

Welcome to Grace Christian Fellowship

Jesus is Lord! (Romans 10:9)

Topic:

2 Corinthians 11

- Paul defends his ministry and deeds
against the accusations from the cultic teachers

- All verses are from the *ESV* unless otherwise stated
- [Brackets] are used to show other, alternative translations

1

Last time ...

Paul carefully exposes these (traveling?) teachers who appear to be skilled Christians, who have **great self-esteem** and use their **arrogance** when speaking. They hope to destroy their relationship with Paul.

Paul prefers a meeker approach when teaching, yet is strong in the Spirit and accurate in his biblical basis. He gets firm when the need arises.

He appeals to their sense of what is godly and denounces the arrogant method of teaching.

Arrogance is a mark of cultic teachers.
They focus on attacking the character of others.

2

Topics for today ...

Paul discusses more marks of cultic leaders.

Some in the Corinthian church claim that Paul does not have the marks of an apostle.

The cultic teachers have apparently made accusations that Paul is a poor speaker, he is a fool, he has bad motives, he is weak, he seeks to exploit the congregation.

Paul defends his ministry. Paul gives testimony that they all know that he has not been like what he is accused of and not like these other preachers at all, but rather the opposite.

He calls this testimony a form of 'boasting'.
In this boasting he actually describes things that take great spiritual strength.
He shows how different he is in contrast to the boastful preachers.

He recounts events that happened earlier in his ministry.

3

2 Corinthians 11

Today's message will be from the *NLT* (*New Living Translation*)

¹ I hope you will put up with a little more of my foolishness. Please bear with me. ² For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. ³ But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. ⁴ You **happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus** than the one we preach, or a **different kind of Spirit** than the one you received, or a **different kind of gospel** than the one you believed.

More marks of cultic teachers.

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2 Corinthians 11

⁵ But I **don't consider myself inferior** in any way to these "super apostles" who teach such things. ⁶ **I may be unskilled as a speaker, but I'm not lacking in knowledge.** We have made this clear to you in every possible way.

Paul is defending his ministry and making clear he has heard the accusations and yet does not consider his ministry to be inferior.

Paul esteems knowing Christ and the Scriptures above being an artful speaker.

Church is not about speaking that is full of feeling nor about being entertained.

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2 Corinthians 11

⁷ Was I wrong when I **humbled myself and honored you** by preaching God's Good News to you **without expecting anything in return?** ⁸ I **"robbed" other churches** by accepting their contributions **so I could serve you at no cost.** ⁹ And when I was with you and **didn't have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone.** For the brothers who came from Macedonia [northern Greece] brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be. ¹⁰ As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one in all of [southern] Greece will ever stop me from boasting about this. ¹¹ Why? Because I don't love you? God knows that I do.

The cultic teachers were probably claiming that Paul did not truly love the Corinthians.

Paul could have rightly asked for donations but instead asked for help from others so as not to burden the Corinthians. In this way he "robbed" other churches. [hyperbole]

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2 Corinthians 11

¹² But I **will continue doing** what I have always done. **This will undercut** those who are looking for an opportunity to boast that their work is just like ours. ¹³ These people are false apostles*. They are **deceitful** workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no wonder that **his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.** In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

Cults eventually burn out because the leaders cannot maintain a self-sacrificing life.

* "Sent forth" from an congregation that has approved and laid on hands

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2 Corinthians 11

¹⁶ Again I say, **don't think that I am a fool** to talk like this. But even if you do, listen to me, as you would to a foolish person, while I also boast a little. ¹⁷ **Such boasting is not from the Lord, but I am acting like a fool.** ¹⁸ And **since others boast** about their human achievements, I will, too.

Paul has just said that one should not boast in ones own deeds, rather boast in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17-18).

So now, although he is not a fool, he will speak as fools do, by pointing to their deeds. Against what he said in chapter 10.

Paul does this because the church has been deceived by these accusations of having only weak deeds.

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2 Corinthians 11

¹⁹ After all, you think you are so wise, but you enjoy putting up with fools! ²⁰ You put up with it when **someone enslaves you, takes everything you have, takes advantage of you, takes control of everything, and slaps you in the face.** ²¹ I'm ashamed to say that we've been too "weak" to do that!

This is another mark of cultic teachers.

They will often enslave members by pressing them to do things that are not real requirements for being a Christian. Just as the Pharisees expanded the things mentioned Scripture to press others into works of righteousness.

Cultic teachers will often take your wealth, and certainly they take control. Then they will use that control to insult and ridicule you.

So if Paul has truly been 'weak' then he must have been 'too weak' to promote taking advantage of the Corinthians like the false teachers did.

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2 Corinthians 11

²¹... But whatever they dare to boast about — I'm talking like a fool again — **I dare to boast about it, too.**

²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more!

Yes, this would be a foolish way for a Christian to normally talk but he is responding in the same way to refute their deceiving accusations.

He lists the claims of these super teachers and how he can match and exceed their claims.

Paul will now begin boasting in his weaknesses, his humble behavior, so they will see how Christ works through a true apostle.

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2 Corinthians 11

... I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. ²⁴ Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea.

This recounts the events described in Acts 14:19; 16:22-24; 22:25

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2 Corinthians 11

²⁶ I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not [they are false brothers]. ²⁷ I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

Arrogant, cultic teachers usually cannot keep up with this.

So is Paul weak?

Is Paul boasting to make himself look important and to exploit the church?

Or is Christ strong through Paul's weakness?

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2 Corinthians 11

²⁸ Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of **my concern for all the churches**. ²⁹ **Who is weak** without my feeling that weakness? **Who is led astray**, and I do not burn with anger?

Paul is also burdened with the concerns for the struggling churches he has planted.

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2 Corinthians 11

³⁰ If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am. ³¹ God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, who is worthy of eternal praise, knows I am not lying. ³² When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas [likely 37-40 AD] kept guards at the city gates to catch me. ³³ I had to be lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall to escape from him.

Paul gives more, specific testimony of the problems he had faced. This was right after his conversion in Acts 9:23-25. Within a few (~5?) years after Jesus' resurrection.

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Concluding comments

Paul gives more marks of cultic teachers. They often:

- preach a different Jesus
- have a different kind of Spirit
- preach a different kind gospel/good news
- deceive the flock
- disguise themselves in the appearance of righteousness
- boast about their human achievements
- take control of the church

While Paul

- was Humble
- did not want to point to his own accomplishments
- hesitated to take donations for support, was not a burden
- had extensive knowledge of Christ and the Scriptures
- did not take advantage of the church
- suffered for Christ and the gospel

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Next time ...

2 Corinthians 12

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