

Transcription of 19ID3206

II Corinthians 3:1-6 "He Makes Us Stable"  
February 17, 2019

All right. Let's open our Bibles this morning to  
II Corinthians Chapter 3 verse 1.

Whenever you find something that is genuine or desirable, it won't be long before someone produces a counterfeit of it. Art forgeries, currency, handbags, watches -- anything of value can be replicated very quickly so that you can be fooled and others can take advantage of you. One of Paul's greatest challenges in ministry was a large group of zealots who really were born when the gospel went to the gentiles. They are referred to in history as the Judaizers. They were mostly out of Jerusalem. They were angry that the gentiles would somehow be offered the grace of God without first passing through Judaism. The group quickly became way aberrant in their beliefs. They mixed a lot of works and law righteousness with very little grace. But they went after Paul and they sought to take over the churches that he had planted. In fact, literally every church that was planted in those 15 years when Paul was on the road they infiltrated. And that was certainly the case in Corinth. Five years after the church was planted, the news came back to Paul of these men there moved into the church seeking to undermine Paul's influence, to steal Paul's fruit, to replace God's word and His ways in the church with their religious brand of false doctrine. They were the bane of the early church. They were the worst that the church had to face, far greater than Satanic influence. It was the undermining of Satan's ways.

It is tragic whenever you find those who think that they can get ahead by pushing someone else down. There are always those who want to take other men's works and call it their own, reap the benefits of their labors, and then try to exist off the body while not serving them. That's certainly true in Paul's day. These guys were not saved. They were lost and self-seeking and ungodly, and they were users. And we still have them today. Folks that don't really care for you, they just want to use you, and

somehow make use of you.

So Paul faced them, and this letter was written by Paul when he found that their influence there in Corinth was diminishing. Paul had written what would amount to three letters and made a visit up to this point. This would be his fourth letter. Things were improving. Some of the folks he had led to the Lord were seeing the light again, and coming out from the darkness that these men had imposed upon the church. But things weren't perfect yet, and so this is a combination of reinforcing good things, and then defending what they had said against Paul because he didn't want to see his ministry undermined.

But they, like I said, followed Paul wherever he went. Paul mentions them in Chapter 20 of Acts, that he warned the Ephesians, he said, "When I leave from here, grievous wolves will come in among you. They won't seek to spare the flock. And they'll even arise from among you, and they'll speak things that are perverse. They'll seek to draw disciples after themselves. I've been warning you with tears for three years now, that this was coming. Be careful, because this is the way the enemy works. He infiltrates." And that's certainly the case today.

In Acts 15, the early Jerusalem church met just about those guys. They were teaching that you couldn't be saved as a gentile without first becoming a Jew, and being circumcised, and toeing the line with the law. And the early church council decided, well, that's ridiculous. God saves by grace through faith in Christ the Lord. And so they'd been the subject, this legalism -- and by the way, legalism in most churches is very appreciated by people because the flesh loves praise. So hey, I did it, I accomplished it, I put my mind to it, I put my shoulder to the wheel, I sacrificed, I died to myself, I did it. It's flesh, man. We love that. Well, if you got to believe in Jesus, and now you don't get credit, He does, that's not as appealing to my flesh. Well, because He did it, I guess.

Paul called them false teachers in Chapter 2. Peddlers of the scriptures. These racketeers. He said in Chapter 4 he despised their methods. He said in Chapter 10 he denounced their self-promotion. So both doctrinally and personally they hounded Paul's steps wherever he went. They challenged his message of the gospel, they questioned his authority as an apostle. They wondered

about his relationship with the church, and they said that Jerusalem wasn't standing with him oftentimes. The entire letter to the Galatians was written because of them. And much of the other epistles carry comments about them as well. So that's really what this book is all about. It's about the encouragement to people who are getting out from under this false doctrine, web that they had spun, and Paul defending the positions that he took by pointing the people back to what Jesus had done.

Last week we ended in verse 16 and 17 of Chapter 2, and Paul said, who's sufficient for this? That we could be the aroma of death to some people because we share the gospel and they don't hear it. And we can be the fragrance of life to others who will hear it, and they'll eternally be saved. But he thought, man, what an overwhelming task. Who can be sufficient for this?

In verses 1 through 6 this morning, Paul answers that question. He wants to tell us how we can make ourselves useful to the Lord, who has called us to these very things. Now, like I said, Paul will go out of his way to defend himself against some of the accusations from these false teachers, not because he really cared what they thought about him. He didn't. You can't find one place where that mattered to him at all. But he wanted to be sure that the work of God through him would continue, and if they had a poor opinion of Paul, they might very well have a poor opinion of what he's teaching, and that he didn't want. So he argues for how that we can be sufficient in Christ to do these works of preaching the gospel, sharing just like you and I have to do in our generation.

His first point is in verse 1, where he says this: A reputation for godliness will help your cause. He says in verse 1 this: "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?" It was customary in those 1st century days for prophets and evangelists to carry with them recommendation letters from churches or people that were well known. Carried them into places that maybe they wouldn't be known themselves, to verify character, to verify claims. We still use those today. We even say to people we might hire, "Can I talk to somebody else you've worked for?" or whatever. But in those days, communication was very slow, and so these would help to verify your reputation.

Paul wasn't against letters of commendation as such. In fact, he wrote in 1 Corinthians 16, he wrote one for Timothy when he sent him with that letter of the I Corinthian letter. He wrote one for Titus when he sent this letter, according to Chapter 8. He wrote one for Phoebe. In fact, the Roman letter, which is so long, started off as just a letter of recommendation, and then he got carried away. Wrote the greatest theological book in probably the New Testament. He wrote one for Epaphroditus in Philippians Chapter 2. Wrote the whole letter of Philemon as a recommendation. So Paul wasn't against them, but he was worried about the abuse of them; how they were exaggerated and sometimes forged, and they were misleading to those not walking with the Lord and all. It's kind of like that big stink they had a couple of months ago, or year ago I guess, in the Yelp, you know, application, about they figured out that a lot of these companies just hired people to write letters of recommendation. Or mom wrote them all. The dad owned the pizza place and mom wrote 600 recommendations under different names. So now you can't even trust that. But that's kind of the way this worked. There were a lot of shady characters running around Corinth.

Some of the letters, by the way, even had Paul's name forged on them. We know that in II Thessalonians Chapter 2 Paul said, "Look, don't you worry about hearing that the Lord's come already, as if you received a letter, even if it was a letter that we signed, as if it came from us."

So these Judaizers, these false teachers, they worked the system to bring quotes and letters from important people in Jerusalem, their credentials that they pointed out Paul didn't have. He didn't have what we have, to further discredit and isolate him. And Paul begins here by saying to them; do we really need letters from someone else to prove ourselves to you? Do you need to write letters of recommendation for us? We founded the church there. You exist because we were there for a year and a half ministering and sharing, and all that you learned during that time you learned from us. In fact, greater than any recommendation letter was my life with you for a year and a half.

If you want to be sufficient to be used by God to bring the gospel of His Son to the world, you can be greatly

helped if you have a good reputation. You practice what you preach. You're not just saying, I graduated from here, and look, I got an "A." But it doesn't affect who you are. Paul will say in chapter 5 and twice in Chapter 10 that his ministry had been commended to him by God. He hadn't done this for himself. He's not looking to elevate himself. I know when you start off you go, he's kind of arrogant. But that's not Paul's interest, and certainly not his purpose, and we'll read that in a couple of verses. Paul was interested in trying to say just the opposite: That he was aware of his weaknesses, but they were and he was a product of God's work. The false teachers sought to gain their credibility with letters written by men, sometimes lost men, sinful men, wicked men, perverse men, but well-known men. We're supported by these guys. And these commendation letters were used by them just to enhance their standing before their next victims.

But Paul appealed to a greater, I should say, proof than letters of recommendation. The Corinthian church had experienced Paul's ministry in daily life. He had been virtuous and faithful and loving and kind. He was sincere. A reputation for godliness will always help your cause. If you go back to verse 16 where Paul says, "Who can be sufficient for these things?" His answer was, you can start by having a godly reputation. Because it's hard to sell something you're not practicing; right? It's hard to convince people of what you believe when you're not living it out. So Paul said to them, I don't need no stinking letters. That's right there in your Bible. We don't need no stinking letters. The Corinthians were his letter of recommendation, his ministry credentials if you will.

Secondly, Paul says fruit in your life is a good proof of God's presence with you. So he says in verse 2, "You are our epistles written in our hearts, and known and read by all men; clearly you're an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not upon tablets of stone but upon tablets of flesh, that is, upon our hearts." Paul goes on to say, if anyone needs any proof of God's work in us, we'll just point to you. That's a pretty cool thing to say. You don't believe God's blessed us? Look at you guys. You're the church. You're the church. Somebody says, well, is the Lord working in Paul's life? Look what the Lord did through Paul in Corinth. They can look at your

testimony. They can look at your example. You're the proof. You're the commendation for our ministry. Your faith, your salvation, your work, your walks authenticate the fact that God's working with us. That seems like a pretty good argument to me. Not prideful, because he'll say in verse 3, you're Christ's epistle. We just ministered to you. But he wants to say the fruit of our lives proves out who we are. You can listen to these guys and their accusations, but where is their fruit? Written recommendations could be handed out to a few. Paul said, everyone can read you. Wherever you go, whatever you say, whenever someone visits you here, you're living and you're breathing people. You're an open letter from Jesus to the world.

So besides Paul's evidence of his life that was consecrated to the Lord, there was an impact of his life upon others that was seen by fruit. What did the false teachers have? They had letters in their back pockets; right? Hi. You want to know who I am? Look, it's signed by the big shot in Jerusalem. I know the top three rabbis and where they eat. They've all signed my letters. I got it on letterhead. See, it's on letterhead. That's what they had to offer to the people. Paul says, I carry you in my heart. I care about you. I want you to do well. We gave our lives that you might believe and live. We have a much different relationship. Written recommendations could be misleading or deceiving, but you can't deceive all of these lives. And Paul was really sad and extremely saddened to hear that some of the people that he had led to the Lord and he had loved when he was there had bought into the lies now, had turned away and had turned against him. In fact, he will say in Chapter 7 of this letter, couldn't you not just open your hearts to us? We haven't hurt anyone, corrupted anyone, wronged anyone, cheated anyone. Look, I'm not saying this to condemn you. I just want you to know that you're in my heart. I would die for you. And I'll live with you. His relationship was far different.

So his proof of his ministry was, A: His reputation; and B: The fruit that had come from his life by walking with the Lord. What fruit did the false teachers have? Nothing. Their only fruit was what they had tried to steal away from the church. Paul had fruit. It was confirmed in his ministry. If he was phony, they were phony. He was deceiving, then they're the fruit of being his deception. And that wasn't the case. They are.

In fact, Paul goes one step further after talking about his own work, and he says to them, really, you're a letter of recommendation that the Lord has written in your heart. You're an epistle of Jesus. We're the ministers, we got to serve, but He wrote upon you. Not with ink, but by His Spirit, and not on stone tablets, but upon your heart.

A letter of recommendation had always come from a third party. They came from Jesus. He had ministered to them. The word means to serve. He had taught them the Bible. He had just shared Jesus' words with them. He had prayed with them. But Jesus was the author of their faith. He was a scribe, one who served, but Jesus saved. So Paul says that their letters in Jesus were written living letters, not with ink on a page, but on the heart. In fact, I think when he was speaking, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount there in Matthew 7, in speaking about the false teachers says, you'll know them by their fruit. You'll be able to distinguish them by the fruit that they brought forth. And for Paul that was enough.

I've always noticed as far as critics go, I've been at it 40 years, I got a few, that they usually have little fruit beyond their critical kind of hearts. Their claim to fame is to make you look bad. That's their ministry. They can't even point to what else they're doing, because they're just too busy finding out what you shouldn't be doing differently. Paul had a lot to show for his labors. Critics had nothing to show for their labors but their criticism and their deception. I found that most of the time critics, who turn against a church or a pastor, or even another Christian, have little to show in their lives in terms of accomplishment, but they've become excellent critics. They have a ministry of rebuke. What is your gift of your spirit? Corruption. I have a lot of that. I correct things around me. To which I usually reply, I have a gift of sarcasm and I'm about to use it with you which I think should be a gift of the Spirit. Apparently, it's not. My wife tells me it's not the Holy Spirit anyway.

The legalist who comes along and says don't do that and don't do that has an agenda, but he can provide no power to make you compliant. They can complain about you, they can't help you. But here comes Jesus, and He does everything. He helps everything, in every way. Sends us

His Spirit, changes us from within, gives us a new heart, teaches us His word. He's the one who makes the difference. And Paul said, you're Jesus' letter to the world. We got to minister to you, so we have fruit, but it's His work. He gets the credit. And who can argue with you?

The comparison for Paul between letters written on stone or in ink as compared to what was written in his heart I think moved him, because both of them, the law and the salvation of a soul, are both works of God's hand; right? The one is cold and written on stone, and never really created to make a difference or to bring power to change. The other is not external, but it's internal. And God intends to save you. The law is good, but it has no ability to change you. It's a teacher to bring you to Jesus, but it can't change you at all.

And so Paul makes that comparison between the false teachers and himself and the church. These guys bring lots of rules and laws and pressure. They can't change anything. And they don't have any fruit. I bring you Jesus, who was able to move in and change everything. And you're the proof of our ministry, and you're the verification of what God is doing with our lives and in our lives. Their doctrine was as dead as the letters that were questionable, carried around in their pockets.

The false teachers in Corinth did what they always do. They looked at salvation by works and rituals and ceremonies, and it's a damaged road. You'll go nowhere fast. You'll end up in a place of great judgment. Cursed is everyone who doesn't keep every word written in the law. There's no way that we can do that.

Today there are a lot of churches, and maybe you have noticed as well, who have gone away from teaching the Bible. They rather rely upon other ways to do the work of the Holy Spirit. I was looking yesterday. Within 50 miles of the front door of this place there are at least 18 churches that have at least 5,000 members, and none of them bring a Bible to church. They bring skits and movies and contemporary teams and questionable musicians and guys on stage painting while somebody speaks. They are using, other things to attract a crowd, and it's working. It works because no one is convicted going to that church, if we can even call it a church. No one is convicted. There's no conviction of sin. There's no



sorrow over our failure. There's no hunger for forgiveness. There's just a party atmosphere. Oh, I feel so good every time I go. Well, that's not really God's goal. Sometimes you just need to feel bad because you're doing the wrong thing. And God loves you enough to make you feel bad, so you can go home and repent and do the right thing. But, you see, there's not that confidence in God's word. And Paul said this: You're God's word. We get to be a party, work through our lives, that you're our proof. You're our recommendation, but it's His work, man. You're His work.

Paul was a real smart guy and God used him. Peter was not such a bright guy in worldly wisdom, and God used him. You can go to seminary, it can help you. You can get a degree. But I'll tell you what, none of that will help you as much as God's work by His spirit, and all the credit then goes to Him. A diploma doesn't make you a pastor any more than living in a barn makes you a horse.

We have to rely upon God's spirit. Paul was extremely educated. He was able to brag to the Philippians in Chapter 3 about his accomplishments, and then he said, I just count it all but dung, and you should know that Greek word for dung is exactly what you think it is. He cleaned it up just so he could put it in the New King James version. But don't miss the fact that he didn't think anything of it. To him it was just a piling of, right, of dung.

The test of any ministry is going to be fruit, and fruit he is talking about is lives that have been changed. Paul could not have been more proud of the Corinthians and the work that God had done in their lives, and the Lord, how He had been faithful to him. And they were his letter by the ministry of Paul, but it was God who is honored by it. So Paul says in verse 4, that's my confidence, that God can use us in Christ to accomplish His work. Verse 4 says this: "And we have such a trust through Christ towards God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency has come from God." You want to be sufficient for this work, then have confidence in the Lord's ability to use you as you stand in Jesus. In other words, He makes you able. It might sound like bragging if you just kind of read through, but he's only bragging in the Lord. And here's Paul. Paul was extremely supremely confident in what God could do in

his life. Paul had no self-confidence at all. There's a huge difference; right? Those are two separate matters. He's not self-confident. He's absolutely God confident. His education, his skill, he was able to just give as a glory to the Lord. He said, my best is insufficient, and I can't even do what needs to be done. I realize that. But God has made us in Christ sufficient. He wrote in I Corinthians Chapter 2, I think verse 4, where he said to them, look, I didn't come with a speech and a preaching that used persuasive words of man's wisdom. I came to you in the demonstration of the power in God's spirit.

It's hard to just share the word of God and then rest, because you can do so much more that you think will be helpful, when in reality nothing more will help. It is the word of God. It is the work of God's Spirit. Paul said to the Corinthians, "So that your faith might not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

I read, and I get a lot of Christian magazines. I've been on mailers. I bet I get, I don't know, a couple of dozen. But on the back of one of these Christian periodicals this last month -- and they seem to have been going to the left, there was a headline that said this: "How to have a successful ministry and take your church from 30 people to 300 in just six weeks." And then on the bottom it said, "The cost for this special is only \$400." Paul wanted none of that. That's not the suggestion is that somehow there's a secret technique to draw people into a church, and Paul said no way. There's no secret to ministry. There's no skill or ability or how-to seminar that's going to bring you some genius to stumble across and be able to be successful. Paul only had one concern: I want to teach the Bible, and in Christ I'll be useful. I don't qualify of my own, but in Him, man, I could be useful. And he was. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it," Psalm 127. So he says, we have such confidence through Christ towards God. In other words, no obstacle, no persecution nor discouragement could have caused Paul to stop, because his confidence wasn't in himself, it was in the Lord. But he had the single-minded kind of unswerving devotion to the Lord. God can do this. He's not arrogant, he's not brash, he's not looking to his own abilities. He's confident in the Lord's work.

He said to the Corinthians in the first letter, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." That's the Popeye verse.

I am what I am. It's right there in your Bible. "But His grace to me, it wasn't in vain; I worked more abundantly than all of them, but it is the grace of God, not me, that's working in me." I'm giving it my all, but I realize where it's coming from. God has done the work. He said to the Romans in Chapter 15, "I don't want to speak about those things which God has not accomplished in me, but I want to speak about those things that He has accomplished in me which has caused the Gentiles to become obedient to Him."

God isn't looking for mighty and for the noble. He's looking for you to be willing to be faithful. And notice what he says in verse 5. He says, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves." The word to think of ourselves is the Greek word "logizomai." It is where we get our word logarithm from. It means by definition to calculate or to figure in. Paul is saying, we've gained a lot of fruit there in Corinth, but we would never try to look at the fruit without factoring God in. Or looking and say look what we've done. No, no, no. We can't even begin to look at what God has done without saying God's done it, or at anything we've done and leave Him out. Not to think anything of ourselves. The salvation, the deliverance, the increase, the wisdom, God was at work.

God was able to give to Paul a confidence that God could do anything. The false teachers had to strive constantly to keep people on their side. Go through the Old Testament and you learn the lesson that God can do anything really quickly. Moses was 80 years old when the Lord said to him, I'm going to send you to Egypt and talk to Pharaoh. Get my people out of there. And Moses goes, Yeah, I don't speak so good. And God made him sufficient. Gideon was called by the Lord to deliver the nation from the Midianites, and said to the Lord, I can't lead. I'm very weak. I come from the smallest tribe in Manasseh. This'll never work. And the Lord make him sufficient. He said, I'll be with you. Isaiah stood before the Lord and realized his sinfulness and said, Woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips and my people are the same way. I can't be that guy. And the Lord sent an angel with a burning coal to make him clean. Jeremiah was sent by the Lord to go speak to the nation at a time of great apostasy, and here's what Jeremiah said, I'm a punk. It's right there in your Bible. I'm a young punk. I can't speak. And the Lord said, Don't you dare tell Me

you can't speak. I'll give you the words. You speak them. I'll go with you. He made him sufficient. Ezekiel had great trepidation over his calling from the Lord. God said, I'll enable you. So he got a vision from the Lord and the Lord said, I'm with you.

Whether you have problems speaking like Moses, or feeling weak like Gideon, or aware of your sinfulness like Isaiah, or maybe just your youthfulness, or your just hesitation to think God could do anything with you, in every one of those cases God made these men able and sufficient. So be careful when you start excusing yourself from serving the Lord by saying things like I don't think I can do it, because the minute you say that, God will say this: Yeah, you're perfect for the job. Yeah, I got nothing to offer. Perfect. Yeah, I don't know what to do. Excellent. I got nothing. You'll do. Because God will make you sufficient.

And Paul said the same thing to them. We realize that we got nothing, but God has made us sufficient in Christ. And he'll use us so that we can -- back to verse 16, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We are in Him.

Have a good reputation, look at the fruit that is coming forth from your life, have great confidence in what God can do through you in Christ, and finally, verse 6, "who has made us sufficient ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Paul's final word to us about making us sufficient is we have a new covenant message to preach. He turns from the messenger to the message; from the character of the minister to the message. Hey, we got good news to preach, don't we? We have a message that can be delivered and that needs to be. The Judaizers of Paul's day had followed him around for years trying to mix what Paul had said with what they believed they should teach. They mixed it according to culture and according to their belief system. They were like chameleons; they changed whenever they needed to. But their whole interest was to get people to support them, follow them, turn away from the gospel.

It takes far more faith to just believe in God. And like I said, there's an entire movement today among these seeker-friendly churches to just set aside the regular teaching of the Bible in hopes of reaching the lost in some other way. They couldn't be more wrong. And these

5,000 member churches that are around today, I suspect they won't be 10 years from now. It just doesn't work. God won't bless.

I love the fact that J. Vernon McGee is still on the radio. I had a chance years ago at a national radio broadcasters convention to have lunch with him, and he sounded exactly in person like he does on the radio. He's not exactly the most dynamic guy, but he's teaching the Bible. He was the first man to ever be able to substantiate and support a radio ministry without the help of a church. It was self-sufficient. It still is. He's been gone 30-plus years. He still has hundreds of people working for the "Thru the Bible" group all around the world and the radio continues. "Right from Texas, right." Really, that's it? That's it. And God just blesses this guy to no end, because he just teaches the Bible. That's where God is honored. That's the message that you and I have.

I think Calvary Chapel has been known over the years for their commitment to just teach the Bible. Unfortunately, in some circles, even in Calvaries, that has started to go the other way, but it shouldn't. Our message is one of God's grace and of His Word; not of the old, but of the new.

The old covenant was based on man's ability to obey. You read in Exodus Chapter 19, for example, "If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you'll be a special treasure to me." If you'll do that when they came into the land, they passed through two little mountains, one Gerizim, one Ebal, and upon the mountains there were the people yelling the law to the people passing through. "If you'll do this, you're going to be blessed." And the other guy's yelling, "But if you don't, you're going to be in trouble." One was conditional, the other was by grace.

The letter kills. Why? Because there's nothing in the law that can offer you the ability to change. Here's what the law does for you: It gives you information that you're in trouble. That's what the law does. Hey, you're in trouble. What am I supposed to do? Yeah, look somewhere else. You want to take five books of the Bible and go, what does the law say? The law says look somewhere else. For if you don't keep the law, if you stumble in one point, you're guilty of all. That's what

James would say. No amount of law and regulation will cleanse you, because the law can only kill. It will produce guilt and unfulfillment and shame, and you'll quickly learn that you're unable to keep it, that hell waits for the lawbreaker, and that's us.

When Moses came down in Exodus, I know, I'm running over one minute, okay, and I'll be done. Some of you should change your attitudes right now. I have no idea who you are, but, well, a couple of you I can, no. When Moses, two minutes now, when Moses came down from the mountain in Exodus 32 and he received the law the first time, the 10 commandments, he found in the valley, right? the people sinning, breaking the law, even before they had it. Worshipping other gods, making an image of a calf. And in anger, Moses threw these tablets down. They broke. It was a breaking of the law. When the Lord called Moses up again to get the second copy, right? to reissue the law, He sent with the law all of the sacrifices that could cover sin. And though the law was broken, though it was intact in Moses' hand, with it came sacrifices that point away from the law to the One who had come to fulfill it for us; until Jesus would come and the new covenant would be born. And in Exodus 34, you'll see that Moses comes with the law and with sacrifices to cover the sinfulness of the people because of the law.

So we're not preaching salvation through legalism, Paul says, or through ritual or through ceremony. We're just preaching Jesus, who said at the last supper, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, which would be shed for you."

So here's Paul's argument for being sufficient: Have a good reputation, look at the fruit in your life, be confident that God can make something of you because you're in Christ. It's not of you, it's of Him. And be sure that you preach His message. And you can be a vessel that God can use even in this generation to see many turn to Christ. That's really what we're here to do, and that was Paul's confidence as well.

I owe you two minutes. You'll never see it, but it's all right. Let's have a prayer, shall we?