

Parson to Person

2 Corinthians 11

(Warning Against Complacency – Part 1)

“Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. 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. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 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!

For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 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. As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! 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. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

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. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! 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. 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. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 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; 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; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands” (2 Corinthians 11:1–33).

Paul was indignant with the false apostles and clear about the need to rid the Corinthian Church of the liars (see 2 Corinthians 10:6, 11). Moreover, having warned the Church that they must be removed, he concerned himself with the Corinthians' lax attitude toward the wicked men and demanded they take a hard look at where they were—and what they needed to do. He saw himself as “a father of the bride” keeping his daughter pure for the day of her wedding. He wrote, *“I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (vs. 2). However, his “fear” was that the Corinthians were lethargic about their “purity” and were being “seduced” into following after “another man:” an imposter—a false Jesus—manifested through the agency of a deceiving spirit. He wrote, *“I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 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!”* (vss. 3–4).

The seducers were *“false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ”* (vs. 13). *“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works”* (vss. 14–15).

These evil men were attempting to draw the “bride away from Jesus,” and Paul knew it. Therefore, Paul determined to set off an alarm in the Church with yet another self-defending diatribe—intended only to exalt Jesus and protect the Church. As was earlier true, Paul was not “defending himself” for personal exaltation or gain. Paul only concerned himself for the Church in Corinth.

Paul was deeply affected by the fact that the Church be prepared and ready to meet the Lord. He said that he had “*deep concern for all the churches*” (vs. 28b) and went as far as to say “*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*” (vs. 29). His anger was justified—as ours should be!

Every true apostle, pastor/teacher will be persecuted and rejected when exercising strong leadership. However, in Christ we will gain the victories sought after.

Paul, in spite of disappointments and “so-called” setbacks, rehearsed: “*in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often... five times [having] received forty stripes minus one. Three times...was beaten with rods; once...stoned; three times...shipwrecked; a night and a day...in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of [his] 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; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things...*” (vss. 23b–28a). He endured for the sake of the Church—the bride of Christ. Therefore, we should not think it strange when we endure the same (see James 1:2–4 and 1 Peter 4:12–14).

Over the next few weeks, we will dig into this chapter as we have the others. The time is short, but we will occupy until the Lord comes.

Love you all,
Pastor Paul