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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

2 Corinthians 11.

(2013)

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2 Corinthians 11.

Topics.

- I betrothed you as a pure virgin to one husband, Christ.
- A different Jesus, a different Spirit, a different gospel.
- I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.
- False apostles, deceitful workmen, disguised as apostles of Christ.
- Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.
- Paul boasts like a mindless and ignorant egotistic person.
- Paul's persecution, suffering and beatings.
- Who is weak, and I am not weak.
- Paul boasts in his weakness.

The Previous Chapter: in the previous chapter Paul spoke of walking in the flesh, the weapons of our warfare not being of the flesh and taking every thought captive. He talked of waging war according to the flesh, what Paul writes is what he lives, boasting in the labours of others and boasting in the Lord.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

I Betrothed you as a Pure Virgin to one Husband, Christ.

2 Cor. 11:1-3 ----- ¹I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ²I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Jealousy: in this context means protectiveness, watchfulness, and desirousness it carries the idea of caring about a person's safety and their well-being.

NOTE: the majority of this chapter is focused on Paul's defence against the self-appointed super apostles disguised as angels of light (v13-14) who are not only turning some the Corinthian brothers and sisters against him, but are also seductively enticing them to accept their teachings about Christ rather than the Gospel Paul had proclaimed to them at the beginning.

This is why Paul asks the Corinthians to be patient with him while they read this chapter because he feels it is foolish and egotistical to boast in such a manner of himself. Paul's motive is that his defence would turn those being influenced away from the self-exalting super apostles and back to himself and those ministering with him and to a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

NOTE: as much as it goes against the grain of a proud person to acknowledge their infirmities, likewise it is goes as much against the grain of a humble person to speak of their own praise. It is no pleasure to a good person to speak well of themselves, yet in some cases it is lawful and right when it is for the advantage of others or for their own necessary vindication as it here with Paul.

Following are two reasons that explain why Paul felt it necessary to commend himself: -

1. Paul had espoused the Corinthians to one husband, the Lord Jesus Christ as a chaste virgin and wanted to preserve their minds from being corrupted by the insinuations of the false apostles and from false doctrines as Eve was beguiled by the subtlety of the serpent. Paul was jealous over them with godly jealousy and was afraid that their faith would be weakened by listening to criticisms that lessened their regard to his ministry by which they were brought into the Christian faith.
2. To vindicate himself against the false apostles who were proclaiming another Jesus, another Spirit and another gospel and were also telling them that Paul was weak and his words mean nothing (2 Cor. 10:10).

The True Heart of a Shepherd.

Here we see the true heart of a shepherd; Paul feels a divine jealousy for the brothers and sisters in the Corinthian church. This means that he is zealous about protecting them and passionate about their well-being which also means he feels enormous grief over the fact that he knows that there are amongst their midst false apostles, deceitful workmen who are claiming to be apostles of Christ (v13).

This is what Paul feels jealous about he is jealous that these false apostles are having an influence over the church he established especially since he does not see himself as a teacher to the Corinthians, but as their father and as such Paul loves them as a biological father loves his own children.

I betrothed you to One Husband, to present you as a Pure Virgin to Christ.

Paul's magnificent and glorious words, "I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ" are simply breathtakingly majestic and stunning in the following three ways: -

1. The Corinthian church was an absolute mess when Paul established it, so much so he told them that: -
 - He could not address them as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ acting in merely human ways and therefore could only feed them with milk (babies feed on milk), not solid food, because there was jealousy and strife among them and they were behaving only in a human manner (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

The majority of his first letter is spent on teaching them right behaviour yet he says, "I presented you as a Pure Virgin to Christ." How tears must have flooded their eyes when this letter was read to them and how vast and glorious is the grace of God, these heavenly words of love show that grace in Christ has no walls, no-boundaries, it is unlimited, borderless and eternal.

2. Paul here sees Christ as the husband of all those who love the Lord, this implies a unique and intimate relationship that only a husband and wife have. Some religious teachers point out the fact that no-where does the Bible state we must have a relationship with Christ to be saved, but it does not need to be stated, since it is automatic, how can anyone not love someone who has laid their life down for them.

It is more than likely that God in His wisdom did not put any Scriptures in the Bible that clearly stated, "You must have a loving relationship with My Son to be saved," since it is almost certain religious legalist would have turned what is a natural fluid, unfolding and ever growing intimate and spiritual relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ into dogmatic theology. (Having an intimate relationship/fellowship with God and Christ is implied in many Scriptures throughout the Bible).

3. In God's mind when a husband and wife commit to each other it is forever, which means that when Paul who never learned the Good News of the Gospel but received it by revelation says: -

- I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

It means that every sinner who comes to Christ in humble repentance is being joined to the Lord forever. Christ as the perfect husband will never forsake his bride. Paul in the book of Romans wrote the following fabulous words of enormous comfort: -

- Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39).

Thus as in any marriage the only thing that can separate the bride from her husband (whose love for her glory and beauty is so great that he is willing to lay down his life for her) is our own personal rejection of him.

Super Apostles.

The so called super apostles (v5) a title for men who are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ (v13) are likened to the serpent who deceived Eve (v3) and to angels of light (v14) who Satan disguises as ministers of righteousness.

A different Jesus, a different Spirit, a different Gospel.

2 Cor. 11:4 ----- ⁴For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough (you might well bear with *him* in KJV).

This is one of the most abused verses in Christianity, legalistic and dogmatic religious teachers have used it to condemn many Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ but don't fit into their mould of what a Christian should look like. They don't follow their traditions, their customs and differ on certain teachings of the Bible therefore they condemn and accuse them of believing in another Jesus, another Gospel and receiving another spirit, but can what Paul is saying here be applied to a Christian brother or sister who loves and believes in Christ, happens to be different in their personality and the manner in which they do Christianity?

Does it mean that they believe in a different Jesus, a different gospel and have received another Spirit simply because they don't fit into the traditional Christian mould?

Consider: there has only ever been one Jesus who came as the Son of God, performed miracles that only a man with the Spirit of God (without measure) flowing through him could do, who called his followers to do good to others (love your neighbour as yourself) and live in a manner that honours God. Who died and rose again and will return in majestic and awesome wonder to gather to himself and to eternal life and everlasting glory all those who have faithfully followed him. It is this Jesus all Christians believe in so who is this different Jesus, what is the different gospel and if we believe in Jesus how do we receive a different Spirit?

For if he that Cometh.

2 Cor. 11:4a ----- ^{4a}For if someone comes (For if he that cometh in KJV).

NOTE: to understand what Paul is saying in this verse it helps to know that Paul later says, "I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles" (v5) since with this knowledge it clearly shows that the phrase "He that cometh" refers to the chief leader of the false apostles disguising themselves as apostles of Christ and as angels of light and servants of righteousness spoken of in (v12-15) who came after Paul had left Corinth and who are now influencing the Corinthian brothers and sisters.

Paul is fully aware that there was danger that the Corinthian brothers and sisters could be corrupted by the so called false super apostles by their preaching a Gospel that appeals to self, ego and pride, a religious system that embraces self-

effort and religious ceremonial rites to be saved and a Saviour that allows them to live as they please and therefore they would remain living in the flesh and could never grow in the Spirit since there would be no Spirit or power within to effect any change in their attitudes and their behaviour.

The super apostles were preaching a different Saviour and another gospel from the truths Paul had taught, which means that though it most likely appealed to self, ego and pride what they were teaching could only be for the worse for the following three reasons: -

- The Christ who Paul preached was perfect and is able to save to eternal life.
- The Spirit which he preached was perfect and is fully able to sanctify.
- The Gospel he preached was perfect and there is no way it can be improved.

For these reason any change to the Gospel the apostles and Paul proclaimed must be for the worse; and as the false teachers varied from Paul's teachings then it could be certain that their minds would be corrupted from the simplicity and saving grace that in Christ. The principal idea, therefore, is that the Gospel which Paul preached was as perfect as it could be and that any change therefore could only be for the worse. No doctrine could be taught or added by others that could be said to be better than the Gospel the apostles and Paul taught.

Preaches another Jesus.

2 Cor. 11:4b ----- ^{4b}For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed.

The words, "Proclaims another Jesus," most likely means that if this chief of the false apostles could proclaim a Saviour more worthy of the Corinthians love and more able to save and who is more worthy of their confidence (which is what they are attempting to do) then Paul will admit that they are doing well to bear with him. Obviously this cannot be done and this is what is implied here in these words of Paul (i.e., that such a thing is impossible).

The Lord Jesus in his character and work is perfect, there is no Saviour superior to him or that is necessary that can be provided. Paul is saying that these men discredit him (which they were), but they have no new Gospel, Spirit or Christ to offer than what the Corinthians have already received from him.

Paul is basically showing the Corinthian brothers and sisters that they are deceiving themselves if they expect to receive from any other man a more excellent Gospel, more excellent gifts of the Holy Spirit or a more perfect Saviour and Redeemer than the Lord Jesus Christ that Paul and the apostles proclaimed.

The Jesus We Proclaimed.

With the words, "Than the one we proclaimed" Paul is basically saying, "Let the super apostles show (if they can) that they have another Saviour greater than the one who Paul and those who minister with him have proclaimed. Can they give all the evidence that they are sent from God as Paul has done? Paul in this verse is saying that those who the Corinthians are being influenced by with all their pretensions have no greater Saviour to tell them of than the one who Paul has already proclaimed to them.

If You Receive a Different Spirit.

2 Cor. 11:4c ----- ^{4c}Or if you receive a different spirit (another spirit in KJV) from the one you received.

If the Corinthians have received another Spirit other than the Holy Spirit which is not only full of God's forgiveness, mercy and grace, but unites those in Christ to God as His adopted sons and daughters filling the heart with joy, comfort and peace and seals them for salvation to eternal life and everlasting glory not by self-striving and self-effort, but by faith and grace, then this other Spirit they have received must be the opposite of this (i.e., the spirit of bondage again to fear).

One of Paul's greatest battles throughout his ministry was against Jewish leaders enticing new Christian converts back under Moses law, circumcision and Jewish customs to be saved, a powerful example of this is seen in the following words of Paul to the Galatians: -

- Foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith (Gal 3:1-5).

It is certain that these false super apostles were teaching a Saviour that demands some kind of self-effort in attaining to a standard of righteousness by keeping certain laws and religious ceremonial rites, traditions and practises to be saved. Those who receive such teaching do not receive the Spirit of freedom, but the Spirit of bondage which is the Spirit of the Law not the Spirit of grace that all who trust in Christ receive through their faith in him.

NOTE.

Ego prefers the Spirit of the law rather than grace since it flourishes on the theory that a person is saved by a certain degree of self-effort. This thought enables self-righteousness and pride to rise up on the inside of some who attain to high levels of Bible knowledge or enormous religious success etc., and not only deceives them into feeling they are worthy of salvation because of their great religious achievements but also gives them a sense of being superior to others who (in their eyes) do not come up to their level of success.

In contrast to this no one under grace can boast or consider themselves superior to others no-matter how famous, how successful or how important they might be.

If You Accept a Different Gospel.

2 Cor. 11:4d -----^{4d}Or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough (you might well bear with *him* in KJV).

These words most likely mean, if the Corinthian brothers and sisters think they are accepting a gospel that is more worthy of acceptance and more full of comfort and peace, better promises a better way of salvation and the forgiveness of sins other than grace that that leads to eternal life and everlasting glory not by self-striving or self-effort, but by the crucified Lord Jesus Christ the Lamb without blemish and Son of God then they do well to embrace him who proclaims it (i.e., you might well bear with him or with it) which is what they are doing.

The sense in Paul's words seems to be, if there was a better Gospel there would then be an understandable reason and some excuse for the Corinthians to be welcoming and putting up with the false apostles they are being influenced by, but since they cannot preach any other Gospel and Saviour that is better than the Gospel of Christ that Paul has proclaimed to them there is no excuse. There is no reason why they should follow such teachers and forsake Paul and those who ministered to them at the beginning.

You might well bear with him: -

These words carry the idea that if the chief of the false super apostle could show the Corinthian brothers and sisters another Saviour, a more powerful Spirit, a better Gospel, they might well bear with him and submit to his teachings and authority and even prefer him to Paul and the apostles,

But since another and a better Saviour than Jesus of Nazareth could not be proclaimed, or another and better message than the Good News of the Gospel of Christ be preached nor could they receive another and better spirit than God's Spirit of forgiveness, grace and truth, which they had received at the beginning of Paul's ministry to them they should not be tolerating, such a false and deceptive apostles among them which some of them were doing.

I am not in the least inferior to these Super-Apostles.

2 Cor. 11:5-6 -----⁵I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. ⁶Even if I am unskilled in speaking (*I be* rude in speech KJV), I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

Rude: (in the KJV) in Greek means a common man; a laic (followers of a religion who are not clergy) or one that is not rhetorically trained, meaning they are unskilled in the art of diction and the articulation of language.

Some believe that the phrase “Rude in speech” means that Paul: -

- Spoke in a language and speech that was of a common person.
- Did not have certificates of approval from the religious leaders.
- Was a man of very low stature and that his voice was proportionally small.
- Had an impediment in his speech of some kind.

Though there is probably a degree of truth in all of these it is most likely that the words, “Rude in speech” is in contrast to those who are Great orators and skilled in the art of speech.

Great Orators: some speakers are so gifted with elegant articulation and oratory skills that they are able to dress their sermons with the flowers of rhetoric, or adorn their discourses with the expressions of human wisdom and with great swelling words that not only flatter but also appeal to self, ego and pride.

By the beauty of their oratory and enticing words of man's wisdom their hearers at their sound can by their persuasiveness force be carried away from the natural senses (common sense, logic and reasoning) so that by the excellence of their speech the deceptive words of their sermon appear to their listeners to be of God and not of man.

Paul's Speech: Paul being highly intelligent and a man who had observed in the synagogues many great Jewish speakers throughout his life was without doubt fully aware of the best rules of oratory and the art of persuasion, but though he was certainly not lacking in the knowledge and mysteries of God (2 Cor. 12:1-5) (Eph. 3:1-5) he spoke modestly of himself and in plain speech consistent with the Gospel and not with great swelling words that not only flatter the hearers but also appeal to self, ego and pride as the self-appointed super apostles at Corinthian messages no doubt were.

Supporting this idea are the following words that Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthian church: -

- And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom, because I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified and I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Cor. 2:1-4)

And in Paul's second letter people were saying that: -

- Paul's letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account (2 Cor. 10:10).

Showing that what he wrote carried weight and strength, but his speeches lacked in some form of artful oratory skills.

The Practical Lesson for Today.

Since Paul points out that he was not a great orator it is certain these deceitful workers of rightness were and no-doubt was one of the main reasons they were able to seduce the Corinthians to themselves.

Even today entire congregations can be led astray by a minister who is skilled in that art of oratory and understands the power of persuasion there is in cleverly and articulately presenting a message with confidence, power of speech and oratory skills especially if what they are saying has been preceded by mood shifting music and appeals to self, ego and pride which by lifting certain Scriptures out of context is something that is very easy to do.

This no-doubt is one of the reasons Paul commended the brothers and sisters of Berea with the words: -

- Now these Jews (in Berea) were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so (Acts 17:11).

We should always be open to listen to new speakers and new concepts for two reasons, firstly to test that what we have already been taught is really so and secondly, we may learn something new and of tremendous value, but we should never embrace something new simply because it has been presented in a manner that excites the mind and the emotions.

We of all Christian's of any generation are most blessed since we are able today to take the Scriptures that have been used in any given message and lift them out of human reasoning and place them into the context they have in the Bible and examine them as the brothers and sisters at Berea were doing to see if what the speaker has spoken is actually so or was it just beautiful but hollow words that tickled our mind and our emotions for the moment.

Paul Preached the Gospel Free of Charge.

2 Cor. 11:7-9 ----- ⁷Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? ⁸I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

The words, "Did I commit a sin in humbling myself" (v7) can refer to the following two aspects of Paul's ministry: -

- 1 To his humility in receiving financial aid from other churches of Macedonia while ministering to the Corinthian church (especially since he felt he was robbing other generous churches to support them) and the fact he humble himself, by working with his hands in the trade of tent-making to support himself.
- 2 The act of paying for a service esteems the abilities of the person being paid above the abilities of the one paying them, thus in this sense the act of paying exalts the one being paid and the higher someone is paid the greater they are exalted likewise the less someone is paid the more they are humbled, since without wages they are truly a servant to those they serve thus in this sense it could be said that Paul was humbled.

NOTE: Paul did have a right to ask and receive support from the Corinthians but he chose to waver it because he did not want to risk hindering the Gospel in anyway by placing any form of burden on them.

False Apostles, Deceitful Workmen, Disguised as Apostles of Christ.

2 Cor. 11:10-15 ----- ¹⁰As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! ¹²And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. ¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder, for even Satan (adversary) disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Since love and friendship are manifested by mutual giving and receiving Paul is telling the Corinthians that the reason he did not accept any aid from them was not because he did not love them or was unwilling to receive support from them but so that no-one (especially the self-appointed apostles) could accuse him of having worldly motives in preaching the Gospel or that he intended to make a trade of it to enrich himself as no-doubt others were.

They Work on the Same Terms as we Do.

Paul's statement, "They work on the same terms as we do" (v12) refers to the fact that Paul and those with him not only minister from a true love for Christ and for others but were prepared to suffer loss for the gain of Christ's Kingdom and those they minister to, in contrast to the false apostles who minister for their own selfish ambition and use their congregation as merchandise to enlarge their own kingdom.

Peter in his writings says of deceitful workmen and false teachers: -

- False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction and many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed and in their greed they will exploit you (make merchandise of you in KJV) with false words (2 Peter 2:1-22).

Even Satan disguises himself as an Angel of Light.

The words, "Even satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (v14) can refer to any religious person or pastor, minister or teacher who proclaims another Jesus and teaches a different gospel so subtly and deceptively that it seduces and deceives others from accepting the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ or entices others away from the faith.

Generally they will have great oratory skills and their messages will appeal to the masses since they tend to focus on what appeals to self, ego and pride (the reason they are able to lead many astray). They appear very holy and religious, they will be charming and have very likeable personalities thus the reason they are called angels of light meaning they are not easily spotted and appear very saintly in their words, their character and their dress.

Counterfeit Apostles at Corinthian.

There were counterfeit prophets under the Old Testament, who wore the religious robes and learned the language of the prophets of the Lord likewise there were counterfeit apostles under the New Testament, who seemed in many respects like the true apostles of Christ. These counterfeit apostles at Corinthian were able to appear in the likeness of the apostles of Christ and appeared as ministers of righteousness even though they were the ministers of satan.

They would have no-doubt have been industrious and generous in promoting the gospel message of Christ, but in such a twisted and insidious manner that it worked toward the promotion of their own selfish ambitions. The motive of their heart and the zeal they have for the ministry is not driven by a passion to extend the Kingdom of God, but to enlarge their own empire of power, control and fame.

Their End will correspond to their Deeds.

The words, "Their end will correspond to their deeds" (v15) means either God will make public examples of them in this world, or if they are not made manifest here, though they may deceive themselves and others, they cannot deceive God. He will take off the mask of their hypocrisy and their true character will be revealed and their evil works laid open and they will not only be judged according to them but also condemned for them. What revelations there will be in the Day of Judgment, when all impostors will be unmasked, and when all hypocrites and deceivers will be seen in their true colours! And how right it is that there should be such a day in which all who confess Christ or proclaim the Gospel are seen in their true character and for imposture, pretence and delusion to be forever removed from the universe! It should never be forgotten that a bad way always leads to a bad end.

Paul Boasts like a Mindless and Ignorant Egotistic Person.

2 Cor. 11:16-21 ----- ¹⁶I repeat, let no one think me foolish But even if you do, accept me as a fool so that I too may boast a little. ¹⁷What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool. ¹⁸Since many boast according to the flesh I too will boast. ¹⁹For you gladly bear with fools being wise yourselves! ²⁰For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face. ²¹To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool I also dare to boast of that.

Paul makes it very clear to the Corinthian brothers and sisters that what he is now writing is not being inspired by the Lord. In fact even Paul hates the fact that he is forced to boast, so much, he feels like he is being egotistical and mindless thus the reason he asks the Corinthians to bear with him.

Paul's boasting is to undermine the false and deceitful apostles who are not only esteeming themselves by boasting of their missionary work and achievements, but also speaking against Paul and those with him and telling the Corinthians that they work on the same terms as Paul and those ministering with him do (v12).

Pride Humility and Human Nature: the world considers humbleness weak and pride strong, leaders who take rulership, authority and control over others are seen by the world as men of strength while those who are humble, do not put on airs or exalt themselves are seen as weak.

Added to this human nature is such that if a person is esteemed to be someone important, powerful or famous people will submit to them, not because of their integrity of character, but simply because they are important and famous in the eyes of the world or the community they are in.

This is why Paul tells the Corinthian's that though they think they are wise they are in actual fact being foolish since anyone who would allow other people to take religious and spiritual advantage of them just because they have authority power and importance is certainly not a wise person.

Paul's Persecution, Suffering and Beatings.

2 Cor. 11:22-28 ----- ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 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 was adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

- Here we see that Paul was a Hebrew an Israelite and the offspring of Abraham.

Paul feels like he is speaking like a madman, he absolutely hates the idea of boasting of himself, but since the Corinthian brothers and sisters are being influence by false apostles disguised as angels of light he feels he is forced to boast of his own achievements, ministry and sufferings for Christ and the sacrifices he has made not only for them, but for all those he ministers to. It is certain that if those he loves as his own children were not being enticed away from the gospel by these false apostles there is no way Paul would be speaking in this manner.

Paul's Suffering Summarised.

Paul, suffered imprisonments, countless beatings (often near death) was five times whipped with thirty-nine lashes and three times beaten with rods. Once stoned, three times shipwrecked and left two days adrift at sea.

On his frequent journeys he was in danger from rivers, from robbers, from the Jews, from Gentiles, in the cities, in the wilderness, at sea and from false brothers. He toiled long hours to support himself and to minister to others and suffered hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure and apart from all these there was the daily pressure and anxiety upon him for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

Since no-one in their own strength would persevere and continue to endure such hardships in serving another this clearly shows that there was something within Paul's life that by far superseded self, ego and pride, riches and wealth and any other thing this temporal world has.

Who is Weak, and I am Not Weak.

2 Cor. 11:29-33 ----- ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? (Burn not, in the KJV) ³⁰If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. ³²At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, ³³ but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

Paul in these verses is responding to the so called super apostles statement, "Paul's letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account" (2 Cor. 10:10) after listing his many sufferings he now states, "I am not weak," no weak man nor any self-serving man would ever continue serving Christ when it brought such sorrow, physical pain and mental anguish.

Who is Made to Fall, and I am not Indignant? (Burn not, in the KJV).

Paul's words, "Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?" (v29) (angry and furious) means, when one of these self-appointed super apostles cause one of the Corinthian brothers or sisters to fall or stumble Paul is inflamed with anger and grief about it. Paul did not see himself as a teacher of the Corinthians but as their father and love them like his own children (1 Cor. 4:14-15) thus the reason he was so upset at the knowledge that certain religious leaders were leading the Corinthians away from the Good News of the Gospel of Christ to accept a false Gospel and a false Christ (v4).

Paul Boasts in his Weakness.

Paul says to the Corinthians, "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness" (v30) and then talks of his escape from the governor who was guarding the city of Damascus (Acts 9:23-25) rather than allowing himself to be taken prisoner which he did do on other occasions so that he could witness to those in positions of great leadership and influence. Paul's escape from the governor was his first great danger and soon after he was converted which means he had not settled into Christianity or at least in the ministry and apostleship of his calling.

The fact Paul feared being caught shows the amazing power and glory of God that was working in his life. Considering all the suffering Paul experienced and endured for God and the Lord when he proclaimed the Gospel it clearly shows that there was a power working in his life that far superseded selfish ambition, ego and pride since neither a self-serving person nor a fearful person would endure the dangers and sufferings (v23-28) Paul did unless there was something working within them that was not only far more precious than their own well-being but even their own life.

End