

I. Review: 2Cor. 11:13-15

A. Paul launches a direct attack against his critics

i. Paul describes his rivals as false apostles and deceitful workmen (missionaries).

1. They claim to be servants of righteousness but their conduct was anything but righteous!

a. Instead of nurturing the church that Paul planted, these deceitful missionaries sought to destroy the church's founder by convincing them that:

i. He was a fickle man (cf. 2Cor. 1:15ff).

ii. He was crazy (cf. 2Cor. 5:13).

iii. He was unspiritual - of the flesh (cf. 2Cor. 10:2).

iv. He was weak in appearance, bold in his letters and unskillful in speech (cf. 2Cor. 10:1, 10; 11:6).

v. He didn't care for the Corinthians because he refused their financial support while with them (cf. 2Cor. 11:7-11).

vi. He deceitfully used Titus and another brother to take money from them for his personal use under the guise that it was for the poor saints (cf. 2Cor. 12:16ff).

ii. God will judge them according to their deeds (2Cor. 5:10).

II. Continuation

A. In verse 1, Paul prepped the church for his foolish boasting but diverted a little when he defended his position regarding receiving financial support from the Corinthians and in the revealing the true identities of his critics.

B. Now he continues his "foolish speech" which began in verse 1...

i. 2Cor. 11:16 (ESV), "*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.*"

1. Paul stressed that he was not a fool but was only speaking as one to make his point.

2. It is good to note that the word "fool" does not mean someone who is not very smart or acts like a silly circus clown.

a. In the context, a fool is a person who boasts in himself as implied in this verse and the next...

ii. 2Cor. 11:17-18 (ESV), "*What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool.*"¹⁸ *Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast.*"

1. Paul makes it clear that the Lord's apostles do not boast of themselves nor does the Lord approve of such men.

2. But if boasting in oneself is what it takes to get the Corinthians' attention, then that is what Paul will do!

a. However, he joins in the foolish game reluctantly because they drove him to it (cf. 12:11).

iii. 2Cor. 11:19-21a (ESV), "*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!*"

1. Paul is using sarcasm here...

a. Paul in a sense is telling the Corinthians that they claim to be wise and yet they embraced those who were deceitful workers!

i. They freely accepted those who proclaimed their own merits and attainments!

ii. They embraced those who...

1. Enslaved them by their false arguments and lofty opinion!

2. They allowed themselves to be devoured by giving money to these messengers of Satan!

- iii. These “wise” Corinthians readily embraced the superior attitudes (i.e., airs) of these critics!
 - b. These critics had power over some of the Corinthians!
 - i. However, it was the power of coercion, not the power of the cross, which liberates and transforms the soul into the image of Christ.
 - c. Sarcastically, Paul is saying to them, “Shame on me and my companions! We are too weak to treat you that way!”
 - i. In other words, Paul is really saying that he is not ashamed for treating the Corinthians in a God-glorifying manner!
- C. Paul now is ready to launch his own boasting to counteract the extravagant claims of his critics...
 - i. First, he starts with his ancestry...
 - 1. 2Cor. 21b-22 (ESV), “*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.*”
 - 2. Are they Hebrews?
 - a. Are they pure-blooded Jews?
 - b. Do they speak and read the language of the Sacred Scriptures?
 - c. So am I! I’m not a Hellenistic Jew, Paul says!
 - i. Hellenistic Jews spoke Greek as opposed to the Hebrews
 - 1. Acts 6:1 (ESV), “*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.*”
 - 2. Acts 6:1 (GWT), “*At that time, as the number of disciples grew, Greek-speaking Jews complained about the Hebrew-speaking Jews. The Greek-speaking Jews claimed that the widows among them were neglected every day when food and other assistance was distributed.*”
 - 3. Are they Israelites?
 - a. Did they descend from Jacob?
 - b. Did they grow up in a traditional Jewish home?
 - c. So am I, Paul says!
 - 4. Are they offspring of Abraham?
 - a. Does their family tree trace themselves back to father Abraham?
 - b. Mine does too! I’m not a proselyte (convert to Judaism), implies Paul!
- ii. 2Cor. 23a (ESV), “*Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—*”
 - 1. This statement shows how extremely uncomfortable Paul is for two reasons
 - a. He just allowed himself to call these critics “servants of Christ” for the sake of discussion.
 - i. This must strike him as a statement of profanity since he just called them false apostles, deceitful workers and servants of Satan!
 - b. Also, he is putting himself in the position of boasting – “*I’m a better one!*”-- which makes him uneasy, thus the statement, “*I am talking like a madman!*”
 - c. Now, unlike Paul’s critics who boasted in their achievements and merits, Paul boasts in his hardships and difficulties as a true servant of Christ...

iii. 2Cor. 23b-28 (ESV), “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.”

1. We will address each of these next time!