

2 Corinthians 11

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 11? We only have a few more studies left in this epistle as there are only 13 chapters. Once we finish with this study, we'll go back to the OT as we go through the Bible in order and begin our study in 2 Kings, sometime in July.

Last time in chapter 10 we saw the spiritual warfare that takes place, and in chapter 11 we see how deceit in the church creeps in as Paul goes on the offensive, combating the false teachers at Corinth. His mission is to guide this church back to the centrality of Christ.

And the title of this mornings message is AN UNFORTUNATE RESUME
LET'S PRAY

STORY OF SWAPPED CAR KEYS

See even though the key looked like it was right, it was totally wrong.

As long as there's been truth, falsehood has never been far behind. Sadly, even honest ministries have always been surrounded, and even outnumbered by fakes-artificial, deceptive and dangerous fakes at that.

Tragically, people have often had trouble discerning the difference between truth and error because they often bear a similar resemblance.

1 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. Paul asked the Corinthians to bear with him because he's going to spend significant time speaking of his credentials—think of his spiritual resume. Paul felt foolish giving his resume, because remember—Paul had planted the church at Corinth!

Not only did he plant it, we learn in Acts 18 Paul had ministered in Corinth for 18 months!

But after Paul left, false teachers crept into the church. The Corinthian church became enamored and fooled by these smooth talkers.

So Paul was in a dilemma. He doesn't want to talk about himself, but if he didn't speak up, the false teachers in Corinth might continue to lead the Corinthian believers astray.

As a spokesman for the truth, Paul couldn't stay silent; he had to speak up. In this case, speaking up for the truth meant defending his own credentials. If his own ministry was discredited, as these false teachers were trying to do, the gospel Paul preached would also be discredited, plummeting the church into apostasy.

2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. Here in verse 2 Paul provides a vivid illustration, viewing himself as a father, the Corinthian believers as a daughter who's about to be a bride, and Jesus as the bridegroom.

Imagine for a moment you were the best man at your friend's wedding, and you saw the bride sneak off with another man. You'd hurt for your friend right? You'd feel the betrayal.

This is how Paul felt when the Christians at Corinth were disloyal to Jesus. It impacted him deeply, so now Paul is about to open his heart and give the most personal verses of all the words he penned...

3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity^[fn] that is in Christ. And Paul was right to worry - for Satan is skillful. This is why we're told in **Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

Remember Satan's effective strategy in the Garden of Eden? Satan's first step was to plant a seed of doubt in Eve's mind concerning God's word, God's instruction, and God's character.

Genesis 3 1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Satan cleverly suggested to Eve that God didn't really want what was best for her and Adam. In fact Satan said that God was actually holding something back that was good for them.

Of course the devil's lie directly contradicted the main point of chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, specifically, that God would provide everything that was good for mankind.

From the very beginning, Satan has tried to undermine God's people by undermining God's Word. And Satan is really skilled today not just in attacking God's word, but by convincing people to neglect God's Word.

See when folks neglect God's word, they don't know who God is, and they become susceptible to false teaching!

One more thing about the wiles of the enemy. As we saw in chapter 10, the warfare the enemy wages begins in the mind. Satan loves to get the focus of our thoughts on ourselves. How others treat us, what others say about us, we spend so much time wondering what others think of us. And without realizing it, our

focus turns to all about us. That's a clever ploy from the enemy. **Colossians 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! Paul was worried about their lack of discernment. They'd already revealed how gullible they were by putting up with the false teachers who'd lied about him. So Paul's concern here is that the Corinthians will believe the false doctrines which distort the truth about Jesus.

The church faces the same problem today. It's not surprising that there are false teachers in the church today; the problem is that the church puts up with them and embraces them. **2 Timothy 4 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

So to drive the point home about the truth of Jesus, Paul dives into his accomplishments here, not to garner praise, but to remind the Corinthians of the truth he was more than qualified to share.

5 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Most scholars think Paul is speaking sarcastically of the false apostles who claimed to be superior to Paul.

In the original language, the idea behind the phrase most eminent apostles is “extra-super apostles.” Paul probably writes sarcastically in reference to those who thought of and promoted themselves as “super-duper apostles.”

6 Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested^[fn] among you in all things.

In the Greek culture the ability to speak in a polished, sophisticated, entertaining way was highly valued. It didn't matter to Paul that he didn't have these oratory skills because he wasn't concerned with meeting people's standards for a “polished” or “entertaining” speaker. Paul's chief concern was making sure he faithfully preached the gospel!

A story is told about a dinner party where the guests were expected to stand after the meal and recite something for the group. A famous Shakespearean actor was present, and he recited the twenty-third Psalm with great dramatic flair and emotion, and sat down to great applause.

Then a very simple man got up and began to recite the same Psalm. He wasn't very eloquent, so at first people thought it was a little funny. But his presentation was straight from his heart, so when he finished the group sat in respectful silence. It was obvious that the simple man's presentation was more powerful than the actor's, and afterwards the actor told him: “I know the Psalm, but you know the Shepherd.”

Knowing God more intimately on a personal basis MUST be the priority of every Christian, but especially every Bible teacher.

The reason Pastors wander and fall away is they know the Bible theologically, but they don't know more of Jesus themselves.

I could care less if you have a doctorate or masters degree- means nothing to me. I want to know about your day to day walk with Jesus. That's what matters.

7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?

While living in Corinth, Paul worked as a tentmaker, refusing to draw a salary from the Corinthians so that no one could possibly accuse him of being in ministry for the money.

But instead of recognizing the integrity in this approach, the false teachers were saying Paul didn't draw a salary because he didn't deserve one.

In the culture of that day, if a public speaker didn't take money for his speaking he was often regarded as a poor speaker, with worthless teaching.

The Corinthian's who despised Paul were so worldly in their thinking they actually thought Paul might be in sin because he preached the gospel of God free of charge!

Story of guy who charged for studies?

Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead,[fn] cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

8-9

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. Paul explains that other churches in Macedonia, which would've been Berea, Philippi and others, were supporting him so he wouldn't be a burden to the church at Corinth.

Have you ever had folks question, doubt and twist your good intentions? It always hurts!

You can feel the hurt dripping from Paul's quill as he writes!

10-11

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows The false teachers built their ministry based upon flashy words and earning a pretty penny for their speaking. This is why Paul said earlier in 2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

Paul hoped that his consistent integrity with money would be one of the indicators that he was a preacher of the truth.

12 But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.

These false preachers wanted to be recognized as “super-apostles”, but in reality, they couldn’t even be considered Paul’s equals. They weren’t willing to suffer as Paul had to present the gospel at great personal cost.

Why is this such a big deal?

13-14

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

I find it interesting that so many people who talk about near-death experiences report seeing a warm, bright light beckoning them. The implication being that if we are “good people,” regardless of the route we choose, we’ll all make it to the bright light at the end of the tunnel.

But that bright light may not be the Father of Lights. It may be the one who transforms himself to appear as an angel of light.

Because Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, we should be wary about the conclusions of those who write about those near-death experiences. Next week in chapter 12 we’ll see that Paul couldn’t even describe heaven, yet all these people can write books on what they saw?

Don't expect Satan to appear in red leotards, and horns, and a pointed tail carrying a pitchfork. Satan is too sophisticated to come at us the way we expect.

There's a fascinating section that talks about what it'll be like when we see Satan

Isaiah 14:12 "How you are fallen from heaven,

O Lucifer,[fn] son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground,

You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart:

'I will ascend into heaven,

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation

On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,

I will be like the Most High.'

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,

To the lowest depths of the Pit.

16 "Those who see you will gaze at you,

And consider you, saying:

'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,

Who shook kingdoms,

17 Who made the world as a wilderness

And destroyed its cities,

Who did not open the house of his prisoners?'

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. If Satan can appear as "an angel of light,"

his demons can appear with “Pastor” or “reverend” attached to their name.

We need to be rooted and grounded in the word of God.

Acts 17 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

16 I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little. 17 What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

Paul says ‘because you’re questioning my authority as an apostle, I’m going to have to boast, but don’t blame the Lord for my boasting.’

This is fascinating, because all too often, the Lord gets blamed for the erratic behavior of weirdo’s who claim to be controlled by God. It’s an embarrassment to the Christian community when people do bizarre things in the name of the Lord.

Here, Paul seems to go out of his way to do otherwise.

18 Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. 19 For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! Again, Paul uses biting sarcasm. If the Corinthian Christians are wise enough to put up with so many fools, surely they can listen to Paul for a while!

20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. 21 To our shame I say that we were too

weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold—I speak foolishly—I am bold also. So not only were the false teachers laying spiritual and financial burdens on the Corinthians—they were evidently striking some as well.

But folks, that's not Jesus!

Isaiah 42:3 A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench;
He will bring forth justice for truth.

See Jesus uses even the weakest instrument and fans even the faintest flame of any who desire to be used by Him. At our weakest moment, at our worst moments the Lord is there to comfort us, not beat us. Because that's not love.

The most eminent apostles were bold in proclaiming their greatness. So, Paul will be bold about the things that prove him to be a true apostle

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Those who were trying to undo Paul's ministry were evidently Jewish teachers who said, it's not just trusting in the work of Christ on the cross, but you must embrace Judaism, legalism, ritualism, and regulations.

There's a tendency within us to want to live under legalism and ritualism. We want to keep score and check boxes for God's approval! But that's not the gospel. Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, Paul worked exceptionally hard in stripes above measure, beatings in prisons more frequently, jailed for his beliefs in deaths often. Paul constantly faced the chance of death

24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. A single beating of thirty-nine lashes was often enough to kill a man. Paul endured such a beating five times

25-27

25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— In our modern world, we are isolated from so many of the difficulties Paul faced. We can get water and food and warmth so much more easily than Paul ever could. Paul lived a hard life as a missionary, traveling and preaching the gospel.

But it's critical to recognize just having a hard life didn't make Paul a true minister of Christ. A lot of people have hard lives but are in no way servants of Jesus.

The difference is that for Paul, all these perils and hardships were freely chosen because he could have lived differently if he wanted to. But he didn't want to. He wanted to serve Jesus, and if these hardships were part of serving Jesus, he would accept them.

What about us this morning? What are we willing to endure because of our love for Jesus?

28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? In addition to all the stressful perils Paul previously mentioned, he lived daily with another burden. Paul lived with a deep concern for all the churches.

30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. Rather than boasting about his strengths, as his critics did, Paul boasted in his weaknesses, humiliations, and sufferings. These afflictions had come upon him as he had faithfully served others and Christ. They were evidence that God had supernaturally sustained Paul through countless discouraging circumstances.

Paul's boast was that he resembled the Suffering Servant; his life was like that of Christ.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands

Remember before he became a Christian, Paul had come to Damascus with his head held high. The high priest had given him the authority to arrest Christians in that city.

After he became a Christian, Paul was forced to sneak out of the city of Damascus under the cover of darkness. He couldn't even walk through the city gates, much less command the authority and respect of the city elders he previously had. Things had changed dramatically for Paul hadn't they?

Like the Corinthians, we modern Christians tend to evaluate a person's success on the basis of the world's standards. Rather than playing down the events in his ministry that made him look inferior, Paul emphasized them, because they glorified God and God's amazing grace.

In view of all of Paul's calamities, there is no way that he could have been so effective unless God was with him