

2 Corinthians 11

Day 1

Led Astray. Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-12

1. What does Paul call the boasting he is about to engage in? 1:1 (See 11:16,17)

- What motivated Paul to do this? 1:2 See also 12:11 *What does Paul's analogy portray about the spiritual state he wanted them to have with Christ versus the direction he feared they were headed?*

FYI: "In chapter eleven the Apostle comes closer to the problem that the false apostles at Corinth were making. They did not hesitate to parade their so-called credentials and were obviously influencing some in the church. Because of this and Paul's great concern for the believers there, he is forced to do something he would have rather avoided and that is to indulge in what was apparently self-commendation, the thing he had just condemned! 'A little foolishness' he called it, but so much was at stake that he is compelled to compare his own true apostleship with the false apostleship of his opponents." - Stuart Allen (238)

Godly Jealousy. God "is not willing to share us with idols, demons, material things, drugs, alcohol, sex, or any other substitute god . His jealousy over us is for our own good. If we are unfaithful to Him and worship some lesser thing, we will destroy ourselves. God's jealousy is a facet of His love. Ungodly jealousy is selfish and envious...Godly jealousy is a loving jealousy that wants only the best." - Ray Stedman (381)

"Human jealousy is a vice...God's jealousy is love in action. ... God is not jealous *of* us: He is jealous *for* us." (Redpath in *Law and Liberty*)" - David Guzik

2. What did Paul fear was happening? (Note the words that describe Satan's ways.) 11:3a (See Revelation 12:9)

- What were the Corinthians in danger of losing? 11:3b

Led astray/corrupted Strong's NT:5351 *phtheiro*; probably strengthened from *phthio* (to pine or waste); properly, to shrivel or wither, i.e. to spoil; to ruin (especially figuratively, by moral influences, to deprave)

"Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that Christianity is not...a theological system or institutional structure. It is fellowship with Jesus...(1 Corinthians 1:9)... It's a relationship, pure and simple." - Ray Stedman (382)

3. List the "different" things that were being presented to the church? 11:4

FYI: "**Another** here means 'another of a similar kind' A false teacher may talk about Jesus, he may sound biblical, but he's fooling you. **Different**, on the other hand, means 'another of an opposite kind.'" Their spirit was opposite to the Spirit of Christ, creating divisiveness. And their gospel opposed the gospel of salvation, usually adding works. But 'you bear this beautifully,' Paul says with a touch of sarcasm, meaning they were tolerant of this heresy." - Charles Swindoll (ME 52)

4. How were the Corinthians reacting to these doctrines? 11:4b (Why do you think they were being so quickly swayed?)

- What rule did John give in about the Spirit? 1 John 4:2

FYI: "Here is Satan with his most deceptive wiles, the 'angel of light', preaching a 'Jesus' and a "gospel" which, although appearing to be right on the surface, is false to the core and has one object, to oust the Christ of the New Testament from His rightful place as the only Savior and Lord. And we can be sure of one thing, *this activity of Satan has been going on in Christendom in this same way ever since.*"
- Stuart Allen (239)

"The fact that a preacher or teacher talks about "Jesus" means little, for false prophets and false teachers have always invoked His name whenever it suited their purposes, and they still do...The true Jesus is the Creator of the universe, the Word made flesh, the one Sacrifice for sins forever, the resurrected Lord and our coming King!"
- Henry Morris

5. What did Paul say to a church in Galatia about following a "different gospel"? Galatians 1:6-9; 4:9-11; 5:3-4.

- What happens to salvation by grace (Eph 2:8,9) if we add *anything* that we must do to Christ's finished work on the cross? Romans 11:6

6. From Colossians 2:8;16,17,20-23, underline the things that Paul warned against being used as a replacement for what we have in Christ.

*8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world **rather than on Christ...***

*16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; **the reality, however, is found in Christ....***

*18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 **He has lost connection with the Head...***

*20 **Since you died with Christ** to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. NIV*

- In verses 22,23b, circle the value these teachings and practices have.

Paul's Qualifications

7. What claim did Paul make? 11:5 *[Commentators disagree about whether Paul was referring to other apostles such as Peter, James and John or to the false apostles at Corinth who were elevating themselves as more important. See Galatians 2:6-9 for Paul defense of his apostleship with those who attacked his apostleship as less than other true apostles.]*

- What does this say about how adversaries were attacking Paul?

8. What was the important thing about Paul's message? 11:6

- Even if Paul wasn't a polished speaker (Cf. 1 Cor 2:1,4), what had been clearly *manifested/made apparent*? (See 4:2; 12:12)

Applying the Word: *Why is it tempting to look at the "manner" of someone who is preaching/teaching rather than at the "matter" of what they are saying? What is your criteria for supporting a ministry - for distinguishing the "authentic from the artificial"? What are "credentials" and actions that you look for in a Christian leader?*

Day 2

Paul's Support. Read 2 Corinthians 11:7-12

9. What had Paul done for the Corinthians and why? 11:7,8 (To what was Paul entitled? Galatians 6:6)

10. How had Paul supported himself when he first came to Corinth? Acts 18:3

- What other support did he eventually receive? 2 Cor. 11:8,9a (See his thank you in Philippians 4:14-18)
- Why didn't he ask for the Corinthians' support? 11:9b (Cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:8,9)

The Necessity of Boasting

11. In spite of criticism, what did Paul resolve to do? 11:10

12. Apparently, how had not asking for support been used against him? 11:11 *On the other hand, what accusations could his adversaries have used against him if he had asked for support?*

13. Why did Paul continue to refuse support? 11:11,12 What do you think he means by saying this would “*cut the ground from under*” or “*cut off opportunity from*” them?

FYI: “The intruders at Corinth had apparently received some remuneration for their instruction. Regarding themselves as in some sense apostles, they probably felt fully within their rights in accepting or even demanding appropriate wages; this validated their apostleship. But Paul’s stance was an acute embarrassment to them, for they could not boast as he did about preaching a message gratuitously. This, then, was Paul’s motive for persisting in his longstanding policy--to deprive his opponents of the opportunity they longed for so they might boast that they were working at Corinth on precisely the same terms he had been.”

- The Expositor’s Bible Commentary

14. What had Paul said earlier about receiving money for his preaching? 1 Cor. 9:1-6,11,14

- Why didn’t he use that “right”? 1 Cor. 9:12,18

False Apostles

15. What 3 terms did Paul use to describe his adversaries in 11:13,15a?

- What do these terms indicate about their methods or motivation?

Digging Deeper

See Jesus’ description and warning in Matthew 7:15-21. (See also Matt. 24:24)

16. Whom were these false apostles following? 11:14,15a

- How will they be judged? 11:15b (See Philipians 3:19)

FYI: “Satan goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour’ Peter tells us (1 Pet. 5:8). But more dangerous still is when he comes disguised as an **angel of light** and poses as a minister of truth! And never let us forget that he quotes the Bible when it suits his purpose (Matt. 4:6)...**His servants/ministers** These can be outwardly good living people with a show of righteousness, but underneath, they, like their master, are deceivers and one day will receive their just due from God.”

- Stuart Allen (242)

“It is so easy for all people, including Christians, to be taken in by image and outward appearances. Many will only recognize evil if it openly declares itself as evil...It is generally said that Satan has *three forms* under which he tempts men: 1. The *subtle serpent*. 2. The *roaring lion*. 3. The *angel of light*. He often, as the *angel of light*, persuades men to do things under the *name of religion*.”

- David Guzik

17. Why do you think Paul was so blunt? i.e. What was at stake? Who was he fighting for? (Compare Acts 20:28-31)

- How did Jesus feel about those who were misleading people and stood in the way of their coming to the Lord? Matthew 23:13; 25-28

Applying the Word: *It has been said. "A good lie always has elements of truth, otherwise no one would believe it." What truths do you think these false apostles could have been mixing in to make them sound like "apostles of Christ" or "servants of righteousness"?*

Day 3

The Corinthians' Foolishness. Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-21

18. What claim did Paul start with? 11:16a

- Even if some did regard him as foolish, what did Paul ask them to do? 11:6b

19. How did Paul characterize boasting? 11:17

- What was this boasting "according to"? 11:18

FYI: 'Reluctantly, [Paul] decides to employ his opponents' methods; unlike theirs, his motive is not personal gain but the Corinthians' welfare (v. 2)... He has decided to boast as his opponents do, because he knows the Corinthians' determination to compare him with his rivals and their vulnerability to those who commend themselves. From 11:16 to 12:13 he engages in *ad hominem* argumentation, boasting about things that are not 'boastworthy' and answering fools according to their folly (Prov 26:5)." - The Expositor's Bible Commentary

not after the Lord. "Paul is not denying divine inspiration of his words at this point, but simply stating that boasting of one's pedigree and achievements was not normal and proper behavior for a Christian, even for an apostle. It is evident throughout this whole passage, that it was painfully embarrassing for him to have to recite his own qualifications in this way. The Corinthians had rendered it necessary, however, by receiving the teachings of the fake apostles as superior to those of Paul and submitting themselves to their undeserved and even despotic leadership, primarily because of their professed superior qualifications to those of Paul." - Henry Morris

20. How had the Corinthians responded to false apostles? 11:19 (What word describes what they thought this showed on their part?)

21. Rather than wisdom, what did Paul reveal about their choice? List the things they were putting up with. 11:20

- Why do you think the Corinthians regarded the controlling leadership and even the mistreatment from the false apostles as appropriate or even spiritual?

FYI: (11:20) **Enslaves you** "Paul used the same Greek word in Galatians 2:4 (translated 'bondage'). There he writes about opponents who tried to compel converts to submit to Jewish legal restrictions and laws (e.g. circumcision). **Devours you** Among other things this could refer to financial extortion. (See Mark 12:20)"
- Irving Jensen (61)

22. How was Paul's ministry seen by the Corinthians? 11:21a (Compare 1 Cor. 4:10)

FYI: "None of Paul's readers or hearers would have failed to catch his message with its indictment of their inconsistency. Claiming to be followers of a meek, gentle Christ (10:1), they were impressed by and willingly submitted to the aggressiveness and authoritarianism of teachers masquerading as apostles of Christ (v. 13); yet they were unimpressed by Paul's "weak" considerateness as a genuine "apostle of Christ Jesus" (10:1). Paul has to confess with 'shame' (but really with biting irony) that his character had been too weak and his disposition too mild to use the tactics of the opposition (v. 21a)!"
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary

23. Underline teachings that the early apostles were battling:

- Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." NAS
- Galatians 5:2-4 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. NIV
- 1 Timothy 4:2-4 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. 3 They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. NIV
- 2 Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. NIV

24. What false teachers did Jesus come up against and what issue did they have with Jesus? Mark 7:1-5

25. Underline what Jesus called the religious leaders and their teachings. Circle what their teachings did to God's commands/word.

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

...13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.

And you do many things like that."

Mark 7:6-9,13 NIV

Applying the Word: Why do you think man's thoughts about how to follow God often seem more "wise" than what God has said?

Day 4

Paul's Credentials. Read 2 Corinthians 11:21-33

26. If false apostles were going to boast about their credentials, how did Paul's compare? 11:21b,22,23 (Compare Philipians 3:4,5)

- What had Paul concluded about these kinds of prideful stands? Philipians 3:7,8

FYI: "Paul is trying to verbally shake the Corinthians out of the spell that these false teachers have cast over their minds. When people are being insulted, abused, and enslaved and they don't even know it, something is desperately wrong....To shake them out of their dazed, state, Paul stepped out of character and used a series of extravagant boasts to make a point."
- Ray Stedman (386,387)

"Paul knows very well that his blood ancestry does not make him an apostle or a servant of Jesus, but many of the *most eminent apostles* either said or implied that it was important. Knowing the silliness of this, Paul prefaced his remarks here with '**I speak foolishly**.'"
- David Guzik

27. How did Paul compare as a "servant of Christ"? 11:23a-27 (Why do you think he characterized this boasting as *insane/foolish*? Expanded paraphrase of 11:23: "Going to the very extreme of folly, I can say 'So am I, and much more so.'")

Digging Deeper
For accounts of some of these events see Acts 9:29; 13:50; 14:5,19; 16:23; 21:30-32; 23:12.

28. Why do you think Paul chose to endure so much when he could have walked away? (See 2 Timothy 2:10)

29. What else did Paul endure daily? 11:28 Cf. 7:5

- How closely did he identify with those he ministered to? 11:29

FYI: "Paul had many burdens, but few of them were for himself.. He, like Jesus, was truly an others-centered person."
- David Guzik

"When you've suffered like Paul, your faith is moved out of the theoretical realm and into the practical. It becomes real. When you've been weakened, you understand a person in weakness...When you've been there yourself, you're concerned, not condemning."
- Charles Swindoll (ME 58)

30. What did Paul determine to "boast" about? 11:30

- What solemnly did Paul states his claims? 11:31

Digging Deeper

See Romans 5:3-5 for Paul's description of what trials produced in his life.

FYI: "The false teachers had their own set of impressive credentials. But they didn't have the credentials that counted in the eyes of God - a heart of sincere devotion and sacrificial service. Sadly, though, the Corinthians didn't have the discernment to see that. They had become enslaved to these masters of rhetoric and oration."
- Charles Swindoll (ME 57)

31. Paul relates a humiliating event early in his ministry in vv. 31-33 (see Acts 9:20-25). Why do you think he shared this?

FYI: "No VIP treatment for this servant of Christ. No limo. No Secret Service men. Neither do we see the hero in the limelight of center stage. He's offstage, far from the applause and accolades awarded to the false teachers."
- Charles Swindoll (ME 58)

"The *false apostles*, those *most eminent apostles*, would never dream of boasting in such things. They thought any **infirmity** made one look weak and far from God. Despite that, Paul did not care if it looked foolish in the eyes of the world or those in the church who thought like the world. Paul lived with an eternal perspective, not a worldly perspective."
- David Guzik

Applying the Word: How do you picture the life and ministry of the apostles after Jesus' death? How does Paul's life compare to your ideas?