws.

III) V3 Notice how he says **clearly you are an epistle** of Christ **ministered by us**

God has used us to engrave His grace on your hearts by the gospel

IV) Of all people, you should know that my ministry is genuine

1 Co 9:2 Even though **I may not be** an apostle to others, surely I am **to you!** For **you are the seal** of my apostleship in the Lord.

V) V4 And **we have such trust** through Christ toward God

I trust that Christ has done His work in you who truly believe in Him

I take no credit for your salvation, because it is God who has done the work

WITH THAT BEING SAID

VI) There are some of you who have been **seduced by the false apostles**

This is something that you need to examine your own hearts about

2 Co 13:5 **Examine yourselves** to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you --unless, of course, you fail the test?

VII) V5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as **being of ourselves**

WHICH BRINGS US TO THE 11TH ACCUSATION

VIII) Paul is self-righteous and self sufficient, **laboring by the energies of his flesh**

IX) V5 If anyone could claim to be self-sufficient, it would have been Paul

Phil 3:4b-7 If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

- I) He knew that we are **made adequate** to serve God by God Himself
- II) Every believer in Jesus has the personal responsibility to grow and mature
2 Pe 3:18 grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ
This is by prayer, bible reading, bible studies, fellowship and service
These basic disciplines serve to strengthen us and develop us
- III) In the end, it is God who strengthens, gifts, and encourages us as we serve Him
Phil 2:13 for **it is God who works in you** both to will and to do for His good pleasure
- IV) This is what he means when he says **our sufficiency is from God**
Thought: My abilities are not natural gifts, but are imparted to me by Jesus
The work of converting people and equipping them did not originate in him
- V) Whatever qualifications I have and whatever successes I enjoy **are all from Him**
Jn 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; **for without Me you can do nothing.**
Zech 4:6 This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, **but by My Spirit,**' says the LORD of hosts.
- VI) God converts, equips, directs and also **provides the resources** (Ac 1:8)
Is 40:29 **He gives power to the weak,** and to those who have no might **He increases strength.**
- VII) Paul did not desire fame, fortune, or advancement in influential circles
His was a life marked by repentance and a pursuit of greater personal purity
Phil 1:21 For to me, to live **is** Christ and to die is gain
- VIII) The task was beyond his abilities to attain, and he openly acknowledged it
He made it clear that it takes God to make us adequate to serve Him, faithfully
APPLICATION
- IX) Each believer must mature, and the resources are completely available to them
2 Pe 3:18 Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen
Is 41:10 Fear not, **for I am with you;** Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'
HE DIDN'T LABOR IN THE FLESH

- I) He made it clear that his *abilities* were not fleshly, but imparted by Jesus
Phil 4:13 I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me
- II) V6 Who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant
Jesus saved him and was the one who equipped him to serve
1 Pe 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability **which God supplies**, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
1 Ti 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, **who has given me strength**, that He considered me faithful, **appointing me to His service.**
APPLICATION
- III) I see ads promising to help me increase church attendance or reach certain people
I remember Jesus said Upon this rock **I will build** My church
- IV) Jn 21 records how 7 of the apostles were at the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee)
Peter told the men that he was going fishing, and they went with him
- V) They fished all night, but despite their efforts they caught nothing
Jesus came and stood at the shore and asked Children, have you any food?
They didn't recognize him, and they said to Him, No
- VI) He said cast the nets on the right side of the boat and you will find some
This they did and the results was so many fish they couldn't draw the net in
- VII) They were so overwhelmed that at first, they couldn't take it all in
This would cause Peter to remember Jesus had done this kind of thing before
- VIII) This provoked John to say to Peter **It is the Lord** (Jn 21:7)
- IX) Paul knew that without Jesus he could do nothing: with Him, he could do all things
- X) V6 As ministers of the new covenant not of the letter but of the Spirit for the letter
The old covenant was a lifeless, *written code* that required perfect obedience
Dt 27:26 Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.

- I) It is through the old covenant that people became aware of their own sinfulness
God's law identified sin and made people realize that what they are doing wrong
Ro 7:7-10 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death
- II) By revealing our sinfulness, the law awakened us to a need for a savior
It was used by God to reveal our need for Jesus
Gal 3:23-26 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. **So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ** that we might be **justified by faith**. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God **through faith** in Christ Jesus
PAUL MADE IT CLEAR
- III) V6 The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life
The Law revealed our utter sinfulness and complete lost and hopeless condition
Ro 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?
- IV) V6 **In Christ** the riches of the grace of God are revealed
This is intended to cause us joy for eternity
Eph 2:7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- V) His Law is written on Tablets of flesh, **of the heart** (V3) and we obey **from the heart**
Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
- VI) V6 the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life
The law awakened people to sin and served to condemn them to judgment
- VII) The Spirit of God **gives life** to the spiritually dead person through grace and faith
Jn 6:63 The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.
This is why we must be born again!