

I. Review – 2Cor. 11:1-3

- A. Paul feels he must become “foolish” and introduce his own “boasts” in order to reveal to the Corinthians some of the evidences of the Lord’s commendation of his ministry! (cf. 10:18)
- i. He tells the Corinthians to put up with his “foolishness” and gives them three reasons as to why.
 - ii. We looked at the first reason in verses 2-3:
 1. Paul felt the same divine or godly concern for the Corinthians.
 - a. Paul pictured himself as the father of a virgin bride (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15).
 - b. In ancient Jewish culture, marriage was done in two stages: betrothal and consummation.
 - c. The father of the betrothed woman would receive gifts as a safeguard for his daughter’s virginity.
 - d. His responsibility was to present his daughter as a virgin to the groom’s home.
 - e. Paul’s desire was to keep his daughter, the Corinthian church, pure until she would be given to Christ in the final stage of marriage.
 2. Paul’s critics were leading the Corinthians astray just as the serpent did to Eve in Genesis 3.
- B. Paul now goes on to give 2 more reasons as to why the Corinthians should put up with his “foolishness”...

II. Continuation

- A. 2Cor. 11:4 (ESV), *“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.”*
- i. Another Jesus
 1. The “Jesus” these critics proclaimed was a “Jesus” who promoted self, not self-denial.
 2. Proclaiming another Jesus will always result in a different spirit and gospel.
 - ii. A Different Spirit
 1. The spirit at work in these critics allows self-commendation, self-exaltation and creates divisions within the church.
 2. It is not the Spirit of God, whose work builds the church up to a harmonious, loving community.
 - iii. A Different Gospel
 1. It is not a gospel that saves (1Cor. 15:1-2) those who obey Christ (Heb. 5:9).
 - iv. And the sad thing is that the Corinthians allow themselves to be easily influenced by these deceivers.
 1. They *“put up with it readily enough”* or, in other words, they eat it up!
 2. And since they readily put up with these deceivers, they ought to put up with Paul’s “foolishness” (vs. 1).
 3. You see this happening constantly today, even in the Lord’s Church!
 4. Paul now gives a third reason as to why they should put up with him...
- B. 2Cor. 11:5 (ESV), *“Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.”*
- i. Paul starts to defend himself against his critics by adopting the persona of a fool.
 1. He compares himself to his critics, saying that he is not inferior to them.
 2. Paul uses irony (or sarcasm) by calling them *“super-apostles.”*
 - a. *“Super-apostles”* is an appropriate and highly ironic term for these critics who were so full of themselves and sought the allegiance of a church planting that was not their own.
 - b. These “super-apostles” were great orators!
- C. 2Cor. 11:6 (ESV), *“Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.”*

- i. Paul begins his comparison to these “*super-apostles*” by admitting that he may not measure up to them when it comes to oratory skills!
 1. This recalls the criticism made by his critics, saying that his speech is of no account, that is, it amounts to nothing (10:10).
 2. Paul may not have possessed the eloquent style and strategy of that of a skilled public speaker in his day.
 - a. In other words, he spoke like a common civilian.
 3. However, Paul was skilled in a knowledge which governed his life and doctrine.
 4. By knowledge, Paul was not saying that he was smart from a human perspective or that he was a walking encyclopedia.
 - a. Paul viewed such knowledge as causing one to be puffed up (1Cor. 8:1).
 - b. The knowledge he speaks of has to do with divinely inspired knowledge.
 - i. It is the knowledge of Christ that true apostles spread everywhere (cf. 2Cor. 2:14).
 - ii. It is the knowledge of the mystery of the gospel, which brings the promise of salvation to both Jew and Gentile (cf. Acts 11:18; Eph. 3:4-6; 2Peter 3:13).
 - iii. It is the knowledge that destroys human arguments and opinions that are set against the knowledge of God (cf. 2Cor. 10:5).
 5. Divine knowledge, not oratory skills, is what sets a true apostle apart from the others.
 - a. Signs and wonders were done to confirm the messengers as possessing inspired knowledge.
 - i. Consider the following passages...
 1. Mark 16:20 (ESV), “*And they [the apostles] went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them [the apostles] and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.*”
 2. Acts 2:42-43 (ESV), “*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ *And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.*”*
 3. Acts 14:3 (ESV), “*So they [Paul and Barnabas] remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*”
 4. Romans 15:18 (ESV), “*For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God...*”
 - ii. The Corinthians have certainly witnessed the signs and wonders that accompanied Paul’s preaching (cf. 12:12).
 - i. And given his long personal history with the Corinthians, not only in bringing the gospel to them and living with them for 18 months, but knowing him well and witnessing the signs and miracles, how can some of them be so easily taken in by these critics who were promoting a different Jesus, spirit and gospel than what Paul taught?