

**2 Corinthians**  
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**Chapter Eleven**

**2Cor 11:1 I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.**

**2Cor 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.**

Paul needed to let them know that he was very upset over the actions of the false teachers and the way that they were entertaining them. He then had to speak to them in a manner that might seem like foolishness. He knew that they were already accepting him and listening to him even when he spoke in a worldly manner. He had to speak to them of the jealousy of God.

*Exodus 20:5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,*

*Exodus 34:14 --for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—*

God will not tolerate the worship of anyone or anything but Him.

*Exodus 20:2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

*Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.*

*Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.*

*Exodus 20:5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,*

*Exodus 20:6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

Saying that he betrothed them to one husband means that he was involved in the process of God bringing them into His family. He wants them to be presented to God pure in their faithfulness to Him. Spiritual virginity is a necessary condition for God's people. Marriage in the Jewish custom involved a betrothal period followed after a year or so with the actual ceremony. During the betrothal period they are regarded as legally husband and wife and infidelity was not allowed. Similarly we have been betrothed to Christ and one day we will celebrate the marriage supper:

*Rev 19:7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."*

*Rev 19:8 And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

*Rev 19:9 And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."*

**2Cor 11:3 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.**

**2Cor 11:4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.**

Paul was concerned that they might be misled by the false teachers and commit spiritual adultery. The original spiritual adultery occurred in the Garden of Eden as Eve was deceived by Satan:

*Gen 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

False teachers always follow the pattern laid out by Satan as they first portrayed the truth as error and then presented error as truth. The people had already shown a tendency to being deceived as they had already accepted somewhat the teaching of another Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel. Today there are many teachings about Jesus being a great prophet but not the Son of God as taught by the Muslims and others. The Mormons also teach another Jesus than the One of the Bible. Teaching of spiritual things apart from the Biblical meaning is also very common today by New Age philosophers and others. A gospel that teaches salvation by any means other than totally by faith and apart from any works is also very prevalent today. Saying that one must accept Jesus as Lord is works as is saying that one must pray some particular prayer before one is saved are also works. Paul speaks with considerable sarcasm that they bore such teachings beautifully.

The Gospel message is both simple and pure. Jesus accepted the wrath of God for our sins and His righteousness was imputed to our accounts:

*2Cor 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Many churches have been seduced by deceitful spirits as predicted:

*1Tim 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,*

*1Tim 4:2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,*

*1Tim 4:3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*

Lack of discernment is a major problem in the church:

*Eph 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*

In chapter ten we discussed that the spiritual battle we fight is an ideological one and we must be armed with the truth and practice discernment in fighting such a battle.

**2Cor 11:5 For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.  
2Cor 11:6 But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.**

Context argues that the “eminent apostles” in verse five are the same group to whom he referred in verse four. He also would never have referred to the true apostles in a rather sarcastic way as calling them “eminent apostles.” He is comparing himself to the false teachers who were proclaiming themselves to be “super apostles”. He is not saying that these people are true apostles for he has already said that they are not. However he is saying that the church should at least not regard him as inferior to these false teachers. He admits that he is not concerned with the eloquent speaking methods of the Greeks but it is not the method of speaking that is important. Today there are also people who are very charismatic and great speakers who command a large following. But the true test is whether or not they teach the real Jesus, Spirit, and Gospel. Paul says that he is not as skilled in speech but he is very skilled in knowledge. He says that he has made such presentations apparent in all of his dealings with them. The false teachers claimed knowledge only available to some special people but the true Gospel is not shrouded in mystique. Five of the seven churches John writes in Revelation had been founded by Paul and had fallen to false messages and this pattern has been repeated throughout the history of the church. Therefore it is imperative that all of God’s children be discerning.

**2Cor 11:7 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?  
2Cor 11:8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you;  
2Cor 11:9 and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.  
2Cor 11:10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.  
2Cor 11:11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!**

As we go through these next few verses we will see three major traits of a true teacher: humility, truth, love. Similarly we will see three traits of a false teacher: pride, deception, and abuse. We can use these traits today to help us distinguish between true and false teachers. We might also add greed or lack thereof to the lists also for they are involved. The love of money has led many teachers astray so we should look at what salaries they take and how they use their resources in their life.

Paul preached to the Corinthians without charge and the false teachers charged for their “services”. Paul received money from other churches for his missionary work with the church at

Corinth and so he referred to such as “robbing”. Of course he was not robbing the other churches for they willingly gave to Paul for his missionary work. Evidently the church at Corinth took Paul’s earlier writing about paying church workers and the claim of the false apostles that being paid was part of the process of being a true apostle as the basis for their complaints about Paul not receiving pay from them:

*1Cor 9:6 Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?*

*1Cor 9:14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.*

He makes his defense by saying that he did not want to be accused of “peddling” the Word of God and his purpose is doing manual labor for his own support was to elevate them above their idolatrous past. It was Paul’s policy to never take money from churches where he was directly involved in their ministry but to accept pay only from other churches so that they would assist in the missionary work.

*Acts 18:3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers.*

There was a time when he was working there that he felt the economic pinch but the church from Philippi and probably Thessalonica brought monetary support for him as part of their missionary work. God provided for his needs so that he was not a burden to anyone.

Paul clearly stated that the truth of Christ was in him so that he could boast of what God had done and his conscience was clear of any selfish motives, unlike that of the false teachers. Were his actions of preaching without charge to them because he did not love them? That is a ridiculous question that everyone could see was not true. He loved them very much as he had devoted his life to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

**2Cor 11:12 But what I am doing, I will continue to do, that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.**

**2Cor 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.**

**2Cor 11:14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.**

**2Cor 11:15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.**

He was also continuing in his work against the false teachers for he wanted to make the conditions such that they would have to leave the area. They wanted to be regarded as true apostles but they did not teach the truth. They were only doing their ministry because of selfish motives. They were in a dilemma for they could not refuse to take money for that was their purpose but if they continued to preach for money they had a bad comparison with Paul. In verses 13-15 Paul blatantly accuses them for what they really are. Anyone teaching a false gospel is against Christ or an anti-Christ. Of course the main character against Christ is Satan himself. Satan is a disenfranchised angel who still pretends to be the source of light but there is

only one source of light (reality) and that is the Trinity. Jesus came as light but the world prefers their darkness.

*John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

*John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

*John 1:9 There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.*

Satan is not omnipresent so he depends upon his servants to do his bidding. He has many servants and they all pretend to present the light but they are representatives of darkness. The churches today are constantly being assaulted by the false messages of Satan's servants and we must be discerning about the messages we hear. The only way to know when darkness is pretending to be light is to know light so we must devote ourselves to the study of the truth. All of these false teachers will receive their payment from God:

*Rev 20:10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

The deceivers do not wear red outfits with horns. They look just like any real teacher of the truth and may even say what seems like the truth. But Jesus warned us of them:

*John 7:24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*

*Matt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.*

*Matt 7:22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'*

*Matt 7:23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

**2Cor 11:16 Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, that I also may boast a little.**

**2Cor 11:17 That which I am speaking, I am not speaking as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.**

**2Cor 11:18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.**

**2Cor 11:19 For you, being so wise, bear with the foolish gladly.**

**2Cor 11:20 For you bear with anyone if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself, if he hits you in the face.**

**2Cor 11:21 To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am just as bold myself.**

Having finished with his defense of his ministry regarding monetary reward, he now returns to boasting as do his opponents. He could boast concerning his station in life more so than any of the false teachers so he will boast according to the flesh. However his boasting is an argumentation that may slip by some of his readers since he is boasting of matters that are really "unboastworthy". He begins now to boast not in the humble manner that the Lord Jesus would employ but he is comparing himself to the false teachers for the benefit of his readers. Verses

19-21 are probably the most sarcastic in the entire Bible as he puts the church members in Corinth in their place. These false teachers had humiliated the church members in many ways and they put up with the assault in submission to the errors. They had been reduced to slavery because the false teachers were trying to put them back under the law.

*Gal 2:4 But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.*

*Gal 5:2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.*

They had devoured them by greedily taking the worldly rewards from the church.

*Mark 12:40 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation. "*

They took advantage of them and they even hit them in the face, which could be used metaphorically or literally. These false apostles were totally controlling them and they tolerated it well! Tolerance is a strong virtue only for those who lack firm convictions and these people had deserted the convictions Paul had given them regarding their conversion.

**2Cor 11:22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.**

**2Cor 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.**

**2Cor 11:24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.**

**2Cor 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.**

**2Cor 11:26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;**

**2Cor 11:27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.**

**2Cor 11:28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.**

**2Cor 11:29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?**

**2Cor 11:30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.**

Paul now lays out his background and it is a background that nobody else could claim. The term "Hebrew" defines someone ethnically. It translates to "to cross over" and may refer to their origins beyond the Euphrates River in the choosing of Abraham. In Paul's time it was also used to distinguish between the Palestinian Jews whose native language was Hebrew or Aramaic and the Hellenistic Jews whose native language was Greek. Paul may have made this assertion because the false teachers complained that he was not originally from Palestine. Paul was born in Tarsus, which is a city in Asia Minor but he seems to have come to Jerusalem as a young child and definitely studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 26:4). The term "Israelite" refers to the Jewish

people regarding their descent from Jacob, later named Israel. Paul was also a descendent of Abraham and thus heir to the covenant blessings promised him (Gen 12:1-3). Paul also defended his background in Gal 1:13-14 and Phil 3:4-6. It was repugnant to Paul to refer to the false teachers as servants of Christ and so he modified his reply. Referring to the false teachers as servants of Christ was like the raving of a madman.

Next he lists some of his sufferings for the sake of Jesus Christ. Jesus had warned His disciples of the dangers in the world because of their serving him (Matt 10:16-25 and elsewhere). Paul also told Timothy about such sufferings for following Christ:

*2Tim 3:12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

Paul's list of persecutions is not complete but impressive and certainly distinctive from the qualifications of the false apostles. The word translated "labors" refers to working to the point of exhaustion. We do not know the total number of times Paul was imprisoned but Clement of Rome said that Paul was in jail seven times. The ones we have in scripture are Acts 16:23-24; 22:24-29; 23:10, 18; 23:35; 24:27; 28:16-31; 2 Tim 1:8. He did not know how many times he had been beaten and he lived in danger of death all the time. He does mention some of his lashings in verse 24. The Mosaic Law allowed for no more than 40 lashes (Deut 25:1-3) and the Jews stopped at 39 so as not to mistakenly break the law. Verse 25 states that he was beaten with rods three times and he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19). Paul's numerous sea voyages left him shipwrecked and once he had to spend time holding onto a piece of wreckage until rescued.

He then tells that he had dangers on his frequent journeys regarding rivers and robbers. He was also in constant danger from his own countrymen since they rejected Jesus as the Messiah and accused Paul of blasphemy. He also faced dangers from Gentiles. He faced dangers everywhere including the city, the wilderness, and the sea. He also had to endure dangers from false brethren. In verse 27 he turned to the dangers that he faced in his labor for the Gospel involving many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, and cold and exposure. All of these events certainly set him apart from the comfortable life style of the false apostles. How about putting all of his experiences as examples for those seeking to join a local church today?

Apart from all of the above he also was in great concern for the members of the churches he had started and others. He had true empathy for the weakness of the brothers who were weak and whenever one of the brothers had been led into sin he had intense concern.

**2Cor 11:31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.**

**2Cor 11:32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,**

**2Cor 11:33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.**

The Old Testament identifies God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5; Matt 22:32; Acts 3:13) but the New Testament identifies Him as the Father of the Lord Jesus (2

Cor 1:3; Rom 15:6; Eph 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3). Paul gives this agreement that the Son and the Father are one and that He is blessed forever. Paul was then committed to reverence of God and states that He knows that he is telling the truth. The Damascus scene is probably stated to show that apart from God he can do nothing. Paul returned here after spending time in Arabia and his life was threatened so his disciples saved him:

*Acts 9:23 And when many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him,  
Acts 9:24 but their plot became known to Saul. And they were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death;  
Acts 9:25 but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.*

In this last section we then see the sufferings of Paul for Jesus and his weakness without the power of God. Paul paints a total picture for us today. We can endure persecution for stating our position with Christ and we will sometimes have to retreat when God wills us to demonstrate a lack of dependence upon ourselves.