



— SECOND — CORINTHIANS



The Comfort of God FOR and THROUGH His People

Part 37—“The Courage to Boast in Our Weakness”— 18 August 2024

Introduction: True Vulnerability

<u>Proud & Defensive</u>	<u>Broken & Vulnerable</u>
I am guarded and protective about my imperfections and flaws.	I am transparent and weak; I disclose myself to appropriate others.
I focus on the “positive,” strong, successful parts of myself.	I am aware of the weak, needy, limited parts of who I am, and I freely admit failure.

—Adapted from *The Emotionally Healthy Church* by Peter Scazzero

Main Point: A willingness to admit our _____ and to reflect openly upon our _____ can be evidence of a mature trust in Christ and a secure identity in Him.

2 Corinthians II:21b-33

Context

Paul has drawn a direct contrast between his ministry and that of the false teachers in Corinth. He has addressed many of their criticisms as well as exposing that they are false apostles and are ultimately servants of Satan. They are damaging the church by preaching a different Jesus and a different gospel. The Corinthians should now bear with Paul as he foolishly boasts of his accomplishments even as they bear with the boastful false teachers in their midst.

Exposition

I. Paul declares that his Jewish heritage is _____ to that of the false teachers. (II:21b-22)

2 Cor. II:21b-22—But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.

⇒ Paul intended to continue acting foolishly, boasting in _____ things, if that would get the Corinthians’ attention.

⇒ Their ethnic and religious pedigree appears to have been a major aspect of the false teachers’ boasting. Paul’s response was intended to establish himself as their equivalent from a worldly perspective (Phil. 3:4-6).

“Hebrews”

“Israelites”

“offspring of Abraham”

“The rivals apparently touted their Jewish heritage to prove their supreme qualifications as servants of Christ...These terms affirm that Paul and his rivals are full-blooded Jews.” —David Garland

Key Point: Our _____ and _____ have been providentially given to us by God and we are right to avail ourselves of them when necessary.

2. Paul’s service to Christ, however, is far _____ to that of the false teachers. (II:23-29)

2 Cor. II:23—Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.

“labors”—κόπος (*kopos*)—activity that is burdensome, work, toil; a state of discomfort or distress, trouble, difficulty

⇒ Paul provides a list of specific difficulties that he experienced, perhaps in an ironic use of a well-known literary technique.

“Augustus Caesar, for instance, wrote a eulogy in his own honor...that listed his many accomplishments...Augustus is careful to include numbers: once I did this, three times I did that, many times the other. It is highly probable Paul had read Caesar’s *Res Gestae* since it was inscribed on monuments in many provinces.” —D.A. Carson

Paul’s ‘_____’ Experiences

(1) On five occasions, Paul had received *lashings*.

(2) On three occasions, Paul was beaten with *rods*. (in Philippi—Acts 16:22-23)

(3) On one occasion he was *stoned*. (in Lystra—Acts 14:19)

“...the scars left upon Paul’s body as a result of his beatings (Gal. 6:17) were not, like the battle wounds on the bodies of soldiers, regarded as badges of honor. Rather, they were ‘markings of a servile body, insignia of humiliation and submission.’” —Colin Kruse

(4) On three occasions, Paul was *shipwrecked* (and later a 4th time!—Acts 27:41-44)

2 Cor. 11:26a—on frequent journeys, in *danger* (*kindynos*—danger, risk)

The ‘_____’ of Paul’s Travels:

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1) From travel: <i>Rivers & Robbers</i> | (2) From those he shared the gospel with: <i>Jews & Gentiles</i> |
| (3) In all locations: <i>City, Wilderness, Sea</i> | (4) From _____ Brothers |

2 Cor. 11:27a—in toil and *hardship* (*mochthos*—labor, exertion, hardship)

Paul’s ‘_____’:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) <i>Sleepless Nights</i> | (2) <i>Hunger & Thirst</i> | (3) <i>Cold & Exposure</i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|

“The catalog of woes portrays an apostle lacerated by beatings, shadowed by enemies, worn down by exposure and deprivation, in shreds and tatters with no place to lay his head. It also shows an apostle unbent by all the hardships in his devotion to Christ’s cause and his calling.”
—David Garland

2 Cor. 11:28—And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

⇒ Of particular concern for Paul was the state of the churches that had been established on these journeys in the midst of all of these dangers and hardships.

“pressure”

“anxiety”

2 Cor. 11:29—Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

⇒ In spite of all of these things, he is not detached from the _____ of the people he cares for. Knowing his own weakness and vulnerability, he had great sympathy for theirs.

Key Points: Following Christ will involve seasons of _____ and _____.

Awareness of our weakness can afford to us _____ to minister to others.

3. Paul is willing to boast even in one of his most _____ experiences. (11:30-32)

2 Cor. 11:30-31—³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

⇒ To avoid people misunderstanding his description of his labors as somehow triumphalist, he reminds them that his boasting is ultimately for God’s _____ and is shown through his weakness.

An Example of Weakness: Fleeing Damascus

Paul’s ministry of preaching Christ began in Arabia soon after his conversion (Gal. 1:17). His preaching of Christ in Damascus, however, was not received well by the Jews of the city who, along with the local political leaders, sought to have Paul arrested (Acts 9:23-25).

“Probably it was the event that shattered whatever residual pride still lurked in the proud heart of Saul the Pharisee. He had set out for the city of Damascus with the avowed intent of rounding up Christians; he left the city not as the hunter but as the hunted. This toast of high rabbinic circles, this educated and sincere Pharisee, this man who had access to the highest officials in Jerusalem, slunk out of Damascus like a criminal, lowered like a catch of dead fish in a basket whose smelly cargo he had displaced. It is even possible that his detractors held up this event to the Corinthians as proof of Paul’s cowardice.”—D.A. Carson

Key Point: God can use even our greatest _____ for His glory if we are willing to trust Him and to learn the things that He would teach us through it.

Concluding Thoughts

• **Maturity in Christ comes as we understand more and more what it means to have our _____ in Him.**

Phil. 3:9—and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith

• **Our weaknesses and struggles in this life do not make us ‘failures’ because we are _____ in Christ.**

John 16:33—I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”



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“The rivals apparently touted their Jewish heritage to prove their supreme qualifications as servants of Christ...These terms affirm that Paul and his rivals are full-blooded Jews.” —David Garland

Key Point: Our cultural and ethnic background is the result of God’s providence and is given to serve His purposes.

2. Paul’s service to Christ, however, is far superior to that of the false teachers. (II:23-29)

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