

“A RIGHTEOUS DEFENSE ?”

(2Corinthians 10:1-18)

July 16, 2017

Is it appropriate to respond to critics and accusers directly, boldly – even FORCEFULLY?

The Apostle Paul DEFENDS both his character and his ministry, EXPOSES his critics for what they are, and even BOASTS of his credentials as he reminds all of his position of authority in the church.

His response can be a guide, not just to pastors, but to EVERY Christian.

I. The Apostle's DEFENSE

1. His MEEKNESS

Paul begins as we all should, by following Christ, being as gentle as possible.

2. His METHODOLOGY

- **What he does NOT do:**

Paul does not depend on the standards of the WORLD. His Christlike “meekness” and “gentleness” are not signs of weakness, but of CONTROL and RESTRAINT.

- **What he DOES do:**

Paul depends on the weapons available to him through the power of the HOLY SPIRIT - “divine power.”

A great verse for any Christian to turn into PRAYER:

“... and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

How would your possible ACTIONS be changed?

How would YOU be changed?

3. His MILITANCY

- **The RIDICULE:**

How dare anyone say such things about this man God used so powerfully to spread the gospel in the first century, to endure incredible hardships, to carry the gospel to Gentles, so that ALL peoples on earth might be saved?

It is especially good to see how Paul responds, so that WE may use it as a MODEL when people speak to us or about us in a critical fashion:

- **The RESPONSE:**

First, Paul reminds them that they are criticizing someone who also belongs to Christ. Of course, the church is not perfect, but, neither is the critic perfect.

As JESUS taught, before you point out the speck of dust in someone else's eye, pull the log out of your own eye.

Secondly, when he comes to see them again, they will see a lion in person. He will confront the cowardly complainers with godly truth. **CONSISTENCY** is one of the greatest answers to criticism.

4. His MEASURE

- He does not compare himself to other MEN

“Hey, compared to me, I'm pretty good!” To invent and use a private standard is really no standard at all. Worldly standards simply cannot be applied to ministry.

Spiritual work really requires a spiritual measurement.

- He does conform himself to CHRIST

“Stay in your lane.” Ultimately, what was Paul's lane – and OURS? It is loving and serving our Lord Jesus Christ, is it not? And as we do so, staying in our lane, we become more LIKE him.

II. The Apostle's DESIRES

1. His desire for THEM

Paul expresses hope that their FAITH continues to grow. The ONLY answer to our sins and sinful acts is faith in Jesus.

2. His desire for HIMSELF

Paul's evangelistic and missionary heart bursts forth as he expresses his desire to go BEYOND where he has gone so far, to continue to spread the Good News.

Some have criticized Paul's boastful attitude, but he seemed to understand the words of the prophet:

This is what the Lord says, “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

The ultimate decider is the LORD himself. Our words and deeds will be measured by him.

Our DEFENSE is provided by him. All TRUTH is known by him.

We can put all of our faith and trust in him, no matter what OTHERS may say.