

2 Corinthians Chapter 11 Continued

2 Corinthians 11:16 "I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little."

After digressing to discuss the issue of financial support and to expose the false teachers as emissaries of Satan, Paul returned to the ‘foolish’ boasting the Corinthians had forced him into.

Boast, seems to be the prominent word in the last few chapters including this chapter. It seems to me that it is very painful to Paul to have to defend himself. Paul has already mentioned that he thought it foolish to boast. This boasting is in defense of his character.

Paul’s concern was not personal preservation; rather, the apostle knew that by rejecting him in favor of the false apostles, the Corinthians would be rejecting the true gospel for a false one. So by establishing himself and his ministry as genuine, Paul was defending the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:17 "That which I speak, I speak [it] not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting."

Paul is not speaking for the Lord here, but for himself. Paul will be sure to give his things that he has suffered for the Lord to prove who and what he is about.

Paul does acknowledge that the boasting is “not according to the Lord”, but the desperate situation in Corinth (where the false apostles made their “boast according to the flesh), had forced him to boast. Not for self-glorification, but to counter the false doctrine threatening the Corinthian church.

2 Corinthians 11:18 "Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also."

This boasting is a fleshly thing in answer to the boasting of the new teacher who has stirred them up against Paul.

In these next 3 scriptures (from 19-21), Paul pens some of the most scathing sarcasm that he had even penned, demonstrating the seriousness of the situation at Corinth and revealing the jealous concern of a godly pastor. Paul did not view his disagreement with the false apostles as a mere academic debate; the souls of the Corinthians and the purity of the gospel were at stake.

2 Corinthians 11:19 "For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye [yourselves] are wise."

The Corinthians who had wrote Paul sarcastically, should have no trouble bearing with a “fool” like him, since they themselves were so wise.

Paul is saying, you are so intelligent that you listen to fools gladly. This is really saying to them that their judgment of character is not what it should be.

2 Corinthians 11:20 "For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour [you], if a man take [of you], if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face."

“Bring you into bondage” is a Greek verb translated by this phrase appearing elsewhere in the New Testament only (in Gal. 2:4), where it speaks of the Galatians’ enslavement by the Judaizers. The false apostles had robbed the Corinthians of their freedom in Christ. The false apostles were attempting to catch the Corinthians like fish in a net.

The new teachers, it seems, were putting them under great bondage. It seems they had these Corinthians so convinced they were right, that they would put up with most anything from these new teachers.

2 Corinthians 11:21 "I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also."

Paul’s sarcasm reached its peak as he noted that he was “too weak” to abuse the Corinthians as the false apostles had done.

Paul says, I may have appeared to you as weak, but if you want boldness, I can be bold also.

2 Corinthians 11:22 "Are they Hebrews? so [am] I. Are they Israelites? so [am] I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so [am] I."

Here again, we see Paul being all things to all men that by all means he might save some. If they claim they are a Hebrew, they have nothing on Paul. He is a Hebrew. Paul always reminded the Israelites that he was not only an Israelite, but a Pharisee of the Pharisees. All believers in Christ are seed of Abraham.

To each of these questions Paul replied simply, truthfully and powerfully, “so am I”.

2 Corinthians 11:23 "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I [am] more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft."

"Fool" means insane (in verse 23). Paul is saying, that it is insane to speak this way. Paul, in comparing himself to these teachers who have come against him, says that he is a better minister. He has labored harder than them all. He had been imprisoned most of the time he was ministering. In Rome, he was under house arrest and yet ministered regularly. He had been beaten, and stoned, and even left for dead. Paul was reminding him the suffering he had endured for the sake of the gospel. I am sure this rejection hurt him more than all the beatings.

In this scripture, Paul had emphatically denied that they were ministers of Christ, however, some of the Corinthians still believed they were. Paul accepted that belief for the sake of argument

then went on to show that his ministry was in every way superior to the false apostles so called “ministry.”

A general summary of Paul’s sufferings for the gospel in the next few verses give specific examples, many of which are not found in Acts. Paul was often in danger of death.

2 Corinthians 11:24 "Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one."

Jesus had told Paul in the beginning that he would show him what great things he would suffer for him. These beatings were just one of these things he suffered. Forty stripes was thought to be too much, and a man would die so the most that was allowed was 39. Any more than that and the one doing the beating could be put to death.

(Deut. 25:1-3), set 40 as the maximum number that could legally be administered. In Paul’s day the Jews reduced that number by one to avoid accidentally going over the maximum. Jesus warned that His followers would receive such beatings (Matt. 10:17).

2 Corinthians 11:25 "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;"

With rods is referring to Roman beatings with flexible sticks tied together. He was stoned at Lystra.

We know that Paul was shipwrecked on the way to Rome to be heard of Caesar, but when this scripture was written, this had not yet taken place. Paul had been on several sea voyages up to this time, giving ample opportunity for the 3 shipwrecks to have occurred. On one of those shipwrecks was so severe that Paul spent an entire day floating on the wreckage waiting to be rescued.

All of these things, Paul gladly endured so that he might be able to bring the gospel message to the lost world.

2 Corinthians 11:26 "[In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren;"

These perils are those connected with his frequent travels. Waters (rivers), and robbers posed a serious danger to travelers in the ancient world. Paul’s journey from Perga to Pisidian Antioch for example, required him to travel through the robber infested Taurus Mountains and to cross two dangerous, flood prone rivers. Paul was frequently in danger from his “own countrymen” and less often, from Gentiles.

From the time that Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and the time he was killed in Rome, Paul travelled widely in missionary journeys. On one of these journeys, he established the church

at Corinth that this letter was written to. Paul was hated by the Jews, and they followed him and tried to kill him. The Christians here at Corinth, it appeared, were turning against Paul and the Romans finally killed Paul. This is not exaggeration that he was speaking.

2 Corinthians 11:27 "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Paul had gone right on ministering in the face of all these troubles. He ministered many times immediately after he had been beaten or stoned. He and Silas were praying and singing at midnight in the prison. He went on, weary or not. Paul gave no thought at all for the physical handicaps he faced. He went right on ministering.

He learned to be content whatever state he found himself in at the time.

2 Corinthians 11:28 "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Far worse than the occasional physical suffering Paul endured was the constant, daily burden of concern for the churches that he felt.

Paul could well endure the hardships from without, but it truly hurt him when the very churches he had started were against him. Paul dearly loved all the churches he had begun. He loved them as a parent loves a child. He felt responsible for the churches he had begun. This is the very reason he wrote this letter. All pastors who begin a work are always concerned for that church staying true to the teachings it began with.

2 Corinthians 11:29 "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"

Those "who were weak" in faith or were made to stumble into sin caused him intense emotional pain.

Paul felt every problem right along with them. Their troubles were his troubles too. He loved them and wanted things to go right for them.

"Who is offended, and I burn not". That is, "Who is caused to stumble, and I am not indignant?" The apostle is deeply concerned about the weaker brethren, and he burned with indignation when he thought of those who would lead them into sin.

Remember that if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers.

2 Corinthians 11:30 "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities."

They have forced Paul to glory. He does not like to glory at all. He says, if I must glory, I will glory in my infirmities. To do so magnified God's power at work in him.

Many church people of our day would say that Paul was not right with God or he would not have had these problems. My Bible says exactly the opposite.

2 Timothy 2:12 "If we suffer, we shall also reign with [him]: if we deny [him], he also will deny us:"

2 Corinthians 11:31 "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."

Realizing how incredible the list of his sufferings must have seemed, Paul called on God to witness that he was telling the truth that these things really happened.

This is the only One that it is important to know that he is not telling anything false. When the final judgment comes, it will not matter what man thinks of you. It will be very important what God knows about you.

2 Corinthians 11:32-33 "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:" "And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."

It appears it was not just the religious leaders of Paul's day who had tried to destroy him, but some of the rulers of which we read of one here.

Paul related his humiliating escape from Damascus as the crowning example of the weakness and infirmity in which he boasted. The Acts narrative names the hostile Jews as those who sought Paul's life, whereas Paul here mentioned the governor under the Nabatean Arab king Aretas (9 B.C. – 40 A.D.), as the one who sought him. Historians believe the man mentioned here was the father-in-law of Herod.

Evidently the Jews stirred up the secular authorities against him as they were later to do repeatedly in Acts.

Paul is just telling of one of the many times when he escaped from prison. The letting down with the basket means that someone helped Paul escape, probably his Christian friends.

2 Corinthians 11 Continued Questions

1. In verse 16 Paul says, let no man think me a _____.
2. What has been the prominent word in the last few lessons?
3. In verse 17 Paul says, this is not God speaking, but whom?
4. Many glory after the _____.

5. What is Paul saying to them in verse 19?
6. How were the new teachers treating them?
7. Paul had appeared to them as weak, but he could be _____.
8. What 3 things did Paul say he was in verse 22?
9. All believers in Christ are _____ of Abraham.
10. What does "fool" mean in verse 23?
11. Where was most of Paul's ministering done?
12. Where did Paul minister in Rome?
13. Of all things, what hurt Paul the worst?
14. How many times had Paul received 40 stripes save one?
15. How many times was he shipwrecked?
16. What were most of Paul's journeys for?
17. Who kill Paul?
18. What problems of Paul are mentioned in verse 27?
19. Who was in prison with Paul when they prayed at midnight?
20. What kind of love did Paul have for the churches he started?
21. What did Paul glory of?
22. Who did Paul say, knew that he did not lie?
23. Who do historians say, this is speaking of in verse 32?
24. What did they use to let Paul down the wall?