

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Corinthians: God's Pattern For Victory Over Severe Ministry Opposition
Part V: Relying On God To Equip And Validate A Wrongly Opposed Ministry
(2 Corinthians 3:1-18)

I. Introduction

- A. Satan often seeks to spur godless parties to discredit Biblical ministries and so thwart true discipleship.
- B. At times the slanderous critique can become so great that even God's servant questions his own validity!
- C. Paul faced foes who tried to discredit his ministry before believers at Corinth, and how he dealt with this problem in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 provides instruction and edifying application for us today (as follows):

II. Relying On God To Equip And Validate A Wrongly Opposed Ministry.

- A. 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 reveals Paul faced a continual battle with foes who tried to discredit his ministry team:
 - 1. Paul's question, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves?" (2 Cor. 3:1) shows he had already faced the charge that his effort to defend his ministry suggested he knew it to be false, Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 560. Thus, Paul's 2 Corinthians 2:17 support of his team's credibility he knew gave opportunity for his critics again to question his credibility: they would use his renewed effort to defend himself to argue that Paul was struggling to defend his credibility to his readers because he knew he lacked it!
 - 2. The next question, ". . . or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?" show Paul's opponents had supported their own credibility by use of letters of commendation from reputed credible authorities, letters Paul did not himself have or use.
- B. Paul then countered his foes' critiques by relying fully on God to make him credible, 2 Corinthians 3:2-18:
 - 1. First, Paul claimed the changed hearts of his readers were his "letters of commendation," 2 Cor. 3:2a. In superiority to the false teachers who apparently let a select few read their letters of commendation lest they be exposed to "public scrutiny", Paul claimed the changed hearts of his readers could be read and examined by all men in support of his ministry team's spiritual credibility, 2 Corinthians 3:2b; Ibid.
 - 2. The cause of this obvious proof of his ministry was God's use of Paul's ministry team, 2 Cor. 3:3-18:
 - a. Paul stated that his readers' changed lives were the product of Christ's work via the Holy Spirit Who had written letters of commendation for Paul's team on the tables of their own hearts, 2 Cor. 3:3.
 - b. He added that he had great confidence in such commendations, 2 Cor. 3:4, an assurance that was not based on human might, but on God Who had made his team able ministers of Christ, 2 Cor. 3:5-6a.
 - c. Paul added that his ministry was not an external ministry (typical of his Judaistic, legalist foes), but that his was a ministry in the spiritual realm that gave life in vast superiority even to the Old Testament ministry of Moses whom Paul's Judaistic foes often touted, 2 Corinthians 3:6b-7.
 - d. God had meant for Moses' great ministry of the Law to be replaced by the ministry of Christ, 2 Cor. 3:8-11: Paul argued that Moses' face had shown with a reflection of God's glory (2 Cor. 3:7), but the ministry of Christ is much more glorious than Moses' work since Christ's ministry produced life and glory versus Moses' ministry of the Law that could only condemn man in his sin, 2 Cor. 3:8-11.
 - e. Accordingly, Paul claimed his ministry team used great plainness of speech opposite even Moses who had put a veil over his face to hide the fact that the glory of his ministry was fading, implying it would be replaced by Christ, 2 Cor. 3:12-13; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 Cor. 3:13.
 - f. Paul added that to this day, the minds of the nation Israel, as with Paul's foes, were blind to the truth in Christ, that this state would continue until Israel trusted in Christ, 2 Cor. 3:14-16; Rom. 11:26-27.
 - g. However, in the current ministry of Christ in the Church era, where the Lord is the Spirit, there is liberty and discipling advancement from one level of glory to the next in the discipling process in contrast to the spiritual bondage and darkness of those who still clung to the Law, 2 Cor. 2:17-18.

Lesson: *To counter the slanderous efforts of his foes against his ministry team's efforts, Paul relied on the Lord's equipping and power through him and his team to supply certification by way of ministry results measured in changed lives that defeated the charges and efforts of his false religious opponents.*

Application: *May we meet challenges to our ministry effort's validity by (1) trusting God (2) to provide HIS OWN certifications of our work's credibility as measured in (3) changed lives (4) for all to see!*