

2nd Corinthians Chapters 11

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Updated 11/14/2023 Printed 11/22/2023

Introduction:

Burton Coffman summarizes chapter 11:

This chapter is sometimes called Paul's Boasting Chapter. A large number of different subjects are touched upon, and it ranks as one of the most interesting passages in the New Testament.

PAUL EXTENDS HIS "FOOLISH" ARGUMENT

2 Corinthians 11:

(1) I hope you will put up with a little more of my foolishness. Please bear with me. (2) For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God Himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband -- Christ.

- Paul next shifts into his **foolishness** mode. In fact, he has been in this mode already because he is speaking of **a little more** of it.
- Paul is putting Proverbs 26 into play:

Be sure to answer the foolish arguments of fools, or they will become wise in their own estimation.
Proverbs 26:5

- He is constrained to break his normal rules of not bragging. He had a deep **jealousy** for the Corinthian church like that of God Himself experienced when His territory was threatened.

They stirred up His jealousy by worshiping foreign gods; they provoked His fury with detestable deeds. Deuteronomy 32:16

In order to properly grasp the nature of God, we must take into account His **jealousy**. He is a God of love and grace, but He is also a jealous God. Exodus 34:14, 20:5; Deuteronomy 6:15, 29:20. He punished those who worshiped foreign gods. Paul was also **jealous** of his efforts with the Corinthian church when someone tried to destroy the product his work. His was a **jealousy** justified by his concern for the honor and purity of the church.

(3) But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent.

- Paul's illustration is drawn from the second tablet of Genesis (2:1 - 5:1a, written by Adam)) In Genesis chapter three the serpent questioned the word of God:

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

Genesis 3:1.



Artist unknown

The serpent did not *deny* what God had said, he only raised *a question* about it.

(4) You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the One we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the One you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.

- Just as Eve had believed the serpent without evidence, so those whom Paul had won to **Jesus** were believing the local liars even though the **Jesus** they described was a different **Jesus** and a **different kind of Spirit** than the one Paul had preached. So the **gospel** was a **different** one than they had at first **believed**.

(5) But I don't consider myself inferior in any way to these "super apostles" who teach such things. (6) I may be unskilled as a speaker, but I'm not lacking in knowledge. We have made this clear to you in every possible way.

- Paul did not claim to be the world's finest **speaker**, but he knew *what he was talking about* because he was God's man and had been assigned to this task directly by the Lord Himself.
- Hear **Burton Coffman**:

The various references in these epistles to "wisdom of words," "wisdom of men," "excellency of speech," etc., are precise and exact designations of the bombastic, worthless oratory of the Greeks

(7) Was I wrong when I humbled myself and honored you by preaching God's Good News to you without expecting anything in return?

- Paul was not paid by the church at Corinth, either in the beginning of his stay or after the church was formed. In this, he was humbling himself and honoring them.

(8) I "robbed" other churches by accepting their contributions so I could serve you at no cost.

- **William MacDonald** states it very well:

The expression, "I robbed other churches," is a figure of speech known as hyperbole. It is an exaggerated statement designed to produce a real effect on the mind.

Paul does not mean he literally robbed other churches, of course, but it simply means that while he was serving the Lord at Corinth he received financial assistance from other churches so that he might serve the Corinthians without any remuneration at all from them.

(9) And when I was with you and didn't have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be.

- Being overweight from overeating was not Paul's problem. There were times that he couldn't buy food or pay his rent, yet he refused to be a financial liability (or even take what he was owed) from the Corinthians. A **burden** he was not.

(10) As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one in all of Greece will ever stop me from boasting about this.

- It was not possible to get Paul to not **boast** about his freedom from being paid by the Corinthian church.

(11) Why? Because I don't love you? God knows that I do. (12) But I will continue doing what I have always done. This will undercut those who are looking for an opportunity to boast that their work is just like ours.

- Paul's critics could say that he didn't **love** them because he refused to be paid for preaching among them.

(13) These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. (14) But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

- In verse 5 Paul called his opponents “super apostles.” Now he takes another step and calls them **false apostles**. They are actually claiming to be **apostles of Christ**.
- **Satan** is smart and wears a **disguise**. He wore a **disguise** while tempting Eve and he wears one now. He is not a horned, evil looking red creature. He appears as a spokesperson for God, an **angel of light**. He might carry a Bible and quote from it as he did in Matthew 4:6. His purpose is to raise questions about God’s commands. Raising questions may be enough to keep a believer from obeying the Lord just like it did for Eve.

(15) So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

- The outcome for these professed angels of light will be **punishment** from the Lord. They lead others astray and that is wicked.

In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.

2 Peter 2:3

PAUL’S CREDENTIALS AS AN APOSTLE

(16) Again I say, don't think that I am a fool to talk like this. But even if you do, listen to me, as you would to a foolish person, while I also boast a little. (17) Such boasting is not from the Lord, but I am acting like a fool. (18) And since others boast about their human achievements, I will, too.

- Paul was on a **boasting** jag and he was continuing. Even if his critics thought that he was a **fool** for **talking** this way, listen anyway. It is true that the **Lord** did not **boast** like this, but Paul is up against men who **boasted** of their achievements, so he would continue in the same way.

(19) After all, you think you are so wise, but you enjoy putting up with fools! (20) You put up with it when someone enslaves you, takes everything you have, takes advantage of you, takes control of everything, and slaps you in the face.

- Paul continues, using satire. These **wise** critics put up with **fools** all of the time. They were **enslaved** by them. Acts 15:10. The false apostles took their money, took **advantage** of them, took **control** of them and **slapped** them in the **face**.

(21) I'm ashamed to say that we've been too "weak" to do that! But whatever they dare to boast about -- I'm talking like a fool again -- I dare to boast about it, too.

- Paul affirms that he had been **too "weak"** to treat them like the false apostles had. They had **boasted** and Paul is about to add to his **boasting**.

(22) Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

- Credential of being a **Hebrew**. Paul expands his meaning of being a **Hebrew** in Philippians. He was as **Hebrew** as one can get:

I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin -- a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. (6) I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for

righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

Philippians 3:5-6

Paul's critics claimed they were **Hebrews** but Paul had the ultimate credentials.

- Credential of being an **Israelite**. Paul was member of the nation of God's people. He spoke of this while writing to the Roman Church:

I ask, then, has God rejected His own people, the nation of Israel? Of course not! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham and a member of the tribe of Benjamin. Romans 11:1

But not all in **Israel** have obeyed in order to be saved:

So this is the situation: Most of the people of Israel have not found the favor of God they are looking for so earnestly. A few have -- the ones God has chosen -- but the hearts of the rest were hardened. Romans 11:7

- Credential of being **descended from Abraham**.

God had promised physical Canaan to the descendants of Abraham *if they kept the covenant*:

"And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God."

Then God said to Abraham, "Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. Genesis 17:8-9

But **Abraham** knew there was more than a luscious and productive land in Canaan. It was also a proxy for something far greater:

And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith -- for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. Hebrews 11:9-10

PAUL'S CREDENTIALS WERE VASTLY SUPERIOR

(23) Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served Him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again.

- This phase of comparison was incredibly different. Paul had **worked harder**, been **put in prison more often**, been **whipped** innumerable times and **faced death** over and over.

(24) Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea.

- Specifically, Paul had been **given thirty-nine lashes** on **five** different occasions. (He had a memory for detail.) **Three times** he was **beaten with rods** (Acts 16:22) and was **stoned once** (Acts 14:19). He was **shipwrecked three times** (the shipwreck of Acts 27 was later) and **spent a night** floating in the **sea**. Most of these events are not recorded.

(26) I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not.

- The **danger from a river** includes drowning. **Robbers** want the money every traveler carried, even if they had to kill for it. **Dangers** from the **Jews** might including a beating or even death. **Cities** were not havens of security. They were often risky. The **desert** had risks from both people and death from the elements. The **seas** were not safer. Not even all professed **believers** could be trusted.

(27) I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

- Paul was a tent maker by trade and he worked long hours at it. He didn't sleep soundly, but endured **sleepless nights**, not waking up refreshed. His **hunger** pangs intruded on his life as did **thirst**. He couldn't get warm enough at times because he lacked **clothing** which he may have surrendered to robbers because clothing was an important asset in this space in history.
- Paul did not blame anyone for his misadventures. He accepted them as part of the task assigned to him by the Lord.

(28) Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. (29) Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger?

- Beyond the physical inconveniences and downright hardships, Paul was burdened each day (and night) for those in the churches he has started. What affected one

of the precious new believers affected Paul. Consider also Acts 15:36, 18:23, 20:2; Colossians 2:1.

(30) If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am. (31) God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, who is worthy of eternal praise, knows I am not lying.

- In reviewing verses 23-29, it is clear that Paul was not boasting of his *accomplishments*, but the several kinds of *hazards* he had endured. And now, he concludes this part with one that may have been a favorite story.

(32) When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me. (33) I had to be lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall to escape from him.

- Luke in Acts gives more detail:

After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. So during the night, some of the other believers lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall. Acts 9:23-25

