

**PAUL DEFENDING HIS INTEGRITY
2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-24**

Introduction

James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

The human tongue is one of the smallest parts of our body, yet in seconds it can cut and slash and do damage and destruction that sometimes is irreparable!

The tongue can ruin someone's reputation, it can malign their motives, it can even destroy their dignity! Such was the case with this Corinthian Church and the Apostle Paul with whom they were looking to find fault with!

Remember on the playground when we were youngsters what our defense was against someone who verbally attacked us?: *"Sticks and stones may break my bones , but words will never hurt me."*

But in reality, while the words hurt us very deeply, we didn't want our attackers to know we were wounded by them.

I. THE PAIN OF FALSE ACCUSATIONS!

Some of the hardest trials we face is when folks make verbal attacks against us! Those attacks can be made against **our conduct, our words, or even our motives!**

Paul's integrity was being attacked in these same three areas.

A. Some Attacked Paul's Conduct!

They accused him of being shrewd, manipulative, and insincere.

B. Some Attacked Paul's Words!

By what the apostle says, it appears that some were falsely accusing him of **lying**. Some in the Church were saying that Paul had promised to come to Corinth again and to spend much time there, but he had not at this point fulfilled his promise.

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C. Some Attacked Paul's Motives!

These wanted to say that Paul may have had on a sheepskin of servanthood, but in reality he was a wolf who wanted to *"lord"* his apostleship over them!

II. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS INTEGRITY!

The two most common reactions to false accusations are:

1) To Be Passive – Say Nothing!

However, this leaves the lie unanswered.

2) To Be Aggressive – Lash Back Vindictively!

This only complicates the problem as it usually causes the attacks to increase.

Paul, however, responded with wisdom and truth as his only defense as he answered the accusations one at a time.

A. Paul's Defense Of His Conduct! (Vs 12)

Paul had the testimony of his *conscience!*

Who knows the conscience? Only God! So, in effect he is using God as his witness!

He explains that rather than living his life by *fleshly wisdom*, he lived it in *simplicity* (i.e. singleness; sincerity without self-seeking) and *godly sincerity* (i.e. godly clearness and purity – holiness) that came by the grace of God working in his life! This was manifested in his *"conversation"* (i.e. how he lived) both in the world as well as in his dealings with the Corinthian Church!

B. Paul's Defense Of His Words! (Vs 13-22)

Look at **verses 13-16** first. At the end of Paul's first letter he had expressed a desire to visit the Church at Corinth.
(1 Corinthians 16:5-7)

Notice how Paul ended verse 7 there with *"if the Lord permit."*

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Paul knew that he had to obey God before his own desires and that his personal plans must always be subject to God's plans! (Compare that to what James said:)

James 4:13-15 13 *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

But somehow the words **“it may be”** and **“I trust to tarry with you if the Lord permit”** escaped Paul’s accusers.

The Corinthians mistook his **full intentions** as a **firm promise!** And so when he didn’t come they drew their own conclusions (i.e. That he was a liar and not to be trusted as an Apostle!)

In self-defense, look how Paul goes on to say he wasn’t joking and he truly in his flesh had a desire to do what he said! **(Vs 17)** He wasn’t just pacifying them and vacillating back and forth!

Paul's critics had **judged his motives** and charged him with **saying one thing one time and something else another!**

In **verses 18-22**, Paul tries to convince these Corinthian Christians that he is not sending double messages! He does not say yes and no in the same breath! When he says “yes”, he means “yes”! And when he says “no”, he means “no”!

He contends that just as God is faithful, so his words (Paul’s words) are faithful!

The preaching about Christ was without wavering! God will do what He says! So also were Paul’s words without wavering!

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Just as these Corinthians could count on the Holy Spirit’s seal in their lives, so they could trust that Paul’s words were full of **integrity and truth!**

It is inconsistent for a person, whose life is wrapped up in sharing the unwavering truth about Jesus Christ, to play games with the truth in his own life!

Believers are to be people of truth! We aren’t to speak out of both sides of our mouth regardless of whether we are talking about the things of Christ or something in our personal lives!

Paul’s Defense Of His Conduct, Of His Words...

C. Paul’s Defense Of His Motives! (Vs 23-24)

We see that Paul again uses God as his defense!

Remember, the Corinthians had it seems, claimed that Paul was just a bully wanting throw his apostleship around and lord it over them!

But of course that was not the case! Paul calls himself a helper here in vs 24. And if the Corinthians looked at this dear servant of God and what he went through for the cause of Christ and even for THEIR benefit, they would understand that Paul was just a bond servant of the Lord Jesus Christ who was wanting to be a help, not a hurt, to those he ministered to!

Conclusion

As I read about the Apostle Paul being misquoted and misunderstood, I am reminded of some past, very painful times of my own ministry. A Church leader doesn't necessarily have to do anything wrong to receive criticism. It often just comes with the territory! It comes just as surely as heat comes from spending time in the kitchen.

But one of the best medicines for dealing with troubling times is this matter of having a **clear conscience!**

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So, where does a clear conscience come from?

A clear conscience comes from: (4 things...each related to the other)

- 1. Living everyday in the light of the Second Coming!**
- 2. Living everyday in the perfect will of God!
(Most of it revealed in the Bible).**
- 3. Living everyday a life that is committed to glorifying the Savior!**
- 4. Living everyday surrendered to the directing hand of the Spirit of God!**

Paul lists four wonderful results or benefits of our salvation!

(2 Corinthians 1:21-22) "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; {22} Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

- (1) God "stablisheth us" (confirms or established).**
- (2) He "has anointed us".**
- (3) He "has sealed us".**
- (4) He has "given us the earnest of the Spirit" (as a guarantee).**