

# THE MINISTER: HIS RIGHT TO BE ACCEPTED

## 2 CORINTHIANS 10:07–18

### *Introduction*

The minister has many rights, but the one right that means as much to him as any other is the right to be accepted. Every church, no matter the situation or circumstances, should open its arms and accept the minister. If he needs help, then the church should help him — no matter the problem.

- I. The minister is to be accepted because he belongs to Christ (v. 7).
- II. The minister is to be accepted because he is set for edification, not for destruction (v. 8).
- III. The minister is to be accepted because of the authority God has given, not because of appearance (vv. 9-13).
- IV. The minister is to be accepted because he ministers and preaches the gospel (vv. 14-16).
- V. The minister is to be accepted because he boasts in the Lord and not in men (w. 17-18).

### ***I. 2 Corinthians 10:07 Accusations Against Paul***

The minister is to be accepted because he belongs to Christ as much as any other minister. The troublemakers and critics of Paul felt that Paul ranked less than other ministers. They said that Paul did not measure up as a minister, that he was not as called or gifted as other ministers of God; therefore, he did not belong in the pulpit at Corinth, nor should his authority be accepted at Corinth.

Paul's claim is that all ministers are equal. Note how Paul exposes the shameful emphasis upon "the surface of things" and upon the ranking of ministers. Apparently some were judging Paul...

- because of his past sinful life as the persecutor and murderer of early believers (see Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-2).
- because other ministers and teachers appeared to have stronger and more appealing gifts.
- because other ministers and teachers had more charisma and were stronger speakers (see v. 10).

Paul is forceful in his rebuke: "You are looking only on the surface of things. If any man claims that he belongs to Christ and that Christ has called him, I too make the same claim. Think about it, and think it over again. A claim is a personal conviction, and a personal conviction is subjective. One man's personal conviction and claim is as good as another man's. Therefore, if a man says that he belongs to Christ, I too belong to Christ. I belong to Christ as much as he does. My claim is as valid as his."

The point is explicitly clear: personal conviction is a factor in the ministry, and a man's conviction that he has been called by Christ must be listened to and heeded. But much more is needed to prove whether or not a man is a true minister of Christ.

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**1 Cor 1:11-13** *My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul;" another, "I follow Apollos;" another, "I follow Cephas," still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul?*

**Mat 23:27** *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean."*

**John 7:24** *"Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."*

**2 Cor 5:12** *We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.*

**2 Cor 10:7** *You are looking only on the surface of things. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as he.*

## **II. 2 Corinthians 10:08 Works of Edification**

The minister is to be accepted because he is set for edification and not for destruction. The charge against Paul was that he destroyed people...

- by claiming to be a minister of Christ when in fact he was not
- by preaching his own ideas and philosophy
- by seeking to secure a personal following

Paul forcefully claimed that Christ had called him for edification, not for destruction. He was called to build up people, not to destroy them. In no way had he ever damaged or destroyed the church. Note: Paul says that he could boast in his ministry and in his faithfulness. He could even boast more than most other ministers; and if he chose to do this, it would not shame him, for he had every right to boast. He had served Christ faithfully and well in the ministry of building up the church.

**Rom 14:19** *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

**1 Cor 14:3** *But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*

**2 Cor 12:19** *Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening.*

**Eph 4:11-12** *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

**Eph 4:29** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

### **III. 2 Corinthians 10:09–13 God–Given Authority and Rule**

The minister is to be accepted because of the authority and rule God has given him. not because of appearance. The charge against Paul was that he was weak in appearance and a poor preacher; therefore, he could not possibly be called of God nor possess the authority of God. William Barclay says:

*“A description of Paul’s personal appearance has come down to us from a very early book called The Acts of Paul and Thecla. It dates back to about A.D. 200. It is so unflattering that it may well be true. It describes Paul as ‘a man of little stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the legs, of good state of body, with eyebrows meeting, and with nose somewhat hooked, full of grace, for sometimes he appeared like a man and sometimes he had the face of an angel.’ A little, balding bandy-legged man, with a hooked nose and shaggy eyebrows — it is not a very impressive picture, and it may well be that the Corinthians made great play with it. We might do well to remember sometimes that not seldom a great spirit has been lodged in a very humble body.” (The Letters to the Corinthians, p. 271).*

In addition to his personal appearance, Paul was apparently what most people would call a *poor preacher*. He was not eloquent; some people even went to sleep during his preaching (Acts 20:9). His critics in Corinth called his preaching contemptible, that is, of no account, unimpressive, a waste of time, unauthoritative. Note that his preaching was being compared to his writings, which were said to be weighty and powerful (impressive and strong, stirring and vigorous).

**Thought 1.** This criticism hurt Paul. The fact can be seen as one reads and looks behind the words of this passage and others (cp. 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 11:6). Paul could do nothing about body features, the way he looked, and his gift to preach had been given by God. He could and did work at improving, as any true preacher does; nevertheless, he was who he was, and he could not change the gift of God. So the criticism was bound to hurt. Lay believers should always build the minister up, not tear him down.

Note Paul’s answer to the criticisms.

1. There is a definite time for authority and discipline within the church. And if authority and discipline are needed, Paul will exercise it when he visits the church with the same bold authority that is evident in his writings (v. 11). (See 2 Cor. 10:1-2.)
2. Human commendations and judgments are unwise. Paul would never do what his critics and some others did: seek the praise and testimonials of men. Apparently, some were seeking letters of commendation in order to secure more recognition, honour and position.

With clear insight, Paul says that such self-seeking only pits one minister against another; it compares one to another. And such measuring of ministers is not wise.

3. A minister is to exercise authority only in the area and within the limits God has given him. The minister has no other legitimate authority, but he *does have that authority*. And it is that authority that is recognized and acknowledged.

*2 Cor 3:5-6* Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

*2 Cor 4:1-2* Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

*2 Cor 5:19-20* All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

*Eph 3:7* I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

*1 Tim 1:12* I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

*2 Tim 1:10-11* But it [God's grace] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.

#### **IV. 2 Corinthians 10:14–16 Authority of the Minister**

The minister is to be accepted because he ministers and preaches the gospel of Christ. This is the authority of the minister, the only authority that he has: the authority to minister and preach the gospel. Paul forcefully declares that he *did not stretch himself beyond this limit*. The false teachers in Corinth were the ones who were stretching beyond their limits, not Paul. Paul had been called and gifted by God to minister and preach at Corinth, not they. The implication is this: the false teachers needed to *repent and become one* with the other believers of the church and work and strive together with the believers for the sake of the gospel.

Note: Paul used another term to spell out exactly what his concern and area of ministry was: their *faith and its growth*. He wanted their faith to grow, and note why: so that they could help send him and the gospel to other parts of the world — to regions beyond.

**Thought 1.** What a lesson! There is no room for division and competitiveness in the church; no room for tearing down the minister of God. The minister has his area of concern and authority:

=> that of ministering and preaching the gospel.

=> that of building up the faith of the people.

=> that of leading people to send the gospel to other regions of the world.

No one should hamper or stop this work of the minister. He is the minister of God to do the work of God among God's people.

**Mat 28:19-20** *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Mark 16:15** *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

**Acts 1:8** *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

**Acts 20:28** *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

**2 Cor 4:5** *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

**2 Tim 2:25** *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.*

**Heb 13:7** *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*

## **V. 2 Corinthians 10:17–18 Boast in the Lord**

The minister is to be accepted because he boasts in the Lord and not in men. Paul has had much to say about boasting throughout this passage (v. 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16). Now he forcefully drives the point home: he that boasts must boast in the Lord, or he is not approved or accepted by God. A minister is not a true minister, no matter what he thinks, preaches or claims if he...

- exalts himself
- craves recognition
- seeks praise
- seeks his own things
- loves position
- is puffed up

A true minister of God does not commend himself; he seeks only the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Rom 15:17-18** *Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done.*

**1 Cor 1:27-29** *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

**Psa 34:2** *My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.*

**Psa 44:8** *In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever.*

**Jer 9:23-24** *This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord. ■*