

Week 5 - (2 Cor 5:11b-12) “Plain to God”

“Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to **take pride** [boast] **in** [about] us, so that you can answer those who **take pride** [boast] in **what is seen** [outward appearance, lit. face] **rather than** [and not] in [*what is in*] the heart.

Key Phrases

- “Fear the Lord” → Know how to honor, respect, follow God
- “Persuade men” → We engage in ministry, plant churches, preach. Use rhetoric, not command.
- “Not trying to commend ourselves to you again” → Not trying to convince you of something, sell you on our work and integrity. He is in fact boasting, but he is doing it in a form that does not call attention to himself, but rather to God’s work through him.
- “What we are is plain to God...and hopefully plain to your conscience” → We are honest, sincere, Christ imitating, hard working, authentic. We are confident that God sees us this way...and hope that you will too.
- “an opportunity to take pride in us” → opportunity to understand/recognize/respect/support a ministry that is from the heart (using himself as an example, like 1 Cor 4)
- “can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart” → you will grow/mature/understand the false premise/arguments/teaching of those who emphasize external/superficial/surface measures of success. (see also 1 Sam 16:7)

“Not Commending” (rhetorical conventions)

“Not trying to commend ourselves to you again” → Not trying to convince you of something, sell you on our work and integrity

- Deny it is boasting (5:11; 3:1)
- Responding to charges (10:10)
- Necessary to silence opponents (11:12)
- Complain that it was necessary (12:1)
- Audience forced them to do it (12:11)

Discussion

- How do each of these phrases help us understand the idea of ...”for Christ’s love compels us”
- “knowing the fear of the Lord”... → out of respect of God. Places certain restrictions on Paul’s ministry *methods*
- (v. 11) How does “persuasion” advance Paul’s cause more than “commanding”?
- Why would Paul want to avoid “commending himself”?
- In what ways do churches sometimes fall into the trap of “take pride in what is seen, rather than what is in the heart”?
- Based on this passage, what is Paul’s aim for writing this letter?
- Based on this passage, how does Paul want the Corinthians to evaluate a successful ministry?
- If you were Paul writing a letter to churches today, what changes would you hope to evoke through your letter?