

# **Authentic Christianity – Part 1**

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## I. Introduction. (II Corinthians 2:14)

A. Background: a misunderstanding concerning the actions of the Apostle Paul on the part of the Corinthians. The Corinthians are upset because Paul had gone into Macedonia instead of visiting them. Paul explains why he seemingly vacillated with them. This sets forth why he operates the way he does. The text is practical and designed to meet us in the midst of life.

B. Anxiety catches us unaware and Paul suffers from it here.

C. The text explains Paul's operation as a Christian.

## II. Excursus.

A. The name of Christ has been preached in every place truly now.

B. Despite the quantity of Christianity, the world is becoming rapidly secular.

C. Why this digression?

1. Something must be lacking in the quality of Christianity today.

2. There is a lot of phony Christianity that has the appearance of being the real thing.

a. It is based on the Bible.

b. It is orthodox.

3. The church, which is called to be salt and light, is often the disseminator of falsehood.

4. There was a quality of life that resulted in power in the early century that made the church a disseminator of truth.

## III. The explanation of Paul's lifestyle.

A. An Apostle is not a super-grade Christian. They are intended to be a pattern of what Christians are. Although we are not called to an apostolic office, we are called to an apostolic model.

B. The authentic marks of Christianity. You detect false things by examining the real thing. (II Corinthians 2:14)

1. An attitude of optimism - it gives thanks.

a. There is not gloom and despair among authentic Christians today.

b. There is unquenchable optimism. It is genuine.

c. Paul has a triumphant attitude that gives him joy even when he is hurting.

1) An example of this joy is when he and Silas were put into the dungeon. They had no natural expectations of hope and were tortured, yet they sang praises to God.

2) They saw that what they came to do in Philippi could not be stopped.

3) They knew that when Satan resorted to violence, he knew that he could be stopped.

4) Their eyes were fixed on God and not their circumstances.

d. Optimism is all throughout II Corinthians. (3:4, 12; 4:1, 16; 5:6)

2. A pattern of unvarying success - a conviction of future victory. (Philippians 1)

a. Paul means this - he has gone through unbelievable trial yet could say that God always leads us through trial.

b. The letter of Philippians reflects this. He sees his imprisonment in the letter as for the greater good for the praetorian guard who were being reached by this process somehow.

c. It was not an easy time to be in Rome, but as a result of shutting Paul up many more were out evangelizing because of this also. Locking up Paul was positive for evangelism in this text.

3. An unmistakable imprint - we are the fragrance of Christ to God everywhere and to men.

a. Incense for the Roman army was a fragrance of life and light, but for the conquered it was a matter of death - this is what Paul was talking about.

b. There is an unmistakable impact of authentic Christianity.

c. It is like a woman who passes by doused in perfume. It cannot be ignored and makes an impression.

d. Traditional credentials are not required. Jesus did not have traditional credentials but no one was the same after coming into his presence.

4. Unimpeachable integrity - trustworthiness and responsibility.

a. Sincerity.

1) A positive and negative description.

2) He is not a salesman. Christians are not salesman; they proclaim.

3) Paul really believes what he is proclaiming.

b. Commissioning.

1) This means that Paul knows what he is about and has a purpose to what he is doing.

2) It is something determined by God.

c. Living in the sight of God.

1) His private life is open.

2) He implies that he is open to be examined by others.

d. Speaking in Christ. There is authority.

5. Undeniable reality - no one could deny that God was at work when they saw the lives of the Corinthians after Paul preached. (II Corinthians 3)

a. There is a request for letters of recommendation.

b. But the Corinthians were Paul's letter of recommendation - their life change proved that Paul was qualified.

C. The question of sufficiency. (II Corinthians 2:16)

1. Churches are relying on programs to change the world and they are losing because they are no longer sufficient.

2. Paul's sufficiency was from God.

3. Most of the church is trying to get us to do the work of God, however. This is why it is failing.

**Application questions.**

1. What observations did the speaker make about the state of Christianity and what specifically is his solution to this?

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2. Which of the authentic marks of Christianity is least seen in your sphere of influence? Describe?

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3. Which mark of authentic Christianity do you find most lacking in your own life? What is the source of this? What is the solution?

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