

2 Cor 12:11-21

11 I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. 12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. 13 For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Paul was not very happy since the Corinthians had forced his hand

- into disclosing his heavenly experience.

As we come to the end of 2nd Corinthians

- we see that Paul has found himself
- in a position of defense.

they forced his hand into boasting

- which was something he didn't want to do.

Paul told them in his first letter that his:

1 Cor 2:4-5

4 And my speech and my his preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

11 I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.

Paul was stepping in for the Corinthians and they didn't come to his defense. He felt they should defend him against the false apostles and they weren't doing that.

He then reminds them of his ministry among them, he says, for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles,

Other translations call these eminent apostles, "super-apostles."

- he may have been referring to the likes of
- James and John and Peter whom
- Galatians 2:9 says were the pillar apostles.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Paul is speaking somewhat sarcastically here.

- I know that I didn't charge you for anything
- as the others did, forgive me for not doing so!"

Paul didn't expect, nor did he want anything for ministering to the church in Corinth.

14 Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you.

- This is the true heart of a servant.
- He was there for the body.

For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

Paul says that he would gladly spend and be spent for your souls.

To spend and be spent is the same verb used

- when speaking of the woman in the book of Mark
- who had a flow of blood for 12 years.

She'd spent all of her money

- and was no better in the end than the beginning

But, she gave everything she had

- because she desperately wanted to be healed.

Paul gave everything he had,

- for an entire church.

He was persistent.

- He pursued the Corinthians,
- spiritually speaking.

What was Paul's pursuit? What was he after? He says he was spent for their soul. What did he receive in return? Nothing!

In Luke 15

- Jesus spoke in parables to teach that God pursues us!

Jesus said if a man had 100 sheep and lost one he'd leave the 99 and go in pursuit of the lost one. Then after he found it, he would ask his neighbors to rejoice with him over the lost sheep.

In the same chapter, He speaks of a woman having ten silver coins, and if she loses one coin, she lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it?

Again, this woman much like the parable of the sheep,

- After finding the coin
- calls her friends and neighbors
- to rejoice with her
- because she found the lost coin.

In both cases Jesus said there would be more rejoicing in heaven over the one sinner who repents.

Why the two parables? So that we'd understand that God pursues us!

We love Him because He first loved us!

God has been pursuing man since the very beginning.

- Adam and Eve run away from God
- Then God set out on His first missionary effort to find them

The Lord wants us to pursue Him as well,

- When we do, we will find Him. He says so in Jeremiah 29.

God is the initiator of our spiritual pursuit of Him.

Ps 53:2

2 God looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

Jesus said:

John 6:44

44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 3:16-18

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And you know, God in His love for us never gives up on us. The Israelites were stubborn.

Isa 65:1-3

1 I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me;
I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me.

I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
to a nation that was not called by my name.

2 I spread out my hands all the day
to a rebellious people,
who walk in a way that is not good,
following their own devices;

3 a people who provoke me
to my face continually,
ESV

God does not give up!

16 But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!

The intruders were gossiping and spreading rumors of Paul.

- They accused him of being crafty (capable of anything).
- They also accused him of being cunning or of trickery.
- The term "trickery" refers to bait used to catch a fish.

The intruders in Corinth had the audacity of accusing Paul

- of taking advantage of the church.

But if you'll recall from 1st Corinthians,

- he insisted the collection be taken prior to
- his arrival so he wouldn't have to handle the money.

Secondly, he instructed the Corinthians

- to appoint their own representatives
- to accompany the collection.

And third, he sent Titus to finish the collection effort rather than going himself.

To those who did not believe him, he calls on them to bring forth any evidence they have against him.

So he asks a few rhetorical questions of them.

17 Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? (did we exploit you with intent to cheat?)

18 I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?

19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification.

Paul made sure they were above reproach.

Why, because he says in verse 19 that we speak before God in Christ.

There is nothing on this earth

- that is worth gaining thru deceit
- in exchange of losing the reward
- you'll receive for your honesty.

20 For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; 21 lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.

The success of a church is not in the size of the church.

Success is measured in changed lives.

2 Cor 13:5-6

5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified. 6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

There is a real possibility that churches today

- including ours if we're not on our toes,

There is a real possibility that churches

- will fail the test of verses 20 & 21.

Paul was speaking to Christians in the church. Look at the list of sins he was afraid he might find the church involved in when he returned to Corinth.

Contentions: strife, **we should avoid foolish disputes.**

Jealousies: People wanting to make war upon the good they see in others.

Outbursts of Wrath: Bursts of anger at church at home or elsewhere.

Selfish Ambition: It represents a motive of self-interest. James 3:16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

Backbiting: to speak evil or slanderous of another.

Peter categorized this with malice, deceit, hypocrisy, evil and evil speaking.

Whisperings: hateful gossip

Conceits: to puff up thru pride.

Tumults: uncertainty of residence. Prov 26:28 A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin.

Notice what Paul did so cleverly in verse 19.

- He dispelled any notion
- that he himself was on trial.

He didn't want the Corinthians to think

- he was defending himself
- or those with him.

There he said, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? Of course not, we speak before God and Christ.

Paul didn't want the Corinthians deceived by the false teachers.

He didn't want to arrive in Corinth and have to discipline the body of Christ.

He didn't want to prove them wrong

- for thinking that he was bold in letter
- and not in person.

He didn't complain about

- his thorn in the flesh,
- the suffering he experienced.

He didn't question God, "Oh God,

- Why do I have to have to carry this burden?
- Why can't I be like everyone else!"

Because Paul, you're not like everyone else.

- You've been set apart

God didn't owe him an explanation,

- His grace was enough.

Do you think you'd feel better if you knew why

- this or that happened or did not happen in your life.

What would that change by you knowing.

We don't need to know the reasons,

- we just need the resources
- and the Lord told Paul, "My Grace is Sufficient!"

The Lord supplies everything that we need.

- Not everything we want, but what we need!

When we come to the well, to Jesus,

- and ask for a drink,
- He doesn't give us muddy water,
- He gives us fresh living water.

Paul now issues a warning to the church starting in chapter 13,

2 Cor 13:1-4

1 This will be the third time I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." 2 I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare — 3 since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. 4 For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.

Paul is like, hey, I'm on my way. Get your act together before I arrive. Some previously said that Paul was weak in person and bold in his letters.

Now he issues a warning to the church

- that Christ was crucified in weakness
- but He rose in power,

and you may think we are weak but we too will rise in power.

When Paul says in verse 4 that Christ was crucified in weakness

- he's saying that Christ doesn't immediately
- impose the proper punishment.

Then he issues an exhortation in verse 5.

2 Cor 13:5

5 Examine yourselves (1) as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves (2). Do you not know yourselves (3), that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.

Paul was continually under scrutiny. Now he's putting them to the test. Is your walk genuine?

Examine yourself before the Lord. Are your motives pure!

6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

2 Cor 13:7-10

7 Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete (to be mature, that you would grow up in the Lord). 10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

2 Cor 13:11-14

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

13 All the saints greet you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.