

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 2 Corinthians
"Finding Strength in Weakness"
Lesson 10 – 2 Corinthians 11
"Father Knows Best"

If you were a Christian minister, how would you go about convincing the people in your congregation that you really loved them?

This was the problem Paul faced as he wrote this epistle. If he reminded the people of the work he did among them, they would only reply, "Paul is bragging!" If he said nothing about his ministry at Corinth, the Judaizers would say, "See, we told you Paul didn't accomplish anything!"

So what did Paul do? He was led by the Spirit of God to use a beautiful image, a comparison that was certain to reach the hearts of the believers at Corinth. He compared himself to a "spiritual father" caring for his family. He had used this image before to remind the Corinthians that, as a "father" he had begotten them through the Gospel, and that he could discipline them if he felt it was necessary. They were his beloved spiritual children, and he wanted the very best for them.

There is a difference between jealousy and envy. Envy is of the flesh and is selfish; jealousy is based on love and seeks the welfare of others. It is right for a husband to be jealous over his wife or for a pastor to be jealous over his church. Paul compares the local church to a bride, just as in Eph. 5:22-33 he compared the church as a whole as Christ's bride. Both examples are valid. Paul's desire was to keep the church pure, free from false doctrine and worldly living. In the Old Testament, going after false gods is compared to adultery; in the New Testament, worldliness is called adultery.

Paul's chief credentials of apostolic ministry were the wounds on his body that he received in serving Christ. Keep in mind that Paul wrote these things before the events in Acts, and that most of the items on this list are not even mentioned in Acts! And the great apostle would never have mentioned them at all were it not for the fact that he was defending the Gospel. It is an interesting fact that Paul claims that his suffering, not the praise of men, was the best proof he had for declaring his apostleship. When selecting a spiritual leader, look for the scars.

Likewise, we must have an unselfish and generous attitude toward the church. We should not have the attitude "How much can I get?" but rather "How much can I give?" We should be willing to sacrifice so that the church might grow for the glory of God.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-15. Pray and answer the following questions:

Here in chapter 11 of 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul is dealing with probably the most powerful tool; the most dangerous threat to a church the devil has, “infiltration.” This attack from the enemy is designed to destroy the church from within by teachers who are veering off from the truth. This is still the most dangerous threat to a church today. As you drive through any of our American cities you find church buildings on almost every corner. It would seem that Christianity is the dominant faith in this land of ours and that the church is a powerful moving force in our society. Yet, as you well know, many of those church buildings are empty; many of them have a mere handful of people coming to services that are dull or all together absence of real vitality. It is clear that the churches represented by those buildings are long gone as an effective force in our society. So the question is, what happened? Well, most of them were destroyed from within by the satanic process of infiltration, by people who came in and gradually began to teach a false gospel. That is what was happening here at Corinth, and that is what is threatening many of our churches today. In chapter 11, we are going to look at the tactics the apostle employs to counteract this threat to the church at Corinth.

1. What qualities do you think should characterize a minister of Christ?

2. How does godly jealousy differ from worldly envy?

3. Why do you think Paul’s decision to “preach the gospel of God free of charge” was so important in defending his ministry? (See vs. 7-12)

4. What help do Paul’s warning in this chapter give you in discerning which spiritual leaders today are deceitful false teachers? (Note Jesus’ warning in Matt. 7:15-23)

Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-21. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul has promised that he would deal firmly with the disobedient who had been trying to undermine his authority. Also he has reminded the Corinthians that he was the one who first brought the gospel of Christ to them. Meekness or boasting can sound like madness. As Paul defends himself against the so called “super- apostles” in Corinth, see how he uses both meekness and boasting to answer the charges against him.

5. How do you think Church leadership should handle rivalry and competition in the body?

6. What does it mean to boast in the Lord?

7. If Paul must engage in boasting, he boasts about his “weakness.” We tend to think that our power and success not our weakness brings honor to God. In what sense is your weakness a reason to be thankful to God?

8. How can our boasting be glorifying to the Lord?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. Pray and answer the following questions:

The minister must be more than a minister. He must go well beyond ministering and laboring and suffering. The minister must do far more than most people. Paul says that he was more of a minister than the false leaders and teachers. He was able to make such a claim because he went well beyond in laboring and sacrificing for Christ.

9. Why does Paul offer a service record of his suffering? (See vs. 23-29)

10. In what specific ways can you be supportive of your church leaders?

11. How should you respond to suffering or hardship that you experience for the sake of Christ?

12. What have you learned from this study about the marks of true Christian leadership?

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts) Write your insights down for review and group discussion.

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