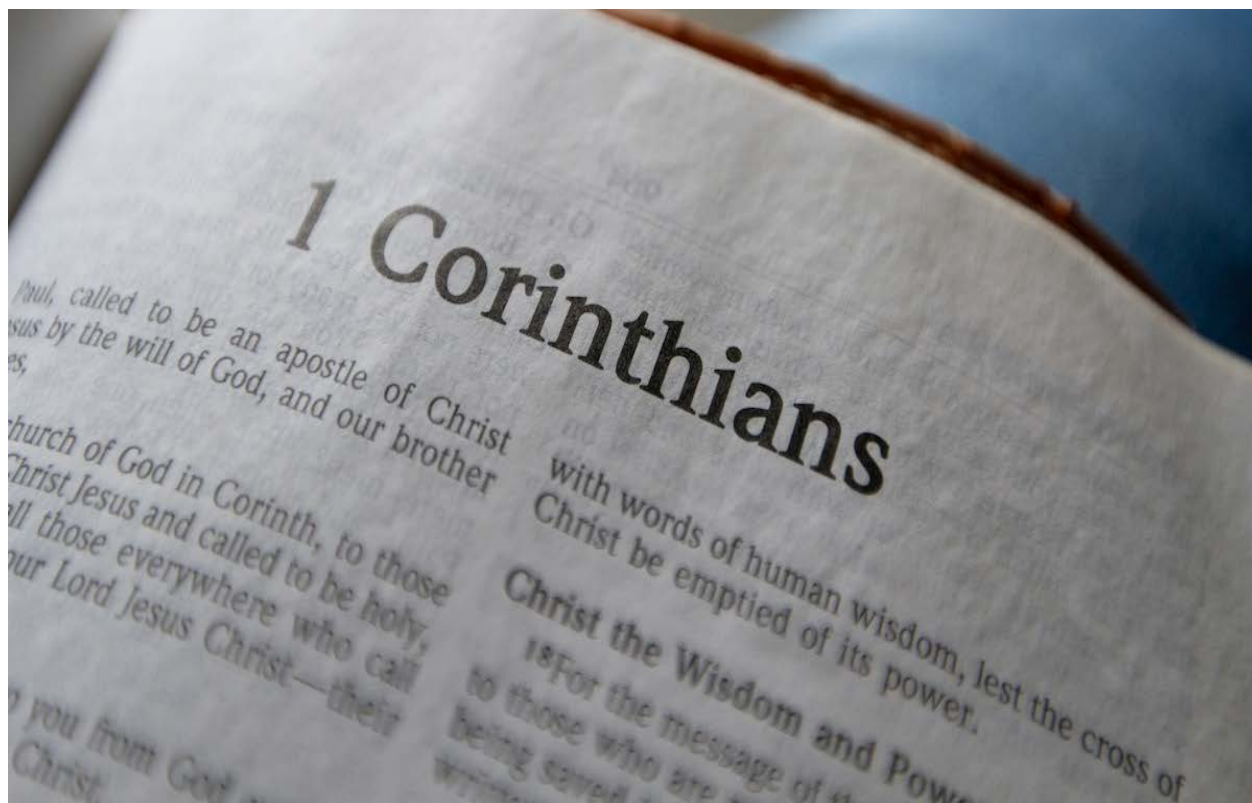


Boast in the Lord

2 Corinthians 11

1 and 2 Corinthians Part 28



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

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Boast in the Lord: 2 Corinthians 111
1 and 2 Corinthians Part 27
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Introduction to *2 Corinthians 11*

Paul was irritated that the Corinthians had so quickly allowed themselves to be taken in by false teachers who boasted about themselves, their eloquence, and their spiritual prowess.

But since the Corinthians seemed open to boasting, he decided to do a little of his own. But he boasted only in his weakness so that his “boasting” would magnify the Lord and His strength.

Paul got down and grubby with the grubby false apostles, but not to vaunt himself. He only sought to exalt the Lord and glorify His Name.

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We hope you find this study instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 Guard Your Mind

Pray Psalm 86.16, 17.

Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me!
Give Your strength to Your servant,
And save the son of Your maidservant.
Show me a sign for good,
That those who hate me may see *it* and be ashamed,
Because You, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Sing Psalm 86.16, 17.

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

Turn to me, LORD; be gracious to me;
grant me Your strength; save Your servant, LORD!
Let me a sign of something good see;
shame all who hate me beneath Your Word.
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
for You help me, sovereign Lord!

Read and meditate on 2 Corinthians 11.1-4.

Preparation

1. What did Paul fear?
2. What did he fear the Corinthians might do?

Meditation

This phrase, εἰς τὸν Χριστόν (“in Christ”), is arresting. It suggests focus, direction, and destination. We are to live “into” Jesus, and to do this we must have a singular focus and purity in all our ways. That singular focus must be Christ—before us, over us, around and beneath us, behind and beside us. We must see Jesus wherever we turn, as He was during His incarnation, as He is now in His exaltation and His daily “riding out” to conquer by His Word (Rev. 6.2; cf. Ps. 45.3-5), and as He will appear when He comes again and we see Him face to face.

Such a singularity of focus is the work of the mind. We must discipline our mind for such a focus by every possible means. But this also requires purity in our walk, which is to say, a life refined by the Word of God (Ps. 12). Our lives must follow consistently in the direction our mind is thinking, into Jesus, and this throughout the course of our daily life. Strong spiritual powers seek to distract us from this focus and walk by appealing to pride, curiosity, and inward lingering sinfulness. We must be mindful of these, vigilant to detect them, and violent in the Spirit to resist them. They are crafty, but we must learn to see their snares and avoid the paths they occupy (Prov. 1.17).

There will always be those who proclaim another Jesus and another gospel than what Paul taught. Throughout history teachers and theologians have cast Jesus in this or that light and have defined His Gospel in terms other than what the Scriptures indicate. We will put up with this unless our vision of Christ, our focus on Him, and our walk with Him are what Paul describes here.

Today a gospel of “near Christianity” and a Jesus Who is less than Lord of all is the preferred message, and because believers are not clear and constant in their focus on Jesus, they have been led into a version of Him and of the faith that suits their convenience. The only way out of this is to turn to Jesus as He is in the Word, and to expose shallow and errant teaching for what it is.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Don't let your hearts and minds get corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is in Christ Jesus. So warned Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.3.

The Gospel message is a simple one—God is angry with our sin, but He loved us enough to send His beloved Son, the holy Lamb of God, to cover the penalty for our sin (Jn. 3.16; Rom. 5.8). Living the Christian life is pure and simple—not at all difficult to understand its parameters, but nigh impossible to perform, apart from the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But it is not a convoluted life nor a confusing message. It is pure and simple.

However, throughout history, beginning with the devil's first sashay onto the creation scene, he has been trying to make it mind-boggling and impure. "Did God really say that you can't eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3.1) Huh? First, he questioned God's authority and then misconstrued what God actually said. And he has been using people to do his dirty work ever sense—to lie about God and His Word—twisting a perfectly beautiful message of hope and deliverance into any and every lie possible.

The devil, as noted, was more cunning than any beast (Gen. 3.1). Don't fall prey to his evil trickery. Instead: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4.6, 7). Thankful obedience and God's peace guard.

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4.23). Intentionality guards.

Paul's dear friend Timothy, got the same warning: "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you" (1 Tim. 6.20, 21). Diligence of belief guards.

We must not stray from the faith due to being corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is in Christ. "Such singularity of focus is the work of the mind. We must discipline our mind for such a focus by every possible means." Focus guards.

"For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways" (Ps. 91.11). Best of all, God guards us, and our hearts and minds, when we are set on following Him to the end (Ps. 119.112).

Incorruptibly His. Pure and Simple.

For reflection

1. What is your approach to guarding your mind so that it does not wander from Christ?
2. What kinds of things can cause you to lose focus on Jesus?
3. How can believers help one another keep their focus on Jesus?

The apostle desired to preserve the Corinthians from being corrupted by the false apostles... They should not listen to men, who, without cause, would draw them away from those who were the means of their conversion. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 11.1-4

Pray Psalm 86.7-15.

Pray that you may keep the Lord always before your mind (Ps. 16.8), so that you may not be pulled away from following him to embrace foolish ideas or ways.

Sing Psalm 86.7-15.

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

When in my trouble, LORD, I call You,
You answer me; there is none like You!
There are no works like Yours, and all whom
You have created shall worship You.
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
all shall glory give to You!

For You are great, You wondrous deeds do;
You are the only and sovereign LORD.
Teach me Your way, let me give heed to,
with all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
praise Your Name forever, LORD!

Great is Your mercy, LORD, toward me;
You have delivered my soul from hell.
Though dreadful foes and threats arrayed be,
You will Your grace and Your mercy tell!
LORD, be gracious to me, LORD, be gracious to me,
slow to anger, loving well!

2 Seeing Is Believing

Pray Psalm 33.1-5

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD *is* right,
And all His work *is done* in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Sing Psalm 33.1-5.

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the LORD, for praise becomes His righteous ones!
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.
His love prevails the whole world through; the LORD loves truth and righteousness.

Read 2 Corinthians 11.1-6; meditate on verses 5, 6.

Preparation

1. What did Paul claim?
2. What did he recall to the Corinthians?

Meditation

By “the most eminent apostles” Paul referred at least to Peter and Apollos, who, we recall, had been invoked by certain people in Corinth as a means of vaunting their spirituality and dividing the Body of Christ. But he also may have been referring to the “super apostles” who were still working in Corinth at the time of this writing and still leading people astray into false teaching. Paul regarded himself as inferior to none of these. The Corinthians should, too.

But why? Because they had seen Paul, heard him teach and preach, observed his humble way of life, and knew his courage and conviction where the Gospel was concerned. If we want people to hear our witness for Jesus, we must be careful to live that witness faithfully in all our ways.

Paul may not have been eloquent in speech, but he was no rube. He knew how to make persuasive arguments that the Spirit could use in many ways. None of the apostles exceeded Paul in knowledge, that is, in knowledge of the Word of God. Even a casual reading of his epistles reveals a mind fully saturated with the Word of God. He also had enough of this world’s knowledge to hold his own with philosophers and God-deniers. The Corinthians had seen that, too.

Paul commended his life and teaching to the Corinthians, reminding them of what they had seen in him when he was among them. His purpose in mentioning this was to keep them on the good path, the Jesus path, which they had begun to walk again. This they would do if they remembered him as they should. And we will, too, as we look to Paul’s example and teaching to guide our walk with and work for the Lord.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

“Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things” (2 Cor. 11.6).

It’s that word manifested that bespeaks his intent: to make evident or certain by showing or displaying. To prove; put beyond doubt or question. To show something clearly, through signs or actions. We would right choose to use the verb manifest when someone shows something for everyone to notice.

David Otis Fuller and Billy Graham have both been attributed with the creation of this question, although it matters not which one said it first. The power of the question remains: “If you were arrested and tried in a court of law for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”

That gets at the heart of what Paul was saying here. His behavior, not his grandiose speech, was the proof positive of his belief. His life was a megaphone proclaiming loudly and clearly, purely and simply, his devotion to Christ Jesus.

“My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King;
my tongue is the pen of a ready writer” (Ps. 45.1).

And Paul, along with most all the other disciples, was convicted handily of being a Christian. The evidence overwhelming, the forensics undeniable—guilty as charged.

Will the same be said of us?

Do our lives manifest the Good News of Jesus Christ?

Do we make evident, showing, displaying, proving beyond doubt or question by our signs and actions—for everyone to notice—that we belong to Christ, that He is our Lord and King, and that we are servants in His Kingdom for the long haul?

May others see and believe, as we manifest Christ and His glory, using the megaphone of our lives well-lived to proclaim these truths:

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...” (Rom. 1.16). “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1.12).

Thoroughly manifested and convicted of being His child.

For reflection

1. How is it “manifest” to the people in your Personal Mission Field that you are a servant of Christ?
2. In what ways are you working to improve your presence for Christ in your Personal Mission Field?
3. How can Christians encourage and help one another to be more “visible” as followers of Jesus?

It is far better to be plain in speech, yet walking openly and consistently with the gospel, than to be admired by thousands, and be lifted up in pride, so as to disgrace the gospel by evil tempers and unholy lives. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 11.5-15

Pray Psalm 33.13-22.

Call on the Lord to watch over you today and to help you walk in hope and in the fear of His Name. Cry out

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to Him for help, and pray that He will shield and protect you from all evil as you serve Him today.

Sing Psalm 33.13-22.

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.

Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love:

He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!

We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

3 Holy Boasting

Pray Psalm 71.23, 24.

My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You,
And my soul, which You have redeemed.
My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long;
For they are confounded,
For they are brought to shame
Who seek my hurt.

Sing Psalm 71.23, 24.

(Solid Rock: My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less)

My lips with joy and praises ring; to You, Redeemer, praise I bring!
I praise Your goodness all day long; LORD, humble all who do me wrong.
Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

Read 2 Corinthians 11.1-11; meditate on verses 7-11.

Preparation

1. How were Paul's material needs met while he was in Corinth?
2. Of what did he intend to continue boasting?

Meditation

The Corinthians had made a turn for the better in response to Paul's first epistle. But Paul did not hesitate to remind them of matters still to address, such as the continuing presence of false teachers.

Here, Paul reminded the Corinthians of their selfishness. They allowed him to preach and minister among them for more than a year and a half, yet they never contributed a penny to help meet his material needs. He had to rely on the churches in Philippi and Macedonia for that (vv. 7-9). Paul never said a word of this because he did not want to burden them unnecessarily. But he wrote pointedly about it in 1 Corinthians 9.

He boasted in the Lord and His provision. This was yet another proof that the "truth of Christ" was in him, that God was so gracious to provide for him all that time. He rejoiced to boast about the Lord and His great provision. Paul took no credit for this, but he pointed to Jesus here to celebrate the goodness of God and remind the Corinthians their duty—not to him but to the believers in Judea.

And why did Paul boast about the Lord in this matter? To rub the Corinthians' nose in it? No, but because he loved them, and he wanted them to follow his example, for his example was his proof of discipleship and apostleship. Whatever the Corinthians had to give up to share with the Judean Christians, God Who was with them and at work in them, would provide all their needs as well.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul allowed himself to think and write the things he did because he knew the truth of Christ was in him (2 Cor. 11.10).

If all believers were as confident of that condition as he was, things in the church would happen smoothly and kindly because it would be working as a "well-oiled machine". Without much ado, physical needs would

be met, the workload would be spread fairly, the lights and the water would always be on in the building, and the green grass would grow all around. Each participant would be working diligently in their own Personal Mission Field; therefore, the coming harvest of new believers would be fruitful because the ground of their souls had been tilled well, good seeds had been sown, all of that watered, and the sun would be shining brightly on the new growth. Each one doing their part to make the whole body functional.

What is the truth of Christ that will light that fire in our hearts? And give us that Pauline-confidence to say and do the things we have been called to say and do?

It is first and foremost to know that: we desperately need a Savior because we are sinners.

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3.23).

Next we rejoice because God provided a way for us to be freed from His condemnation:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6.23).

Then we must understand how it is that we came by this gift:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2.8, 9).

And finally we must understand that there is work to be done now that we have received and accepted this incredible gift: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2.10).

Because we are so thankful, so grateful, so overwhelmed by this gift, we choose to live by God’s Law and His Kingdom standards—realizing that we cannot please Him apart from doing it His way.

The truth of Christ enlightening our hearts to see—the truth of Christ.

When God laid down the parameters for living out the truth in the Ten Commandments, one of the things He said was this: He would show mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments (Ex. 20.6).

And Jesus said the same: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14.15).

This truth, most assuredly, is not “easy believeism”, nor is it a Monopoly “Get out of jail free” card.

When we accept this incomparable gift, we accept the guidebook and the rules that go along with it.

Paul believed all these truths. Paul lived out all these truths. It is where he got his confidence and boldness.

And he challenges us to do the same: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11.1).

Want to do some holy boasting?

Boast on— “as the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting”!

Just make sure your boasting is Christ-truth based, not some self-defined gobbledygook (2 Cor. 11.4).

For reflection

1. What opportunities for boasting in Christ will you have today?
2. Why is it spiritually healthy for us to boast in the truth of Christ that is in us?
3. How could you use singing to improve and increase your holy boasting in the Lord?

Lest any one should suspect, that Paul's words were designed to induce the Corinthians to be more liberal to him in future, and endeavor to make amends for their error in the past, he affirms with an oath, that he would take nothing from them, or from others in Achaia, though it were offered to him. For this manner of expression — the truth of Christ is in me, is in the form of oath. Let me not be thought to have the truth of Christ in me if I do not retain this glorying among the inhabitants of Achaia.

John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 11.10*

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Pray Psalm 71.14-18.

Pray for revival and renewal today, in yourself and your church. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to boast in Him today.

Sing Psalm 71.14-18.

(Solid Rock: My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less)

But as for me my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.

Refrain v. 3

A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
my Rock and Fortress ever be!

O LORD, I praise Your righteousness Who me from youth have taught and blessed.

Forsake me not when I am old, 'til I Your mercies all have told!

Refrain v. 3

4 False Apostles

Pray Psalm 52.8, 9.

But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
I will praise You forever,
Because You have done *it*;
And in the presence of Your saints
I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good.

Sing Psalm 52.8, 9.

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

But as for me may I be seen in God an olive ever green!
Ever in God, most kind and just, shall I with joy and gladness trust!

Thanks evermore to our Savior be raised! His faithfulness be ever praised!
Here with Your people, loving God, I wait upon Your Name, so good!

Read 2 Corinthians 11.1-15; meditate on verses 12-15.

Preparation

1. How can we identify false apostles?
2. Whom do they serve?

Meditation

False apostles were continuing their self-serving ministries in Corinth, and Paul felt the need to expose them for what they really were.

We can know false apostles by their penchant for drawing attention to themselves and exulting in their identity with this or that great teacher or theologian or Jesus (v. 12; cf, 1 Cor. 1.12). True apostles don't need such boasting, for their lives declare that they are true followers of Jesus, and that the truth of Jesus is in them (2 Cor. 11.10).

False teachers want to be thought of as true Christians, but they are “deceitful workers”, leading the people of God astray. Their deceitfulness takes different forms in different ages, but their deceitfulness lies in encouraging people to follow them or their camp or school or tradition rather than the Scriptures alone. Anyone who leads us away from Scripture is serving Satan and not the Lord (v. 14). They might seem to be deeply versed in Scripture, and they might use all the right words, but if their teaching draws us away from the Word of God, or fails to lead us ever deeper into it, they are false teachers.

False teaching led to all manner of problems in the churches in Corinth. Those who had been deceived and were clinging to the false teachers were on the path to hell (v. 15). Paul's true teaching showed them the way back onto the Jesus Path.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul—like any parent or teacher who finds themselves saying and teaching the same thing repeatedly—was experiencing a tiny bit of holy exasperation! Disingenuousness reigned, “And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11.14).

Strong words, but they declared what was going on in Corinth.

Jesus clearly named the perpetrator of the problem: “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (Jn. 8.44).

Paul added this disclaimer: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1.8, 9).

The accursed are accursed, but it also doesn’t go well for those who believe them.

God speaks clearly to His people:
“Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you!
O Israel, if you will listen to Me!
There shall be no foreign god among you;
nor shall you worship any foreign god.
I AM the LORD your God,
Who brought you out of the land of Egypt;
open your mouth wide and I will fill it” (Ps. 81.8-10).

To be found pleasing to God, to avoid following false gods, Paul clarifies the problem and the solution:
“Brethren, join in following my example,
and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.
For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping,
that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:
whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly,
and whose glory is in their shame—
who set their mind on earthly things.
For our citizenship is in heaven,
from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,
Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,
according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3.17-21).

How grateful we all should be for parents and teachers and preachers and Scripture writers and friends and mentors, who through “holy exasperation”, have taught us the truth and have guided us “back onto the Jesus Path” should we have accidentally, inadvertently, or intentionally strayed into false teaching of any kind.

Then, make sure to only follow true apostles, those who by their lives show “that they are true followers of Jesus, and that the truth of Jesus is in them.”

For reflection

1. How can you tell whether a teacher is true or false?
2. What does this suggest about how you and all believers must approach your time in the Word?
3. Whom will you encourage today to be earnest about reading and studying the Word of God?

Satan sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light in order to test those who need testing or to deceive those who deserve deception. Nothing but the great mercy of God can save a man from mistaking bad demons for good angels and false friends for true ones and from suffering the full damages of this diabolical deception which is all the more deadly in that it is wily beyond

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words. Augustine (354-430), *City of God*, 19.9

Pray Psalm 52.1-7.

Pray that God will keep you from being led astray by false teachers, and that He will daily ground you more firmly in His Word.

Sing Psalm 52.1-7.

(Warrington: *Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Why do the mighty boast in sin? God's love endures, it knows no end!
They with their tongues vain boasts repeat, and like a razor, work deceit.

Men more than good in evil delight, and lies prefer to what is right.
They utter words both harsh and strong with their devouring, deceitful tongue.

God will forever break them down, uproot, and cast them to the ground!
He from their safety tears them away, no more to know the light of day.

The righteous see and laugh and fear, and say, "Behold, what have we here?
Such are all who at God conspire, and wealth and evil ways desire."

5 Foolish Boasting

Pray Psalm 53.1, 2.

The fool has said in his heart,

“*There is no God.*”

They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity;

There is none who does good.

God looks down from heaven upon the children of men,

To see if there are *any* who understand, who seek God.

Sing Psalm 53.1, 2.

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God at all!”

Corrupt are they in whole and part, unjust and small.

Not one of them does good; God sees their wicked ways.

None understands the Word of God or gives Him praise.

Read 2 Corinthians 11.1-21; meditate on verses 16-21.

Preparation

1. How did Paul regard the boasting he was about to do (in vv. 22-33)?

2. Why did he think it was necessary?

Meditation

Fools boast about themselves, seek to draw attention to themselves, and work to impress others to gain their loyalty and devotion. And this is the proof that they are indeed fools—that they have no true knowledge of God.

Paul warned the Corinthians not to regard him as a fool (v. 16), even though he was about to take on the methods of one in his effort to break the Corinthians free from the real fools who had taken them captive (v. 20).

Only fools listen to fools and follow their ways. And the Corinthians were acting like fools in listening to those who boasted about themselves (v. 20). They failed to see the danger latent in such folly (v. 20). They seemed even to be looking at Paul as a fool (v. 16), so foolish had their thinking become. And, since that was indeed the case, then Paul would lower himself to their foolish thinking and boast a little about himself, though he had not done this before with the Corinthians (v. 21). They loved that kind of stuff, wrongly considering themselves “wise” by listening to fools (v. 19); so if Paul had to “stoop to conquer” by adopting the method of the false teachers, then that’s what he would do (in vv. 22-33).

But, as we shall see, even Paul’s “foolish boasting” was really only holy boasting, designed to glorify God Who was at work in and through him.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

Paul’s argument with the Corinthians seems to be begging these questions of them:

“What foolishness are you acquiescently accepting from your false teachers and the world?”

“In light of that, why are you so critical of me and my teaching?”

And I would put those same questions to us today:

“What huge amount of nonsense do we accept daily from false teachers and the world?”

“And if we do, then why are we so critical of the church, our pastors, and the Word of God?”

Think about it:

We sit quietly and complacently in front of our television sets and listen to lie after lie, watch immoral behaviors galore, and take it all in without so much as a whimper.

But God help the Sunday morning pastor who might stumble a bit in his presentation, or make a point that we don't fully enjoy, or maybe the music is not to our complete liking, and whammo! We pick him and his message apart, minutiae by minutiae, and complain ad infinitum of everything else that happened in that hour and a half.

God's people are expert disassemblers of church business.

But, not so much on calling out things that mightily displease God in our lives and others'.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17.15).

Of course, if your pastor is a false teacher, it is a different story.

But really, what are you doing? Why are you even there?

“The Corinthians were acting like fools in listening to those who boasted about themselves.”

What were they doing by even sitting under their teaching?

We must constantly be on our guard against our adversary the devil who “walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5.8).

Instead of sitting quietly and complacently, and letting the things of the world pour into our lives, in front of our TVs, or on “anti-social media”, or in what we read or listen to, let us “Fight the good fight, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6.12) and “Resist [the devil], steadfast in the faith...” (1 Pet. 5.9) so that we will not hear the condemning words that the Corinthians did, “...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” (2 Cor. 11.20).

Make no mistake, foolish boasters are coming at us from all corners, because our adversary's only job is to push us off the Jesus Path. So, don't let him do it.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15.58).

For reflection

1. What can you do to ensure that you will always be steadfast and immovable from the truth of God's Word?
2. How does false teaching hinder us from always abounding in the work of the Lord?
3. How can we know that our work in our Personal Mission Field is not in vain in the Lord?

Doubtless here is reference to facts in which the character of the false apostles had been shown. It is astonishing to see how such men bring their followers into bondage, and how they take from them and insult them. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 11.16-21

Pray Psalm 53.4-6.

Pray that God will sanctify all your boasting, so that when you boast of Him, it will be clear that the truth of Christ is in you.

Sing Psalm 53.3-6.

(Leoni: *The God of Abraham Praise*)

Have all these wicked men no knowledge of God's grace?
The Church they hate with passion and seek not God's face.
LORD, strike their hearts with fear, where fear was not before.
And scatter all who camp so near Your holy door.

The wicked flee in shame; their ways our God rejects.
Renew Your people in Your Name with great effects!
Let great rejoicing sound once we renewed have been,
and let salvation's Word resound from us again!

6 Paul's Pedigree

Pray Psalm 48.1-3.

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In His holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
God *is* in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge.

Sing Psalm 48.1-3.

(Cwm Rhondda: *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the LORD!
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

Read 2 Corinthians 11.1-33; meditate on verses 22-33.

Prepare

1. How many different sufferings did Paul mention?
2. In what did he boast?

Meditation

Paul played the foolish game of the false apostles, boasting in his experience of the Lord. But his boast focused not upon his great achievements, but on his “infirmity” (v. 30). He did not mention the various places where he had preached the Gospel, the many people who had come to faith in Jesus, the churches he started, or the many disciples who had become part of his ministry. That would be to boast foolishly.

Instead, he boasts in his trials and sufferings, and especially in his care for the churches (vv. 22-29). Reading through this litany of afflictions, we wonder how anyone could have survived, much less have persevered on task. But Paul did, and he wants us to know that it was not by his weakness or infirmity that this was the case. Rather, it was the blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who saw him through.

Would the false apostles have been able to continue through even one of these trials? It is not likely, since their primary concern was for their own prosperity and wellbeing. Yet from the very beginning of his ministry, when he began to preach in Damascus (vv. 32, 33), Paul's life and work were characterized by opposition and trials. The book of Acts records a few of these, but Paul lists many more.

Jesus told us to expect suffering (Jn. 16.33). So did Paul (2 Tim. 3.12; Acts 14.22). Every trial, every disappointment, failure, setback, injury, opposition, oppression, or affliction comes with the permission of the Father, that we may acknowledge our weakness, cast ourselves on His mercy, draw on His strength, rejoice in all things, and thus prove our true discipleship and calling in the Lord. Like Paul, we glory in our trials and grow through them, that we may be greater strengthened to do His work.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We know for certain that Paul was not boasting about his own incredible heroics—albeit amazing—because

these things were not his personal claim to fame. He was not moved by his own actions. His mind, focus, and goals were based elsewhere. As he wrote: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3.1-3).

This is what Paul believed. This is how Paul lived.

And even his close calls with death did not move him, as he explained to his grieving friends: “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20.22-24).

Paul’s singular focus energized his whole existence: it determined for him what was important and what was not. His accomplishments and tribulations were not in his wheelhouse for self-gratification.

And because this truly was true of him, he was able to say, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying” (2 Cor. 11.31). Indeed, He did know it.

Paul took to heart, and embraced as a lifestyle, Jesus’ words to His followers: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5.11, 12).

Paul believed, claimed, and lived by the psalmist’s prayer:
“Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.
This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life.
The proud have me in great derision, yet I do not turn aside from Your law.
I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself.
Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.
Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.
I remember Your name in the night, O LORD, and I keep Your law.
This has become mine, because I kept Your precepts” (Ps. 119.49-56).

It was his. And it can be ours as well.
It is the truth of Christ that lifts us out of our circumstances
into the glorious arms and victorious mind of God.

Holy boasters all—pedigreed like Paul.

For reflection

1. What are you most pleased about that God has been doing in and through you?
2. In which areas of your walk with and work for the Lord do you most need to grow?
3. What opportunities will you have today for boasting in the Lord?

The apostle gives an account of his labors and sufferings; not out of pride or vain-glory, but to the honor of God, who enabled him to do and suffer so much for the cause of Christ; and shows wherein he excelled the false apostles, who tried to lessen his character and usefulness. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 11.22-33

Pray Psalm 48.4-14.

Pray that others will see Jesus in you, even in your times of affliction or suffering. Give praise to God for the day ahead, and commit your walk and work to Him.

Sing Psalm 48.4-14.

(Cwm Rhondda: *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)

Earthly kings, amazed and wond'ring, look upon the Church with fear.
See them flee in dread and anguish, knowing that the LORD is near.
For the city of the Savior God will keep forevermore!
God will keep forevermore!

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!
As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.
Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;
for the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessed city, see her beauty, see her power.
Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on every mighty tower.
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;
God will guide her evermore!

7 Grubbin' with the Grubby, but Not

Pray Psalm 46.1-3.

God *is* our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though its waters roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling.
Selah

Sing Psalm 46.1-3.

(St. Chrysostom: *We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

God is our refuge and our strength; He is our help in times of need.
Thus though the earth beneath us should change, the sea engulf the mountain range.
Waters may roar with raging speed; yet God will rescue us at length.

Review 2 Corinthians 11.1-33; meditate on verses 1, 10, 17, 18, 30, 31

Preparation

1. Why was Paul so upset in this chapter?
2. What was his purpose?

Meditation

Paul knew the Corinthians, and he loved them. He loved them so greatly that, as he would say in the next chapter, he would very gladly spend and be spent for their souls (12.15).

At the same time, it angered him to learn how easily they had been led off the Jesus Path by false teachers, boasters and smooth talkers, who, to advance their own interests, fractured the apostolic witness, flaunted their eloquence and ability to attract others, divided the churches in Corinth, and opened the flood gates for all manner of sin to wash over the people for whom Jesus died.

Paul was firm and uncompromising throughout 1 Corinthians. He told it like it was, and he was perfectly clear about what the Corinthians must do. In 2 Corinthians he rejoiced that they heard him and began to set matters straight. They had found their way back to the Jesus Path and were leaving the false teachers behind.

But Paul was not naïve. He knew the Corinthians, how easily they could be swayed by a little eloquent boasting. So, unseemly as it was, Paul decided he needed to boast a little himself. He had to get grubby like those disgusting false teachers so that the Corinthians would hear him.

But whereas they boasted in their prowess, he boasted only in his weaknesses and infirmity, so that his boasting in the Lord might resound all that much more clearly. Just as Jesus lowered Himself to come among us for our salvation, all the while refraining from sin, so Paul lowered himself, without compromising his faith, to defend the Corinthians from the lies of the devil. When we truly love people, we'll do whatever we can to help them know the joy of walking the Jesus Path.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity” (2 Cor. 11.30).

Most people try to cover their weaknesses. They surely do not boast in them.

But we should consider this infirmity-boasting mode of ministry as one that has great merit.

If we are always victorious, where do we gain the comfort to comfort others? “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1.3-5).

If we don’t have infirmities, how can we boast in them? “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness’. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12.9).

If we are not weak, why would we need a strong Savior? “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12.10).

If we graciously own our weaknesses, then we can boast like Paul did, in the strength and comfort of the Lord Jesus.

Consider David, who wrote a whole poem recounting the occasion when, out of fear, he behaved like a madman (1 Sam. 21.10-15). Not really a day to write home about; but he was able to glorify God, even through that embarrassing situation:

“I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
the humble shall hear of it and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt His name together” (Ps. 34.1-3).

True humility demands we boast in weaknesses for the sake of others.

For “When we truly love people, we’ll do whatever we can to help them know the joy of walking the Jesus Path.”

For reflection

1. Have you prayed lately about your weaknesses? How did you pray?
2. Why is it important that we admit our weaknesses, especially to the Lord?
3. Whom will you encourage today to help them grow strong in their walk with and work for the Lord?

It is the duty and practice of Christians to humble themselves, in obedience to the command and example of the Lord; yet prudence must direct in what it is needful to do things which we may do lawfully, even the speaking of what God has wrought for us, and in us, and by us. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on 2 Corinthians 11.16-21

Pray Psalm 46.4-11.

Seek the grace of God for this day, and be ready to do whatever it takes to care for the souls of His people. Talk of His works and let your work refract His joy into your Personal Mission Field.

Boast in the Lord: 2 Corinthians 11

Sing Psalm 46.4-11.

(St. Chrysostom: *We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

God's everlasting, joyous grace gladdens the city where He dwells.
Safely in Him, we will not be moved; when morning dawns, His love will be proved.
Fears and distresses Jesus dispels for His beloved, chosen race.

Kingdoms arise and rage and roar, threat'ning the earth with sore distress.
Nations may fall, earth melt away, His Word is yet our hope and stay.
God is among us, ever to bless; He is our stronghold evermore.

Come see the works of God's Right Hand! He breaks the nations of the earth,
shatters their foolish weapons and pride, sets all their sinful strength aside.
Them He will show His infinite worth as they before His judgment stand.

Rest in the LORD and be at peace, all who are mired in sore travail.
Lift up our God, praise Jesus our Lord; proclaim to all the earth His Word!
God is our stronghold, never to fail; thus may our hope and joy increase!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. How would you summarize the main idea of this chapter?
2. What makes us inclined to boast about ourselves? Why is this wrong?
3. What does it mean to “boast” about your weaknesses and infirmities? How does this play into boasting in the Lord?
4. In what ways should you expect to suffer for Jesus? How should you prepare for this?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of 1 and 2 Corinthians?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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