

The Book of 2nd Corinthians

Chapter 11:1-33

March 14, 1999

- **Outline of 2nd Corinthians:**

- Chapter 1 God equips His people through trial, comfort and perseverance.
- Chapter 2 Restore fellowship to the repentant; One aroma, two response.
- Chapter 3 The glorious covenants
- Chapter 4 The Light of the Glory of Christ
- Chapter 5 Longing to be further clothed; Christ died for the world
- Chapter 6 Faithfulness in persecution; Separation from the World
- Chapter 7 Godly sorrow leads to repentance.
- Chapter 8 Gracious giving abounds from grace received.
- Chapter 9 Sparse sowing yields sparse reaping.
- Chapter 10 Weapons of war; Spheres of authority.
- Chapter 11 Uncovering the false teachers.

- **Review & Introduction**

As we considered last week, Paul has begun his polemic against the false teachers at Corinth and against the gullibility of Corinthians for being lured by them. It is wonderful to see in Paul a righteous jealousy that he has for the Saints in Corinth and for the purity of the Word of God. In this chapter Paul employs a masterful use of sarcasm and criticism for the purpose of reclaiming and protecting those who are being tempted to follow falsehood.

- **Exposition of 2nd Corinthians 11:1 - 33**

Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.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.³ 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.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!

- The Corinthians had already demonstrated that they put up with foolish talk (deceptive instruction from the false teachers), so putting up with a little more (sarcastic boasting from him) would not be a problem. We see that Paul's reason for speaking this way to them is his jealous love for them. This godly jealousy toward them is the jealousy of a matchmaker. He has been directly involved in their betrothal to Christ and he wants to see them presented in purity.
- The child-like mind of faith had not been protected by discernment and the Corinthians were being ensnared by slick teachers proclaiming a false Jesus, spirit and gospel. As is common with deceptive teachers, heresy comes in a package of plausibility. If the teachers had come teaching a different lord with a different name, even a child could spot the difference. But in order to sway the older people, heresy must be subtle and plausible. The Corinthians were being duped by a message that wasn't subtle at all and they were tempted to abandon the clear instruction from an authenticated Apostle and follow the instruction of men who were heretics.

5 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.⁶ Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.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?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.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!

- It is not possible to completely piece together all of the accusations that the false teachers brought against Paul. But here we can very clearly see that they assaulted the validity and superiority of his Apostleship because he was not one of the original twelve. In sarcasm, Paul concedes that he is not an eloquent speaker (like the opponents) but he claims superior knowledge. This concession is only rhetorical.
- They also appear to have accused Paul of being an amateur speaker because he did not charge for his teaching like a professional speaker would. Although he had the right to receive support for laboring in the gospel, Paul did not exercise that right so that he might obviate any accusations of being a minister only for the money. Instead Paul received support from other churches and labored in his vocation so that he could set aside his rightful support from the Corinthians. A godly Christian worker should be prepared to take such action. Entering into ministry is not a profession, it is a calling by

God. Paul set aside this right out of love for the church and obedience to his Lord. Unfortunately, the church today is training people to think of the ministry as a profession and as a result our pulpits will be filled with hirelings.

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.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.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.

- o Paul has loaded both barrels of his criticism and aimed at the opponents. He clearly proclaims that they are false teachers, full of deception while masquerading as teachers of light. The most dangerous heresy is the one that nobody catches. Therefore, false teachers must dress themselves up as teachers of truth. The Saints must be equipped so that they are not carried away with false doctrine and so that they may be able to discriminate between truth and falsehood.

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.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!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.

- o Paul states that he is not a fool, but in order to get their attention he states that he will act like a fool. The Corinthians were giving credence to the boasting of the false teachers and were impressed with what they heard. Therefore, Paul says that he will boast in a similar manner. Paul does not like to speak this way, he is willing to do so because of his love for the church. Paul is not sinning here, because his boasting is only for show and not an attribute of his character.
- o Notice in verse 20 what people will tolerate from false teachers; bondage, greed, self-centeredness and violence. We must see Paul's use of sarcasm in order to understand verse 21. Paul has begun this tongue-in-cheek comparison of his ministry with that of the false teachers. The first thing he brings up are those things in which they excel over him: bondage, greed, self-centeredness and violence. Obviously Paul is not truly in shame that they excel over him in this.

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.²³ 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.²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.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—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?³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.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. NKJV

- o Paul began a comparison of himself with the false teachers and on the first point of comparison (sinful mistreatment of the church) Paul failed. Now Paul turns to compare himself with the false teachers in those areas that he will excel. In racial heritage, Paul ties with them. But now in sincerity of ministry Paul will far exceed them and this comparison is the one that is of actual importance.
- o Paul had endured true affliction and turmoil for the sake of obedience to his Lord and out of love for the church. His indignation comes from the fact that he has endured all these things and then finds out that the church at Corinth is rejecting him and listening to those fools who have endured no such thing.
- o It is our Christian duty to identify and expose false teachers and their destructive heresy. We must do so in humility and boldness. Paul here uses boasting and sarcasm as a tool but should not be characterized as a boastful or sarcastic individual. This manner of speech for Paul is extraordinary, but for the opponents, it would appear to be ordinary.
- o False teaching must be attacked by true servants of Christ. We are not qualified to expose a cult simply because we have done our studious homework. Beyond the study of the facts, our lives and character must be in accordance with the attributes of a servant of Christ. These servants must be motivated by a love and jealousy for the Word of God and the purity of the Church.