

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

A Ministry of Integrity, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:12-13

Code: 47-35

We return again, this morning, to our continuing study of 2 Corinthians, Paul's fourth letter, really, but the second one included in Scripture, to this wonderful church at Corinth. You'll want to open your Bible at this time and turn to chapter 5 of 2 Corinthians.

Let me introduce our subject again. Last week we began looking at verses 11 to 15 under the title, "The Ministry of Integrity." And as you have known, if you've been with us through our study of 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul in this letter, and a rather lengthy letter it is, but in this letter he is defending his integrity which is under attack. It is the theme of this letter that Paul is honest, sincere, genuine, real, a man of integrity, in spite of what his accusers are saying.

And so, as we have been going through we have learned so much about his attitude, his ministry, his motivation and the passage before us is one very salient and important treatment of the matter of defending his own integrity. And we'll get at that passage in just a moment.

By way of introduction, as I was thinking about the apostle Paul and the immense influence that he had, the tremendous, tremendous imprint and impact he has made on the world, I began to ask myself the question...what is it that makes people like that the way they are? What is it that makes people people of impact? What are the qualities that make people rise above the crowd to influence history even in the spiritual realm? There are many who serve in spiritual leadership, there are many who serve the Lord in spiritual ministry, there are many who preach and teach...but what is it about certain people that just causes them to seem to be elevated to a level beyond even the best of their peers?

But if you think about leadership and you think about the marks of leadership, there are some common marks that leaders have that you do see in the lives of men like Paul. Let me just share some of them with you.

As you look at the marks of those people who leave their print on society, and particularly on the church, they are people with focus. That is they tend to be people who have a very clearly defined mission. They know exactly what it is. They understand it and they understand how to do it.

They are people also with drive. They have a high degree of motivation. They don't have to be externally motivated, there's just something in them that presses them, that pushes them.

Generally these kinds of impact leaders also have courage. That means that they are so devoted to their task and so devoted to their goal that they are willing to face adversity and threat and not break down or back off.

They have knowledge. Effective leaders all have knowledge. They know what they're doing. They know what they believe. They know where of they speak. And they tend to have an insatiable search for more of it. They seemingly can never get enough knowledge. They tend to be people of physical strength, physical stamina because they have to give themselves to very, very hard work.

They also tend to be people who are optimistic. They believe the best about people and they believe the best about their plans. They look on the upside of things. They believe in those in whom they invest.

They tend to be people also, these leaders, who are enthusiastic. They are able to create a contagious kind of excitement that causes people to jump on board their enterprise and go with them.

They tend to be people of risk. They don't mind sticking their neck out for what they believe in. They don't mind putting their life on the line, all they possess.

They tend to be, what I would call, enterprising. And when I talk about an enterprising person, I mean a person who is willing to tackle the most difficult task possible because that's really the way you change things.

So these leaders are marked by a number of qualities. They tend also to be persuasive. That is, to say they are able to convince people to follow them in their cause.

They tend to be outstanding in communication. One way or another they can articulate their vision, their ideas.

They tend to be people of imagination. They have to be because otherwise they would just maintain the status quo. And they dream about what hasn't been done and what hasn't happened, but what they believe can happen.

And then in just going through this little list of almost maybe fifteen characteristics of a leader, I would say they tend to be individualistic. Strong leaders stand alone. They have the ability to stand alone. They need people to accomplish their enterprise, they don't need people to prop them up. They tend to be able to stand alone.

With all those characteristics of leaders with impact, you sort of begin to see a profile of the kind of person that emerges even in spiritual matters as a formidable leader and servant of the Lord.

All of those characteristics, by the way, I drew out my thoughts about the apostle Paul. He was an individual who stood alone very, very often, and stood alone confidently. He had a creative imagination about what could be done and longed for the opportunity what hadn't been done where it hadn't been thought of. He could articulate truth like few who have ever lived and could convince whole masses of people to follow him, even at the peril of their own life. He was entrepreneurial. He always was eager to tackle the most seemingly impossible task and willing to risk his own life for what he believed. He was contagiously enthusiastic. He was optimistic about people and about plans. He was physically strong enough to endure tremendous hardship and physical abuse and still press forward with unlimited energy, it seemed. He had drive. He had a clear focus. He knew exactly what his targets were. He had a high level of internal motivation. He was willing to face persecution and hostility and never back down, even though it might mean his death. His sense of direction was clear. His goals were specific. He had the knowledge that was necessary to accomplish the ends that he had been called to achieve. He is a living model really of a strong, powerful leader in the enterprise of building the church.

But when you have said all of that and when you have painted the picture with those colors, you really haven't addressed the most important component. Because when you step into the spiritual realm, there is one more issue that is essential and that is the matter of integrity. Beyond all of those things which I mentioned, and in fact the glue that holds those all together is this matter of integrity. It is that attribute of integrity that solidifies all the rest, that grounds it, that anchors it. And last time, you remember, when we began to look at these verses, we noted for you that integrity could be defined as the quality of being undivided...the quality of being undivided. That is to say it is being completely true to your beliefs, completely true to an ethical standard. And in the case of a believer, completely true to the Word of God, living what you believe and what you preach. Its synonyms, we noted, are honesty, sincerity, incorruptibility. It is describing a person who is without hypocrisy. And all the rest, frankly, is shallow apart from integrity. You could have all of those other components of leadership but without integrity you're a fake. Integrity is what makes it all hold together.

I was talking to a gentleman who visited a church a number of years ago by the name of Teddy Donnebaour(?) who is a Swedish evangelist and we were talking about the issue of integrity. I'll never forget what he said. He said, "I've been thinking about integrity and I think integrity can be illustrated by making bread." Now, ladies, I want to acknowledge to you that I have never made bread. The extent of my bread making is to turn on the bread making machine. I don't know anything about making bread. And I'm taking a wild stab in the dark about the ingredients here. Don't get caught up in the recipe, just get the illustration and I'll be happy.

But if I were going to make bread and I had a bowl. I assume you need a bowl to start with. And I wanted to put the ingredients in, let's assume flour, water, salt, sugar and I put all of that in the bowl and I take that bowl and put it in the oven for the appropriate amount of time and wait for something

to happen, nothing will happen except all that stuff will be hot. But I won't have bread because there's one thing missing. What is it? (Yeast) No, no, you're worried about the recipe, I told you I'm not worried about the yeast...okay, let's put yeast in it before we put it in there. See, I knew you'd do that. Okay, yeast. That isn't the point. Now we have flour, water, sugar, salt, yeast in the bowl. The one thing we didn't do was...what? Mix it up...that's the issue. Good. It's the mixing that is the issue. When you mix all of those ingredients together and you do that thoroughly...thoroughly as you possibly can, then you put it in, then you get bread. And my friend Teddy said to me, he said, "That's what integrity is, integrity is when every part touches every other part...then you make bread."

And that is what it means to be undivided. That's when you get a whole loaf of a person...someone in whom every single component of his life, ethics, biblical standard, what he preaches, what he believes and the way he lives all touch. That's integrity.

Paul was that kind of man. And he knew that needed to be maintained as a very evident characteristic or his ministry would be profoundly affected negatively. The virtue of integrity was the most important virtue. He doesn't write a letter to defend his drive. He doesn't write a letter to defend his courage. He doesn't write a letter to defend his single-mindedness, his knowledge, his persuasiveness. He does not even write to defend his preaching skill which, of course, they had spoken unkindly about. They might criticize his drive and his courage and his goals and his knowledge and his focus and his persuasiveness and his communication ability and his articulation, they might criticize those things. They might attack those matters that we mentioned earlier and it wouldn't destroy him. But they didn't attack those things. They attacked his integrity because that is the point at which any servant of God is most potentially vulnerable because that questions his honesty, that questions his credibility, that questions his integrity. Is he for real?

Nothing is as devastating as you well know in the life of one who ministers on behalf of Christ as a breach of integrity. It destroys everything. The criticism which was most threatening to the life of the apostle Paul was the attack on his integrity. Into the city of Corinth come the false teachers. What do they attack? They don't attack his knowledge, they don't attack his drive. They have a few comments about his preaching, but they major, they focus their major attack on his integrity. They say he is a liar. He is dishonest. He is a deceiver. He is crafty and subtle. He is a manipulator. He adulterates the Word of God. And he has a secret hidden life of shame. That's what they really want to get across. They want to destroy his believability because if people then begin to think that he's a phony and preached one thing and lived another, then his influence is lost. And not only is his influence lost but now they don't know what's true and what's not.

So he wrote this whole letter to defend his integrity. And from chapter 1 all the way to the end in chapter 13, his integrity is the issue. He's unfolding the motives of his heart. It is the most personal, intimate look at the apostle given in any of his letters. He wanted everybody to know that like David in Psalm 78:72, he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart. He wanted everyone to

know that he was a man who was honest, who was sincere, who was genuine, who is credible. He was not a man who would lower the standard of God in his own behavior, or sinfully misrepresent it.

Now in the text in front of us, verses 11 to 15, you have the heart of this defense of his integrity. Here he gives you five reasons why he defends his integrity. Now keep in mind Paul is not prone to self-defense. He doesn't like to do that. It is distasteful to him. He resists doing that. He has been accused by the false teachers of doing it, but really he resists it. Now he has to do it and he wants to make clear why. It's very important because inevitably when the Corinthians receive this letter, people are going to say..."Well, this is just so he can keep his posture where he wants it. This is just so when he comes to town he gets people to provide his food and his clothing and his housing. This is so that when he comes to town everybody will bow and scrape to his needs and give him money and give him resources. This is so he can maintain his popularity, his prestige, his prominence, his place, this is for his own sake. He's really commending himself," they would like the people to believe. And we'll see more about that in a moment.

But he's not. Not at all. In fact, he does just the opposite. All throughout this letter he refers to himself as a clay pot. He says we have this treasure in earthen vessels and a clay pot was used for the most demeaning tasks in a household. He refers to himself only in terms of weakness. He says, "If I'm going to boast about anything, I will boast about my weakness." He does not exalt himself. This is not designed to exalt the apostle Paul. This is designed to defend his integrity. And there are five reasons here given for that defense.

Reason number one, and we looked at this last time, this is a review, reverence for the Lord. Look at verse 11, "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men but we are made manifest to God and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences."

Now remember, the key phrase in this whole section is "we persuade men." What he means by that is we persuade men about our integrity. The verb there is translated in Galatians 1:10, the same verb, "to seek the favor of." He is saying I am trying to generate a favorable estimation of my life. I am trying to persuade you to think well of me. I am trying to convince you of my honesty, my integrity. That is what he is doing. He says in verse 11, "We are made manifest to God." In other words, he calls on the highest court in the universe, God knows my integrity. As he said back in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, "I don't know anything against myself, God hasn't revealed anything to me with regard to sin." In chapter 1 of 2 Corinthians verse 12 he said, "My conscience is absolutely clear." God knows my heart. There is no conviction in my conscience. God knows my integrity.

And then he adds, "And I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences." I hope your consciences are saying what my conscience is saying and my conscience is affirming my integrity. Conscience, Paul said to the Romans, is designed to accuse or excuse. And he says my conscience is excusing me or affirming my integrity, I hope yours are as well. Remember now, conscience is

informed by the mind and they knew first hand the apostle Paul's life. He had lived with them for eighteen months, face to face, hand to hand, eye to eye, day in, day out. They had corresponded. He had made a couple of visits to them since his original time with them. They knew him. He said, "You have enough information to inform your conscience about my integrity."

We are persuading men. It is important. God knows and you should know. And we're endeavoring to persuade all to know that I am a man of integrity. Why? "Knowing...verse 11...the fear of the Lord."

What does it mean to fear the Lord? Does it mean to be terrorized by Him? Well it can, but not here. Does it mean to be frightened by Him? It can, but not here. What it means is to worship Him, to reverence Him. Why am I defending myself? Not for personal gain but out of reverence for the Lord because if someone thinks that I am liar and a hypocrite and a fake and a phony, then that is going to reflect upon the Lord. In Romans 12:1 he said, "I present my body as a living sacrifice which is a spiritual act of worship." His whole ministry was a spiritual act of worship. He wanted to honor God in everything that he did, whether he ate or drank he did it all to the glory of God, as he said in 1 Corinthians 10:31. If he boasts he said, "I'll boast only in the Lord." I want to bring honor to the Lord and if I am seen as a man without integrity, then I am seen as a man who dishonors the God he acclaims. And see that's what grieved him.

So the issue is...Look, I want people to believe in my integrity, says Paul, because if you think that I am a liar and I name the name of Jesus Christ, then that is dishonoring to the Christ I claim. Right? I don't want to be thought of as believing things that are blasphemous or untrue. I don't want God dishonored at all. And so he says the reason I defend my integrity is out of reverence for the Lord, out of honor to Him. I want to bring honor to His name.

You remember the Jews, Paul said in Romans 2, because of the way they lived, verse 24 of Romans 2, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. It was very important to Paul that he be a man of integrity so that people didn't have cause to blaspheme his God out of worship. Well, we went through that last time.

Point two, point number one, he defends his integrity because of reverence for the Lord. Point number two, concern for the church...concern for the church. And this, too, would enter into the mind of any spiritual leader. Verse 12, "We are not again commending ourselves to you, but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart." This is a very, very important verse and let me explain it to you.

Paul knew that all of the discrediting false accusations against him would ultimately hurt the church, right? Obviously. Why? Because if some people in the church began to believe that Paul was a liar and a fake and a fraud, that would split the church because there would be the pro-Paul group and

there would be the anti-Paul group, and he knew that. And there would be a war going on as the false teachers gained more and more influence, they would be pitting themselves and their converts against those who trusted Paul so that the unity of the church would be shattered.

And I'll tell you something, folks. Nothing will faster destroy the unity of the church than a group of people who begin to discredit its leadership. And that moves like a cancer and creates discord.

He also knew that once trust in himself was lost, spiritual growth would be hindered because he was the source through which the revelation of God was coming to the church, right? Thirteen New Testament epistles written by Paul. And if all of a sudden the church didn't trust him anymore, where was the truth for their spiritual progress going to come from?

He also knew that when the church became divided and spiritually stunted in its growth, immediately its impact in the community would be stopped and its opportunity to evangelize its culture significantly hindered. He was concerned about the church. And that's why he starts out the verse by saying, "We are not again commending ourselves to you. You say, "Why does he say again?" Because he had been accused of doing this. Back in chapter 3 verse 1, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?"

You see, what had happened was, as soon as Paul tried to defend himself, the false teachers said, "Oh yeah, there he goes, blowing his own horn, building up his own ego, commending himself again." He had been accused of that. And he had to walk a very fine line so he didn't fall victim to that accusation.

He confesses back in chapter 4 of the first letter to the Corinthians that he certainly was not perfect before God. He said, "Even when I know nothing in my own conscience is accusing me it doesn't mean I'm acquitted fully before God." I'm not saying I'm a perfect man. He calls himself an earthen vessel. He says I'll boast only of my weaknesses. There was nothing about him that was boastful. But they accused him, of course, because that was part of their ploy of commending himself. Every time he responded to an accusation they said, "See, he's building himself up, he's commending himself again." And so he has to give this disclaimer...we're not again commending ourselves to you. This is not the point. And by the way, the time at which he was probably accused of this was during what we call...and you learned about it earlier...the sorrowful visit...a brief visit to Corinth which broke his heart because he saw what the false teachers had been able to effect.

So he's saying I will not write a testimonial to myself. I realize the grave danger of serious division in the church, the stunting of spiritual growth and the hindering of effective evangelism. I realize all of that but I will not commend myself. I'm not going to go to these false teachers, he's saying. I'm not going to go to them face to face and build a case for myself.

Here's what I'm doing...back to verse 12..."But we are giving you an occasion to be proud of us that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart." What he is saying is, I'm not trying to commend myself to my enemies, I'm trying to arm my friends to defend me. That is a wise, wise approach.

I am giving you an occasion...I'm giving you an opportunity. What I'm saying is not for the enemies. You know, it doesn't do any good to do that? You can go to your enemies who tear you down and do everything they can to destroy you and depreciate you and you can go to them and all you do when you've done your best to defend yourself is give them more material that they can twist to use against you. That's what happens because your enemies are your enemies because they have an attitude and because they have an agenda. And no matter what you say to them, they're going to use it and twist it to their own ends. You're much better off to go to your friends and let your friends be your defenders. Your enemies know they have nothing personally to gain and they are more objective, your enemies will assume.

This is so sound. You cannot effectively argue with your enemies who are bent on your ruin. You're much wiser to arm your friends to be your defense...much more effective.

So he says...we're not going to commend ourselves, that's not the point, but we're giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, proud in the right sense. We think of the word proud always as related to sin but it isn't. To literally boast on our behalf in the good sense. To boast in the good sense or to be proud in the good sense means to speak the truth about someone, the truth that does exalt that person, that emphasize their honesty and their integrity. And he's saying, "I want you to take up my cause. I want you to answer my detractors."

That is such a wonderful thing when people do that. I'm always so encouraged when people do that on my behalf with people who would say evil against me. That's a wonderful thing when as believers we defend each other's integrity against those who would assault it.

And the Corinthians knew enough to defend Paul. I mean, in fact they didn't know any reason not to defend him because there was nothing about him that was a breach of integrity.

On the other hand, it is the most heartbreaking experience that a person can ever go through when friends won't defend you. You think about the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy chapter 4 who says at my first offense stood with me. That is heartbreaking. No one stood with me...he says. But the Lord was there. Paul says you're my friends, you know my life, your conscience affirms my integrity. I have just written this letter to arm you so that you can come to my defense.

He's not trying to vindicate himself to his enemies. He wants his friends to do that. And then, by the way, at the end of verse 12 he identifies his enemies as those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. And he flips the tables on him. They were saying Paul has no integrity, which is to take pride in appearance and not in heart, isn't it? If you don't have integrity, you're all show on the outside and nothing on the in. He says that's true of them, they're the ones with no integrity.

Somebody might say, "Well is he talking about the Judaizers? Were these false teachers Judaizers who took pride in circumcision and ceremony and ritual and the externals?" Could well be. But it could be any form of false teaching. It could be any concoction. He doesn't really identify a special group it is just that this is the core of false teachers, this is the core of their deception. They parade virtue, they parade being holy. They appear to be spiritual. They want you to believe they're godly. They want you to believe they teach the truth but their hearts are filthy, it's all show. They're the real hypocrites. They're the ones who have no integrity. I want you to answer the people who have no integrity. I want you to go to the real hypocrites and tell them the truth about me, I'm writing this to arm you. You go to the hypocrites who on the outside are white washed but inside are full of dead men's bones.

God knows my heart. And your consciences ought to be able to tell you that you know my heart. And I'm just giving you all of this information so you can go to these enemies and you'll have an occasion and an opportunity to answer.

So the apostle does give a defense because he does adore God and he loves Christ and he reverences the Lord and he wants to be rightly represented as one who does reverence God and who does love the Lord and who would never ever blaspheme his Lord by believing error or living a lie.

Further he is passionately concerned with the unity and growth of the church. And he knows if those who know him don't defend him in the church, the false teachers will rip that church to shreds. That's what they wanted to do. And if the rest of the Corinthians didn't come to Paul's defense, that church would be torn up, its spiritual growth terribly impaired, its evangelism hindered significantly.

Paul is not worried about his reputation for his own sake. He's just a clay pot. Over in chapter 6, look what he says in verse 8, he says, "Look, we have endured it all, glory and dishonor, evil report and good report. We've been regarded as deceivers and yet true." I mean, he said I get it all. "And when they come along and they speak of me as one who dishonors God, when they give an evil report about me...as verse 8 says...and when they regard me as a deceiver, would you just stand up for me? You know me. Would you just tell them that you know me and it's not true? Would you defend me for the sake of the church?" I say it again what I said earlier...if people can begin to speak evil of leadership in a church and get other people to listen, nothing is more devastating to the unity of a church than that. And Paul knew it, he knew it.

In chapter 10 verse 13 he says, "We will not boast beyond our measure." I'm not speaking of myself in any sense beyond what I ought to speak. Verse 18 of the same chapter, "For not he who commends himself is approved but whom the Lord commends." Obviously, ultimately the Lord is the one. And over in 11:30 as I said, "If I have to boast I'll boast with what pertains to my weakness." This is not self-congratulatory. What is at stake here is the honor of the Lord and the unity and the testimony of His church. I'll defend myself so the church isn't torn up, devastated.

Well there's a third reason. And we'll only have time for this one, and that's discouraging because I wanted to get to the next two. The third one, he defended himself out of reverence for the Lord, concern for the church, and thirdly, devotion to the truth...devotion to the truth.

One thing about Paul, he lived for the truth. He preached it, taught it, defended it, fought for it. The man passionately existed for the truth. Notice how he expresses this motive in verse 13, this is very interesting. "For if we are beside ourselves it is for God, if we're of sound mind it is for you."

Now you can understand from that verse what the debate was like in the Corinthian church. There were the friends of Paul, those who had been influenced by his life, those who had come to Christ under his preaching, those who had grown in their sanctification under his teaching, those who loved him and believed in him. And they viewed him as having a sound mind. But then there were the false teachers who came in and stirred up everybody and they...they...they were able to win over converts. They started a full-scale rebellion led by the one who was influenced by Satan and who was orchestrating this whole rebellion. They had gotten people to join in and their criticism of Paul was he's beside himself.

So you had the people who were Paul's friends saying he was of sound mind. You had the false teachers and those who chimed in with them saying he's really beside himself. Again you see here he uses the editorial plural pronoun "we" but he's referring to himself. Let's take a look at this verse.

His ego is not at stake, and he makes that clear when he says, "If we are beside ourselves, it is for God." Now what does he mean by this? Well "beside ourselves," existemi, means "to be out of one's mind, to be out of your mind." It's used of insanity. They were accusing him of being insane, mad. In fact, they were accusing him of being a fool, bereft of a sound and sober mind. He refers to these accusations not only here but over in chapter 11 verse 1, he comments about the fact that they had thought him to be foolish. And some of these are sarcastic statements, "Bear with me in a little foolishness," sarcastically picking up on their accusation that he was foolish.

Down in verse 16, "Receive me even as foolish," he says. Verse 17, "That which I am speaking I'm not speaking as the Lord would but as in foolishness." It's sarcastic but he's referring to their accusation that he was a fool. The same thing is in chapter 12 verse 6 where it refers to his

foolishness again. Down in verse 11 the same thing.

Ah, they said he's a fool, he's out of his mind, he's beside himself, he's insane, he's mad. Why did they say that? What were they assaulting? His passion, his zeal...he seemed like a man out of balance. He was fanatical. And this term "beside ourselves" does not refer to some clinical, mental derangement, insanity in some technical term, but refers to a man who has sort of lost control, he's just so passionate, so zealous, so devoted. And it refers to something else. Dogmatism...you see, the world thinks people that are dogmatic are crazy. I mean, I remember when I went to the philosophy class at Cal State Northridge. And I had an opening statement, I simply said, "I'm here to tell you all the truth you've been searching for all your life, I'm here to tell you all the truth you need to know, I know all of it."

They are absolutely dumbfounded at such a statement. What kind of maniac is this guy, he knows all truth? I mean, you understand, don't you, how philosophy class works? You just look for the truth, you never find it or class is over. So you spend your whole life trying to find what you can never find. You look at our whole world, you come along and be dogmatic and affirmative and absolute and speak the truth, they think you're crazy. Where is this guy coming from? Such dogmatism is uncommon and it's unacceptable. They put you in a category with a maniac standing on the corner saying, "I'm God, I'm Jesus."

And so they looked at Paul and they said he's out of his mind, I mean, he comes in here and he's zealous and he's fanatical and he's out of balance and he's passionate and he's dogmatic. In fact, Paul was more dogmatic than anybody cause he was giving direct revelation.

But this isn't anything new. This is how the world always receives that kind of passion, that kind of zeal and that kind of absolute truth. Listen to Matthew chapter 11 verses 18 and 19. Jesus speaking, He says this, "For John came and they say he has a demon." Here came John the Baptist. You say, "Was he a zealous man?" Absolutely...absolutely. "Was he a passionate man?" Yes. "Was he a firm and dogmatic man?" I think so. He looked right at the Pharisees when they came down to where he was preaching and said, "You snakes, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Oh, they said he's demon possessed, he's bereft of his mind. His mind is controlled by a spirit, he's out of his senses. Another...another being is in control of this guy.

And then in the next verse, the Son of Man came and they say He's a drunkard. That's what they said about Jesus. "Oh, He's out of his mind. Alcohol has gotten Him out of His mind, He's lost His senses." You know how a person who is drunk is, they're crazy, they've lost balance, they've lost touch with reality, they don't know what's going on. They said of John the Baptist, "He's controlled by a spirit." They said of Jesus, "He's controlled by alcohol." That was how they explained away the zeal, the passion, the truth.

In Matthew chapter 12 and verse 24 they said about Jesus, "This man casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." They said this man is filled with Satan. That's how they explained Jesus. They said He's mad cause He's filled with Satan.

In John's gospel...well look at Mark, first of all, there's one in Mark, I'll take a moment to show it to you. We won't get pass this point anyway. Jesus came in Mark 3:20, came home, a multitude gathered again to such an extent they couldn't even eat a meal, everybody crowding around Jesus. And when His own people heard of this...now here comes Jesus and He's created such a stir, He's got so many people there the people can't even eat in His own home and His own people when they heard this they went out to take custody of Him for they were saying He's lost His mind. He's lost His senses. You know what they want to do? Take custody of Him, put Him away somewhere, lock Him up cause He'd gone nuts. That's the only way they could explain Him from a human perspective.

Look at John chapter 8 and verse 48. The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" The Jews assessment on Jesus, He's got a demon, He's a drunkard, He's demon possessed. Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon."

Then near the end of the book of Acts, even Paul got the same accusation. Acts 26 verse 24, Paul had just given a powerful straightforward clear message of the gospel and his calling. I mean, it was powerful. And here's the response, verse 24 of Acts 26...Acts 26:24, "And while Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, `Paul, you are out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you mad.'" But listen to this. "But Paul said, `I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus.'" Little sarcasm there. "But I utter words of...what?...sober truth." They said he was out of his mind because he spoke the truth. And here's exactly what you have in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. If we are out of our minds it is for God. What do you mean? It is because it is the Word of God, it is divine truth. And if I am passionate and if I am zealous and if I am dogmatic, it is for God, it is to honor His Word which He has exalted to the level of His own name.

Indeed the apostle was bold. He was fanatical zealous. He was dogmatic. It is for God...he says. It is the truth of God I'm dealing with. It is a stewardship. And so there was passion in the delivery of it. I understand that and...I mean, I don't know anybody can dispense the truth of God without zeal and passion and conviction in a measure of appropriate dogmatism. It honors God. God is honored when His Word is proclaimed.

Paul told the Ephesians to pray for him that the Word would go forth. He told the Thessalonians to pray for him that the Word would go forth. That was his passion, preach the Word...he said to Timothy. Having studied it to show yourself approved.

And so, Paul says, "Look, if I acted like an insane man it's because I'm dealing with divine truth. It's for God because God has put this truth in me to proclaim." And the world will always render this assessment that the person who preaches with power and boldness and courage and conviction is out of his mind as an egomaniac, as a fool.

Then on the other hand, he says, "If we're of sound mind it's for you." What does he mean?

Sophroneo, be of sound mind, means to be sober minded, to be in complete control, to be moderate. This is cool communication as opposed to hot communication. If we are calm, cool, collected, meek, humble, dispassionate, restrained, it's for you.

What do you mean by that? When I am restrained and humble and selfless, it's to come down to your level and be patient and kind and gentle in moving you along the path. There are times when I have to be sober minded and moderate and come to you with cool communication. I mean, look, you get in the pulpit and you come here on Sunday and you hear me...you hear me fire on all cylinders here and roaring out the truth with great passion and great conviction and no doubt somebody could walk out of there and say, "This guy's crazy, this guy is out of his mind, who in the world does he think he is? He says this is true and everything that isn't this is not. He's got the corner on all the truth and he's demanding all this and look how passionate and zealous he is. What a ...this guy is out of his mind." But the fact of the matter is if you happen to meet me in the parking lot and say to me, "I didn't understand what you said," I wouldn't immediately look for a pulpit, stand up and say..."Well, my brother, you must hear me again." No. There's a time for me to say, "Well let me sit down with you and help you to understand this. If you don't understand it, let me see if I can't open the truth." There's a time for patience. There's a time for tenderness. So as...as my own son, Mark, confessed to me one time, in all honesty, he said to me, "You know, in the pulpit you're something really unique, but the rest of the time you're nothing special." And he was dead serious. There's a place for the hot communication, there's a place for the cool communication. And I think Paul is just taking both sides. He's saying, "Look, if I...if I appear to be a man insane, do you understand that I am dealing with a stewardship from God? And if you see me as a cool and calm and patient and gentle man, it's because I'm trying to deal with you. But in the end the matter that is at stake here is the truth. So, I'll defend myself because I want to be able to continue to propagate the truth."

I mean, what happens if somebody comes along in Grace Church and starts to spread lies about the integrity of the pastor? And all of a sudden half the congregation leaves? Do I sit in a corner with a "poor me" thing because my ego was wounded, or do I grieve because there are people who have walked away from the opportunity to hear the truth? That is the issue with Paul.

For God's sake he was passionate. For God's sake he was zealous. Because the truth was at stake. And for their sake he was meek and humble and modest and patient because the truth was at stake there, too. He wanted the truth to be received and believed. He wanted the truth to be applied. So he says, "We persuade men." We persuade men of our integrity out of reverence for the Lord,

concern for His church and devotion to the truth.

That's as far as we can go. So the issue then in spiritual leadership is not focus and drive and communication and entrepreneurship and all of that. Those are components of great leaders. The issue is integrity. And defending one's integrity is very important so that an ongoing impact may be made in the church for the truth and for the glory of the God whose you are and whose name you bear.

Father, thank You for our time in Your Word this morning and we regret to not getting to the place that we had in mind, we trust that perhaps we came to the place You had in mind. Help us, Lord, to see Your truth clearly, to believe it, to speak it and to live it so that we are people of integrity. And though we never preach a sermon, maybe never even teach a class, those who know us will know we live what we speak. May we be people of integrity that You might be revered, that Your church might continue to be powerful, that Your truth might be made manifest clearly. And give the church men of integrity to lead it, men like Paul who maintained his integrity to the very end, though the accusations never stopped. He was true to the very end. And his integrity stands as the model for all of us. And he being dead yet speaks through that powerful life and witness.

And, Father, we pray too that You'll do a work of grace and mercy in all our hearts this morning that You'll accomplish Your perfect purpose through us as we endeavor to live for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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