

## **Paul's Ministry**

### **2 Corinthians 11:16-33**

INTRO:

In **2 Corinthians 11:5-15**, the Apostle Paul responded to his critics. These folks make much of the financial burden they put on the Corinthian church. Paul highlighted how he took from others so he could bring the gospel to Corinth free of charge. He also accused these false apostles of being agents of Satan (**verses 12-15**).

This part of Paul's defense of his apostleship (in **verses 16-33**) detailed things which are not a source of pride to Paul, but are evidence of his sincerity and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel.

*I. Pauls' Pedigree (v. 16-22)*

*II. Paul's Sufferings (v. 23-33)*

*I. Pauls' Pedigree (v. 16-22)*

**2 Corinthians 11:16-21** *"I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool that I also may boast a little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly, since you, yourselves are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold—I speak foolishly—I am bold also."*

A. The Apostle Paul is very sensitive to the idea of exalting himself at the expense of Christ's glory. However, his opponents' methodology forced Paul to boast. To salve his conscience, Paul introduced his boasting with a long preamble. He explained why he is stooping to this methodology.

B. Paul first tried to make them understand that this boasting was not meant to be pleasing to the Lord.

**vs.16-17** *"I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool that I also may boast a little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting"*

C. Second, Paul underlined what the Corinthians experienced because of the arrogant boasting of these false apostles.

**vs.18-21** *"Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly, since you, yourselves are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold—I speak foolishly—I am bold also."*

One time I knew of a church musician who had learned from an abusive teacher and though the way to teach music was to be as abrasive as her teacher. In many ways the Corinthians were like this lady. They experienced the philosophical teachers, some of whom could be arrogant, and they thought these false apostles were to be endured like they had endured these others.

D. Paul began his defense by outlining how he shared many of the qualifications the false teachers trumpeted.

**v.22** *“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.”*

These false apostles claimed authority from **(1)** being Hebrew (Hebrew speaking Jews). **(2)** They also claimed they had a place in the Israel of God, the covenant people. **(3)** Their third claim was they were of the coveted *“seed of Abraham.”* This was probably an attack on the things Paul taught.

## ***II. Paul’s Sufferings (v. 23-33)***

**v.23** *“Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.”*

A. This last point is the defense proper. Paul defends his service for Christ. Carson mentions that this section had to be a shock to the Corinthians. They would have expected a list of how many churches Paul planted, how many conversions God had given him, how many accolades he had received, and anything else which might exalt Paul in the eyes of the Corinthians. It is not that at all. Paul boasts about his suffering. He stated them concisely in this verse.

B. In the verse which follows he expands his list with more detail. He gives details of his beatings in (verse 24-25).

*“From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep.”*

The false apostles claimed they deserved a life of ease.

C. Paul then talked about his trials and stresses.

**vs.26-30** *“In journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.”*

Can you picture the pain here? Paul endured much agony and sorrow so he could bring the news of Christ to places like Corinth. He then stops to answer his critics who might say, "Paul is making this up as he goes along."

v.31 ***"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying."***

D. Paul closed the chapter with a short account of how the suffering began.

vs.32-33 ***"In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands."***

This was not Paul conquering and getting honor, this was Paul escaping because many did not like his message

E. Over this passage we could write **Acts 9:15–16.**

***"The Lord said to [Ananias], 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.'"***

***What Do we take away from this?***

1. How deep is our love for the Lord Jesus Christ? We love Him because of what He has done for us. As we grow in Him and in His Word, we love Him more.

2. How much would we be willing to suffer for Him?

3. A Poem.

## ***No Scar?***

*"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ,  
not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."  
Philippians 1:29*

Hast thou no scar?  
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?  
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;  
I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.  
Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?  
Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,  
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent  
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.  
Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?  
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,  
And piercèd are the feet that follow Me.  
But thine are whole; can he have followed far  
Who hast no wound or scar?

~ Amy Carmichael

**Hymn #378 *Only One Life to Offer***