

Series: 2 Corinthians
Title: Commending the Commendable
Text: 2 Corinthians 12: 11-12
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2 Corinthians 12: 11: I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12: Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

The desire of God's saints is to hear Christ and him crucified preached in every message. And Christ's true preacher desires to only preach Christ in every message. We desire to hear the one way sinners like us can be just which is in God giving his Son who laid down his life to fulfill his own law and justify his elect.

But there are certain passages which teach us something that is our responsibility and that is for a very needful reason. Our text tonight teaches us our responsibility in "Commending the Commendable."

The reason this is so important is so that the gospel of Christ and him crucified will continue to be preached among us. The reason false preachers gained a footing in Corinth is because the Corinthian's failed to commend Paul. It had a negative effect on everyone involved.

Proposition: It is needful for believers to commend faithful pastors, especially before those who bring reproach upon them, so that false preachers and false brethren are not able to enter the church and cause the gospel to cease being preached.

We ought to commend all our brethren in Christ, especially when they need to be defended before the enemy. But we will focus on the pastor since our text does.

NO DESIRE TO GLORY

2 Corinthians 12: 11: I am become a fool in glorying;

Christ's true preacher has no desire to glory in himself or to be gloried in. Paul said, "*I am become a fool in glorying.*" When Paul gloried, he gloried only in the total inability of his flesh.

2 Corinthians 11: 18: Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also...30: If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

The reason Paul gloried in the total inability of his flesh is because when he was weak in himself, he was strong in Christ's Power:

2 Corinthians 12: 9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10: Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God for his people.

Isaiah 40:29: He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

Christ is *our Strength of Righteousness*—he is our only Righteousness—the LORD our Righteousness. He is *our Strength of Holiness*—“Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one for which cause he is not ashamed to call us brethren”—that is only so of those Christ has made holy. Christ is *the Strength of our Life*—Christ said, “I am the Life”; Christ the Life in you is the Life of our new man within! He is *the Strength of our Faith*—Christ is the Author and Finisher of our Faith—we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Christ is *the Strength of our Resurrection*—Christ said, “I am the Resurrection.” In all, Christ is our Strength!

But even though Paul only gloried in Christ his Strength, to show it he had to speak more about himself than he wanted. Even when he listed all those times he suffered and was totally weak depending upon Christ his Strength, he spoke more about himself than he wanted too. So he said, “*I have become a fool in glorying.*”

God’s preacher knows he is sent to glorify the triune God in the Lord Jesus Christ. We declare to men that all the glory in salvation belongs to God in Christ.

Isaiah 42: 8: I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Isaiah 43: 7: *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

1 Corinthians 1: 29: That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

So when a believer hears his pastor: one, faithfully preach Christ according to the scriptures, giving the Lord all the glory and man none, and two, when his pastor lives so as not to bring glory to himself only to the Lord then that is a faithful minister of Christ. So it was with Paul. Therefore, the Corinthians had every reason to commend Paul.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO COMMEND

2 Corinthians 12: 11: I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you:

It is the responsibility of the believer to commend Christ’s faithful minister. Remember, this is Christ, through the Holy Spirit of God giving Paul the words to write. Christ says to the Corinthians, “*Paul ought to have been commended of you.*” This is Christ teaching you and me that we ought to commend our faithful pastors. Why is this important?

One, God’s word says we should.

1 Timothy 5:17: Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

Galatians 6: 6: Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Both those verses speak particularly of monetary support but it holds true for giving thanks to my pastor and commending my pastor, especially when he needs defending.

1 Thessalonians 5: 12: And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13: And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

“Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.” I truly love my pastor and I tell him often. I esteem him highly for his work's sake. Now I know the labor involved to find a message, to prepare and to preach it. He has the same sin and obstacles you and I have, the same family responsibilities, plus the care of the brethren to whom he ministers. So I “esteem my pastor very highly in love for his work's sake.”

Two, commendation of a faithful pastor is important because the way we honor our pastor is how we honor Christ and God our Father. When Christ sent out his apostles to preach he said,

Matthew 10:40 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

By divine election, by blood redemption and by the new birth, God's people are inseparably one with God our Father and Christ his Son. Christ said, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (Jn 17: 23) So if I fail to honor and highly esteem and commend my pastor, I fail to do so to God my Father and Christ my Redeemer.

Three, our commendation of Christ's minister shows what we think of the gospel of Christ because Christ's preacher is preaching God's gospel. Paul said of himself and his fellow ministers,

1 Corinthians 4:1: Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

When brethren thank me for preaching a message the whole conversation turns to Christ. When I was lost, I never thanked my pastor for that very reason: I was afraid I would reveal I did not know Christ. So when I see folks who do not thank a pastor after he has preached the gospel to them, besides thinking it is rude, it makes me wonder if they even rejoice in the gospel of Christ. Our thankfulness and commendation says much about what we think of the gospel of Christ because Christ's preacher is preaching God's gospel.

Four, by not esteeming, by not being thankful and by not commending my pastor, I can cause my pastor to be cast down. It is not merely because he desires to be thanked. But because he is fearful there is not love and gratitude in my heart toward Christ. The ultra-pious often excuse themselves from ever thanking or commending their pastor by saying they are keeping him humble, keeping him from being puffed up. Please get this point: you and I are not sovereign. We cannot keep ourselves humble much less anyone else. Christ alone keeps his people humble and he alone gets the glory. Paul said lest he should be exalted, Christ gave him a thorn in the flesh. Christ alone keeps us humble. But by being ungrateful, by not defending and commending my pastor, I can cause my pastor to be cast down. What if you worked long hours to obtain a gift that you gave someone you love then after they opened it, they walked out without saying a word to you?

Five, commendation is so very important because (this is the point of our passage): it was the Corinthian's failure to commend Paul that gave the false preachers a foothold in Corinth. Paul repeats this throughout this letter, “I should have been commended of you.” After hearing the false preachers slander Paul, the Corinthians were silent. And by the Corinthians being silent, rather than commending Paul, their silence said to the false preachers and to everyone around, that the Corinthian's were critical of Paul, too. It showed the false preachers where to appeal to the Corinthians, at the point they deemed the Corinthian to be critical of him. Also, when those older in the faith did not commend Paul, it made those younger in the faith question Paul. When an older believer commends a faithful pastor, it assures younger believers he is faithful and true.

But if not, it makes the younger question him or be critical if he hears the older being critical. Plus, by not commending Paul, it gave credit to the false preacher's slander. So by simply not commending Paul, the false preachers were able to slip in and turn the Corinthians against Paul, against Christ and against his gospel. This is why commendation is so very important.

This is why Paul *had* to commend himself. Understand, Paul did not commend himself in his preaching. He taught us earlier in the letter that we are to only seek the commendation of the Lord. But Paul had to commend himself for the sake of true believers at Corinth, for the sake of the gospel of Christ, for the sake of the glory of Christ and for the sake of not giving credit to the false preachers and their lies. The sad thing—and you know it broke Paul's heart—is that he had to commend himself.

CHRIST MAKES HIS MESSENGER COMMENDABLE

2 Corinthians 12: 11...for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. 12: Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

These are the reasons they should have commended Paul. In all these things, it was Christ who made him commendable. Christ makes his messenger commendable by his sovereign, irresistible grace. Christ our Redeemer is our risen Head with all power to sovereignly make his people commendable.

One, Christ made Paul commendable by turning Paul from false humility—2 Corinthians 12: 11...for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles. Paul is not boasting. He had just spent two chapters declaring that it was by the grace and power of the Lord Jesus Christ that he was what he was. It was by Christ that he could say “*in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles.*”

But it would have been *false humility* for Paul not to acknowledge that Christ had made him equal with the chiefest apostles. If God has given you a talent, when someone commends you for it, it is fine to acknowledge it, as long as you give the glory to God for giving it. But to say you do not have a talent when it is obvious that you do it is false humility. And false humility is nothing but self-righteous pride.

This applies to the gospel. Some refuse to say that the inner man within a believer is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. Instead, they say all we are is sin. Indeed, as Paul said, “*In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.*” But the reason the Spirit of God made Paul qualify that statement is because the new man in God's saints is the work of Christ and everything God creates is good. We are not glorying in ourselves. We confess that “*in our flesh*”, in that part that is born from Adam's corrupt seed, “*dwelleth no good thing.*” But we must exalt Christ who shed his blood that he might fulfill his promise and create a new man in his people in his righteousness and his holiness in the image of God by the incorruptible seed. Else we would only be sinful flesh and could have no communion with God. False humility is self-righteous pride.

Two, Christ made Paul commendable by humbling Paul so that he acknowledged that in himself he is nothing—2 Corinthians 12: 11...for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Being an apostle of Christ, could Paul not stand against temptation better than you and me? Not anymore than you or I when unassisted by the grace of God. Being an apostle, could not Paul pray better than you and I? He was just as dependent upon Christ to give him the spirit of grace and supplications as we are. Could Paul not love better than you and I since he was an apostle? Not without the Spirit of God shedding the love of God abroad in his heart just as we depend upon him to do so in us.

When Paul said, “*In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing*” he meant, like us, in his flesh *he was nothing!* He meant everything given him was given by Christ through the Spirit in the inner man just as it is

with every believer here now. Christ commands us Lazarus' to come forth and with the command comes the power to come forth. Christ commands us to stretch forth our withered hand and with the command comes the power to do so. But without Christ we are nothing and can do nothing. If you would really be something then learn that you are nothing. Grace has made a man attain something of infinite value when he can say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "[I am] less than the least of all the saints."

Three, Christ made Paul patiently endure suffering—2 Corinthians 12: 12: Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you. In all patience. Christ made his apostles suffer far beyond his other ministers. It was by Christ's strength alone that Paul patiently bore all his infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake. Had he not been made an apostle and sent by Christ, had Christ not given him a heart for God to receive all the glory in salvation, had Christ not given him a heart for God's elect, and had Christ not kept him, Paul would never have patiently suffered all the things he did, while continuing to preach the gospel in truth. Though, Christ's ministers today do not suffer anything close to what his apostles suffered, it is by Christ's strength alone that they patiently endure and continue faithfully preaching Christ, while the whole world goes after another Jesus which is not another.

Four, Christ confirmed Paul to be an apostle by making Paul work works only the apostles could work—2 Corinthians 12: 12: Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. Christ gave only his apostles the ability to work supernatural miracles such as: raising the dead, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, casting out devils, speaking in different tongues (languages) they had never learned, and so on. These things confirmed them as apostles of Christ as they completed the new testament scriptures and established the early church. But when the last apostle died, these gifts died with them.

Yet, today, by the strength of Christ working through his ministers the miracles of grace which those miracles pictured are still being performed. By Christ, through the preaching of the gospel, by the Holy Spirit, sinners who are *spiritually dead* are being raised to newness of life. By Christ the great Physician, by the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel, sinners with *the sickness* of looking to their will and their works are made whole by being turned from themselves to faith in Christ. *Spiritual lepers* who are unable to cleanse themselves of their sins and unrighteousness are brought to confess their sins to Christ and are cleansed by the blood of Christ who laid down his life for his sheep. While dead in our sins we were under *the power of the devil* like the demoniac of Gadera: living among the dead and no man could tame us with chains of legal bondage. Then Christ came and cast out the devil—binding the strongman and spoiling his goods. Now, like the demoniac, we are seated at Christ's feet in our right mind. Now, by the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, *we speak a language we never knew*—the language of the gospel of Christ, the language of grace and love, the language of God's Israel.

So let me leave you with this. The man who is able to give Christ all the glory in his preaching and in his life, the man who after all these miracles of grace are performed can say, "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God*" is a minister that Christ has made commendable. (2 Cor 3: 5) And it is needful that we commend the commendable—faithful ministers, as well as all faithful brethren. It is needful for the good of our brethren, for the gospel of Christ and for the glory of Christ! So concerning our pastors, if Christ has made them commendable then Christ says we ought to always be commending the commendable!

Amen!