

"Paul's Defense of his Apostleship"

Part 3

2 Corinthians 11

Introduction: In our study of chapter 11 the past two weeks we have been looking at Paul's fear and concern about the Corinthian believers.

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:3-4

Paul was fearful the believers at Corinth would be deceived as Eve was deceived in the Garden. In verse 4 Paul reminds them how they had permitted someone who preached a different Jesus, who was exercised by a different spirit and preached a different gospel to have a platform within the church at Corinth. The false apostles that had come from Jerusalem were never investigated but instead they had come into Corinth proclaiming that salvation was by faith in Christ PLUS works. When these false teachers came to Corinth they were presented with an open door of opportunity to proclaim their false doctrines.

Paul would not sit quietly by and allow this to happen. They had been turned against him and so they were rejecting Paul but Paul did not take the mutiny and rejection personal. There was more at stake, to reject Paul was to reject Jesus Christ for his teaching was Truth which he had received directly from the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-15

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

Paul had been given direct revelation from the Lord and therefore if the Corinthians rejected him it was the same as rejecting the Lord. Paul teaching was the Word of God and therefore he was determined to do everything he could to defend his apostleship and that would even include something Paul hated and that was boasting about his own experiences as an apostle.

I. Paul's Knowledge

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:5

The word "for" connects this verse with the previous verse and the thoughts there. They had accepted the teachers who had preached another Jesus and they had given them a platform but now they were rejecting Paul so here in this verse and the next verse he points to his knowledge.

The question which faces us here in verse 5 is who are the CHIEFEST APOSTLES. The word "chiefest" means "SUPER". He is possibly comparing himself here to Peter, James and John and the other nine. Or he could be using sarcasm and comparing himself to the false apostles. It seems more likely that Paul words here are sarcastic and when he refers to the SUPER APOSTLES he is referring to the false apostles. These men had made their way into Corinth and claimed to be the chief apostles who had been sent from Jerusalem with their letters of commendation. Paul is pointing out how the Corinthians had accepted the false apostles and their credentials but now they were rejecting him as if he was a nobody or nothing. That is the very idea behind the word "whit".

The false apostles would have no doubt pointed to Paul's testimony and claimed that he was not like the other twelve apostles. Paul had persecuted the church and he was not a part of the original group who followed Jesus Christ. Paul was saved and called to be an apostle on the Damascus Road at a later date. Paul had admitted that he was not like the other apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:8-9

⁸ And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But in all of this Paul was not a nobody and he did not fall behind the other apostles.

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:6

Paul was "rude" in speech which means he was not skilled in speaking. But he lacked nothing in knowledge. Paul had been taught by the Lord and so his knowledge was straight from God. He was not skilled in his presentation but it was not about the presentation but it was all about the content of the message.

Let me remind you about what the false teachers said concerning Paul's speaking ability.

2 Corinthians 10:10

¹⁰ *For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*

The word "contemptible" means "something to be despised". Paul was not a great orator. He was not polished in his presentation but the content of his message was "SPOT ON". He spoke the Truth.

Application:

Let me just remind you all that however and whenever you were saved does not matter. The main point is that you are saved. The Spirit of God works with each individual in a different way.

John 3:7-8

⁷ *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

⁸ *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Jesus told Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit works in ways that man cannot sometimes understand. The wind blows from different directions and we cannot tell where it came from or where it is going and the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people the very same way. In one person they may come to Jesus through a message in church but another may come to Jesus through a tragedy in their family. The Spirit works as he pleases. Paul was saved out of persecution on the Damascus Road while the other apostles were saved in different places under different circumstances. But that did not make Paul a second-class apostle.

I say all of this to help you to see that there are no second-class believers. You may have been saved outside of church and you may not remember the date while the person next to you was saved in the church and they can quote the date and the exact time. That all means NOTHING as far as your position in Christ. You may not have the skill of presenting the Gospel as someone else does because you just have a difficult time speaking to people. That should never stop you from sharing the Truth because your skill in presentation has nothing to do with the CONTENT of your message. Some of the most eloquent speakers in the world really have nothing to say because their message has no spiritual Truth.

Let me remind you of what Peter said concerning false teachers.

2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

² *And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

³ *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

The word "feigned" here means "to be molded or formed". The idea is that many false teachers are POLISHED in their ability to speak. But they have NO content in their message.

I am reminded of the advice Paul gave to Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:11-12

¹¹ *These things command and teach.*

¹² *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

I point all of this out to help us to see that we are all different and what is important is the content of our message. You may be young, you may not be skilled in public speaking and you may have been saved out of a very sinful lifestyle but that does not make you second-class and if you are willing to stand and share the TRUTH God can use it to make a difference in the lives of others around you.

II. Paul's Sacrifices

Notice 2 Corinthians 11:7-12

When Paul came to Corinth he made the decision that he would take no money from these people because he did not want to give anyone an opportunity to say he did what he did for the money. He did without so that he could show to them the Gospel was absolutely free.

When he tells them, he robbed other churches he is referring to how the other churches supported him while he ministered to the people of Corinth. He calls it "robbing" because it was really the responsibility of the Corinthians to support him but he chose not to accept any finances from them. The believers at Macedonia sent him support and he also worked as a tent maker while he preached at Corinth.

He was very careful that he was not in any way a burden to the Corinthians. He made great sacrifices so that the Corinthians could receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This reminds me of the words of Paul earlier in this letter.

2 Corinthians 6:3-7

³ Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

⁴ *But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,*

⁵ *In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;*

⁶ *By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,*

⁷ *By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,*

Paul was very careful with how he lived so that there could be no accusation brought against him or the ministry and so to be sure of this he was willing to sacrifice and to suffer to accomplish this.

Application:

This very spirit should be in each one of God's children. We should be very careful so as not to do anything that would be offensive to those around us to be sure they could not bring an accusation against the ministry. The bottom line is we never want to do anything that would push someone away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Christ we have liberty but we must be very careful not to use the liberty so that it offends others.

Let me refresh your mind about what Paul said when he instructed the Corinthians about eating meat offered to idols.

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

⁹ *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

¹⁰ *For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;*

¹¹ *And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?*

¹² *But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.*

¹³ Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Now let me get you back to the thought of 2 Corinthians 11 again. The question which comes to my mind is, "Why did Paul bring this up to the Corinthians?" This is so unlike Paul to boast about any sacrifices which he had made.

Paul brought this up and boasted about it because it showed the contrast between him and the false teachers. He was willing to sacrifice and to suffer for the Corinthians. This is one characteristic that will not be found in the false teachers. They are not about suffering and making sacrifices but they are in it for the filthy lucre.

Let me refresh our minds again with the words of Peter concerning false teachers.

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False teachers are driven by covetousness and they will use the people they CLAIM to care about as merchandise to get what they want.

Paul suffered and sacrificed not for himself but for the Corinthians because he desired that they would hear the Gospel and receive Christ as Savior. He was not in the ministry for the money but he was in it for the benefit of others. This was all for the reason of cutting off any opportunities for the for the enemy to come and attack him and the ministry. Paul's motive for how he conducted his life as an apostle was LOVE. Paul lived exactly what he preached.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

⁴ Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

⁶ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Conclusion:

I will leave you tonight with a passage that is very important for us to understand and live.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

¹⁸ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and **hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;**

¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; **and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.**

²⁰ Now then **we are ambassadors for Christ,** as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**