

2 Corinthians 11

11:1 I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me! ² I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. ³ But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

In verse 1, Paul asks the Corinthian Christians to put up with a little bit of foolishness. When Paul wrote to the Galatian church, he wanted to teach them more than what he was able. He failed to go into the depth that he did with the Thessalonians because the Galatian church was caught up in the Law. There is a group in the Corinthian church that is caught up in whether Paul is a true apostle compared to the false teachers or so-called "super-apostles". Paul calls what he is about to say foolishness not because it is going to be a joke or the way we think of foolishness. He is just feels that it is a waste of time when he should be teaching them more.

In verses 2 through 4, Paul explains why his apostolic credentials are so important. In verse 2, he says that he has a jealousy from God. Where have we heard of God being a jealous God? Read Exodus 20:3-5. The 10 Commandments.

Do you believe that you are sitting here in this church listening to me teach by luck? God wants you here for His purpose. That is what Paul is saying. It is what Jesus said in John 10:27-29. Paul is saying, "God sent me to Corinth, He put you in my hands and no one can snatch you from my hands. I am jealous for your salvation."

Continuing in verse 2, since God ordained it there should be no arguments from them. Since they are God's church and the church is the bride of Christ. The church is betrothed to Christ and Paul wants to deliver a pure bride. Paul's job was to deliver the Corinthians to Jesus with a pure understanding of the Gospel and faith in salvation through Jesus. But they keep altering the true Gospel or keep listening to improper teachers.

Paul goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden to give them a scriptural example of what he is talking about. Paul has said time and time again that the Gospel that he presented to the Corinthians was accurate and given to him by Jesus. They keep altering the Gospel taught by Paul because they were led astray by Satan, just like Eve in the Garden. Satan said to Eve, "*Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?*" Satan was saying to the Corinthians that doubted, "Is Paul's gospel really accurate? He didn't even walk with Jesus."

In verse 4, Paul says that if someone comes to them with a different message about Christ, then consider these things:

- a. Does their message teach about “*a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached?*”
- b. Does their message give you a “*different spirit from the Spirit you received?*”
- c. Is their message, “*a different gospel from the one you accepted?*”

Gusik says about the sentence at the end of verse 4, “You may well put up with it: The problem wasn’t so much that these false teachers had come among the Christians in Corinth. The problem was that the Corinthian Christians put up with them.”

⁵ I do not think I am in the least inferior to those “super-apostles.” ⁶ I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.

In verse 5, Paul compares himself to these false teachers by sarcastically calling them “super-apostles” or “most eminent apostles.” He isn’t insinuating in any way that he is less than these false teachers. He was mocking the false teachers for their claims or inaccurate gospels.

In verse 6, Paul says that his speaking may not be the best but his knowledge is unquestionable. God had prepared Paul for his apostleship from his birth. Paul could argue the Law with any Jew or member of the Sanhedrin. He studied under a member of the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, then on the road to Damascus, He was further taught by Jesus.

In verse 6, Paul says that he was willing to teach them but not to put on a show. While Terry and I were in Myrtle Beach a couple of week ago, we saw just what Paul is talking about here. We saw two evangelical preachers put on a show. They stirred emotion but without much substance. Then we saw Ken Ham from AIG who taught, but maybe too much.

⁷ Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.

“Someone in the church had mistaken Paul's refusal to take money as an indication that he considered himself inferior to others. The “super-apostles” were well paid for their efforts, but Paul offered only free service in Corinth.” Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians

In these verses, Paul said that he was given money by the other churches to live on while teaching in Corinth. Sometimes we think, if what we received was free then it obviously had lower value. Price does not always equal the true value.

Owens Corning had lots of groups that set the prices of their products. Occasionally, they would set a price high but people didn’t buy it because the true value didn’t equal the premium price. They

thought the high price meant people would think it was much better than the lower price product, not so.

When you truly think about it, Paul was offering something of high value, salvation, at no cost. What an amazing deal!

In verse 8, Paul says that he “robbed” other churches. He used the Greek word ‘sylaō’ which is a strong word for ‘rob’ or ‘to strip’ as in, stripping the possessions from a dead soldier. He felt strongly about taking an income from the other churches in order to teach the Corinthians for a year and a half. Paul was a hard worker but there must have been something to prevent him from usual work, tent making.

In verse 9, Paul tells them that as a missionary in Corinth, he relied on the support of the churches in Macedonia. Earlier in 2 Corinthians, Paul spoke of the willingness of the churches in Macedonia to give cheerfully. This is another example of their generosity.

¹⁰ As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. ¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

In verse 10, Paul says that as a true apostle, he will never stop boasting about the Gospel message that he taught. The Gospel message he taught to the Corinthians and for that matter, all of the churches that he planted, came directly from Jesus. He was not boasting about himself but the message that was in him from Christ.

In verse 11, Paul says that the reason for his boasting was that He wanted them to have the true salvation that comes from Jesus and not some altered promise of salvation that would come from a false teacher. Just as we want to see our loved ones in Heaven, Paul wanted to see the members of the Corinthian church in Heaven too. Why, because he loved them. He almost says it as an oath to God. “God knows that he loves them!”

¹² And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. ¹³ For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

In verse 12, Paul says that he will continue to “*cut the ground*” from under the false prophets that are watering down the Gospel or altering the Word of God. These false prophets are preaching for personal gain, both financial and reputation. Look around today and you see the same thing going on. There are pastors preaching a prosperity gospel or a lukewarm gospel just to “tickle the ears of their listeners”.

This verse makes me think of Matthew 7:15 where Jesus gave the warning, *“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”*

Sometimes it gets to be difficult to tell if the promises made by these false teachers or pastors are from Satan himself. “God wants you to prosper. He wants you to be happy and successful.”

In the second part of verse 12, Paul gives the reason they are teaching. They are looking for any opportunity to boast about what they have done and not what Jesus did.

In verse 13, Paul again pulls no punches. He says that these people are false prophets and deceitful workers. The phrase *“masquerading”* or *“disguised as apostles of Christ”* are the wolves in sheep’s clothing that Jesus warned about.

By definition, a true apostle of Jesus; it is only a calling from God. “They were never apostles of Christ, only they put themselves into such a shape and form, that they might have more advantage to deceive.” (Poole)

Jesus’ beloved disciple, John was having the same problem when he wrote his epistles. Read 1 John 4:1-5. John and Paul are warning people about the same thing but John was warning the believers to test every spirit.

In verse 14, Paul brings Satan into the mix just as he told the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:12, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* Jesus blasted His own people because they were the children of Satan and not the children of God (John 8:44).

These false teachers were altering the Gospel. Peter ran into the same thing. Peter too, recognized that the false teachers were from Satan. In 1 Peter 5:8-9, he said, *“8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”*

Men have always had trouble with the fact that Jesus was fully human and fully God. Their thinking is: Since Habakkuk 1:13 tells us that God cannot look upon sin and Jesus and God are one (John 10:30), then how could Jesus have a physical body and walk among sinful men. He must have appeared to have a physical body and He appeared to have suffered and died on the cross. This type of teaching was rampant during Paul’s life. It is related to agnosticism.

¹⁶ I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. ¹⁷ In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. ¹⁸ Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. ¹⁹ You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! ²⁰ In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves

you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face.²¹ To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

In verse 16, he reiterates that if they consider him a fool then he will act like a fool but he won't act like Jesus. Paul would rather talk about Jesus but he believes that he must brag about himself like the false teachers which he considers acting a fool. Back in 1 Corinthians 1:31, Paul quoted Jeremiah 9:24, "Therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" Paul brags about Jesus because Paul considers that man's accomplishments to pale in comparison to those of Jesus.

The accomplishments of men lead to self-elevation. Jesus' accomplishments glorified the Father and lead to salvation. Back in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul said, "*I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.*" Paul is about to become a fool to save these fools.

In verse 18, Paul says that the false teachers are boasting about what they have done, just as the world does then he will too.

In verse 19, he uses sarcasm. He says that they put up with the foolish because they are so wise. They have a bit of Mohammed Ali in them. He said, "It's hard to be humble when you're as great as I am."

In verse 20, Paul says that the troublemakers in the Corinthian church are willing to tolerate anything from the "super apostles" or false teachers. They are "*willing to put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face.*"

"The bondage Paul speaks of may indicate that these false apostles were legalists, trying to put people under the bondage of the Law. However, it is just as likely that the bondage Paul refers to is the personal domination and authority the *most eminent apostles* held over others. The emphasis on image and outward appearance is often coupled with an authoritarian approach to leadership, and this probably explains the bondage Paul refers to." (Guzik)

In verse 21, Paul says that he and his mission team were too weak to let someone do that to them. You can sense that Paul is getting fed up with these troublemakers. He is using more and more sarcasm. Paul says that whatever these false teachers are boasting about then he too will boast about what he has done.

²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in

the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

Paul is about to take off on his boasting about who he is and what he has accomplished. In verse 22, he says that if they say that they are Hebrews, Israelites and descendants of Abraham, so is he. As a Jew, Paul's pedigree was unmatched. He was a Jew's Jew.

In verse 23, Paul says, "When it comes to serving Christ, I am unmatched." He said, *"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again."*

In verse 24 – 27, Paul lists what he has suffered for Christ.

- a. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.
- b. Three times I was beaten with rods,
- c. Once I was pelted with stones,
- d. Three times I was shipwrecked,
- e. I spent a night and a day in the open sea,
- f. I have been constantly on the move.
- g. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.
- h. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep;
- i. I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food;
- j. I have been cold and naked.

In verse 28, Paul says that in addition to his physical suffering he has endured the daily stress of worrying about his churches. Mental and emotional stress can wear on a body as much or more than physical suffering. His concern for the churches is because he truly loves them. It is not that he doesn't trust God, he doesn't trust the people in the churches.

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. ³³ But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

Paul points out in verse 30 that he has boasted about things that show his weakness. He still goes back to boasting in God and Jesus. To Paul, it truly is not about him, it is about Him.

In verse 31, he says that “the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying.” It doesn’t matter whether men believe what he says, God knows the truth.

In verses 32 and 33, he gives one more example of his suffering to finish this chapter. Paul had to be “lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.” He did this in order to escape death for preaching the Gospel in Damascus.

“It illustrates with power the contrast between *Saul of Tarsus* and *Paul the Apostle*. Saul of Tarsus traveled to Damascus full of man’s power and authority, directed against God’s people. Paul the Apostle left Damascus humbly in a basket. Is there anything more descriptive of weakness than being let down in a basket over a wall? (Guzik)

“Could we think of anything more likely to rob a man of any sense of dignity than that?” (Morgan)