

2 Corinthians

“Winning Through Weakness”

III. Main Teaching: 1:15-13:10

D. 10:1-13:10 Winning Through Weakness

2 Corinth. 12:11-13:4

“I do not seek yours, but you!”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 11-13 The way God works

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I. Intro.

Twice in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian’s he admonished them to “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*” (4:16, 11:1). Mark Twain's once said, “*When I was a boy of fourteen I thought my father was the most ignorant man in the world, but when I was twenty-four I was amazed at how much the old man had learned in ten years.*” I think Paul could relate to that quote! He founded this church and as such was their spiritual father. He had stayed among them 18 months teaching them how to live as Christians. But, after he left, some false teachers with smooth words came in and these same believers began to see Paul as unimpressive. And because of what was at risk Paul was forced to stand up against them based upon who he was so they wouldn’t reject what he taught. Here in this section Paul gives four marks of a true apostle.

II. Vs. 11-13 The way God works

1. **Vs. 11-13 Not just what God did through Paul but the way in which God did it through Paul:**

Here in verse 12 Paul indicates that there were signs, marks of authentication that distinguished the true apostle from the false. Furthermore he says that they were visible while he was among them. Prior to saying that in verse 11 Paul says he was surprised by these Corinthian believers in that they didn't defend him when the false teachers began to defame his character; after all they had been eyewitnesses of these marks in his life. Since they were so deceived by these false teachers Paul embarrassedly now has to defend himself for their benefit. Notice that Paul describes these marks or signs three ways:

- A. **Signs**: By the use of this word Paul is saying that these miraculous marks were meant to convey something more than just the miracle; they were symbolic and meant to signify something; represent something.
- B. **Wonders**: Second Paul says that these signs or marks were used to cause the person witnessing them to stand up and take notice.
- C. **Mighty deeds**: Finally, the first thing noticed about these signs is that it was not a talent or ability of man that produced them. They were amazing demonstrations of the power of God.

What is amazing to me is that these signs that Paul brings up here that identify him as an apostle is not something that you don't see him talking or writing about. In the 16th chapter of Mark Jesus said certain signs would follow those who believe: *“In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”* Looking at that list and comparing it with the list recorded for us by Luke in Acts and you will soon discover that Paul has four out of five of these the only one missing *“if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them”*. Now if you again read verse 12 you see that Paul says that these signs *“were accomplished among you”*. These things weren't miracles that they **HEARD** that God accomplished through Paul they were miracles that they **SAW** God accomplish through

Paul! Yet I submit to you that more impressive than God at work through Paul was God at work in Paul. Simply put it wasn't all about the miraculous works God did but the WAY they were done. Look carefully at verse 11 as Paul describes this in a paradoxical statement:

- First, he says “*for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles*”. Paul says, “*I am not inferior at all to these superlative apostles; I have everything they have and more*”.
- Next Paul says, “*though I am nothing*”. In one statement Paul says, “*I am the equal of anybody*” then in the very next sentence Paul declares that he is “*nothing*”.

This reveals that God worked through Paul in such a way that Paul remained invisible and God remained the center of attention. Paul was all about God and nothing about himself. This attitude is echoed in Paul's words in Philip. 4:13 where he writes “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” The “*can do*” attitude was encompassed by “*Christ who strengthens me*”. The confidence was not upon relying upon self but surrendering everything to Christ! There is no limit to what God can and will do through any person who has surrendered all their time talent and treasure to the Lord so that He alone gets all the glory.

One of the ways you can test the false apostles of our day is to listen carefully to what they say about themselves. Do they claim anything is coming from them? Do they claim to be remarkable people of remarkable ability, or are they talking about the power coming from Christ? Paul adds in verse 13 “*Did you reject all this only because I failed*

to let you support me? I'm sorry I should have let you do that. Forgive me that wrong."

That is a reference, to the fact that he supported himself when he was with them instead of living, off the fat of the congregation.

III. Vs. 14-18 About others

2. Vs. 14-18 Not about self but about others:

Paul's readiness to come to them was not based upon his educational qualifications but because he was willing to spend and be continually spent on their behalf. How strange to fallen mankind is the Christian life that is selfless and sacrificial! Oswald Chambers wrote: "*Our interest in another is to be centered in what is Christ's interest in them.*" The principle Paul states is giving of oneself in selfless love for others. He uses the analogy of a parent to their children as it is the responsibility of parents to provide for the children and not to expect the children, while they are children, to support their parents. One of the great marks of a true servant of Christ is that he gives himself without restraint to those to whom he is ministering. But like so many teenagers these Corinthian believers were not responding back in love to which Paul says he will continue to love sacrificially on their behalf. Years ago a story appeared of a mother who went down to breakfast and found a bill from her son lying beside her plate. It read:

Mowing the lawn -- \$2.00
 Drying the dishes -- \$1.00
 Raking leaves ----- \$3.00
 Cleaning garage --- \$4.00
 Total ----- \$10.00 owed

When the boy came home from school he found a bill lying beside his plate and it read:

Purchasing clothes --- nothing
 Washing clothes--- nothing
 Cooking meals --- nothing
 Health Care -- nothing
 Providing place to live -- nothing
 Love, Mother

That was Paul's parental attitude, as he didn't expect or demand anything in return. It would have been nice if he got it back, but even if he didn't it wasn't going to stop him.

That's a true sign of a person called by God and one we can test ourselves with can't we?

Vs. 16-18 Not only did they not treat Paul as he had treated them they went further and said that the only reason he treated them this was so that he could win their approval in order to take advantage of them in the future. I was having this conversation with a successful business man in our area who was talking about how he went about choosing those he would hire. He told me that as they applied for a position if all they were interested in was what the company offered in benefits, salary, vacation, health ins. Etc. that it was a clear sign that they were not the right candidate for the job. Paul had no concern for his salary, he wasn't asking question with regards to his retirement or vacation time. His concern and only care with regards to others was to be a blessing because he had been so blessed by the Lord. In the 6th chapter of this letter Paul explained it this way in verse 10 *"...as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."* Dear ones I believe the **"entitlement mentality"** has permeated the Church as it has our society and people are more concerned about *"What the Church can do for me"* then *"What I can do for the kingdom of God"*. Jesus said in Luke 22:25-26 *"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority*

over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves."

IV. Vs. 19-13:1 Approved by God alone

3. Vs. 19-13:1 **Doesn't look for affirmation from man**: A true servant of Christ does not need to justify himself before the people to whom he ministers. Paul was a God pleaser not man pleaser. And because of this Paul sates that he wasn't afraid to do what was right even though it wasn't popular. In verse 20 Paul makes a list of 8 things that William Barclay called the, "*marks of an unchristian church.*" One of the reasons why people have rejected Jesus is because of their experience in Church, we simply don't live like our Lord told us too. Because Paul got his approval from God not from the church he was free to address the issues that needed to be corrected and in verse 21 he lists those as well and in this case they have sexual connotations'. Finally in 13:1 we note that Paul's behavior was consistent with them something that a hireling may not be for fear of losing their job. And the reason why he was able to maintain this was because he answered to God not the Church, denomination, etc.

V. Vs. 2-4 Trusting God's power

4. Vs. 2-4 **Trusts and rests upon the power of God working in life's**: Twice in verse 4 Paul mentions the "*power of God*" and by so doing he is assuring the fact that he is trusting that God will correct there behavior. Paul's not afraid to address the 11 issues that he lists but he is trusting in the power of God to bring about the needed repentance. He is not saying, "Wait till your father gets home!" He is encouraging those actively involved in rebellion to get their hearts right before separation occurs.

Effectiveness is the proof of reality! The health of a Church is not seen in the splendor of their buildings, the elaborateness of its worship, the wealth of its giving or the size of its congregation. Not it is seen only in changed lives, if there are no changed lives than the essential health of the Church is missing! That is the only thing Paul was to be judged upon as it related to his ministry and they were living proof of his effectiveness.

Allan Redpath said, *“God’s goal in your life is not only to get you living sacrificially with no other motive, no limit to your availability, no expectation of reward, but He waits for the day when He hears you say this very words of Paul to the Church in Corinth, “I do not seek yours, but you!” (verse 14) We move from fans to followers when we are no longer looking only to get something from Jesus and instead are only wanting Jesus!*