

Intro:

16-21a **I. MIRRORED, FOOLISH BOASTING**

16-18 **A. Though This is Foolish Don't Think Me A Fool.**

Don't think that I'm a fool. But even if you do, receive me as one for just a moment longer as I continue dealing with this in the way your used to.

You can sense a bit of Paul's sarcasm here! It's playful but it's serious. Matter of fact it got real serious in the previous verses when he was warning about those opposing him. (vs12-15).

- He called them "false apostles"; "deceitful workers" and said they transform themselves into apostles of Christ.
- No wonder! Satan transforms himself into an angel of light.
 - So it's not great thing that "his ministers" also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.
 - "who's end will be according to their works!"
 - (Paul then takes a breather then starts up again!) (16-20)
 - (Here's Paul, and the beautiful way the Spirit uses him even in his humanity)

19-21 **B. You Gladly Put Up With Fools**

19 **1. "You put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise".**

That's one of the things this church was struggling with is the temptation to think themselves as wise.

a. Remember back in the 1st chapter of his 1st letter he dealt with that. He said "The Jews request a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block to the Greeks foolishness"

i. To the Greeks it was foolish to receive a savior & King that was crucified.

ii. They had many great Greek philosophers in their day. So they prided themselves to be a culture of great wisdom.

b. Paul had to remind them that when he first he came to them it was in weakness and trembling and his speech was not with these big persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power so that their faith would not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

i. There's nothing wrong with wisdom, wisdom is good; but he's warning against relying on man's wisdom.

c. They had this natural pull because of the culture they're from to gravitate towards whatever sounded "wise".

i. Anyone who seemed to have more knowledge. (Knowledge puffs up but love edifies. (1 Cor 8:1-3) **Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.** **2** And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. **3** But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

2. And that's exactly what was playing out in the church. Judiaizers coming in with "more knowledge about how you get saved". Paul says "you put up with fools gladly since you yourselves are wise".

a. It's amazing how much foolishness people will put up with when they blindly follow people who consider themselves wise.

- i. The bible says the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom".
 - ii. Yet our nation is blindly following those who do not fear God. AT ALL!
 - b. But they're considered wise. So they teach in our schools the foolishness of evolution. (I watch these NatGeo shows) Foolish! (walking fish) Foolish.
 - c. They tell our children they "evolved" from animals and took prayer out of the classroom, then their surprised when they "act" like animals and shoot up the school.

 - i. We've forsaken God's wisdom for man's!
 - ii. The Word of God says *"The fool has said in his heart there is no God!"*
 - iii. Rom 1:18-23 But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. 19 They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. 20 For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. **So they have no excuse for not knowing God.** 21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. 22 Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. 23 And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.
- ii. The bible says that man's wisdom is foolishness to God and yet God's foolishness is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
- iii. Yet we put up with foolishness.

3. **"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."** Hear the love of Paul the Father. **"You'll put up with this and then reject 'my' love?"**

a. It was Henry Word Beecher who said "We never know the love of our parents for us till we have become parents."

b. I remember thinking to myself when one of my children left home "Why would you leave here and the comforts of this home to be out there?" (I DID THE SAME)

i. Trade rules from moms house to friends house.

ii. Or go out to have the freedom of staying with friends, but then you get devoured, they take from you, some strike you in the face..... (brought into bondage)

c. So Paul the Parent is like "This don't make sense that you'll put up with those who bring you into bondage.

i. That's what Judaism was. It was a form of bondage. Bondage to the law. Paul dealt with this problem in the Galatian church. Go with me to **Gal 5:1-6**

* There's nothing wrong with the law, the law is good if one uses it correctly.

* The law is a reflection of what's wrong with me and Christ is the answer.

4. **"if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face"** These false teachers were in Paul's own words "taking" from them. It wasn't like they were given an offering to support the work of the ministry to glorify God, it was that they were taking from them to feed their own appetites and glorify self.

- a. They were **exalting themselves**. They weren't exalting Jesus. One man said "*they weren't humble servants but they were exalted spiritual tyrants*"
- b. That doesn't look anything like Jesus. Jesus said, **Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:**
- c. The bible says, **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.** * For "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." These men were the exact opposite of the ministry of Christ, it wasn't humble and lowly but it was arrogant and proud.
- d. Not only are they prideful but they seek to humiliate you Paul said. **"if one strikes you"**. What he's referring to is this practice by Jewish rabbis who if a disciple wasn't listening or paying attention or was not obeying they could slap you on the face (basically humiliate you).
 - i. (Acts 23:2) Remember when Paul was before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest didn't like something Paul said in his own defense and he ordered them to slap him.

5. We don't know if that was actually being practiced here in Corinth but the point I believe Paul is saying is that these men are seeking to humiliate you and abuse you. Whether it be physical or verbal.

- a. And the worse thing was that these Corinthians were putting up with it! (Jesus told Peter to feed His sheep)
 - i. Some people will gladly put up with a sheep beating, why? Well because maybe they are guilt ridden and they feel like they deserved it.

ii. Feeling guilty over something they may have done and they come to church and get beat up from the pulpit or in counsel and they feel like better cause they think the beating cleared it up. Set them free. NO IT'S GODS GRACE THAT SETS YOU FREE.

iii. And a Pastor should never beat the sheep but feed the sheep. Take them to the word of God and show them what the word says.

b. The abusive treatment of these men on the congregation should've shown them that these men were not men of God.

c. When God gives a shepherds heart to a man it's never to beat the sheep. 1 Peter 5:2-4 **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

6. One of the accusations against Paul was that he was weak! So they were putting up with these false teachers who were putting them in bondage (snared or fish on a hook) and devouring them taking from them, exalting themselves and humiliating them.... And Paul says **"to our shame I say we're too weak for that!"**

a. If that's how you see strength then yes we're too weak for that.

21b-33 II. **PAUL'S REAL MINISTRY FOR CHRIST**

21b-28 A. **His Suffering**

Here's Paul showing what real ministry, what a real shepherd looks like. As he contrasts his life with theirs.

22 1. **"Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I."** If anyone wanted to argue

about pedigree, if that's the credentials they have been going by Paul says "that's nothing, so am I".

a. But that's all carnal. That's the flesh. I have those credentials even more than these others but that's confidence in the flesh.

b. Matter fact when Paul was writing to the Philippians he told them to beware of these same Judaizers and they're doctrine and confidence in their flesh. **Phil 3:2-9** Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

c. Sometimes we battle with putting our confidence in our flesh. (Our titles, our talents, our background or education. Strengths. Etc) But our confidence should never be in ourselves but in Christ.

And Paul takes the confidence away from his own background and education or pedigree – and he puts the attention back on Christ.

23 2. **"Are they ministers of Christ?"** That's what they say but if then.... What have they suffered for the sake of the gospel?

a. Now remember Paul says "**I speak as a fool**" because as we've noted already these things he's going into – to Paul – are

a bit of foolish boasting. He would've never released this information other wise.

- b.** But what have they suffered?
- c.** We think serving God is all about victories and getting all the things we've ever wanted. We come to Christ under the false pretense that "things will all get better and you'll have no problems". But Jesus said **pick up your cross and follow me!** Meaning **deny yourself and follow me.** If they persecuted me **they will persecute you.** He said **In this world you will have tribulation.**
- d.** So we're never promised that we wont suffer. Matter fact if you are going to truly live for Christ you will suffer.

Some of us may be thinking "I've suffered. I'm suffering right now". Someone posted something bad about me.... my coworkers didn't invite me to lunch (cause I'm a Christian) etc.

23b

- 3.** Paul's talking about some real sufferings **"in labors more abundant"** Paul worked everywhere he went. He labored with his hands while he poured into the lives of others.
- 4.** **"in stripes above measure"** What does he mean? In vs 24 he mentions that 5xs he received forty stripes minus one. (we'll get to that) Paul had been beaten in every city he went to. Everywhere he went the Jews sought to lay hold of him and beat him.
 - a.** Paul could ask those false apostles "How many times have you been beaten for the sake of the gospel?" **You beat the sheep but have you ever been beaten?**
- 5.** **"in prisons more frequently".** (Paul knew what it was like in deep dark cold prison cells often. Not like jails today) (Paul and Silas could've gotten out once Acts 16:25) (because of these often imprisonments Paul wrote most of the N.T.) **"in deaths often".**

(Some of us have experienced a near death experience or two and it could be traumatic. Paul often)

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6. "from the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one."

This was a Jewish punishment that was meant to beat you within an inch of your life. (They would minus one in case they miscounted) They would whip you with a leather strap 1/3 times on the front and 2/3 in the back. **5xs?** 195 lashes across his body front and back. No wonder Paul could say to the Galatians "*From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*"

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7. "Three times I was beaten with rods; (this was a Roman punishment, in fact this happened same time the imprisonment with Silas.) Paul not only beaten by his own people but he was beaten by the Romans as well. It was recorded in Acts 16:22 that Paul had been beaten in Philippi for supposedly spreading a teaching that threatened to upset Roman order.

a. "Once I was stoned" In Acts 14 Paul had gone to Iconium and began spreading the gospel, people began to believe and signs and wonders were being done. But there was both Jews and Gentiles there who wanted to kill Paul so they fled. They ended up following them to Lystra where they aroused up more against him and they dragged him out the city and stoned him, supposing him to be dead.

b. "three times I was shipped wrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep" Acts 27:1-14

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8. "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;" Perils = meaning dangers. Paul was in danger always. He was a marked man. These Judaizers traveled to the

safe places Paul traveled to the difficult places. And was in danger everywhere he went.

a. But it was through those times in danger Paul was able to learn more about the love of Christ. **Rom 8:35-36** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Rom 8:38-39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul learned these things in perils.

27 9. “in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness —”

28 10. “besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.” Besides the other things? You mean there's more that could be said?

a. **“comes upon me”** {NT:1987 epistasis (ep-ees'-tas-ees);} An advancing approach, an incursion,(a hostile entrance into or invasion of a place or territory, especially a sudden one; raid)

b. **“my deep concern”** {merimna (mer'-im-nah) }NT:3308 Vines dictionary says it means "to draw in different directions, distract," hence signifies "that which causes this, a care, especially an anxious care,

c. **Col 2:1-3** For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- d. When Paul wrote the Ephesians he said *"After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,"*
- e. Look what he said to the Galatians **Gal 4:11-20** (My little children for whom I labor in birth again until Christ)
- f. (Paul's fear and concern for these Corinthians) **See 2 Cor 12:20-21**

Paul's been sharing his great heart for this church. Battling these false apostles and their doctrine. They boasted of all their accomplishments and letters of commendation and when Paul foolishly goes there with them to prove himself he resorts to talking about his sufferings.

Now he will begin to share his weaknesses.....

- 29-33 B. **His Weakness**
 - 29-30 1. **"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity."**
 - a. If I must boast it will be about my "weaknesses". Greek word means "weakness or frailty" either physically or spiritually.
 - b. Thayers = NT:769 "used of the soul; lack of the strength and capacity that is requisite"
 - 31-33 2. Paul revisits a fearful embarrassing moment. When he had to escape capture.
 - a. Paul forced to boast about his ministry, instead of boasting about his strengths begins to boast about his weakness.
 - b. "Let me share something humbling with you" (Timeline) After conversion he went off into the desert of Arabia. He was discipled there by the Lord then went to the Jews and proved that Jesus was indeed the Christ. The result was they wanted to

kill him. When Paul found out he had to be placed into a basket like they would trash and lower it down off the wall of the city. Humiliating. Paul felt so low about that.

He then went off into Tarsus for about 7 -10 years and no one knew where he was except for a guy by the name of Barnabas.

Barnabas told him there were Gentiles starting to believe in Christ and he asked Paul to join him in proving Jesus was the messiah and Paul went. And from there God began a great missionary work through Paul. And many "through Paul's weakness" began to put their faith in Christ!