The Mistake of Misjudging Others

2 Corinthians 10:1-18
10/09/2011

Introduction:

- ***Don't make the fatal mistake of misjudging God's ministry or minister!***

I. ***Don't judge based on*** **FLESHLY STANDARDS** (v.1-6)
(Beware of fighting spiritual battles with fleshly weapons)

II. ***Don't judge based on*** **OUTWARD APPEARANCE** (v.7-11)
(Beware of making surface evaluations without gathering honest facts)

III. ***Don't judge based on*** **HUMAN COMPARISONS** (v.12)
(Beware of measuring men by men)

IV. ***Don't judge based on*** **SIZE OF MINISTRY** (v.13-18)
(Beware of taking credit for what others have accomplished)

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(Beware of fighting _____ with _____)

II. ***Don't judge God's servant based on*** _____ (v.7-11)
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(Beware of _____ by _____)

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(Beware of _____ for what others have accomplished)

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Introduction: What is Prejudice? To pre-judge without having honest facts.

To be prejudiced is to pre-judge a person without knowing all the facts about his/her own personal character.

What is prejudice?

Prejudice is the sin of pre-judging a person based on a superficial, non-moral, exterior, surface evaluation. Prejudice evaluates externals over internals and often esteems the temporal over the eternal.

Biblical examples of people who made erroneous pre-judgments:
--Abraham toward Abimelech (Gen. 20:11)
--Joshua toward the Gibeonites (Josh. 9)
--Satan toward Job (Job 1:11, 2:5)
--Israel toward Saul (I Sam. 10:23-24)
--Goliath toward David (I Sam. 17:42-44)
--Pharisees toward John (for not eating & drinking) and Jesus (for eating & drinking)

How quick people are to judge (become critical of) a person based on:
--the clothing he/she wears (which is not necessarily an indication of the heart)
--the car he/she drives
--the Bible version he/she carries to church
(those who prefer the KJV are often judged as antiquated and uneducated, while those who read the NASV are judged to be liberal or at best New Evangelical)
--the denominational label attached to his/her church
--facial hair (beard - a symbol of rebellion; Beware: Mormons are as clean-cut as you can get!)

In 2 Corinthians chapters 10-13, Paul defends or vindicates his apostolic authority and ministry. This greatest of missionaries has—to this day—come under the greatest scrutiny and attack. Such has always been the case with men God has used most mightily. From Abel to Joseph to Jeremiah, to the Apostle Paul, all of God's choicest tools and instruments have been discredited, slandered, misunderstood, misrepresented, and in most cases mistreated and martyred.

"At present a small, unrepentant minority of such detractors and interlopers opposed Paul in Corinth. Guided by their inverted values, they judged Paul's ministry to be fleshly. His unimpressive persona, his lack of rhetorical skills, his meek and humble demeanor, his poverty, his working with his hands, the absence of ecstatic experiences and visions, his incessant trials and difficulties (rather than "success") were, to his opponents, incontrovertible evidence that his ministry was of the flesh and not of the Spirit." (Hughes, p. 180).

"To them, fleshly displays of giftedness proved how spiritual a person was and that such a person was appropriating the blessings that Christ had already provided. This thinking is what had produced so much ego-pumping division in Corinth. As D.A. Carson explains: "in short, the Corinthians were quick to seize every emphasis in Christianity that spoke (or seemed to speak) of spiritual power, of exaltation with Christ of freedom, of triumph, of victorious Christian living, or leadership, of religious success; but they neglected or suppressed those accents in Christianity that stressed meekness, servanthood, obedience, humility and the need to follow Christ in his suffering if one is to follow him in his crown. They glimpsed what Christ had done, yet failed to contemplate what remains to be done; they understood that D-day had arrived, but mistook it for V-day. They loved Christian triumphalism, but they did not know how to live under the sign of the cross." (Hughes citing Carson, p.180)

- ***Don't make the fatal mistake of misjudging God's ministry or minister!***

I. ***Don't judge God's servant based on*** **FLESHLY STANDARDS** (v.1-6)
(Beware of fighting spiritual battles with fleshly weapons)

v. 1
Although Paul had apostolic power and could have made his appeal to the Corinthians with force and aggressive boldness, he instead makes his appeal with the **"meekness and gentleness of Christ."** Just as Christ had total power and total authority (as God) yet ministered with meekness and gentleness, so Paul would minister with the same spirit and grace.

Remember that meekness is not weakness, but is strength under control. The most powerful leaders to ever walk the earth had this quality, as did Moses, "the meekest man on the earth."

Jesus Christ described himself as gentle and humble at heart
Matthew 11:29
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"In presence am base among you" - Just as was the case with Jesus Christ, who had "no form nor comeliness (physical attractiveness). . . (and) no beauty that we should desire Him" (Is. 53:2) – so Paul had a weak, timid, and meek persona.

As he wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:3-4,
And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

And he states in 2 Corinthians 10:10 that "his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible."

Paul would receive no "style points" for his preaching. He certainly would not blow anyone away with his charisma nor would he have that "poster appeal" or carnal attractiveness of the big names of Hollywood.

A man of God should be judged on the <u>content</u> of his <u>message</u> and by the <u>integrity</u> of his <u>character</u>. His walk and talk should like up with New Testament Christianity.

"Being absent am <u>bold</u> toward you" - Again quoting the Corinthians' opinion of Paul. They noted how his letters were very weighty and powerful (cp. 10:10). I fully expect that they would have a unique boldness about them, for Paul wrote the very word of God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His writings, as Peter testified, are just as important to be properly understood as all of the other Scriptures (2 Peter 3:15).

v. 2
Paul makes an appeal that when he personally visits Corinth, he would not have to wield his apostolic boldness; though he would have to be bold toward some who accused him of living in fleshly power.

"As to who the ill-fated "some" are, they are probably not the Corinthians themselves but outsiders. They so-called "super-apostles" were their leaders (cf. 11:5, 13-15). These interlopers doubtless fancied themselves as superior and cosmically gifted – masters of rhetoric, knowledgeable of mysteries, recipients of visions and ecstasies. The irony was that while they charged Paul with "walking according to the flesh," it was they who were fleshly. Their values were world-centered. Their walk was a death-walk – "according to the flesh." (Hughes, p. 181).

v. 3
To that accusation of "walking according to the flesh", Paul says that though he was alive in the flesh, he did not fight God's battles by the power of the flesh. He was in the world but was not of the world (Jn. 17:14, 16).

We, too, should not do God's work the way the world goes about their business. We should expect authentic Christian ministry to look and sound different than what the world would embrace.

v. 4
We are in a battle:

1) It's a battle that exists in the spirit realm (Ephes. 6:10f)

2) It's a battle for truth; God's truth as specifically revealed in His Word, which is truth (Jn. 17:17)

3) It's a battle for the souls of men and women, boys and girls. Eternity is at stake.

"As Carson points out, Paul's language of destruction here is not merely about winning arguments or debates. "He means something far more: his weapons destroy the way people think, demolish their sinful thought patterns, the mental structures by which they live their lives in rebellion against God." In Paul's own words, his spiritual weapons tear down "every high thing lifted up against the knowledge of God." Paul is referencing the citadels of sin in our lives – every high thing, every haughty thought, every action that forms a barrier to the knowledge of the living God." (Hughes, p. 183)

In this spiritual battle, we need spiritual weapons (weapons such as the Word of God and prayer, and holy living).

"Mighty through God" – God dependence, rather than flesh dependence, is where Paul got his power for ministry.

When we rely upon what intelligence or machinery can accomplish, we get what they can do; but when we rely upon the Word of God and prayer, we get what God can do!

Paul did not live his life and conduct his ministry according to the "laws and limitations common to human flesh" (Hughes, cited by Rogers, p. 412).

Our power is found in God's Word. ***Romans 1:16***
For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

"Pulling down" - describes the dismantling and demolition of spiritual fortresses that the demon world has established.

"Strongholds" - (*ochuroma*) – the word speaks of <u>powerful fortresses</u> or as the papyri used the word: "prisons." (Rogers, p. 412).

Paul may have had Proverbs 21:22 in mind here - A wise *man* scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Sin and Satan build strongholds or fortresses in people's lives that seem humanly impossible to implode. Strongholds of doubt and fear; strongholds of lust and greed; strongholds that take men captive and keep them shackled with no fleshly means of escape. Yet God's Word with God's power can set the captives free!

Paul may have seemed weak; he may have appeared unimpressive; yet he had the hand of God on his life. Though the false apostles (11:13) who seemed to be very impressive from a fleshly perspective accused him of operating in the flesh, the power and effectiveness of his ministry proved just the opposite.

We should be very careful in these days when so much is made of "image" and so much attention is given to popularity and fame, that we do not succumb to the appeal of those fleshly things, but do God's work by God's standards with God's power and not the flesh.

v. 5
Paul's power as being in God and not his flesh is evidenced in verse five.

In "ancient warfare when strongholds were captured and towers were pulled down, the defenders were taken into captivity. Here Paul extends the military language to thoughts." (Hughes, p. 184).

He, by God's power, was able to dismantle and destroy human reasoning and logic (lies of man's imagination). He was able to tear down and demolish every imposing high tower that proudly exalted itself against God's knowledge. And he by God's power was able by his ministry to captivate every wild and unruly thought and bring it to its knees in repentance before Christ.

Obedience to Christ was the proof of the validity of his ministry. And it remains so today.

v. 6
The majority of those at Corinth were not giving him problems. It was a minority (a small contingency – it's always a "little leaven" that leavens the whole lump; but many were being infected by the poison of the few).

So here Paul says to the church as a whole, as soon as you get this matter right and become obedient, I will then deal with those other individual acts of disobedience (and disrespect) that the minority brought about.

II. ***Don't judge God's servant based on*** **OUTWARD APPEARANCE** (v.7-11)
(Beware of making surface evaluations without gathering honest facts)

v. 7
"Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" (lit. face value). Paul says in effect, "you are looking only on the surface of things" (NIV) or "You are looking at things as they are outwardly" (NASV).

When we judge people are matters based on external appearances, we are no better than the Israelites, who selected Saul as king because he was tall and handsome.

1 Samuel 16:7
But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Jesus described the heart of prejudice very succinctly when He said: *"Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment"* (John 7:24). The word *"appearance"* is derived from the word *opsis* (akin to "optic," the eye), which refers to that which you see, outward appearance, the outward aspect of a person, his face (Jn. 11:44) or countenance.

Why is prejudice so wicked?

>It often extols race over righteousness
>It often esteems color over character
>It often respects popularity over principle
>It often glorifies culture over conduct
>It often values wealth over worth
>It often evaluates externals not internals

Making judgments about people or matters without first doing an honest investigation of the facts has been a major hurt to people throughout history! To quickly jump to a conclusion without gathering unbiased evidence is indeed a crime! This has happened in courtrooms, in schools, in the news media, and in the realm of science, politics, and religion.

True honesty in science would favor the intelligent design theory over the spontaneous generation of evolution. True honesty in politics would result in the election of a candidate who would better serve the people rather than one whose looks and charisma wows the public. True honesty in the religious realm would favor the ministry of a humble Bible preacher over the flashy, large, wealthy, and popular mega-ministry.

"He is Christ's . . . even so are we" - All believers equally belong to Christ.

We should not misjudge anyone's value to Christ based on some outward attraction (ILLUS: the rich man vs. the beggar Lazarus).

James 2:2-10
For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

v. 8
As a bonified apostle, Paul had every right to speak of his apostolic authority. But he knew that God did not give him that authority to toot his own horn and to exalt himself. And he did not use that authority so as to abuse his subordinates with it (by terrifying them with his epistles – v. 9); but rather God gave him his apostolic ministry to build them up in the faith ("edification" was the goal).

The apostles' authority was given for one main reason, and that was to edify the local churches. No ministerial office exists for the benefit of itself, but for the benefit of those being ministered to.

Those who make misjudgments about certain ministries often do so to ministries that do not exalt themselves and are not so impressive from outward appearances. But Paul will warn concerning ministers who look good on the outside yet are satanic cult leaders (2 Cor. 11:13-15); as Jesus said, they are "wolves in sheep's clothing." (Mt. 7:15).

v. 10

There were those who (seeking to bring Paul down in the minds of others so as to lift up themselves) basically said that there was a strange inconsistency in Paul. The power in his letters did not match the power of his public preaching ministry.

They said his epistles are heavy and strong (or forceful, NIV), but his physical appearance is without strength and his speech amounted to nothing (it was nothing you would expect from an apostle).

Like then, so it is today, that carnal people are more impressed by <u>how</u> you say something than by <u>what</u> you say. If your style grabs their ear, they will follow you! How sad! Remember, my friend, that <u>content</u> matters more than delivery! Substance matters more than style! The <u>concepts</u> you convey are of infinite more value than the package they are delivered in!

So many cult leaders, like Simon the sorcerer of old (Acts 8:9), imply that they are some "great one," and they produce a following; a following not of sheep but of goats. I'd rather have a following of ten sheep than 10,000 goats!

"Among the descriptions of Paul that have come down to us, the only one that has any possibility of being based on early tradition is the famous paragraph from *The Acts of Paul and Thekla*, which the great classical scholar and archaeologist Sir William Ramsey assigned to the first century. The description in the Syriac version reads: "A man of middling size, and his hair was scanty, and his legs were a little crooked, and his knees were projecting (or far apart), and he had large eyes and his eyebrows met, and his nose was somewhat long." This agrees with Paul's detractors' estimation of his bodily presence as "weak" (v. 10). By both estimates Paul in person cut a sorry figure and was far from the Greco-Roman ideal. Paul was no Adonis." (Hughes, p. 187).

v. 11

Paul says here that the power of his <u>words</u> will be matched by the power of his <u>works</u> (deeds) when he arrives at Corinth. His preaching style might not be so appealing (certainly not like Apollos) but the fruit of his ministry will be undeniable.

III. ***Don't judge God's servant based on*** **<u>HUMAN COMPARISONS</u>** (v.12)

(Beware of measuring men by men)

"We dare not make ourselves of the number" – We dare not classify or categorize ourselves (as part of an elite class). We create faulty standards when we form various categories of Christian ministers and judge each other based on those categories. The only standards we should raise are those revealed in Scripture.

Be careful that you don't have an air of superiority over others because of the particular "camp" you "run" with.

1 Corinthians 1:12
Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:4
For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

We dare not **"compare ourselves with some that commend themselves" -** apparently some leaders at Corinth had promoted themselves to such an extent that they viewed themselves as being in a class all by themselves. They viewed themselves as the authoritative standard by which all other ministers and or ministries should be measured.

"Measuring" - to line up with a standard (as a ruler)

"Comparing" - to view by way of similarities and contrasts.

"Are not wise" - They do not understand, comprehend, or realize that by doing so they are measuring themselves and comparing themselves to the <u>wrong</u> standard!

Our standard is not men, but Christ.

"The folly of the self-appointed apostles is that they had set up their own subjective standards of excellence (training in rhetoric, speaking fees, ecstatic experiences, commendations, awards, and so on) and then judged themselves by conformity to those standards! These false apostles had no desire to measure themselves by the objective criteria used by Paul – allegiance to the gospel, conformity to Christ's character, and participation in Christ's sufferings." (Hughes, p. 189)

Comparisons with other people will never reveal to you where you <u>are</u> or <u>ought to be</u> in terms of your <u>Godliness</u> or <u>maturity</u>. Because all men are flesh with sinful old natures, no person will ever provide for you a perfect standard by which you could measure yourself. All "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Christ is the only valid measuring stick or accurate ruler for determining spirituality. He (as a man) lived a perfect life, had perfect character, perfect blend and balance of attributes, perfect attitudes and actions.

--We ought to be "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2)

--We ought to be following Paul's example to the degree that he followed Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

--We ought to set an example, but our example is of Christ (1 Tim. 4:12).

God is not like us; rather, we are to be like He is.

Psalms 50:21

These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

1 Peter 1:16

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

IV. *Don't judge God's servant based on* SIZE OF MINISTRY (v.13-18)

(Beware of taking credit for what others have accomplished)

v. 13

Paul would not take credit for something he did not do; he says here that he would not boast (to take credit) for anything beyond the limits of what God gave to him or did through him.

To this point God had given Paul a ministry that reached up to Corinth. The extent of Paul's ministry is the extent of what God allowed him to do. The same is true of any minister.

We never want to be people who "sing our own praises" –

Proverbs 27:2

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

v. 14

Paul would not be overextending himself (or "stretching the truth") to say that God used him at Corinth. Paul indeed preached the Gospel at Corinth and planted the church there! (Acts 18:1ff)

v. 15

"However, the false apostles were not content to build on Paul's foundation. They boasted that any spiritual vitality in Corinth was due to their ministry, not Paul's. Carson aptly remarks, "Little men can be dangerous, especially when they position themselves in such a way as to capture some stolen glory from great men." (Hughes, p. 190).

He was not taking credit for ministry done through other men's labors! Paul recognized that other men had built upon his labors at Corinth and that he should not boast in what God did through others. But he was hoping that as the Corinthians matured in their faith they would open up to more of what Paul had to offer them. Paul was hoping to do much more work at Corinth and to help in their spiritual maturity so that he could move on and minister in regions beyond them.

As Ryrie says, "As their faith increased and his presence is no longer necessary, Paul could turn to other fields."

v. 16

"To preach the Gospel" - to announce the good news as an evangelist – this is the work of missions. What a privilege the church planting missionary has – to herald the good news to people who have never heard.

Paul was willing to go where no evangelist had ever gone! Are we willing to do a work where Christ is not named?

So many church members today who warm the pews of fundamental churches are transfers from other churches. Very little outreach; very little evangelism; very little pioneer spirit.

To this day, I give credit to Doug Lowery for much of what we have here at FBC. He was the pioneer church planter; Jim Swanson and I simply picked up where he left off.

The reason we should never judge someone based on the size or extensiveness of their ministry is because anything we do accomplish must be properly credited to God. For He is the one who gave us the resources, opportunities, gifts, open hearts, etc., to do effective ministry.

v. 17

May we never boast of work accomplished through someone else. Don't even boast of the work you do! But if you will glory, glory in the Lord! Give the credit and praise to Him!

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

Galatians 6:14

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

When was the last time you bragged on God?!

v. 18
"Commendeth" - lit. to make stand; to approve as worthy of recommendation.

It is not the man who recommends himself who God approves of, but the man whom God recommends.

It is not the man who toots his own horn who passes God's test, but the man whom God can speak highly of.

Don't seek to please man, but God!

Proverbs 20:6
Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Conclusion:

There will be no boasting in Heaven. All glory for all things will go to God alone.

God will receive all the glory for creation and salvation.

Revelation 4:11
Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 5:9-10
And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.