

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS

"Part XLVI: 2 Corinthians - Overcoming When God's Messengers and Messages Are Opposed"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy reports on a Western Reserve University poll to 10,000 clergymen in five major U.S. denomination. Over 7,440 ministers responded to the question: Do you believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God? Those ministers who answered "No" were: 82% of the Methodists, 89% of the Episcopalians, 81% of the United Presbyterians, 57% of the Baptists and 57% of the Lutherans! (Boice, Does Inerrancy Matter?, p. 9)

Perhaps due to this wide-ranging denial of the truth many have left mainline denominations to seek credible ministries elsewhere! By far, most of the members of our own Church have come to Nepaug Church in reaction to error taught in other church groups!

However, with this distrust of churches and ministers often comes a big **credibility** problem for the **godly** church and minister:

(2) Child Evangelism Fellowship uses a wordless booklet to give the Gospel to children. It has pages with colors of black, then red, then white, then gold and finally green. The black page stands for the **darkness** of one's heart in need of salvation. The next page speaks of Christ's **blood** (red) that provides an atonement so that when one believes, his heart is **cleansed** white as snow (white). There awaits a wonderful **future** in heaven's streets of gold (yellow), so the believer meanwhile needs to **grow** (green) in God's Word.

This booklet has been misunderstood by a child in a church in our area: he took the black page to mean people with black skin, and his relatives are upset at what they perceive to be racism taught by the church to this child! There has been no effort to contact the Church's pastor on his beliefs or the Church's stand--there is just discreditation based on the little child's report!

How does such a Church, how does its minister continue to minister effectively when so misunderstood and misrepresented when a climate of distrust understandably prevails?!

(We turn to the "Need" section of the message . . .)

Need: *"Not all churches or ministers promote God's truth, a thought I find that appalling! (a) HOW can we discern the true from the false?! (b) Also, how do good ministers keep going if discredited in an era where there is distrust of even the clergy, and (c) how will the Church survive if good ministries are opposed?!"*

- I. **Man's decline into ages of deceptive, harmful paganism has left many people distrusting even qualified couriers who bear God's messages, and that to the Church's threatened harm!**
 - A. Though God created the world and set up man as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
 - B. God renewed human history by the Noahic Flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
 - C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
 - D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check his sin, Gn. 12:1-3.
 - E. Yet, the Old Testament records that nation, Israel's repeated failure to curb Nimrod's error and even to be corrupted by it, Gn. 12:4-Malachi.
 - F. When God sent Jesus, Israel's long-awaited Messiah, apostate Israel rejected Him, so God postponed the Kingdom's installation and carried on its recruitment program through the Church, the Gospels and Acts.
 - G. Yet, with that Kingdom postponed, converts out of pagan apostasy who had been **abused** for **ages** by **false** spiritual leaders distrusted even God's couriers and their messages, threatening their own **harm**:
 1. God used the Apostle Paul to evangelize people at Corinth, a city known for paganism at its worst, Bib. Know. Com., N.T., p. 505.
 2. Yet when he was absent, false apostles were able to discredit Paul:
 - a. Paul at first arranged to make two short stops with the Corinthians in his round trip to Macedonia, 2 Cor. 1:15-16.
 - b. However, upon writing 1 Corinthians with its challenge to excommunicate a man (1 Cor. 5), Paul **changed** his plans, **waiting** until the Church was **past** this difficult task so that his coming would not be **painful** for them, 2 Cor. 2:1.
 - c. False teachers convinced some Corinthians that since Paul changed his itinerary, he was deceptive! To back up this claim, they noted that **since** he had never supplied letters of character reference, it **proved** Paul and his message were suspect (2 Cor. 3:1; Hughes, Second Corinthians, p. xvi-xviii)!
 - d. These Corinthians **questioned** Paul's input as they were steeped in ages of paganism under abuses of former deceptive teachers!
 - e. With his message suspect, Paul's groundwork in 1 Corinthians for these converts to live well was sabotaged to their harm!
- II. **God used Paul to write 2 Corinthians as a Church textbook in handling the challenge of accreditation for God's messengers:**

- A. Paul spoke of his itinerary change so that his side of the account was understood by the Corinthian converts, 2 Cor. 1:1-2, 14-18; 2:1-4; 3:1.
 - B. In the process, he also announced in great detail instructions on his picking up their offering for the needy Jerusalem saints, chs. 8-9.
 - C. Scattered throughout this rambling letter is Paul's insight on God's **victory** for **distrusted** but **godly** messengers and their messages:
 - 1. Qualities in a godly messenger's **character** insure their success:
 - a. They **react** to distress with a **winning faith**, 1:3-11; 12:1-10.
 - b. They depend on the **Holy Spirit** for power **instead of human effort** to combat failures of all sorts, 3:4-18; 4:1-7; 10:1-15.
 - c. They thus face opponents **boldly** with **God's** power, 13:2-3, 10.
 - d. Though often afflicted, they **never quite totally fail** in these challenges as **GOD** aids them in the trials, 4:8-11; 6:1-13.
 - e. They **sense accountability** to God & thus have His aid, 5:10-21
 - f. They view themselves humbly as **graciously** appointed **ambassadors** for Christ, and so enjoy His assistance, 5:14-21.
 - 2. Qualities in a godly messenger's **ministry** insure their success:
 - a. They uphold the **powerful gospel** message, Rom. 1:16; 1:18-20.
 - b. They use **God's power** by way of **spiritual gifts**, 12:12; 13:10.
 - c. They typically are **sincere** in **deliveries**, so God blesses, 2:17.
 - d. They thus **change lives**, a factor that certifies their work, 3:2-3.
- III. **2 Corinthians adds to the "thread of redemption" by revealing that even if discredited and opposed, those ministering GOD'S ways succeed in HIS provisions, 2:16-17; 10:3-5. Thus, godly messengers are discernible, they stay afloat and the Church's mission succeeds!**

Application: To handle the challenge of credibility to God's messengers, (1) believe on Christ for salvation to become part of the spiritual body of Christ, Jn. 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:13. (2) As a believer, note that CHRIST WILL BUILD His Church against the wishes of all evil powers (Mt. 16:18). Then, (a) as a "layman," discern the true from false minister and ministry through use of 2 Corinthians to get into the right group; (b) if we minister, simply follow God's leading in God's power and God's way and let HIM persuade HIS people to support us, 2 Cor. 2:16b-17! HE will secure our works!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon . . .)

(1) At the outbreak of World War I, a nationally-renowned atheist, Giovanni Papini, disillusioned with how humanity could accept a World War, left the urban center where he had written and taught to take his family to a mountain village.

While there, he observed lowly, God-fearing peasants having devotions around their campfires, and on occasion was asked by them to read to them from New Testament some beloved stories about Jesus.

As he read, he became enthralled with the life of Christ, and was soon converted. His 1921 book, the Life of Christ shook his supporters and admirers deeply as he defended the credibility and truth of the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior. (McDowell, A Ready Defense, p. 463)

(2) Jan Chelcicky was elected one day to be the president of the Communist Youth in what is now the former Czechoslovakia. He was an avowed atheist and firm believer in the loftiness of Marx and Lenin.

The night after his election, he dreamed that a voice came out of the sky, saying to him: "Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ . . . and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Jan awoke in great fear, his heart pounding fiercely. He dropped beside his bed and accepted Christ as his Savior! Dauntless in the face of possible fierce persecution, he resigned his communist post, saying that he now replaced Lenin and Marx with Christ as His Savior, and became a pastor of a church near the Russian border. (Ibid., p. 459)

(3) Dr. Bolton Davidheiser with the Institute in Creation Research tells us that he could not accept Christ as Savior for many years because he believed evolution to be true. If evolution were true, the Bible was errant, and its Gospel suspect. Yet, **while** thus convinced, upon hearing a humanly ungifted pastor in a North Dakota church on a Sunday night in the spring of 1944 give the simple, familiar Gospel, he found himself saying, "I believe that!" to his own surprise!

He concluded by stating in his book's personal testimony that the Gospel **itself** changes errant views, Evolution & Chr. Faith.

The credibility of God's Word or of those who minister it is something only GOD can settle by His intervention. Like the Italian peasants or the plain North Dakota preacher, the godly must just go about God's business and let HIM do the rest!