SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE

ACCURATE BUILDING CONCEPTS(ABC) – Dr S.Y. Govender

2 Cor 12:12-21

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!

14 Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!

17 Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you?

18 I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?

19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification.

20 For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults;

21 lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.(NKJ)

Paul founded the church in Corinth. He began his ministry in the synagogue, where he persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 18:4

And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.(NKJ)

Acts 18:8

Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.(NKJ)

MANY OF THE CORINTHIANS CAME TO THE LORD, AFTER HEARING – NOT AFTER SEEING.

In Acts 18, there is no record of signs, wonders and miracles. The thrust of Paul's message was teaching and reasoning.

Acts 18:11

And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.(NKJ)

YET PAUL DECLARES THAT HIS MINISTRY IN CORINTH WAS ACCOMPANIED BY SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIGHTY DEEDS.

Signs – miracle with a message.

Wonders – miracles that cause amazement

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Mighty deeds – demonstration of power.
MANY FOLK USE THIS AS A STANDARD GUIDELINE TO VERIFY APOSTLESHIP. SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES ARE NO LONGER UNIQUE TO THE CHURCH – THEY CAN BE FOUND IN HINDUISM AND ISLAM.

THE MARKS OF APOSTLESHIP CANNOT BE GLEANED FROM THIS SCRIPTURE ALONE. THE VERSES FOLLOWING VS. 12 ARE MORE AUTHENTIC MARKERS OF APOSTLESHIP. THESE WERE DEMONSTRATED IN PAUL'S LIFE IN PATIENCE, SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIGHTY DEEDS.
The word "for" in vs. 13 is a causative particle expressing the reason for what has been implied before(Zodiates – the complete word study). This word links vs12 with the verses that follow.
THE MARKS, SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE ARE:
1. HE IS NOT A LIABILITY TO THE CHURCH.
myself was not burdensome to you
burdensome – expensive
This is in sharp contrast to many "apostles" today, who are absent from the ghettos and poverty-stricken villages, where honorariums are non-existent. Paul was not expensive to the church – He would not have said, "deposit the honorarium into my account and fax the deposit slip to my secretary, if you want me to come. My secretary will get back to you."
PAUL WAS NOT AN EXPENSIVE PREACHER.
He was preparing for his third visit to a people that did not appreciate him. He was going where he was not celebrated.
2. HE IS PROPELLED BY A LOVE FOR THE BODY
for I do not seek yours, but you
His interest and desire is the people, not their possessions. This genuine interest and love for the body, pushed him to Corinth.
3. A TRUE SPIRITUAL FATHER
but the parents for the children.
Paul saw himself as a father to the Corinthian believers. Just as a father provides for his children, Paul went with the mentality of providing for the body. He did not expect his children to provide for him. He gave more than he received.
(Note that this is accurate in the context of "children" – not mature believers. Mature believers need to understand the principle of reciprocation.)
4. SACRIFICES HIS TREASURES AND HIS LIFE
I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls
An apostle sacrifices his possessions, treasures and himself for the body. He does this gladly – not grudgingly.
5.HIS SACRIFICE IS NOT BASED ON RECIPROCATION
though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.
Paul was not motivated by reward from the Corinthian church.
The absence of reciprocation does not quench an apostle's love for the body.

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6. DOES NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OR DEFRAUD THE BODY

Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you

An apostle does not use his anointing, revelation, position, expertise or experience to take advantage or defraud the body.

7. OTHER APOSTLES SHOW THE SAME SIGNS

Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?

Paul affirms that Titus had the same mentality. Therefore these qualities were not unique to Paul. These signs present in Paul and Titus are marks of true apostleship.

8. RECOGNIZES DIVINE ACCOUNTABILITY

Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ.

Apostles recognize that they will have to give account to God who sent them. Apostles do not make excuses or need human approval. The accountability to God defines their motive for ministry.

9. MOTIVE IS EDIFICATION

But we do all things, beloved, for your edification.

The apostle's intent is to build the body of Christ – to bring the body up to the measure of Christ.

10. MOURNS, WHEN OTHERS SIN, AS IF HE HAD SINNED

my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced

Despite Paul's authority and stature, he mourned for those who did not repent. He ministered in brokenness.

THE TEN POINTS MENTIONED ABOVE ARE IMPORTANT SIGNS(INDICATORS) OF APOSTLESHIP. THEY HAVE MORE VALUE THAN THE TRADITIONAL MEASUREMENT OF FLAMBOYANT MIRACLES AND DEEDS WHICH ARE EASILY COUNTERFEITED BY THE FALSE DIMENSION.

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