

Series: 2 Corinthians

Title: The Possession and Work of God

Text: 2 Corinthians 1: 1

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2 Corinthians 1: 1: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

If there is one thing that characterizes the attitude of religious folks in our day, it is an arrogant, flippant, familiarity with God. There are popular so-called preachers who glory in appealing credentials before and after their name. There are so-called churches which glory in marketing gimmicks by calling themselves clever names. There are so-called saints who glory in making themselves holy and more holy by their works under the law.

Is this how scriptures describe God's people? Here is a true minister of Christ. How does the Holy Spirit make Paul describe himself?—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Here is a true church, how does the Spirit describe it?—"the church of God." Here are true believers, how does the Spirit characterize them?—"the saints."

Our subject is "The Possession and Work of God."

The thing we will see is that God's preachers, his church, and his saints recognize ourselves to be God's possession and God's work. Therefore, we glorify only in the LORD.

AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

2 Corinthians 1: 1: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

By the Spirit of God, God's minister recognizes himself to be the possession and work of God. Therefore, he seeks no glory by self-exalting titles.

Paul calls himself simply, "Paul." He adds no prefix to his name. He is not "Dr. Paul, Rev. Paul, Pastor Paul, or Father Paul." He is only "Paul."

As for his office, after his name he writes, "an apostle." He is not "the apostle", only "an apostle." He is one apostle among several. And Paul only says he is an apostle because some at Corinth were spreading lies that he was not. Remember, the office of apostle is the highest office in the church (1 Cor 12:28). Yet, Paul does not call himself "The Apostle Paul." Others could call him that out of respect. But Paul calls himself, simply, "an apostle"

Then notice the one to whom he says he belongs, the one whose apostle he is, "an apostle of Jesus Christ." "by the will of God." The emphasis is on Christ—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ." The emphasis is to glorify God—"by the will of God."

Why is it important to note that Paul did not give himself a self-exalting title? For two reasons.

One, God's ministers do not want self-exalting titles because God gives his true servants a new, broken and contrite heart by the Spirit of God. In this new spirit, we see and acknowledge we are nothing. We were made guilty sinners by Adam's disobedience like all other sinners. By Adam's corrupt seed, we were made corrupt in nature like all other sinners. Our will was in bondage to our sin-nature like all other sinners. And by the Spirit of God, we know that our fleshly sin-nature is sin, that is all our flesh still is.

Romans 7: 18: I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:

Paul qualified what part of himself he meant when he said no good thing dwelled in him. He was speaking of his flesh. He meant right then when he wrote those words as a believer, long time in the faith. I would not know that in my flesh dwells nothing good unless the Spirit of God had put a new spirit in me. In that new inward man, God has given me a will to obey but my flesh will not allow me to do so without sin contaminating it.

Romans 7: 20: Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but the flesh, the law of sin.

The law or principle I see in me is not itself the new man or the flesh. There is the law of the flesh which is the law of sin in my members and opposed to this is the law of my inward man. The believer does not have two opposing principles dwelling in one regenerated nature. We have two opposing natures. That nature which is born of Adam's corrupt flesh is flesh. That spirit born of God the Holy Spirit of Christ's incorruptible seed is spirit. Christ told Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Jn 3: 6)

So by this Spirit of God teaches us, now, God's ministers acknowledge all the glory and honor belongs to God in Christ alone, not unto us. Again, in 1 Timothy 1, we hear Paul's description of himself and of Christ.

1 Timothy 1: 12: And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13: Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. 14: And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15: This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16: Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17: Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Brethren, do you see how Paul speaks of himself honestly, lowly, as nothing an undeserving sinner saved by the grace of God? See how he exalts Christ alone? Christ only sends forth his ministers after this is the new spirit Christ has put in them. This is why we want no titles to exalt us. It is because we know we are only sin and we want Christ alone to be exalted.

The second reason Christ's ministers do not want self-exalting titles is because our Lord and Master taught us not to desire such titles. He said of the Pharisees that they love:

Matthew 23: 7...greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8: But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9: And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10: Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ. 11: But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12: And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (Mt 23:7-12)

There is a great difference in the spirit of Christ's true ministers and Satan's ministers. Beware of preachers who point out how many degrees they have or who desire lofty titles. God's preachers recognize ourselves to be the possession and work of Christ—"a pastor of Christ Jesus by the will of God."

God's ministers are like the old, faithful preacher, William Huntington. He used to sign his name "William Huntington, S.S"—sinner saved.

THE CHURCH OF GOD

2 Corinthians 1: 1:...unto the church of God which is at Corinth,

God's true church recognizes ourselves to be the possession and work of God.

These days it is common for so-called churches to call themselves names or use slogans to attract people. There is a church I pass which sign says it is "the Church where everybody is somebody." I know of several places which call themselves "The People's Church."

The true church is "the church of God." God's elect, his church, is his possession by his purchase. When Christ became the Surety of God's elect, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world purchased his church. Before Christ came and went to the cross, the Psalmist wrote,

Psalm 74: 2: Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

Psalm 78:54...this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.

Then God came to this earth and purchased his church on the cross.

Acts 20: 28: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Ac 20:28)

Therefore, since God's church is his possession, he shall come again and redeem us out of this world.

Ephesians 1: 14: [God gave us the Holy Spirit of promise] Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Eph 1:14)

Romans 8:21 [this is the redemption spoken of when we]...shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Brethren, we do not call the church by cleaver titles that this world’s churches use. We can have no greater, honorable title than the “church of God”, God’s own possession!

THE SAINTS

2 Corinthians 1: 1:...with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

Each individual child of God recognizes ourselves to be the possession and work of Christ. Here the believer is called the saint. We would not be saints were it not for the work of our triune God.

Have you ever heard someone say, “You must think you are a saint!” To be a “saint” is to be sanctified and it is nothing like this religious world thinks. Will-works religion may give God the glory for doing every other work of salvation. But when it comes to being saints, they make sanctification to be a co-effort between God and the sinner.

Still, “Salvation is of the LORD.” It means God must receive the glory for the whole work of salvation beginning to end, including our sanctification.

God the Father sanctified his people in eternity by sovereignly choosing his people by his grace alone in Christ.

Jude 1:1:...to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

All the vessels in the tabernacle were sanctified—chosen, set apart and consecrated by God for his holy use. That is an illustration of God the Father sanctifying his people by divine election. He choose us, set us apart and consecrated us for his holy use alone when he chose us freely in Christ.

God the Son, Christ Jesus, sanctified his people on the cross.

Hebrews 10: 9: Then said [Christ], Lo, I come to do thy will, O God...10: By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*...14: For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

“Perfected” means “made complete.”

Colossians 2:10: And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

God the Holy Spirit sanctifies his people in the new birth. Again, we see it illustrated by those vessels in the tabernacle. They were sanctified by God choosing them as are God’s elect by God the Father choosing us in Christ. Then they were sanctified by the slaying of a lamb as are God’s elect by the blood of Christ Jesus our Redeemer. Then the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on those vessels as are God’s elect by God the Holy Spirit in the new birth.

Hebrews 9: 18: Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated [purified, renewed, consecrated] without blood....21:...[Moses] sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22: And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

The Holy Spirit performs this sanctifying work—this dedicating, purifying, consecrating, renewing work—in regeneration when the Spirit creates in God’s elect, redeemed child a new inward man.

Titus 3:3: For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another.

When we were only flesh born of Adam’s corrupt seed this is what we were. We were without a holy, inward man of God’s creating. Therefore, we were common children of wrath just like every other sinner born of Adam.

Titus 3: 4: But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and **renewing** of the Holy Ghost; 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

So having been sanctified by our triune God, every true believer, is a saint. Now, we serve God in newness of spirit—in that new man, with that new heart, in spirit and in truth. We do so, not to become sanctified and not to become more sanctified. But we do so because we are sanctified. Notice what scripture says we now are and now have by the sanctifying work of God.

Romans 6: 22: But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Romans 7: 4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we [by Christ our Husband, our Sanctification] should bring forth fruit unto God.

Romans 7: 6: But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

We praise only God for making us saints because the work is all of God alone. By this sanctifying work, God has made us fit to enter heaven with the saints already there.

Colossians 1: 12: Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

By the grace of God having created us anew, God's preachers, God's church, and each saint in particular, recognizes ourselves to be God's possession and God work. Therefore, we glory only in the LORD.

Amen!