

2 Corinthians 10 pt. 2 v. 7-11

V.7 Let's answer the question - do you look at things according to the outward appearance?

Yes. We do. Maybe we shouldn't, but we do.

[Jhn 7:24 NKJV] 24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

If we did this we would be required to slow down, take a beat, think, reflect on God's word and what God's word has to say about whatever it is we are judging.

Jesus instructs us to use righteous judgment - where we find ourselves uniquely unqualified to do so - since righteousness is not inherently something we possess.

Using righteous judgment requires a shift in thinking born out of a shift in who we are - having put on Christ's righteousness when we are made into new creations.

Samuel visits a man named Jesse, with eight sons...the first one he sees catches his eye.

[1Sa 16:6-7 NKJV] ...[Samuel] looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed [is] before Him!" 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not

look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For [the LORD does] not [see] as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

At Corinth Paul was criticized by those who believed they had a more distinguished standing in ministry - and a more distinguished standing in Christ.

These people pointed to how they looked, how they appeared compared to others. They may have appealed to their status, eloquence, wealth, power, to convince themselves and others that they were "uniquely Christ's," or that they had a "special" ministry. It appears that within the church they began to create an order of merit by which to rank one another.

[2Co 10:12 NKJV] ...we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

While the Corinthians dealt with a fractured church, and following the cult of personality, dividing themselves into their preferred clans - they also indulged in comparative christianity. I don't think it's too far of a stretch to say that the two often go together. I.e. high school

It is a presumptuous and arrogant Christianity. It is a Christianity that discounts another person's standing in Christ not simply for the rare

satisfaction of tearing down another dear saint - but has as its primary motive, the propping up of our own sense of self-worth.

It relies on the wisdom of Ricky Bobby - "if you're not first, you're last" rather than Christ's teaching...be last.

Paul instructs those Corinthians who are convinced that they are uniquely and exclusively Christ's - that they should consider that Paul and his crew were also Christ's servants. There is no VIP lounge for Christ's servants. Where one person gets in and another doesn't.

In Paul's case - being especially, and uniquely called to the ministry Christ never offered him the promise of vain glory, status, high-fives but said:

[Act 9:15-16 NKJV] 1... he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Even as Paul rides the emotional roller coaster of instructing this hard-headed, stubborn church that he planted - he reminds them - "hey, you guys think you are "all that." Don't forget where you came from.

[Gal 2:6 NKJV] ...from those who seemed to be something--whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man--for those who seemed [to be something] added nothing to me.

And yet, we deal with this today - people who assume inflated and dubious ministry credentials for questionable reasons or for outright personal benefit -- and at the end of the day what have they added to the body?

V.8-10 Paul's authority came from Jesus. He wasn't some self-ordained hack-job out on the fringes making people call him a made-up title.

Jesus Christ himself called Paul into ministry - this is a key mark for the capital "A" apostles - those who are sent out by Jesus Christ personally/bodily, instructed by Jesus Christ personally/bodily, saw the Lord Jesus Christ personally/bodily.

Another Apostle, John, succinctly states the condition of the first generation Apostles when he writes: [1Jo 1:1 NKJV] 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life--

This was real to the Apostles in the most complete sense.

Paul says that even if he does boast more of the authority he received from Jesus Christ - STILL...whatever authority he has is for building them up and not tearing them down.

This is a defining mark of somebody who understands their role and place in the work of Jesus Christ. Any authority one has is for the edification and building up of the saints and not as a destructive force.

Paul would not be ashamed of the authority that Jesus gave him. He knew for certain his place in Christ; and he knew his calling beyond the shadow of a doubt - what else could have kept him going against all odds?

Since Paul's authority, calling, credentialing didn't come from man - then surely no man could take it from him.

On top of all that, people had a problem with Paul's letters. People still have a problem with Paul's letters.

REF Peter's instruction on this -

[2Pe 3:15-16 NKJV] 15 and consider [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable [people] twist to their own destruction, as [they do] also the rest of the Scriptures.

Interestingly enough men twisted Paul's words in the first century as they do today, along with the rest of the scripture - Peter calls these men "untaught" and "unstable." It's important to be teachable and stable.

AND...Peter classified Paul's letters with SCRIPTURE! Amazing. He, by the insight and inspiration of the Holy Spirit - knew that Paul's writings were inspired by that same Holy Spirit.

He knew that some of these things were difficult, and challenging, but he didn't make allowance to excuse them away.

Apparently some at Corinth claimed that Paul's personality and his writings were not consistent with one another. They read these letters and saw that they were substantial, heavy, weighty.

But when he showed up he appeared to them as "weak" and his speech "contemptible." The NLT says - he appeared weak and his "speeches" were worthless. Ouch.

He didn't fit the bill as a celebrity pastor. He didn't have his \$9000 shoes on (true story), he didn't rant and rail against the body or put on a show.

It is to be noted as well that Paul had some physical maladies. He had poor eyesight. During one of his trips to Corinth he was really ashambles.

He writes: [1Co 2:3-5 NKJV] 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching [were] not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Paul was weak among them, he was afraid even to the point of trembling. He was real and raw. He didn't rely on clever turns of phrase or a polished homiletic. He relied on the Holy Spirit and God's power, not his own.

As we've taught before - our weakness is a platform for God to demonstrate His power, might, and majesty. Paul clung to that.

It appears that some people were turned off by this and still held it against him.

In the book, "The Way of the Dragon or the way of the Lamb," the authors write about Paul and his interactions with Corinth:

"...the Corinthians were wrestling with the questions, 'what does Christian power really look like?' More specifically in relationship to Paul was the question of what apostolic power ought to look like...in many ways Paul was the exact opposite of what they desired: He did not have an impressive physical presence, he lacked bravado and confidence, and was meek and gentle in his leadership. He did not speak with eloquence, and he did not boast in money, intentionally refusing to take money for his 'service,' choosing to work a menial job that would have been socially dishonorable...the totality of Paul's weaknesses had become unpalatable to them...Radically, Paul embraced the very things that the Corinthians rejected...this is not merely a question of what leadership style you like, but a question of whether you embrace the way of Jesus."

In as much as Paul embraced his weakness and refused to fabricate a false persona for ministry he embraced the way of Jesus.

The prophet Isa describes this way...

[Isa 53:2-4 NLT] ...There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. 3 He was despised and rejected--a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. 4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down

V.11 We are the same all the way around not just in letters, but in person too - you just can't see it because you're looking the wrong place.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that he had a unified personhood in Jesus.

He would not adjust his behavior to satiate their desire. AND, while they judged him weak and ineffective based on his appearance - he was in fact a servant of the Most High God, inducted into His service by Christ and empowered for this work by the Holy Spirit.

We can learn something from Paul. It's not about how we look. It's about who lives in us - the Holy Spirit. And who's service we are in. Where our authority comes from - Jesus Christ.

Do not fold to the temptation to perform. The crowds say, “put on a show, entertain me, show me how powerful you are, inspire me.” Christ says, [Mat 11:29 NKJV] 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.