

Home Group Helps

2 Corinthians 11:16-12:4

Boasting in Weakness

I. Paul's Foolish Contrast with False Teachers (v.16-21) – ¹⁶ Again 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. ¹⁷ What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. ¹⁸ Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. ¹⁹ For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. ²⁰ For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. 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.

II. Paul's Pedigree (v.22) – ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

III. Paul's Persecutions (v.23-25b) – 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. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned

IV. Paul's Perils (v.25c-27) – three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 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; ²⁷ *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

V. Paul's Pastoral Burdens (v.28-29) – ²⁸ Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

VI. Paul's Particular Example (v.30-33) – 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.

VII. Paul's Prophetic Vision (v.12:1-4) – 2 Corinthians 12:1 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ² I 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. ³ And I know how such a man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- ⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

1. Launching Question(s):

- Have you ever felt the need to boast even if it made you uncomfortable to do so?

2. Observation Question(s):

- Why does Paul find boasting so irksome?
- One commentator stated that, "The true measure of a person's humility is the ability to boast when necessary and yet remain humble."
- Why does Paul find boasting here so necessary?

3. Interpretation Question(s):

- Paul reminds the Corinthians of his Jewish pedigree.
- Why does he feel the necessity of doing so?
- See Romans 9:4-5. Might there be advantages in being a Jewish Christian?
- Of all of Paul's experiences, he points to his being snuck out of Damascus as the one to expand upon and highlight.
- Why, according to the sermon, does he do so?

4. Reflection Question(s):

- Paul lists some of his persecutions (v.23-25b) and perils (v.25c-27).
- How do these experiences contribute to his credibility as a true Apostle?
- How are his persecutions and perils in contrast to the experiences of the false apostles?
- Paul tells the Corinthians of an experience when he was taken up into heaven and heard "inexpressible" words.
- Why did he feel the need to reveal this to the Corinthians?
- What is the danger of putting too much emphasis on such an experience?

5. Application Question(s):

- How might you "boast" in what God has done?