

2 CORINTHIANS 11 | Paul's "Boast"

Don't Be Led Astray from Messiah

1 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! 2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, because I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Messiah. 3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Messiah. 4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. 5 Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. 6 Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge.¹ Indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

Refrain from Burdening Those You Minister To

7 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 10 As the truth of Messiah is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. 11 And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

Undermine the Claim of False Apostles

12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Messiah. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Don't Bear with Fools

16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. 17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. 18 Because many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. 19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! 20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

Paul's "Boast"

¹ Knowledge is more important than speech.

But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Messiah? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

Boast of Things that Show Your Weakness

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

Overview

1. This is called by some Paul's "fool speech."

Lessons for Life

- 1. We are to feel a divine jealousy for those to whom we minister (v. 2).**
 - a. We are to betroth them to one husband, Jesus (v. 2).
 - b. Paul pictured himself as the father of a virgin bride (1 Co 4:15; 2 Co 12:14). His desire was to keep his daughter, the Corinthian church, pure until she would consummate her marriage to Jesus (cf. 4:14; Eph 5:27; 1 Jn 3:2-3).
 - c. Divine jealousy is a virtue.
- 2. As the church, we are to be a pure virgin to Messiah (v. 2).**
- 3. We must not let our thoughts be led astray from a pure devotion to Messiah (v. 3).**
 - a. Satan, God's enemy, is out to deceive us (v. 14).
 - b. Deception plays a huge part in our world. Watch *Catch Me If You Can*.
 - c. If we study the genuine well, we will be able to discern the counterfeit.
- 4. We must not receive or accept another Jesus, a different spirit, or a different gospel (v. 4).**
 - a. **Ga 1:8-9** 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.
 - b. Sometimes we must call a spade a spade.
 - (1) "The welfare of those under Paul's ministry required him to identify his critics for who they really were. We will serve our own generation faithfully if we do the same. We should point out teachers who lead others into error, and warn people about them, if we want to keep the naive from harm (cf. 3 Jn 9-10)."²
- 5. We are to preach God's gospel free of charge (v. 7).**
 - a. This may require "robbing" other churches (v. 7).
 - b. We are not to burden anyone (v. 9).
 - c. We are to supply the need of gospel workers (v. 9).
 - d. Paul can't be bought. God can't be bought either. This is living out the grace of God.
 - e. "Paul's principle was to preach and teach without charging those who benefited directly from his ministry. This is a good policy in church planting, but it is not normative for a settled pastoral ministry (1 Co 9:14; 1 Ti 5:17-18)."³
- 6. We are to undermine the claims of false apostles (vv. 12-13).**

² Constable, 156.

³ Constable, 154-55.

- a. False apostles disguise themselves as apostles of Messiah (v. 13) and servants of righteousness (v. 15).
 - b. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (v. 14).
 - c. The end of false apostles will correspond to their deeds (v. 15).
- 7. We may sometimes have to boast as a fool (vv. 16-18).**
- a. Paul's foolish boast is seen in vv. 21-33.
 - b. Boasting is not always evil.
 - c. "As much against the grain as it is with a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much is it against the grain with a humble man to speak of his own praise."⁴
 - d. **Pr 26:5** Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.
- 8. We must not bear with fools, those who make us slaves, devour us, take advantage of us, put on airs, or strike us in the face (vv. 19-20).**
- a. The "Judaizing error" is submission to the Mosaic law as necessary for justification and/or sanctification (Ga 2:4; 5:1).
- 9. As servants of Messiah, we are to expect labours, imprisonments, beatings, lashings, stoning, shipwrecks, journeys, dangers, toils, hardships, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, cold, exposure, pressure, anxiety, weakness, and escapes (vv. 23-33).**
- a. We are to expect the daily pressure of anxiety for our church (v. 28).
 - (1) "And so it should be with every faithful pastor of Christ's flock: he should lovingly identify himself with those who have been committed to his care, showing himself deeply anxious for their spiritual well-being, compassionate with them in their frailties and temptations, and resisting and resenting every one who seeks to entice them away from the purity of their devotion to Christ. This compassion is not of man: it is the divine compassion of Christ Himself, burning in the heart of His servant, and blazing forth in love to reach and to bind to the one Bridegroom the hearts of those to whom he ministers."⁵
- 10. We are to boast of the things that show our weakness (v. 30).**
- a. Paul does not present himself as a super-successful minister of the gospel.

⁴ Henry, 1835.

⁵ Hughes, 418.