

2 Corinthians 12:11-21

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Preacher: Billy Joe Calvert

[0:00] your Bibles, go with me to the Word of God in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, 2 Corinthians chapter 12. You know, this week as you're turning there, I was looking over some things as it pertains to the form and function of a church, really just what church structure looks like and how churches operate.

And there was one portion in there in which this professor who is writing this book, it was more of a textbook, it was a really exciting read. I know some of you think, oh, how boring it is. Well, for pastors, it's good to read that type of stuff.

It's foundations for biblical theology is really kind of what it was getting down to of what it looked like to be the church. And he made a statement. He said he usually, if he goes into the church and he wants the church to really get a good view of themselves, and he asks someone in the crowd to just keep a time sheet of how much time is devoted to every aspect of the worship service.

Not in a judgmental way, it's just so you as a church can get an idea of what's going on. So, in particular, like, there would be time written down, like, X amount of minutes given to announcements, X amount of minutes given to fellowship, the majority of minutes given to preaching, especially in this one.

I understand that. I know who I am. You know, X amount of minutes given to singing. But the one that got me was also recording how many minutes are given to corporate prayer.

[1:18] And boy, that was convicting. Because I don't really need anyone to give me a time sheet of the breakdown of our service when I understand it and I know it.

But corporate prayer is one of the things, one of the hallmarks of the early church that we find in pages of scripture. One thing that we try to do is we try not to follow a handbook of church growth or a handbook of church health.

But rather, we try to follow the book. Because if we want to know what church looks like, we go back to when the church was born, and that's in the book of Acts. And in the book of Acts, we find that the church was committing themselves to a certain number of things, right?

To the fellowship, which is essentially important. I believe table fellowship is absolutely important. They were committing themselves to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, that is, the taking of the Lord's Supper together. And to the apostles' teaching and doctrine, that is, to right preaching.

But we also find that one of the earmarks of that church was that they gathered together for corporate prayer quite often. As a matter of fact, the walls of the house were shaken where they would gather together.

[2:20] Prayer was being answered time and time again. So I guess I'm saying this not because that today we're getting ready to enter into an extended period of corporate prayer.

I'm saying this because I know my tendencies and I know who I am as a pastor. I love to preach. I am much like we find in scripture. I have a fire in my bones.

And if given my freedom of what would I do, I would welcome you, say good morning to you, and ask you to take out your Bibles, and we would preach. That's what we would do. We would get right into the Word of God together.

But I also know that until I say something publicly, I do not hold myself accountable to it. So I am now publicly declaring this reality to you so that moving forward, you will understand we will begin to spend more time together in corporate prayer as a church body.

We will begin to work. What that looks like, I don't know yet. But if our order of service changes a little bit, don't be shaken to the core. If I'm just announcing it beforehand, we will begin to try to commit ourselves to more corporate prayer because we live in a day and time in which we need to pray for one another, and we need to pray with one another, and we need to pray for those around

us, right?

[3 : 34] Not only our local leaders, our national leaders, international leaders, but also just the concerns and cares that are going on around the world. We need to be in prayer over those matters because God has given us a great opportunity.

So that's my commitment to you, and until I make that commitment public, then I will not hold myself accountable to it. But now that I have declared it, you've all heard the same thing that I have felt. So now you have the freedom to hold me accountable, okay?

But this morning, we're in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. We're going to start in verse 11. We're going to make our way to the end of the chapter, which would be verse 21. So 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 11, to get down to verse 21.

So if you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God with one another, just continuing Paul's, if we have to claim it as this, self-defense of his position in the gospel and actually the authority that he possesses with the church that meets at Corinth.

He says, He says, I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him.

[5 : 32] Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps? All this time, you have been thinking that we were defending ourselves to you.

Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ and all for your up-building beloved. For I am afraid that perhaps when I come, I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish.

That perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances. I am afraid that when I come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality, and sensuality which they have practiced.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We do come before you as your people and as your church, gathered together to worship and declare your praises.

Lord, to exhibit our common bond and fellowship, to lift up one voice declaring your worthiness and to come reading the word of God that we may be strengthened and emboldened by it.

[6 : 42] Lord, we pray that you would also lead in every respect, that you would search our hearts, search our minds, that you would help us to know ourselves as you know us. In your grace and in your mercy, would you begin to reveal truly where we stand before you.

May it be for your glory and yours alone. We ask that the truth which we come to see in scripture would not be collected as other information, but rather it would be desired to be applied in our lives in a daily application.

We ask that these truths would take root, that they would begin to be lived out for your glory. We pray for those around us, Lord, the multitude that stand in need, many in physical need.

But Lord, we also know that there are many, many more in great spiritual need. So Lord, help us to rise up to be your people, declaring your worthiness and your praise all for your name's sake.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Paul has been writing this letter to the church at Corinth.

[7 : 48] It is the second letter in which we have recorded for us in scripture, possibly the third letter which he has sent to the church. And it was a letter sent not to correct, reprove or rebuke, as we have said over and over again, but rather to strengthen the church, calling the church to live out an authentic faith in the midst of the community and the society in which the Lord God had placed them.

May we never fail to realize that when church, when Paul wrote the church its first letter, he referred to them as the saints which were at Corinth. That is, based upon their profession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their life, they held a new position.

They were saints. They were saints by calling and saints by his choosing, but not saints by practice. And what he was asking them was that they would live according to their calling.

They had been called saints. And it was not because they were perfect. It was because there was a perfect Savior who called them to himself. And when he had called them to be saints, he had left them in a city that was full of wickedness and darkness.

And what the city needed more than anything was not for someone to be like them or even to meet them as they were. The city needed someone to desperately be utterly different than them.

[9 : 11] Because the world doesn't have to look very far to know how the world should act. But the world needed a living example of what it looked like to walk in holy fellowship with a holy God full of righteousness and practice and authenticity.

And that what difference that life made. The city desperately needed to see something different. Now that shouldn't surprise us because when we open up scripture from the very beginning of the pages of scripture, we find that God has called his people to be different and he left them to live that life that is different amongst a world that was looking for something better.

The whole calling of the nation of Israel when he called Abram the Ur of the Chaldeans was for the sole purpose that Abram, out of Abram, he would rise up a nation, a people group, a people that would be so distinctively different that all of the world would be drawn to them and they would notice them and they would see that the rains do not fail to fall upon them, that the animals do not fail to give birth, and that the crops do not fail to yield.

And the whole purpose of their existence was to show a world, this is what it looks like to live in relation with a God who is faithful. And in living that out, people would be drawn to the God who was faithful.

They would know that living according to the standard of the world, nothing seems to work out, my friend. I don't know if you have figured it out yet or not, but when you live like the world, you get what the world gets and it's not worth getting.

[10 : 35] You may get a temporary pleasure, you may get temporary excitement, but in the end you're going to get a great letdown. Because the wages of sin is death. And it's a full wage and it comes certainly at every given moment.

But what God was desiring was to show them there was another way, a better way, a greater way. And when the nation of Israel failed, we understand it did not take God by surprise because God was calling a people to himself through the perfect Savior of Jesus Christ.

The people that would live among the world, that would show the world what it looks like, they would have a purpose for their existence. They would have a reason for their living. They would have a mission field that was all around them.

And only by living out their faith authentically could they declare to the world that something was greater in following Jesus Christ and living in communion with holy God.

And it is when the church has failed to do this that the church has received its corrections and its rebukes and its encouragement. But one of the avenues by which the church fails to do this is because the church has allowed to live in and to dwell among themselves unauthentic leaders.

[11 : 48] Paul had went and declared the gospel to the church. Evidently they had responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior. Now we know that when Paul went, he claimed nothing other than the salvation found in Jesus Christ through faith alone, by grace alone, not by works lest any man should boast.

Paul did not make baptism one of his key landmarks, though it was important and an aspect of display. We know that Paul tells the church at Corinth, the first letter, that he did not baptize many of them.

He did not come declaring to them baptism. He came declaring to them salvation through Jesus Christ. And much like today's time, after Paul left the simplicity, but yet the fullness of the gospel in which they responded to, and the Lord moved him on, others came in behind him.

And they wanted to build upon that foundation with wood, straw, and stubble. They wanted to add to simple faith in Christ. And it was these leaders that Paul is writing and refuting against.

Paul is in the middle of, in this chapter, declaring his worthiness of being their gospel father, their spiritual father, that he is giving them a foundation that they need nothing other than that.

[13 : 09] But I want you to see this morning, not only from the life of Paul, but also hopefully in the lives of ourselves, what are those marks of authenticity?

There's here his marks of authenticity. See, Paul is separating himself from those others who have come behind him and have tried to lead the church astray.

Just like every other letter we read, we find that Paul was followed immediately behind people who said, well, you need to do this, you need to do that, you need to do this. There's all these rules and regulations.

There's all this list of do's and don'ts. There's all this legalism that you need to hold on to. But Paul is not just defending that he has endured more, that he's been tempted more, that he's been tried more, that he's been tested more.

He's suffered more than all these. Those are not the marks of authenticity that he gives. Surely, in the first half of the 12th chapter, he says, surely these things have happened. He is a Jew of the Jews.

[14:09] He is a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He's attended the greatest of educational institutions. He has suffered to the highest level of persecutions. He has met with the Lord and Savior for three and a half years in the wilderness of Arabia.

Not only did he sit at the feet of Gamaliel, that after meeting the Lord himself on Damascus Road, he sat at the feet of Jesus Christ. No one could match his level of education. He was not only a Jew by birth, he was a Roman citizen by birth.

He had every benefit that society could give, but he said, but these things are nothing. These are not the marks of authenticity because these are the matters which any man can attain to.

These are the labors and the efforts and the works of mankind. This is the pursuit of oneself. Here he gives you a listing of what it looks like to be authentic.

The first mark we see is the authentic believer in Jesus Christ has a great understanding of the foolishness of boasting. Now pay attention to this.

[15:13] In a day and time in which we have two spirits, it tells us that the authentic have a great understanding of the foolishness of boasting.

Paul says, I have become foolish. Now what has he just been doing? He has been declaring his worthiness of being an apostle. He has been stating everything that he's endured.

He has been stating everything that he's went through. He has been stating every qualification. He has been declaring every right that he has to stand before the people and to encourage them.

He has been telling them every reason why they should listen to him. And after this he says, I have become foolish. I have become foolish. He said, you yourselves compelled me.

Now he's not blame shifting here. He's just telling them the reality that my boasting is foolishness.

But the reason I'm doing it is because you have accepted the boasting of others.

[16:10] You have let their pride, their self worth, their self qualifications, everything that they rely upon become the foundation of their worthiness to be heard.

Paul says, this is foolishness. Now we're not saying that an individual shouldn't study to show himself approved, that he shouldn't labor amongst those, that he shouldn't do all these things.

But friend, I'll just be honest with you every now and then. I've said this, I've given this caveat before and I want you to understand it. I have this really weird habit that I do and I don't do it for any other purpose.

Now I need to say this from the very beginning. My prayer is that the Lord never moves me in the pastorate again. From the very beginning when I accepted the call to be a pastor, I wanted a long tenured pastor.

I wanted the Lord to leave me somewhere, keep me there and never move me. I served his ten years as pastor of church and he moved me and I said, Lord, I will move one time. Hopefully that's all I want to move one time. So that means he may move me again, but if he doesn't, then you're stuck with me.

[17:12] I just have to say that because one of the odd habits that I have is I read the calls for pastor. I like to read the classifieds of churches looking for pastors.

And the reason I like to do it is because it's better than the comment pages sometimes to me. Now I don't mean this in any disregard. I don't mean this to belittle any churches at all.

But some of the qualifications that churches put on the man of God that they're calling, my friend, it would be hard pressed to find that man. And not only do they put such great qualifications on him, they seem to miss entirely the character of the man.

They're looking for a man that has all of the worldly degrees, the worldly education and all the worldly qualifications. But very seldom do you find a church who wants to know what he looks like in private.

Very seldom do you find a church that wants to know what his theology and his doctrine is. Very seldom do you find a church that wants to know what his prayer life looks like.

[18 : 16] Very seldom in a church do you find one who's concerned about his family relations. See, there was a time when churches called the pastors. And even when you were ordained as deacon, I remember that, my deacon ordination council and even my pastoral ordination council, my wife had to be present as well.

Because the ordination board questioned her. Because it matters. What is the Word of God said? If he does not rule his own house well, he is not fit to rule over the house of the Lord.

See, there were qualifications that had direct impact upon the individual that did not reflect itself based upon worldly accomplishments. We can train doctors, and I praise God that we can.

We can fit them with the highest educational level that we could ever give them. But my friend, until you've stood before the people of God and declared the Word of God through the Spirit of God, that education really doesn't matter at all.

And I'm not meaning that to be belittling. I'm just meaning that to be honest. Because there are things in which the educational institutions cannot train you for. There are matters in which there are far above and beyond worldly accomplishments.

[19 : 28] And if it is that so for the pastor, how much more so for the pews? You say, oh, well, we hold the pastor at a higher level. When I read the Word of God, I believe there's a priesthood for me there in 1 Peter.

One of the great baddest doctrines is that we believe in the priesthood of the believers. That is, what is true of me is true of you as well. You say, oh, wait a minute, pastor.

I know it gets real, doesn't it? But look at what the Word of God says. Paul says that boasting is foolishness. Why? Because it really doesn't matter how we appear to the world.

It really doesn't matter how we look to the world. It really doesn't matter what we have achieved in the world. Look at what he says. He says, I should have been commended. No respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles.

I love that word there. He says, I wasn't inferior to the most eminent apostles. That word eminent apostle means the super apostles. See, the church had been carried away by some super apostles. After Paul came, I mean, think about the irony of this.

[20 : 27] When Paul left, some super apostles showed up. I mean, in my doctrine, I don't see how you get more super than Paul. But evidently they were there. He said the super apostles showed up, but I didn't show you anything less than them.

As a matter of fact, Paul says, every sign, every wonder, every miraculous deed, everything that could authenticate my apostleship was accomplished among you.

But then what does he say? I who am nothing. I who am nothing. Some think that Paul is tongue in cheek here saying these super apostles say that I'm a nobody.

And I don't think that. I think a little bit later we catch a little bit of his tongue in cheek, if you must say sarcasm. But I don't think here because here he's making a self-declaration.

All of the works of the true apostles. They were committed by me. I who am nothing. See, do you know why boasting is foolish?

[21 : 35] It's because it really doesn't matter who we are compared to others. The only thing that matters is who we are compared to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Paul says, I was able to do all these things in spite of the reality that I'm a nobody.

I'm a nothing. We want to put Paul on a pedestal. Paul takes himself off. He says, look at Jesus. It has nothing to do with me. All boasting does is highlight ourselves. All boasting does is puff up our own labors and our own work.

Paul says, I'm not doing that because the authentic believer knows that the one that matters most, there's not room but for one on the throne and that is Jesus Christ. Only in glory do we get to sit on his throne with him.

But until he calls you to glory, friend, get off of it. He tells you in the book of Revelations that once you have overcome, then he will grant for you to sit upon his throne with him.

But until you've overcome, and if you're on this side of the grave, you haven't overcome yet. But until you have overcome, that's not your throne. That's his. Paul says, the reason I think boasting is foolish is because I'm a nobody.

[22 : 45] I'm a nothing. I've done all these things, but it doesn't matter. It's Christ in me. It is not me myself. It is not my education. It's not my understanding. It is Christ.

Foolish, he says, to try to put myself up when I realize there's only one to lift up. There's a mark of authenticity. Friend, I want to ask you, are you more concerned about what others see in you or are you more concerned about who others see in you?

See, we need to make sure that the thing, as Paul says, if I'm going to brag, I want to brag in Jesus Christ. Number two, there is the authentic have this commitment. They are committed to focusing on others.

Paul says, I am a true apostle, for sure, but I'm a nothing. And he says, here for this third time, I'm ready to come to you. Now, we know he didn't go to him three times, but that doesn't mean he wasn't prepared to go to them a third time.

He says, I am prepared again to come to you. And then he makes this declaration. I will not be a burden to you. He says, this one wrong I have done to you, I didn't overburden you.

[23 : 59] I didn't overextend you. I didn't ask you to support me. If you go back and you read in the book of Acts, you will find that when Paul went into the city of Corinth, by the way, the wealthiest city in that region, one of the leading cities in that region.

This is one of the well-to-do churches that Paul founded. But yet one thing you will find is that when Paul went into the city, he did not make the believers at Corinth support him financially.

He started making tents until, by the way, some of you say, well, see, we shouldn't have vocational ministers. Wait a minute. Read the rest of the text, right? Stay there. Until his fellow believers got there with him and they brought his support from the other churches that were coming to him because the churches were financially supporting Paul, though he did not burden the Corinthians to do it because they were new in the faith.

So it was the responsibility of those churches who were already mature in the faith. And as Paul would say, the laborer is worthy of his wages. So Paul was receiving support, but he was not receiving support from the new church.

He was receiving support from the existing churches. He said, I didn't do that to you. He said, now I'm getting ready to come to you again. And he said, I'm not asking you to pay my way. I'm not asking you to support me when I'm there.

[25 : 06] I will bring my own support with me. He says, I'm not going to be a burden to you because look at what he says. By the way, pay attention to this. Do you ever want to know someone is authentic? This is one thing you can notice. For I do not seek what is yours, but I seek you.

When religious quote-unquote leaders begin to seek possessions more than they are seeking the people, then we tread on dangerous ground. He says, I'm not seeking what is yours, but I'm seeking you.

Cult after cult after cult, church after church after church. We can look throughout church history and we can see one of the earmarks of that is the acquisition of other people's possessions, quite often at the expense of the people.

Friend, if you find someone who is seeking more of what you have than they are of you, then flee from them. Because one of the marks of authenticity is they are more concerned about the person than they are the possessions.

Judaism felt that they were suffering a great loss because here, one of their great teachers of Judaism, that is, Paul, had met the Lord on Damascus Road without teaching people about Jesus Christ and teaching them a salvation that was found apart from the temple tax, apart from all the rules and regulations, apart from all of these things.

[26 : 39] And if it continued this way, then financially they would be lost. So the only way to follow that up was say, well, that's all well and good. We're thankful you found Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior. But be sure to pay your temple tax as well.

Be sure to pay this. Be sure to pay that. Be sure to pay this. See, when someone tells you that you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and that's all great, but also be sure to do this, then run away.

This is why we have the great privilege of supporting churches that are not in this area. Churches that have been in existence for five and six years now. I've talked to the pastor this past week and he called me. We've got great needs here.

We're trying to meet physical needs. Can you do that? And yes, we made a decision to do that. And you say, well, that church is six years old. They ought to be supporting themselves. They're on their way. They're doing it. They're making progress, right?

They're meeting some of their needs. But keep in mind, they're also leaving a religious institute that declared to them how much they would give to the church. So the last thing that that pastor over there needs to do once they find freedom in Christ is to burden them with also this responsibility to give to the church.

[27 : 40] He is being patient and kind and thankfully he is doing this and he is letting the word of God and the spirit of God move the hearts of the people of God to give to the church accordingly. So until that time, we have a great privilege of walking beside them with a number of other churches across the country and supporting them while they do the work.

Does that mean we're going to do it, you know, until the Lord calls us home? No. But we're going to let the people of God be moved by the spirit of God rather than us declaring to them, hey, you need to do this, you need to be sure to give a tenth of your income.

They just left that burden. Now they found Jesus Christ and they need to know the freedom. Friend, listen to me. The one who saves you will also move you. If he can save you eternally, then I guarantee he can move your heart to open up your wallet, right?

I don't have to convict you and convince you of that. That's his job. Do we have a responsibility according to scripture? Yes, absolutely. That's his job, not mine. So when we find someone who gets more concerned about the possessions and the people, then we flee.

We run away from that. Paul says, I'm not seeking what is yours, but I'm seeking you. And then he goes a little bit further. He says in verse 15, which is probably, by the way, one of the greatest lines of ministry that you will ever find.

[28 : 53] And it's not just pastoral ministry, but it's also your ministry. And I want you to understand this. Do you want to know how you authentically care for people around you? If you want to test your authenticity of the people around you, see if it lines up with verse 15.

He says, I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. That is, are you willing not only to invest in people, but just to be completely drained for the sake of people and their souls? disciples. This is a testing of the authenticity of the ministry. Discipleship is hard business, but we've been called to go and make disciples.

The reason we see so little discipleship is because it costs the disciple maker so much money, so much time, so much energy, so much effort.

It costs so dearly to make disciples. It does. It means you will be investing in the lives of others. You will be spent and you will be expended for the sake of someone else's soul.

[29 : 56] I want to stop you for just a moment. When Jesus Christ, if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, we're not going to assume everyone present does, but if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, when He called you to Himself, you had nothing to offer Him when He called you.

You brought nothing to the table. He gained nothing by your salvation. He gained nothing by mine. The Lord God Almighty who owns it all, who created it all, who sustains it all, who puts His feet upon the earth as His footstool stood in want of nothing.

And the moment Jesus Christ came and called me to Himself and led me to the Father and convicted my heart, He had nothing to gain. As a matter of fact, it cost Him dearly to do so.

He not only had to clothe Himself in the humility of human flesh, He had to endure the persecution of a ridiculing world. Read Isaiah 53. They plucked His beard out. It wasn't just the cross that was shameful, right?

They looked upon Him whom they despised, who was forsaken of men, whom was neglected, who looked, and they beat upon Him. They spat upon Him. And then it essentially culminated in His crucifixion. It cost Him dearly.

[31 : 14] He spent and was expended for my sake. So that He could call me to Himself. So that He could draw me next to His side and impart unto me the Spirit of God that would teach me the Word of God so that I would become a disciple of the Lord God Almighty.

He had nothing to gain. You know what I brought to the table? Nothing. The reality is that what you brought to the table when Jesus Christ calls you, you bring nothing to the table in the economy of God.

God, we like to convince ourselves, oh, well, God got a good one when He called me. No, He didn't. God got the worst of them when He called me. Friend, let's not think too highly of ourselves.

And if He's willing to do that for us, why will we not be willing to do it for others? Paul says, I will spend and be expended for your souls.

I will pull myself out. It is a commitment to focusing on others, which is a great mark of authenticity. [32 : 21] Number three, we see that the authentic develop fellowships of like-minded people. They develop fellowships of like-minded people.

Paul says, well, I guess since I didn't require much of you, then I must have taken you in. This is where we get his tongue in cheek. He says, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit because I didn't come.

I sent the other people to you, and surely they took of you. But look at what he says. He says, I urge Titus to go. By the way, we read of this individual in 1 Corinthians, and we read of him here again in 2 Corinthians, and I would, I mean, just a side note, I would love to be this unnamed brother.

He said, I sent Titus and the brother. In 1 Corinthians, he's referred to as the brother. You know why he didn't have to give a name? It's because as soon as he said, and the brother, his character all of a sudden brought to mind who he was.

The brother whose walk was in the same manner. The brother whose character was unmatched by any other. The brother who didn't need a name to set him apart because his life already did.

Wouldn't it be great to be the brother?

[33 : 32] You can get a little soul in there like, I'm the brother, right? It'd be great. There's nothing wrong with that. You can see, I sent Titus and the brother over there with you too. And everybody know who you're talking about, right?

There's some people in your life, I don't have to give you a name, I could give you an attribute, and all of a sudden you would know exactly who I was talking about, some for the good, some for the bad. But all Paul said is I sent Titus and the brother also.

You know. You know who I'm talking about. And they didn't take you by deceit, did they? He said they didn't act in any way, did they? Look at what he says. Did they not walk in the same walk? Did they not take the same steps?

Now, listen to this friend. One of the marks of authenticity is that they bring around them and raise up around them people of like-minded fellowship. Now, like-minded does not mean uniformity.

Titus didn't look like Paul, he didn't walk like Paul, but he acted like Paul. The brother didn't look like Titus, he didn't act like Titus, but he walked like Titus, right? It does not mean uniformity.

[34 : 35] We don't want to be uniform. We don't want everybody dressing the same, we don't want everybody acting the same, we want everybody believing the same, talking the same, and thinking the same. Sure, we don't want to create robots, but it does mean unity.

Like-mindedness means that their hearts have been redeemed by a Savior. Like-mindedness means that their focus is upon the individual. Like-mindedness means that they have a fellowship that is unbroken because the Savior has brought together people who are completely different. I love differences. I love being around people that are so different than me. I love being around people that I have never met. And I love meeting brothers and sisters in Christ that the moment I meet them I know there is a like-minded spirit.

Brother Andrew, the God smuggler in his book God Smuggler said the same way. He said he would cross international borders not be able to speak with people of different languages. He would not know how to communicate but unknowingly to him he would walk up to an individual and all of a sudden God would show him this is the man that you give the Bibles to behind the iron curtain. This is the individual you give. He said what did it? It was the like-minded fellowship of knowing that his spirit and my spirit were communing across different grounds. One time he was looking for believers.

[35 : 47] He was looking for a church so he asked the church he asked the clerk there at the hotel he's standing and he said where is the church? He said there's a church down the road but they speak a different language you won't be able to communicate with them he said that's okay we talk a different language he said what language is that?

He said we speak the language of agapeo he said agapeo I've never heard of that he said oh you need to learn it it's the language of love he said we speak the language of love that is we love the Lord Jesus Christ with all of our hearts with all of our soul with all of our mind with all of our strength and the moment I meet him I know him he said it is the like mindedness of the fellowship and in the same spirit we understand it when we meet someone who is not of us that's also clear too one of the greatest things that we can ever find is when the spirit inside of us does not agree with the spirit inside of another and there seems to be a difference not because we don't like the individual it's just

we cannot commune with the individual what Paul says here is the authentic always developed fellowships of like minded A.W. Tozer used to say water never rises above its source so be not surprised friend what we display is what we develop what we display is what we develop I have found it to be true and it has been a very humbling thing almost to a mark when I meet an individual in the community that regularly attends the church quite often they do not have to tell me the church they attend I can already name it for them because what we display is what we develop so we need to make sure that we are displaying an authenticity of relationship with Jesus Christ fourth and finally I know I'm a little long winded fourth and finally we see here not only do they understand the foolishness of boasting not only are they committed to focusing on others not only are they developing this fellowship of like minded people number four there is the aim at fostering godliness the truly authentic have it as their aim to foster godliness Paul says in verse 19 all this time you've been thinking we were defending ourselves he said well yeah that's what you've been doing right if you go back and read verse 11 verse 12 he said all Paul's doing because defending himself

Paul said all this time you're thinking I'm defending myself to you friend listen to me Paul did not have to defend himself he knew who he was in Christ when you know who you are in Christ you do not have to defend yourself to other people this is why the blessing of the assurance of salvation is of our life Paul says I don't have to defend myself I know who I am in Christ so what if anybody thinks any differently of you if anybody looks down upon me I'm a nobody right nobodies don't defend themselves he said all this time you've been thinking that we were defending ourselves to you he said actually what we're really doing if you really want to know what Paul is doing it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ here it is and all this for your up building beloved Paul says the whole time all I'm trying to do is build you up why why was it important that Paul show them that they could trust him it's because the moment you begin doubting your salvation the enemy has a foothold in your life if the gospel that Paul declared to them in its simplicity was not sufficient then all of a sudden the foundation of their salvation had been shaken now they needed to do this now they needed to do that now they needed to add this to it now they needed to make this effort now they need to do all this work if Christ is not enough then my friend what is enough Paul says all I'm wanting you to do is to realize that when I stood before you and declared the message it was sufficient it doesn't matter what you think of me but what matters is what you think of the gospel which you received why because the others push you and prod you to a greater effort to greater stamina to greater determination but only the gospel can lead you to godliness what he says he says I'm afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you not to be as I wish and I may be found to you to be not what you wish you may be doing all these good things but you may have put off some things there may be strife jealousy angry tempers disputes slanders gossips arrogance disturbances why because when you're basing your salvation upon your work this is what you get I'm afraid that when I come God may humble me and that you may not have repented of your sins of the past the impurity immorality sensuality that you have practiced you know why because the only avenue to true repentance is a full commitment to

[40 : 52] Jesus Christ when we begin to divide our commitment then we begin to divide our devotion then we begin to cast off those things which are uncomfortable do we want to be godly then press in closer to Christ my friend don't try harder get closer you want to be godly don't get more rules and regulations don't get more dues and don't trust in the savior who saved you and lean upon him like no other time before all that is needed peter tells us for godliness is found in Jesus Christ Paul is fostering godliness in these people by reminding them that the gospel they responded!

to that made them saints by calling was sufficient because it flowed through a sufficient vessel matters little what they think of the individuals who stand before them but it matters entirely the confidence they have in those individuals because of the message they responded to he's fostering godliness and may that be the thing in our lives may we not foster a greater effort and greater work ethic among people but may we be those who foster godliness by pointing them closer to Jesus Christ than they've ever been for the glory of God alone and not for the glory of man would you pray with me father we thank you so much for this day we're so thankful for the opportunity we've had together together we're thankful for every chance that we have to come together as your church for your glory so Lord we ask that you would work on our hearts and minds that you show us where we stand with you may we have those marks of authenticity in our life may they be for the glory of the

father we ask it all in
Jesus name amen so Thank you.
Thank you.