

Series: 2 Cor

Title: Answer in Behalf of Brethren

Text: 2 Corinthians 5: 9-15

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One of the best words of advice I received when I first began preaching is “Do not defend yourself, let your brethren defend you.”

Our subject: Answer in Behalf of Brethren

2 Cor 5: 12: For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

From chapter 2 up to chapter 5—the apostle Paul has been declaring to believers, why he and all Christ’s preachers and all Christ’s true brethren are faithful to preach Christ according to the word of God. Paul is giving believers an answer so that brethren can defend Christ’s preachers and our brethren against our accusers.

Proposition: The answer believers give in defense of brethren to those who would lay charge to our brethren is that our brethren preach, believe and serve Christ as they do because we are constrained by Christ’s love for us to live unto him.

TO PLEASE CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5: 9; Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Every true believer desires to please Christ in all our labors. Paul says, “Wherefore.” He had just declared that those created anew by God, every true believer:

2 Cor 5: 1:...we know we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens....5: He that hath wrought us [worked to create us and prepare us] for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6: Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8: We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. **9: Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.**

“*Accepted of him*” means that we may be well-pleasing unto our Lord in all things. Knowing our living Redeemer is seated at God’s right hand and has made us a house in the heavens, we labor in the cause of Christ to glorify and please him in all things.

Therefore, we do not alter the word of God to compromise and please those who become offended at us.

Galatians 1:10: For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

We labor passively by submitting to his divine providence, even when it means suffering rejection and persecution from men. *We labor actively* in our lives and in our labor that whether at home in the body or present with the Lord, we may be accepted in the Beloved—well-pleasing in his sight. This is the one concern, the one desire of the renewed heart –to glorify Christ alone, to please Christ in all things.

Philippians 3: 8: Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11: If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

So the first answer for you to give those who accuse your brethren is that because of what Christ lives and has made us an eternal home in the heavens, our one desire is to please him by glorifying him in everything we preach and do.

URGENCY FOR PERISHING SINNERS

2 Corinthians 5: 10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. 11: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;

Every true believer knows the urgency of preaching the gospel of Christ to perishing sinners.

Believer's know that all the sons of Adam must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. All judgment is committed to the Son (John 5:22). And Christ shall be the measure of Perfection which no sinner can measure up to in himself.

Those without Christ—who refused to bow and believe on Christ—who forsake his gospel will not be covered in the righteousness of Christ so they will be found guilty of sin before the law. Also, Christ abides not in them so their motives will manifest to be sinful from an evil, impure heart. They shall give account and stand responsible for every secret and open sin.

Romans 2: 16: In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

But those who believe on Christ by the grace of God have no sin because Christ bore our sins away on the cross.

Romans 8: 1: *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Hebrews 10: 14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified

All the labor of the believer in the cause of Christ will be found to be good works at the last judgment, not as *causes* to give us eternal life and happiness but *as fruit*—because we were

Philippian 1:11:...filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Christ will manifest all the believer's good works as evidences before all which justify us that our profession of faith was true. And these fruits of God's grace will justify Christ the Judge in pronouncing us as true believers saved by his grace.

So it is not that believer's are terrified of standing before the judgment seat of Christ but we are afraid you who do not know Christ—*"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."* We labor and persuade men because those who do not believe on Christ will face the terror of the Lord in the day of judgment!

Nahum 1:6: Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Look to the cross! The only one who could stand and abide God's fierce anger was Christ Jesus. He bore the sin and terror of God in the place of guilty, helpless sinners. Sinner, righteousness and salvation is only through faith in Christ. Christ is able and willing to save the chief of sinners who believe on him. (Heb. 7:25).

Some will say, "But I am a sinner!" Recently, I read of an orphan walking down the street during the depression. He came to a big window. Inside was a lunch line of hot food. A man said, "Come inside boy and eat!" The little boy said, "I cannot, I am dirty. My clothes, my hands, my face is dirty!" The man said, "Are you an orphan?" He said, "Yes sir." The man said, "Son, this feast is prepared just for orphans." Christ says his gospel feast is prepared just for sinners! Christ said, *"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* (Lu 5: 32) Never let it enter your mind that Christ will not receive you because you are a sinner. Sin does not disqualify but qualifies us to come to Christ. "Is your head, your feet, your whole-self nothing but sin?" "Then come to Christ, son, this feast is prepared just for sinners!"

BRETHREN ARE ONE

2 Corinthians 5: 12...but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience. 12: For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

In all this, Paul says we are giving you something to answer those that glory in appearance. These are things a believer can use to defend his brethren rather than joining with the accuser.

Christ's preachers are openly manifest unto God. This is why Christ's faithful preachers are faithful to preach Christ in spirit and in truth. And Christ commends his preachers to his believing people—*"but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your conscience."*

2 Corinthians 3: 1: Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you? 2: Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3: *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. 4: And such **trust** have we through Christ to God-ward:

Paul's purpose in declaring all these reasons is to show how Christ makes his people one with each other through the gospel. Brethren are one. As Christ's witnesses are faithful to Christ, brethren are given something to answer our accusers. Brethren defend one another.—*"For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart."*

Paul and all God's true people glory in heart in spirit and in truth by the same Holy Spirit. We are true believers, true Jews, the true circumcision: *"which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh."* (Php 3:3)

But the enemies of the cross “*glory in appearance, not in heart.*” Most glory in circumcision—in their so-called law-keeping. But that is easily recognizable by most believers.

Yet, far more subtle and deceiving are those who glory in their learning and their knowledge. Gnostics define faith as “*giving mental assent to doctrinal facts.*” We do not come to faith in Christ by learning doctrinal facts and giving mental assent to them. Christ said,

John 7:17: If any man will do his will, [believing on Christ then] he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

Faith is a gift of God given in the new birth. It makes a sinner go from having no interest in the gospel to hanging on every word. He has not confessed faith in Christ yet. He does not even know what God has done for him yet. But he has begun to believe through God-given faith. Through faith, as the gospel is preached, the Spirit teaches him Christ and he begins to see himself a sinner. As the gospel is preached, the Spirit teaches him Christ and he begins to see Christ is his Savior. Before long he finds himself believing on Christ. Christ has been revealed to him through faith and through faith in Christ he knows the doctrine is true because he beholds doctrine in the light of Christ. Then God makes him to be “not ashamed” to confess Christ publicly in believer’s baptism.

When God gives a new heart, the heart is soft and tender: in conviction, repentance, faith, hope and love. A believer loves God and his brethren who are born of God because he is filled with God who is love.

1 John 5: 1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

God is love. The following is a description of God who is Love. It is a description of the believer’s inward man which is created of God.

1 Corinthians 13: 4: Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5: Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6: Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8: Charity never faileth:

When a fellow believer stumbles or is in error concerning doctrine, Love dwelling in the heart of his child makes the believer suffer long and be kind and put the best construction on his fellow brother. Love makes the believer see his fellow brother and “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Once I and a few other brethren were considering parting from our fellow brethren due to some differences we discovered we had. One wise old pastor asked me, “Could you forsake your wife, your mother, your daughter over this?” I had to answer, “Of course not! I love them.” Likewise, God-given charity makes the child of God come to himself and say, “I cannot forsake my brother. I love them!”

But the naturally taught heart knows nothing of heart faith, hope and love. Therefore, those who glory in appearance are puffed up—*knowledge puffeth up*. They are cold-hearted toward God’s saints instead of having the love of God which cannot forsake brethren you love. Sinners cannot fake “*Bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things.*”

Instead, the naturally taught heart argues and debates doctrine, accuses, and separates and receives only those who strictly agree with their understanding of doctrine. And their acceptance of doctrine is strictly from a

humanly logical standpoint—what they conceive as humanly logical, rejecting doctrine except they can understand how God can do it.

Brethren, I trust that God has given you a heart to know the gospel in spirit and in truth and to know me so that you will defend me and your brethren against such men. Even you do not, myself and these brethren who are filled with the love of Christ will continue to receive you in love and wait on our sovereign Lord Jesus who is able to make his people stand. This is what God-given love does for brethren!

CONSTRAINED BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5: 13: For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. 14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

One, if we are accused of being fanatical or being mystics for preaching the mysteries of God which are beyond human comprehension—here is what you can tell our accusers on our behalf—“*whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God.*”

Do you believe God’s word? By God’s grace, by God given faith, I do! God help my unbelief. And I confess there are more things about Christ and his doctrine that I am not able to explain than things that I can.

1 Timothy 3: 16: Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Great is the mystery of godliness, the lawgiver was made under the law. Who can explain that! *Great is the mystery of godliness*, sinless Lamb of God was made sin for us. None can explain that! *Great is the mystery of godliness*, Christ was made a curse for us. What a mystery! *Great is the mystery of godliness*, God purchased the church with his own blood. God bleeding? Mystery! *Great is the mystery of godliness*, Christ the Life died and was buried in a tomb and all those for whom he died died and was buried in him. *Great is the mystery of godliness*, Christ who died arose from the dead and all those for whom he died arose and sat down in glory in him. *Great is the mystery of godliness*, a glorified Man who is God is seated at God’s right hand ruling and fulfilling all things in heaven and earth just for his church and the glory of God. *Great is the mystery of godliness*, he gives sinners eternal life and makes us one with him as he and the Father are one by taking up abode in us with us in him. *Great is the mystery of godliness*, Christ sends forth his gospel, sends forth the Holy Spirit, gives us life and faith and calls us to himself and shall lose none who he redeemed. *Great is the mystery of godliness*, Christ is coming again and shall raise our vile bodies fashioned like unto his glorious body and we shall be perfectly like him and with him for eternity.

Can I logically explain any of that? No, they are miracles of God! But God’s miracles are God’s liberty to do what only he can! Faith believes God! Faith is the substance, the evidence. Faith needs no other argument!

So by the grace of God giving me faith, I believe God is able to do all that he says and promises! And if I am crazy for believing all that is written, then tell my accusers, I am crazy to God. I am a fool for Christ’s sake! Tell that to my accusers!

Two, if I am too serious and dogmatic and serious to my accusers because I refuse to preach and glory in any but Christ and him crucified, then tell my accusers this—“*whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*” God is love. And God abides in us. Therefore, God’s saints love and desire to see sinners saved through the preaching of the gospel of Christ! Therefore, we refuse to compromise the word of God with anyone simply

because some are offended and unwilling to look into God's word and takes sides with God against themselves. If you will defend you brethren to our accusers then tell them that!

Three, this is why these things are true of all God's preachers and all God's people—*For the love of Christ [for us] constraineth us; because we thus judge.*

God has given us this spiritual discernment to know “*that if one died for all, then were all dead.*” This means three things.

One, all for whom Christ died, our old man of sin—our body of sin—died when Christ died—*Romans 6: 6: Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him**, that **the body of sin** might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed from sin....10: For in that he died, he died unto sin once: ...11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.* When Christ died for all his elect, all our body of sin died.

Two, all for whom Christ died, died to the law when Christ died—*Romans 7: 4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become **dead to the law** by the body of Christ.* The law has nothing to say to a dead man because justice is settled. The law has nothing to say to anyone for whom Christ died because Christ settled justice for us by his death. When Christ died for all his elect, all became dead to the law.

Three, all for whom Christ died, the law died to us when Christ died—*Romans 7: 6: But now we are delivered from the law, **that being dead wherein we were held;*** Since Christ gave the law all it demanded for his people, all for whom Christ died owe the law nothing else. When Christ died for all his elect, the law died to all his elect.

Now, constrained by Christ's love, we do not live to the law or to ourselves but we live unto God our Father and Christ Jesus his Son—“*And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*”

Romans 6:..in that [Christ] liveth, **he liveth unto God.** 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be...**alive unto God** through Jesus Christ our Lord....13:...**yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead**, and your members as instruments of righteousness **unto God**....22: But now being made free from sin, and **become servants to God**, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Romans 7: 4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that **ye should be married to another, even to him** who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit **unto God**....6...**that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.**

So brethren, defend one another to our accusers, by telling them we do what we do because of these four reasons:

- We have an eternal house awaiting us so that we desire to please Christ in all our labors.
- We know the urgency of preaching to perishing sinners
- We are one in heart with our brethren because Christ has made us living epistles and commended our brethren to us through the gospel they preached unto us.
- We are constrained by the love of Christ to no longer live unto ourselves but unto him.

Amen!

