

PRODIGAL

CHURCH II

A SERIES IN 2 CORINTHIANS



PRODIGAL CHURCH (SEASON 2)

Community Group Study Guide 2 Corinthians 12:11-21– Week of January 23, 2021

Introduction

- Is authority inherently good/bad? Is submission inherently good/bad?
- Throughout 2nd Corinthians, Paul has been teaching that you cannot judge spiritual authority by outward appearances.
- Instead of boasting in his outward strengths, as a Christian and as a leader in the church, Paul boasts in his weaknesses. Bringing attention to such weaknesses is a means to draw people to the power of God working in him and through him in his life and ministry. Evidence of God's power moving in Paul through his weaknesses is validation of his Apostleship.
- All authority is a gift. Nobody has any authority of their own. See John 19:10-11.
- Authority is a tool, not a toy. Used improperly, it can cause harm and destruction, but, used properly, it can also be a means for the flourishing and building up of those subject to it. See 2 Cor. 10:8, 12:19.

Christlike Authority is Evidenced by the Spirit (11-12)

- Two signs that validate Paul's authority over the Corinthians church
 1. His "A"postolic authority was evidenced by signs before the Church; he, therefore, should not have to make a case for it. See 1 Cor. 9:1-3, Acts 18:8b-11, Acts 19:10-12, 2 Cor. 3:1-3.
 - The Corinthians had much evidence to submit to Paul as an "A"postle. True leaders of the church today show their legitimacy by submitting to the teachings of the "A"postles.
 2. Paul's Christlike authority was evidenced by humble and confident submission to Christ. See 2 Cor. 12:11b; 1 Cor. 15:9-10. When you see this kind of leadership it doesn't look the way people expect a leader to look. Pastor Shane gave his example of the confident yet humble witness and authority of his large friend Jim. He never had an official position of authority in the church, but his life was clearly marked by the power of one wholly submitted to the Holy Spirit of God in Christ.
- The Lord looks upon the heart of his people, not their outward appearance or identity. See 1 Cor. 13:1-8, 1 Samuel 16:7 (think about David in comparison to Saul), physical description of the Apostle Paul from Onesiphorus.

Christlike Authority is Expressed like a Parent (13-18)

- Satan tempts us to misuse our authority through flattery. See 2 Peter 2:1-3. Paul loved the Corinth church as a parent, and didn't flatter them with false words (v14), which would have been much easier. With a more faithful church, Paul gave gentle words and nurtured them in the manner of a nursing mother 1 Thes. 2:5-12. He would have preferred to have spoken to the Corinth church in this manner.
- How do you respond when people are resistant to your authority?
- The temptations are to abandon through abdication and/or domineer through coercion. The false teachers were exploiting the church and domineering in their rule of the church (2 Cor. 11:19-21). Paul, on the other hand, approaches them as a father, in the way of the words of 1 Peter 5:1-5.

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To understand that all authority is a gift and a tool to be used for God's glory.

Heart

To submit ourselves to Christ's authority more deeply so that we might enjoy freedom under his rule and exercise authority more faithfully and effectively in our lives.

Hands

To steward our authority as Christians, pastors, leaders, workers with tough and tender Christlike love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next **Membership Meeting** will be on **February 20**.

Sign up to join a **service team** here: <https://brookline.mosaicboston.com/serve>.

The next **Baptism Seminar** will be **this Sunday, January 30, at 1PM** in the Temple basement. Sign up at brookline.mosaicboston.com/baptism.

- v19-21: Paul avoids domineering the church, and also avoids the sin of passivity toward the church in its sin. He's willing to discipline as needed, like a father with his children. See 2 Cor. 2:4; Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-26. True love and discipline go together; it confronts sin precisely because it cares. Mat. 18:12-21: Before giving us the instructions for discipline, Christ gives us the heart of discipline. A good parent longs for a child to not just feel good, but to be good and do good.
- Deep down, we all look for tough and tender love and authority in our lives. Pastor Shane benefitted strongly from such love from his taekwondo instructor, who didn't just train him and discipline in the gym but held him accountable with matters of life.

Christlike Authority is Foolish yet Effective

- When you hear about it on the outside, Christlike authority sounds foolish and twisted, but when you see it at work its wisdom and power is apparent. This is the kind of leadership that was modeled by Jesus Christ and practiced by his disciples.
- Coercion can change the actions of people, but only the love of Christ can change a person's heart. Coercion can overpower an enemy, but only love can turn an enemy into a friend or brother.
- Paul wasn't afraid to practice this self-sacrificial, Christlike authority because he knew that it was powerful. He knew that it could transform the world because it transformed his own stubborn heart. See 1 Tim. 1:12-17.
- We should all strive to have the humility of Paul, by constantly meditating upon how patient, gracious and merciful the Lord has been to us. Similarly, we should seek to have the confidence of Paul, as we meditate upon the fact that the Lord has called and appointed us to preach the gospel in his service, as he is ruling all authority of heaven and earth at the right hand of the Father.
- We should have the heart to act and boast in our weaknesses so that God's power might be made perfect in them.
- Conclusion: 1 Cor. 1:18-31

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

1. Does anything from the sermon or text stick out to you in a fresh manner?
2. What is the position of authority that is given to all Christians? How do you see God's mercy and grace on display when you think about this?
3. How well are you doing as a steward of all of the positions of authority to which you have been called?
4. How do you typically respond when somebody is resistant to your authority?
5. What should church members look for first and foremost in evaluating the legitimacy of the authority of their pastors and church leaders?
6. What does it mean that Christlike authority is expressed like a parent?
7. Describe a person in your life who has modeled Christlike authority well.
8. What does it mean that Christlike authority is foolish yet effective?
9. Why is it an act of faith to model tough and tender Christlike authority in our world today?