

Transcription of 19ID3224

II Corinthians 10:7-18 "Recognizing God's Man"

July 28, 2019

All right. Let's open our Bibles the morning to II Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 7.

Certainly, the context in which you study the scriptures is important, and I think no more so than this book. Paul went to Corinth on the second missionary journey of the three that he took. He spent a year and a half in Corinth at a time when he was probably as discouraged as you'll find Paul in the Bible. Really had been beat up at every turn; pretty sure quitting was a good idea; didn't have his friends around for several months. And yet as God began to work, he developed this amazing church in the middle of one of the most corrupt cities on the planet. And so, Paul loved the folks. They had problems, for sure -- big city church -- but at the same time there was great fruit. And when Paul left, he would eventually end up at Ephesus, and five years later, as he was sewing up a three-year stint in Ephesus planting a church was the first time he really got wind of the fact that the Judaizers had moved into Corinth.

The Judaizers were a band of folks in the first century that followed Paul almost everywhere he went. In fact, I think they're mentioned in every epistle that Paul writes. They were legalists. They didn't believe in the grace of God. They certainly didn't walk with the Lord. They didn't know God. They drew men after themselves through mysticism, and legality, and false doctrines. And they turned people away from the grace of God. It was a plague that Paul had to deal with everywhere he went. But it was particularly hard in this case, because this was a place he'd spent the longest amount of his time. It was a miraculous church that had begun, and he just loved the people to no end.

For seven chapters he writes, with Paul's kind of heart on his sleeve. Heartbroken that the folks would buy into the lies of these false teachers, who not only went after the doctrines and the grace of God, but they went after Paul, because if they could get rid of Paul, they could take over, and that's they wanted. They wanted the power, they wanted the income, they wanted the gain of the people. In fact, when things stopped becoming gain, they were the first ones out the door.

Paul was up against a lot. They came in with glib presentations, the recommendations of famous people. They claimed superiority and hidden wisdom, if you will. They were like wolves, though, among the sheep, and they sought to draw men after themselves. Paul for seven chapters, brokenhearted, appeals to the loving relationship with the people.

When Titus gets back from having delivered a third letter that we don't have that Paul delivered -- this one is actually the fourth one -- the people responded. And for the first time in over a year, Paul got some good news. The majority of the people were back on track. The grace of God was back in vogue, if you will, and the love for Jesus and for Paul had renewed with most. But there were some guys that had just dug their heels in and had a small following. And Paul was just determined -- he could have stopped after Chapter 9 and stopped writing, but he was determined to go after these guys.

These last four chapters are not Paul, the brokenhearted servant-of-God pastor. The last four chapters are Paul, the big apostle of God, with great power. Now, we're going to get into that a couple of weeks from now, how were the apostles distinct from everyone else, the office

of the apostle, those 12 that God had chosen. There were lots of apostles, but these men in that office, they had great power. And Paul now wants to root out what's left of those ruining the church, and he goes after them not with anything but his power. But in so doing, he wants to compare him with them, so that the people that are still caught up in the church with these deceivers and all who have influence, that they might look at both and say, "I can't follow this guy. Look what he's doing. Look what kind of life he leads." Paul spends four chapters doing what he will say a half a dozen times he hated doing: He wanted to boast in what God had been doing in his life. See what the Lord has done in us, see what the Lord's doing with those guys, and then pick a side.

In every chapter from here on forward towards the end, you will find Paul making various comparisons between them and us. In fact, one of the studies, I work three or four weeks ahead usually, because if something comes up and my study week is challenged, someone gets sick, you have to spend a few days in the hospital with someone, you don't feel like, gosh, you're going to never get caught up. I've written a couple more studies ahead, and one of them is called, "We Are Not Them and It

Shows," and another one says, "My Life, Their Life, You Decide." Because that's kind of where Paul's going with this. He wants the people in the church that he loves to not just go by the words, but go to the life. Go to the proof that's in the pudding. Show it to be so. And Paul will turn the hearts of the people to that. In fact, I think he uses the words like glorying or boasting 20-something times in these four chapters. It's almost distasteful to him, but he keeps bringing it back to, I'll just boast in the Lord and what he's done with us. But he wants them to look at him. Look what God has done with our life, look what the Lord has not done with theirs. Because these guys were interlopers that were just out for their own good.

From the time in the Bible that Satan deceived Eve in the garden until today, Satan's greatest assault against the church and the work of God in the world is to introduce God's truth with lies; in other words, to get to the source of what you believe. Lots of people say, well, I believe this, and they have no assurance it's true. And they live with that kind of fantasy life for the rest of their life. They find out eventually that they could be wrong. But the truth sets men free; right? There is a truth. It's absolute. We can't deviate from it. We can

argue about aspects of the truth or the application, but God's word is the standard, and so wherever you turn in the scriptures, there's always this call to the church to know the Bible well; not just I go to church, but here's what I believe and here's why I believe it. And then to be very careful and on guard against those who try to lure you down a path that will lead to destruction, even though on the outward it looks pretty good. Because deception by definition means you are fooled. But if you know God's word, it's going to be harder to fool you. You are going to go, well, that's not what the Bible says, and you run rather than get caught up.

And Paul will run down that road of here's the scriptures, here's what the Bible says, here's what the attributes of what a godly man should look like, here's how you can recognize God's man from one who is not. And in order to do that he has to point to himself, but not so much in terms of self-honor, but just to say, look what the Lord has done with us.

Wherever you turn in the Bible, there's always this call to you and I to know the Bible. You should know it well. We don't teach the Bible a lot in church because we have nothing else we could do; we do so because it's the best

thing we can do.

And throughout the scriptures, there is a warning constantly about being on guard against false prophets. When Moses gave his sermon that we call the book of Deuteronomy over a 30-day period before he handed the children of Israel off to Joshua, he said in Chapter 13 as the Lord was speaking, "If there arise a prophet or a dreamer of dreams among you, and he shows you a sign and it comes to pass --" in other words, he's got power, "and yet his message is 'let us go serve other gods' that you haven't known, then you would do well to turn from them, not listen to them. This is the Lord's test for you, whether you know Him and believe Him or not." In other words, can you stand on the truth even when the signs and wonders would tell you otherwise, but the message is clearly against the word of God?

When Jeremiah, who was ministering at a time when certainly the church -- or I should say the children of Israel were not doing as they should, Jeremiah said, "The prophets, they are prophesying falsely. The priests, they are ruling by their own power. Those that have the law don't believe the law. And the people love to have it that way. What do you think the end of them would

be?" the prophet says.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said, "Be careful of the false teachers that will rise up among you. They'll look like sheep, but inwardly they're ravenous wolves. Be on guard." That's not just written to their generation, that's written to us. And our culture's filled with people telling you what God says. You should know what God said, and you have an obligation to certainly be ready to give an answer.

In Mathew 24, as the Lord talked about the last days, he said, "Take heed. There will be those who will come to deceive many. They'll come in My name and tell you that they're the Christ, and many will be deceived by them."

Paul wrote to Timothy in the last days, "Perilous times shall come and people will depart from the faith, and they'll give heed to seducing spirits, doctrines of demons."

I think John was in his -- when he was in his 90s, the third generation of Christians had come and gone, and yet he writes in 1 John, "Beloved, don't believe every spirit. Test the Spirit to see if they're from the Lord

or not. Many false prophets have gone out into the world." Well, that happened in Corinth. And no church is immune from that danger, us included. We should be on our game when it comes to knowing what we believe in, and rightly dividing the scriptures and committing ourselves to knowing what the Lord has to say.

The false teachers' attack against Paul, they sought to discredit his teaching in the hopes that they could turn the people to them for a while so they could make some profit out of them.

Well, we started last week in Chapter 10, and Paul said - - he came dressed in this portion like a soldier. And he said, if you want to win the spiritual warfare, be a compassionate person who is courageous, capable of entering into the war, and show deep concern or genuine concern. That's what we looked at last week. This morning, from verse 7 down through verse 18, Paul gives two things that he would hope that they would make consideration for between himself, and someone who claimed to know the Lord but obviously in his practices does not. In fact, Paul will say of them in Chapter 11 verse 13, "They are false apostles." He didn't mince words at all. But here's his first point. And his

desire is that the church would begin to be able to separate the chaff from the wheat, and have good discernment, and just be able to focus not just on appearance, but words and humility and doctrine and practice, which should determine what you believe about people anyway, and what they have to say.

Verse 7, he says, "Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he's Christ's, then let him consider this in himself, that just as he thinks he's Christ's, even so we're Christ's. For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord has given us for edification, not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed -- lest I seem to terrorize you by my letters. 'For his letters,' they say, 'they're weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, his speech is contemptible.' Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, so shall we be in deed when we are present with you." Not exactly weeping Paul here. Paul's a little bit more, "let's do this"; right? He's taking a stand.

Now, first things first, verse 7, the claim of the false teachers was that they were believers. We're Christ's.

Do you know anybody that will tell you they're a Christian and you're pretty sure they're not? I think most Americans will say that, most of them. Oh, yeah, I'm an American and I'm a Christian. I believe in God. What do you believe about Him exactly, and what God do you believe in? But there's that general kind of claim. Paul will go after this claim in the next couple of chapters, but suffice it to say he begins this argument with them by saying, "They say they're saved. All right, I say I'm saved. They say they're believers. All right, I'm a believer. Now what do we do with that?" In other words, that doesn't take us anywhere; right? To just say something about yourself, hey, that's easy. Anyone can do that. The problem was, there was no objective evidence for the salvation of these false teachers. And if you follow someone or their teaching, you should see evidence of what God is doing in their life. For these men, no track record, no churches founded, no list of converts, no saints built up in the faith. Nothing to really say anything about them, other than they come in, they try to steal people away with their own little doctrine, and when things go tough, then they go away to the next place. Nothing to boast about whatsoever. That's going to be Paul's word to these Corinthians that are deceived by these guys who appear to look good, but

inwardly they're not good at all.

The false prophets made claims without any objective evidence. That's the problem. Now, when you get to Chapter 11 down through about verse 13 and beyond, Paul will start to make definite lists about what you do see in their lives, but for now Paul starts with the issue that you're going to need more than just a claim; right? Your faith should have objective evidence for it to be so. You can say, "I love Jesus." If I watch you and I go, "I don't see any of that." "Well, you just have to trust me on that." "Well, I will, but I don't believe you." I'll trust the Lord to figure it out. I'm not making a judgment. I don't know what's in your heart. But Jesus said, you'll know them by -- what? By their fruits. You'll know them by their fruit. A good tree, good fruit.

Now, hey, look, we all have hard days and we're not perfect, but we should be heading in the right direction. And that was Paul's point with these guys. And with himself, because what Paul will say in the weeks to come is that my life is an open book. He'd spent a year and a half with them living there day and night. He had a business there. He made tents. He built business

relationships and business transactions. They saw him in the business life. They saw him in the church life. They saw him with his Bible out. There was nothing that you could guess about Paul. You saw it in the way that he walked around. He preached without fear. There were cities all around that he reached, the Lord honored. He was persecuted terribly for his convictions, and he stuck around. They turned on him in this church for a year. He was still reaching out to the folks. He hadn't walked away. They were important to him, and he wants them to notice the difference.

Paul has this intimate walk with God clearly seen in his life. The outward appearance of the false teachers looks pretty good, but it has been kind of craftily put together for public consumption, but the doctrines they teach and the immoral practices they are practicing, man, that should disqualify them. How many people have you seen on T.V. over the years, they look so spiritual, and then they end up running around with somebody's secretary or taking off with the money, there's a big scandal, and people go, "That's why I don't believe in God." And, you go, "Well, I don't blame you. But believe in God, just don't believe in these guys or their god." That's the problem.

That's Paul's interest here. If you judge by appearance, if you just want to go by appearance, hey, I'm saved too. Now, he'll, like I said, flesh that out in the weeks that follow. And he uses himself as an example, because as you go down through verse 10 and verse 11, the things they were saying about Paul was he writes some pretty tough letters, but let's face it, he's a little guy. He's a weak guy. And he doesn't speak very well; right? They carried that judgment thing by means of appearance forward to apply to Paul.

By the way, not in your Bible, but extra biblical literature tells us a lot about Paul. He's written about in several places. They said he was a hook-nosed, weepy-eyed individual that was extremely small. Now, that's what history says. Bulging eyes, squinting all the time, couldn't see very good, weepy, running liquid running out of his eyes, just a hook nose. Kind of an ugly-looking guy, and short. Not exactly your most intimidating guy. What did the false teachers say? "Oh, he writes some pretty bad letters. Oh, he's all bad and stuff, telling us off and stuff. He's not going to come here and say that." And Paul says this: "Oh, if you want me to come there, I could say it. The Paul of the letters could be

the Paul on your doorstep if that's what you want." I love that guy. He might be little, but he seemed like a pretty good guy. I'm going with Paul; right? He's pretty excited. Their mistake, though, was that they judged by outward appearance; right? Don't judge by outward appearance. That should be a lesson for us as well. Don't get caught in by what you see, because there's a lot more going on.

We had a parent -- I probably could tell you, because it's been over 20 years ago. I can't imagine they bother to listen to me anymore -- who actually took their kids out of church here because some of the high school kids were dressed kind of like high school kids: Long hair, holey jeans. "We can't have our children hanging around with children like that." And I thought, really? This is the way you're going to judge? You don't know them. You haven't been here very long. And so when they wrote me this long letter about, I should do something about that, I wrote back and said, "Sounds to me like you've judged by outward appearance, which by the way is a great quality of a false teacher." And they didn't write back. I don't know why. I'm trying to be nice. But I thought -- I put in the letter, "I'm sure glad Jesus didn't get that memo when he picked John the Baptist," because if

you were going to pick anybody to be your forerunner, you don't want a guy running around in camel hair clothes, eating locusts and wild honey. This is not a guy, if you had a daughter, you'd want to have her bring home to dad and go, "Look what I'm marrying. He's in the living room. He's eating a locust." Not exactly good. But that's what they did.

And you find that same mistake. Samuel, godly man in his 80s, blind almost, almost made the mistake of anointing Eliab; right, Jesse's oldest son, to be king, and the Lord stopped him, said, "Look, you look on the outward spirit, but God looks on the heart."

Saul and his army made the mistake when they were looking at Goliath. All they could go by was what they saw, and this guy's too big to fight. Saul made the same mistake looking at David when he volunteered to go fight.

Goliath made the same mistake when he looked at David and went, you're a punk. Well, the punk was going to put a rock right in your forehead and cut your head off by noon. You get the picture.

Don't look by outward appearance. Unfortunately, the folks in Corinth, to some extent, were fooled by the

appearance of these false teachers, which is kind of the way the world works. It goes by what it sees and it's moved by those kinds of things, the obvious things I guess, the things that you clearly with outward appearance can see: The surgeries, the muscles, whatever. God could care less. The fight was not with what you could see, but what you can't.

Now, Paul is, like I said, much more authoritative in verse 8, when he said, "I could tell you about my authority that I have in the Lord, but I know the authority that God has given me is not to destroy you, but to build you up." Which is a cool use of power, isn't it? God has put me in a place of authority to help you, not to destroy you.

I thought about James and John, when they were early on with Jesus in Luke, I don't know, Chapter 9 or so. They were in Samaria. When you travel from the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem, you have to go through Samaria, or around it, but if you traveled through it, you would have to go to Samaria, and Samaritans hated the Jews. They were in conflict about their heritage and all. What the Samaritans did in fighting back against the Jews was if you were traveling to Jerusalem, they would say all their

hotels were full. You want to eat -- I'm sorry. You want to feed your horses or your camel, get some water -- I'm sorry. We can't help you, because you're going to Jerusalem. Now, if you were leaving Jerusalem, everything was available. But in going to Jerusalem -- Jesus went there with His disciples, and they got to town and they ran into the "yeah, there's no room at the inn" kind of thing. And James and John got furious and they said this to Jesus, "Lord, would you like us to call down fire from Heaven like Elijah did and destroy them all? We'll use our power, man. We're apostles. We're going to wipe everybody out." Jesus said this: "You don't know of what spirit you're of. The Son of Man did not come to destroy man, but to save them." And he says then they went to another city.

Well, Paul's got that right; right? He's got great power, and these guys were infuriating and they were lying and taking saints. Paul wanted to do something about it, but man, God will, there's a break in his heart. First, love first; right, before he brings the hammer. The hammer will come, but in God's timing. And I thought, true men of God, or true people of God will always have a positive impact on the church; right? What your influence is to strengthen or to build up or to

bless people, and if that's your reputation, that's a pretty good sign.

They accused Paul, notice in verse 9 and in verse 10, of writing letters that would frighten people, but that they insinuated, he's not much to look at, he can't really talk very good, and he certainly is not going to show up here and talk like that when he's in the flesh. And Paul says in verse 11, we can do that if you want. If you'd like, I can definitely do that.

By the way, this letter that was so tough that Paul wrote that Titus delivered was the third letter that Paul sent. This is the fourth one in response. We have two of them. But in Chapter 2, if you were with us back in January when we started this book, Paul said, "I've written you a hard letter with many tears. And I don't want to hurt you, but I want you to know how much we love you and I want to tell you the truth." So that was his motivation for writing the letter that they were now accusing him of, trying to -- I don't know -- overstep his bounds and bigger than his britches, so to speak. No, no, no. He loved the people. "A good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." Look, he's all talk is what they said; right?

The word "contemptible," by the way, is a word that it means you can't put up with something. If you go back to the book of Acts or the I Corinthian letter, Paul said that a lot of people in Corinth preferred Apollos over him. Apollos was kind of a more classically trained Greek orator; right? The fancy people would be drawn to his prose and the way that he forms, said, "Oh, he's amazing." Paul said in Corinthian letters, like Chapter 2 again, "I didn't come to you with fancy words. I just wanted you to trust in the Holy Spirit." I think he came out speaking street language, not because that's all he knew, but because that helped him to not rely on maybe the skills that he had. He came just with the gospel, real clear, and they made fun of him. You don't sound much like an orator. Well, he wasn't, but not because he couldn't have been; it's just he didn't want to. He wanted to rely on the Spirit. They made fun of him. His bodily presence is weak.

I don't know about you, but my impression of Paul is that when he was 50, he looked 100. I mean, this was a hard life. I bet he had a scar on every inch of his body, and a story to tell; right? "Hey, Grandpa, what happened there?" "Oh, let me tell you that." He'd have

a story. But it was because he loved the people, had given his life over to the ministry. And so, Paul said, "Look, if you're only worried about the mail, you should worry about when I show up, when I bring the authority. I'll call your bluff." Don't go by just what you see. The false teachers were different in public than they were in private. Paul was the same wherever you found him.

Second of all, verse 12, "So we," he says, "dare not compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, comparing themselves, among themselves, that's not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond our measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God has appointed to us -- a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment. Because the Bible says in Jeremiah, 'he who glories should glory in the Lord.' So that not he

who commends himself will be approved, but he who is commended by the Lord will be approved."

Paul ends this section by taking on the false teachers in two specific areas: Number one, they were good at comparing themselves with others to determine that they were fine; and second of all, that they would boast not in what they they'd done or what the Lord did with them, but in the works of other men that they are seeking to take over. Does that make sense? In other words, they claimed as their own things that God hadn't done with them. Paul talks about his own outlook at ministry, wants them to compare the two, and he speaks about a humility of a life that can only kind of come from someone who has come to meet the Lord.

Humility at best is spiritual bankruptcy; right? You realize that everything you have has been given to you by God. You really don't deserve it, the grace of God, the mercy of God. You find yourself worshipping because you're in debt; right? You're amazed at what God is doing with you. You're eager to give Him credit. One of the clearest marks of God's presence in someone's life is humility, but that's not what these guys do. In fact, they write their own testimonials.

I go speak in a lot of places. In fact, this year -- after the stroke a couple of years ago I stopped going anywhere, because I was just not ready, I guess. But this year I took a lot of speaking engagements back east, in Hawaii, out in Japan. There's a lot of places where I'm speaking this year. And people do this: "How would you like us to introduce you?" I'll go, "Well, my name is Jack. Go with that." They want to, like, say stuff about you that's either not true or barely true. Look, you are going to find out what I'm like anyway. I'm going to open my mouth, it'll take five minutes, so might as well not go down that road; right?

Look what happens to the problem with the mutual admiration society, those who make judgments based on setting themselves next to other people. You always come up with the wrong decision, don't you? I guarantee you that this morning you can find someone that is not as short as you; that has more hair than you; that is smarter or not as smart as you; that has less money than you do; that maybe is less involved than you are. You can find enough people to stand next to, to feel really good about yourself, no matter how poorly you're doing; always find someone to step on to get up a little

higher in your own mind. That's how the world works. They applaud each other, pat each other on the back. And Paul said not only is that not wise, that is not right. There's no way you're going to come up with the right understanding of who you are by playing this game of ego building, or some self-congratulation. That doesn't work that way.

Do you remember when Jesus told that story in Luke 18 of the Pharisee that went to church, or to the temple, and he walked in, and here's how the Lord tells the story: He said the Pharisee went into the temple, "and he prayed with himself." My favorite line. God wasn't listening, but the Pharisee who was making the prayer was listening to it, and he was feeling really good about himself as he prayed it. This is what he prayed: Father -- no, he didn't say Father. He said, "I thank you, God, that I'm not like these other sinners. I'm not an adulterer, I'm not unjust. I'm not an extortioner, and I'm certainly not like that tax collector standing over there." And then the Lord said, "And he went out justifying himself." But then the tax collector, who was aware of his sin, was unable to even look up because he was so ashamed of himself, beating himself on his chest, in, physical demonstration of his woe, and the Lord said, "He went

away justified with God." It's terrible when you begin to find others to move yourself up the ladder, but that's exactly what these false teachers were doing. They didn't see themselves clearly. And they elevated themselves by tearing people down around them.

Here's the best way that you can find out what you're really like. Go stand next to Jesus. Go stand next to Jesus. Just stand there with Him. Hi, Lord, it's me and You. You can't last very long there. Let's talk about the love. All right, Lord, I got this: Mercy, gracefulness, mercy. I can't. I don't have it. You go stand next to Jesus, and all of a sudden who you are becomes clear.

When Paul wrote the I Corinthian letter, he wrote to these same guys, "It's no big deal to me that you judge me. I don't even bother to judge myself. But I know when the Lord's coming, he's going to bring righteous judgment, and everyone then is going to have the reward from Him." Paul was interested in only pleasing one.

When Jesus in John 16 was talking about the work of the Holy Spirit, he said when the Holy Spirit has come, he's going to A) convict the world of sin because they don't

believe in me, Jesus said, but then there's a comma, and it says and he's gonna convict the world of righteousness, "because I go to the Father and you see Me no more." The word righteousness means the kind of life that you can live that God accepts. So what Jesus is saying, when the Holy Spirit comes, He's going to set before you an example of the life that you would have to live to be righteous and go to Heaven. You'd have to be just like Jesus.

Now, you go stand next to Jesus; right? In Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect." That's the standard. So we can stand next to each other and I might go, hey, I pray more than you do, or I'm in church more than you are, or I know Bible verses more than you do -- and I might, because they pay me to learn them, for the last 40 years. Had I been left to myself, I probably wouldn't know any. God put me in ministry to keep me close. I know He did, but that's just my own personal conviction. But you go stand next to Jesus, and man, you're going to be on your face crying for His mercy. And that's Paul's humility. He's going to have to say, Hey, compare me with them. Okay. I get it. But understand that when I'm standing next to Jesus, that's when I realize I got nothing, or as these guys, they

applaud each other, they give each other great words of welcome, while the testimony, "Oh, come up, dear brother. Oh, he's touched the world. He's gone around. God's used him. Come over, buddy. Just rub a little bit on me. Oh, there you go." Really? Get out.

In fact, Paul goes on to say here in verse 13 and in verse 14 and in verse 15, look, we don't boast beyond what God has done. We stay in our lane. We stay in our sphere. And by the way, our sphere includes Corinth. There was no church till we came there and preached Christ. There was no church until the Holy Spirit was poured out. We're not boasting about something someone else has done like these false teachers who are now in your midst. We're talking about things God did in our lives.

See, Paul thought -- this is all distasteful to him, but he wants them to see the difference between the two. And Paul's field of influence was mostly the Gentiles. He boasted in the Lord. And notice that Paul says that he honestly reported God's blessings. We won't report things that we haven't seen. We're not ambitious to exaggerate the results like these guys on T.V. There's a million people there and we -- whatever. We just want to

tell you what God is doing and what He's not, and we're just proud of the Lord. We're bragging in Jesus. We're giving Him honor. That's what that verse there -- I think it's Jeremiah 9:24 is what's quoted there in verse 17. We're just proud of Him and what He's done with us.

But notice he said in verse 15, and he mentions it a couple of times. We're not like these false teachers who come and they boast about someone else's work. They're just sheep stealers. They didn't come to establish anything. They came to take.

One of the things that's frustrating in Southern California is we have so many good churches. Not frustrating in the sense that we have good churches, frustrating that in the sense that when people have trouble in the church or they have to work out problems, rather than working them out, you just go to another church. And then when they get there, if that happens again -- you can go to 100 places and you probably never see the same people and feel good about things without ever growing because you're forced to deal with it. It's called transfer growth. But I should say to you, transfer growth, where people move around, adds a net gain of zero to the kingdom of God. That's not something

we should be interested in. We should be interested in getting the lost in to meet Christ, and reaching out with the gospel of Christ.

These guys were just moving around, using other people's ministry for their own personal gain, and Paul said, "We don't brag about another man's work. We don't enter into another man's place. We just stick where God has put it and we're thankful."

And then he ends by saying it really doesn't matter what anyone thinks anyway. What you really want is the Lord's applause; right? You want the Lord's applause, not man's applause.

Let me end by asking you this: What makes you different this morning from every man and woman sitting in a church somewhere across the country that's not saved? They're in church like you are, so what's the difference? They show up every week faithfully, like you do. What's the difference? How does your life and your convictions and your pursuits and your investment and your time spent and your hobbies -- how do you find yourself distinct from the religious man in the world? Because that's Paul's challenge. He loved the Lord. God's power was moving.

But these guys had captured the hearts of some of the church and were deceitfully using them for their own benefit, and Paul was furious. He'll say in Chapter 13 when we get there, "I hope you'll repent before I show up and give you a proof of what can God can do through my life."

I like Paul. But may God help us to be different and not be judging by what we see outwardly or somehow in our false humiliation try to convince ourselves God's doing far more than He is in my life. He wants to do great things, but if you had to make an honest assessment, what is the Lord doing with you? What's on the list, and what should be there?

We'll pick it up in Chapter 11 next week, so read ahead and we'll -- I like Paul. You're going to enjoy these verses, I think.