

2 Corinthians 22 - 11:16 - 12:10

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This week

Paul's defense 10:7 - 12:21

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Boasting according to the world 11:16-29

Boasting in weakness 11:30 - 12:10

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Boasting according to the world 11:16-29

Acceptance of boasting 11:16-21a

2 Corinthians 11:16–21 (LSB)

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

17What I am saying, I am not saying according to the Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.

18Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.

19For you, being so wise, are bearing the foolish gladly.

20For you bear it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

21To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison.

- v16 Listen to me
 - Resuming from v1 after parenthesis: why they should listen to him, why he does not accept support from them, the true nature of the opponents.
 - Let no one think me foolish.
 - 11:5 Not inferior
 - If you do. Some were seeing him as foolish
 - Receive me even as foolish. As you do the opponents.
 - So that I may boast a little.
 - Paul does not compare himself with others (10:12) but he must answer the opponents who have lured the Corinthians away.
 - a little. Until 12:10

- v17-18 Acting as a fool
 - What I am saying. In his boasting.
 - I am not saying according to the Lord
 - Not disobeying the Lord.
 - Answering the opponents as needed.
 - Pr 26:4-5 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you yourself also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.
 - Paul must answer the opponents to rescue the Corinthians from them.
- but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.
 - foolish/foolishness
 - Occurs 7x 11:1, 16, 17, 19, 21; 12:6, 11
 - Characteristics: 11:16 boasting; 11:20 enslaving. devouring, taking advantage of, exalting themselves, hitting in the face; 12:6 speaking lies
 - Why foolish? Not like Jesus (10:1). Coming judgment (5:10)
 - confidence.
 - Either “basis for assurance”: confidence in one’s own abilities and achievements.
 - Or “setting”; temporarily entering into the setting of boasting
- Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also.
 - many. The opponents
 - boast according to the flesh. As the world does: worldly basis, motives, means.
 - I will boast also. To answer them.
- Contrast Paul’s response to the envious preachers in Ph 1:15-18: Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife <they> proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me affliction in my chains. What then? ... Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.
 - Here Paul rejoices because Christ was being proclaimed truthfully even though the preachers had wrong motives.
 - In Corinth the opponents were proclaiming a false Jesus and a false gospel (2 Cor 11:4)

- v19 Wise fools
 - For you. The Corinthians.
 - Being so wise.
 - Sarcasm
 - The Corinthians were acting like unregenerate men. Ro 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools
 - are bearing the foolish gladly
 - bearing. Putting up with.
 - gladly. Happy because getting pleasure. Enjoying getting their ears tickled (2 Tim 4:3).
 - Play on words: wise (phronimoi), foolish (aphronoi). Paul uses similar words to identify the “wise” Corinthians with fools.
- v20 Bearing folly
 - For you bear it. Endure patiently. Contrast what believers are to do with such folly: Tit 3:10 Reject a factious man; 1 Cor 5:5 deliver the immoral man to Satan.
 - What the false teachers were doing
 - Enslaves. Brings into bondage. To the false teachers. To false doctrine. To the law of Moses. Contrast Paul: ourselves as your slaves (4:5)
 - Devours. Takes the Corinthians’ belongings. As the Pharisees devoured widow’s houses (Mt 23:14). Contrast Paul: without charge (11:7).
 - Takes advantage of. Exploits by deception. Contrast Paul: in holiness and godly sincerity (1:12)
 - Exalts himself. Lifts themselves up in pride; are arrogant and haughty towards others. Contrast Paul: in the gentleness and forbearance of Christ (10:1)
 - Hits you in the face. Striking with the hand repeatedly. Figurative or literal. Ultimate insult. As was done to Jesus in the Sanhedrin (Lk 22:63). Contrast Paul: 1 Cor 4:21 love and a spirit of gentleness.
 - Characteristic of false teachers in all ages.
- v21s Shameful weakness
 - To my shame. Sarcastically
 - we have been weak by comparison
 - Paul walked in the gentleness and forbearance of Christ (10:1). He was too “weak” to do what the false teachers were doing.

Just as daring 11:21b

2 Corinthians 11:21 (LSB)

21 ...But in whatever respect anyone else is daring—I speak in foolishness—I am just as daring myself.

- daring. To be bold to challenge opposition.
- I speak in foolishness. Repeating again that he is not speaking in a wise manner.

Boasting in pedigree 11:22

2 Corinthians 11:22 (LSB)

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's seed? So am I.

- The opponents were boasting of their pedigree. Paul has the same.
- Hebrews. Ethnicity
- Israelites. God's people
- Abraham's seed. People of the covenant and promises.

Boasting in ministry 11:23-29

2 Corinthians 11:23–29 (LSB)

23Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, in beatings without number, in frequent danger of death.

24Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one.

25Three 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.

26I 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 desolate places, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brothers.

27I have been in labor and hardship, in many sleepless nights, in starvation and thirst, often hungry, in cold and without enough clothing.

28Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

29Who is weak without my being weak? Who is made to stumble without my burning concern?

- Are they ministers of Christ? “Do they say that they are ministers of Christ?” Paul has identified them as ministers of Satan. (11:15)
- I speak as if insane. Out of my right mind (mind of Christ).
- I more so. Paul surpasses them.
- List is all afflictions; no accomplishments, commendations, achievements. Paul is answering the opponents’ boasts. Greek philosophers said that true wisdom was shown in a person’s ability to deal with affliction.
- Structure
 - Three ongoing afflictions (labors, imprisonments, beatings)
 - Danger of death with explanation (lashes, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked)
 - Lashes. From the Jews. Likely for blasphemy, saying Gentiles did not need to observe the law of Moses. Paul accepted these punishments rather than severing his tie with his people.
 - Beaten with rods. By the Romans for civil disobedience.
 - Stoned. By the mob at Lystra (Acts 14:9)
 - Shipwrecked. 3x prior to Acts 27
 - Dangers experienced voluntarily in service to Christ (frequent journeys - false brothers)
 - From my countrymen. From the Jews as at Corinth (Acts 18)
 - City...desolate places...sea. Everywhere on the earth.
 - From false brothers. As the opponents at Corinth.
 - Physical afflictions (labor and hardship - without enough clothing)
 - Pastoral concerns (weak, stumbling)
 - Weak. Spiritually weak
 - Stumble. Fall into sin.
 - As 1 Cor 8:12 wounding the weaker brother
 - Not what the opponents demonstrated.
- Much in this list is not in Acts.

Boasting in weakness 11:30 - 12:10

Affirmation and escape from Damascus 11:30-33

2 Corinthians 11:30–33 (LSB)

30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

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

32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,

33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.

- v30 Boasting in weakness
 - If I have to boast. Showing his reluctance.
 - I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. Turning the tables on his opponents.
- v31 Assertion of truth
 - Applies to all his boasting. Much was not known first-hand by the Corinthians.
 - God and Father of the Lord Jesus. Special relationship to believers.
- v32-33 Escape from Damascus
 - Re Acts 9:23-25
 - Ethnarch helped the Jews.
 - Humiliating display of weakness. Paul came to Damascus arrogant and with authority. He left as a fugitive lowered in a basket.
 - But the Lord used him to start the church in Corinth (10:14-16)

Visions and revelations 12:1-6

2 Corinthians 12:1–6 (LSB)

1It is necessary to boast, though it is not profitable, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

3And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—

4was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

5On behalf of such a man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in weaknesses.

6For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will consider me beyond what he sees in me or hears from me.

- V1 Visions and revelations
 - Necessary. To counter the opponents.
 - Not profitable. Does not proclaim the gospel, build up the church, validate a person as an apostle of Christ.
 - visions and revelations.
 - Replying to another boast by the opponents.
 - Corinthian valued revelations and included them in their worship (1 Cor 14:6, 26)
 - Pagan worship featured revelations (Oracle at Delphi).
 - Paul's revelations were from Jesus.
- v2-4 Caught up to heaven
 - I know a man in Christ
 - Paul speaking of himself. Does not name himself to avoid exalting himself. Wants to boast only in his weakness.
 - Fourteen years ago
 - Early in his ministry; prior to coming to Antioch. Maybe when he was in Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21)
 - Paul had numerous revelations from the Lord: Acts 9:4-6 his conversion, Gal 1:12 his gospel and others. He speaks only of this one because of what it taught him about weakness.
 - whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows
 - Avoiding a current controversy
 - such a man was caught up
 - By the Lord, not by him
 - to the third heaven...into Paradise. Synonyms
 - Heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.
 - not permitted. Forbidden.
 - For Paul alone. Not like his conversion.

- v5-6 Paul's intent
 - Refusing to boast about himself except in weaknesses
 - If he does boast he speaks the truth (11:31). Unlike his opponents.
 - He wants the Corinthians to only consider what they themselves can see and hear in him.
 - As Phil 4:9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
 - Consider. Reckon. Also in 10:2, 7, 11; 11:5. As Jesus asked (Lk 9:20): who do the Corinthians say that Paul is?

Thorn in the flesh 12:7-10

2 Corinthians 12:7–10 (LSB)

7Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

8Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me.

9And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

10Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and hardships, for the sake of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

- v7 Paul's gift
 - Surpassing greatness. Gk hyperbole: Beyond great.
 - to keep me from exalting myself. 2x for emphasis. Contrast his opponents.
 - a thorn in the flesh
 - What is known
 - Given. By the Lord.
 - A thorn in the flesh...to torment me.
 - Illustration.
 - torment. Lit to strike with the fist repeatedly. Humiliating. As Jesus' Jewish captors (Mk 14:65).
 - Affects Paul in his flesh. Painful. Cannot be removed.
 - Messenger of Satan.
 - From Satan. Allowed by God.
 - Message: as to Eve (to deny God's word); as to Job (to curse God)
 - Brings weakness. Impeding his ministry.
 - What is not known
 - Its nature. Not important.

- v8 Plea
 - Concerning this. The thorn.
 - I pleaded. Ask earnestly but properly.
 - Three times.
 - As Jesus in Gethsemane (Mt 26:44)
 - Did not tire of praying; received his answer.
- v9a Surprising answer
 - And He has said to me. Prayer answered. Perfect tense: ongoing.
 - My grace is sufficient for you.
 - Thorn removal is denied.
 - sufficient.
 - Gk: 1st word for emphasis.
 - All that is needed to accomplish the Lord's purpose: manifesting the odor of Christ to all (2:14)
 - My grace. The Lord's love and provision for him. Includes comfort to enable Paul to endure the thorn (1:4).
 - Ro 8:37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.
 - for power is perfected in weakness
 - power. The Lord's power
 - perfected. Accomplished completely. Present tense: ongoing.
 - weakness. Paul's weakness.

- v9b-10 Paul's response
 - Most gladly. Not resigned but rejoicing.
 - Paul was comforted when he realized that his weakness allowed the Lord's power to be manifested in him.
 - I will rather boast in my weaknesses. Rather than continuing to seek relief.
 - so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
 - dwell. Lit. pitched his tent. As the shekinah glory dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex40:38)
 - 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;
 - Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions and hardships.
 - Pleased in his weakness.
 - for the sake of Christ.
 - Not for himself. Not because of sin.
 - As Christ
 - for when I am weak, then I am strong
 - Paul's strength is not increased but replaced.
 - As Gideon in Jdg 7: Yahweh removed Gideon's strength by reducing his army from 32000 to 300. Then Gideon defeated Midian in Yahweh's strength.
- Why Paul chose this revelation
 - To bring the Corinthians to understand that weakness is characteristic of a true apostle of Christ.
 - To show that his opponents are not true ministers of Christ.

Application: Walking wisely in weakness

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God...

- Christ made Himself weak unto death.
- Through His death God defeated Satan, sin, and death.
- Let us imitate Him, rejoicing in weakness so that His power may work in us.

References

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