

2 CORINTHIANS: DEFENDING GOD'S SERVANT TO HIS CRITICS

Part XVIII: Heeding The Credentials Of Godly Christian Workers, 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:10

A. Valuing The Great Service Records Of Godly Ministers

(2 Corinthians 11:16-33)

I. Introduction

- A. 2 Corinthians was written "to defend the authenticity of" Paul's "apostleship and his message" to a church of believers who were susceptible to heeding false teachers who critiqued him, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552.
- B. The mingling of immature, carnal believers (1 Cor. 3:1-3) with false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13-15) at Corinth left Paul having to give his credentials much like what the false apostles gave to persuade weak believers to follow his teaching versus that of the false apostles. His then listing in 2 Corinthians 11:16-33 his great service record is valuable not only for the Corinthians of his day, but is also applicable for our insight and edification:

II. Valuing The Great Service Records Of Godly Ministers, 2 Corinthians 11:16-33.

- A. Paul began to relate his great service record by again expressing his dismay at having to stoop to such lowly "boasting," but nevertheless choosing to do so in order to convince weak, carnal believers not to follow the boasts of false apostles, but to heed his ministry, 2 Corinthians 11:16-21a.
- B. The Apostle Paul then gave his great service record as a godly worker for the Lord, 2 Corinthians 11:21b-33:
 - 1. Paul claimed he was bold in his ministry just like the false apostles boasted of themselves, 2 Cor. 11:21b. This claim carried some weight as the wicked generally fear where the righteous are bold, Prov. 28:1.
 - 2. Paul also claimed he had a pedigree of standing in his heritage as the false apostles did, 2 Cor. 11:22-23a:
 - a. Like the false apostles claimed, Paul was a Hebrew, 2 Corinthians 11:22a.
 - b. Like the false apostles claimed, Paul was of the nation Israel, 2 Corinthians 11:22b.
 - c. Like the false apostles claimed, Paul was of Abraham's seed, a Hebrew by birth, 2 Cor. 11:22c.
 - 3. Yet, though the false apostles claimed to serve Christ, Paul's service far exceeded their service, v. 23a-33:
 - a. Paul claimed that though the false apostles claimed to serve Christ, he served him more, 2 Cor. 11:23a.
 - b. The Apostle Paul then listed the numerous experiences he had faced in serving the Lord far more than the false apostles could claim (as follows): (1) Paul had performed far greater labors, v. 23b. (2) He had experienced countless numbers of beatings for Christ, often near to the point of death, v. 23c. (3) Five times he had received 39 lashes by the Jews and three times beaten with rods, v. 24-25a. (4) Paul had been stoned once and three times shipwrecked in his missionary travels, v. 25b, c. (5) On one of his shipwrecks, Paul had been adrift at sea for a night and a day, v. 25d. (6) He had faced danger numerous times, danger from rivers, from robbers, from his own Hebrew people, from Gentiles, danger in the city and in the wilderness, danger at sea and danger from false brethren, v. 26. (7) Paul had faced the hardships of toil, many sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, lacking food, warmth and adequate clothing in winter, v. 27. (8) Aside from all of these trials, Paul had the daily pressure on him of his care for all of the churches in which were weak believers, Christians who fall into sin and spiritual defeat, what made Paul angry, v. 28-29. (9) Paul added that if he were to boast, he would boast of those things that displayed his human weakness, asserting God the Father and Jesus Christ knew he was not lying, v. 30-31. (10) Finally, Paul added that the governor under King Aretas had once guarded the city of Damascus in order to capture Paul, but he was let down in a basket through a window in the wall to escape from his hands, v. 32-33.

Lesson: Being forced to have to boast in his great service record opposite the record of the false apostles so as to convince the carnal, immature Corinthian believers to heed his teaching over that of the false apostles, Paul asserted that though both the false apostles and he were bold, had the same pedigree as real Jews, etc., when it came to actual service for Christ, Paul had faced far more hardships, suffering, injustices and persecutions than the false apostles, indicating his definite superiority in spiritual power over the false men who would have quit in ministry long before had they faced what suffering Paul had faced!

Application: (1) Though Paul felt he had to STOOP to FOOLISHNESS in testifying of his accomplishments as a true apostle of Christ, the fact that he testified of the abundant difficulties he had surmounted to keep serving the Lord, what no false apostle would have tolerated, indicates there was a motivation and power by which Paul functioned that was superhuman -- the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the evidence of the working of God amid his sufferings went to the credibility of Paul. (2) May we then "read" the service record of God's servants, coming to VALUE those whose actions reveal SUPERHUMAN motivation and power as testimonies of their credibility.