

2 Corinthians 11:1- - 12:21 **Paul's Performance of Apostleship**

Betrothed a Chaste Virgin to Christ –

1 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me. **2** For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Deceived with another spirit – another gospel – another Jesus

3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. **4** For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!

Not inferior Apostleship

5 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. **6** Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.

Gospel preached free of charge – Supported by other Churches

7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? **8** I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. **9** And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. **10** As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. **11** Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!

False prophets – Deceitful workers – Ministers of Satan

12 But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. **13** For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. **14** And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. **15** Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

I speak foolishly because you put up with fools

16 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. **17** What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. **18** Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. **19** For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! **20** 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. **21** 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.

Credentials as a Jew – Minister of Christ – Perils of tribulation

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. **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. **24** From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. **25** 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; ²⁶ 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; ²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. ³¹ The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; ³³ but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

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2 Corinthians 12:1-21 **Visions & Revelations – Thorn in the flesh**

Vision of Third Heaven

¹ It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come 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 whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- ⁴ how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ⁵ Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. ⁶ For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

Thorn in the flesh

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Signs of Apostleship

¹¹ I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. ¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. ¹³ For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Ready to come to Corinth the third time

¹⁴ Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. ¹⁵ And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. ¹⁶ But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning!

We have not taken any advantage of you

17 Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? 18 I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps? 19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification.

Fear of possible disappointment

20 For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; 21 lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced. NKJV

Facts Revealed:

Betrothed a Chaste Virgin to Christ [2 Corinthians 11:1-2]

- ✚ Paul's desire for the Corinthians was that he might present them in purity to Christ as a chaste virgin.
- ✧ This can only happen "if" they hold fast to the Gospel message in its purity as originally delivered to them. [1 Corinthians 11:23, 15:1-3, 2 Corinthians 11:4, Galatians 1:9, Philippians 4:9, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 4:1, 5:21, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6, 1 Timothy 5:11-12, 2 Timothy 1:13, 2 John 1:4, Hebrews 3:6, 4:14, 10:23, 26-27, Revelation 2:4-5, 24-25, 3:3, 10-11]
- ✧ This requires discernment on their part to recognize true Gospel message from false messages presented by false apostles who had come in and attempted to slander Paul and his message.
- ✧ The reference to the chaste virgin, espoused to one husband, is not a declaration that the Church at Corinth is the "Bride of Christ" - but a figurative wording declaring Paul's desire that the Corinthians remain pure in doctrine until the coming of the Lord for His Church.
- ✧ The expectation of relational purity between a husband and his wife is the closest human experience Paul can use to illustrate the doctrinal purity expected in the Church.
- ✧ It is the same as the relationship between the Lord God and the Children of Israel when He said:

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, **though I was a husband to them**, says the LORD. [Jeremiah 31:31-32 NKJV]

Deceived with another spirit – another gospel – another Jesus [2 Corinthians 11:3-4]

- ✚ Paul's greatest concern is that the Corinthians might be swayed by the message of false apostles and be deceived. [2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 12-15, 1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 3:13]
- ✧ "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!
- ✧ That is the same concern Jesus expressed: [Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 23-24, 48-50, Mark 13:5-6, 21-22, Luke 17:22-24, 21:7-8, Revelation 2:9, 14-15, 20-25]
- ✧ Other writers had the same concern. [2 Peter 3:17, 2 John 1:7-11, Jeremiah 23:9-40, Ezekiel 13:1-23, Deuteronomy 18:20]

Not inferior Apostleship [2 Corinthians 11:5-6]

- ✚ Paul does not feel inferior to the most eminent Apostles.
- ✧ Paul has been charged with contemptible speech. [2 Corinthians 10:10]

- ✧ Even though his speech may be unpolished as a great orator, still his knowledge is full.
- ✧ His presentation did not depend on excellency of speech through the wisdom of men, but by the manifestation of the power of God. [1 Corinthians 2:1-5]

Gospel preached free of charge – Supported by other Churches [2 Corinthians 11:7-11]

- ✧ Paul preached the Gospel to the Corinthians free of charge.
 - ✧ His support came from other churches so he would not be a burden to the Corinthians.
 - ✧ When the brethren came to him from Macedonia they supplied what he lacked.
 - ✧ Paul intends to continue to keep himself from being a burden to the Corinthians so no one will be able to stop him from boasting in all the regions of Achaia (Greece).
 - ✧ It also cuts off the opportunity from the false apostles who want to appear equal to Paul.
 - ✧ God knows how much Paul loves the believers at Corinth.

False prophets – Deceitful workers – Ministers of Satan [2 Corinthians 11:12-15]

- ✧ Those who desire to be regarded equal to Paul and his company in the things of which they boast, are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.
 - ✧ This is of course not surprising, because Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.
 - ✧ That being the case, it is no wonder if Satan's ministers also represent themselves as ministers of righteousness. In the Judgment their end will be according to their works. [Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:5-6, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11:15, 1 Peter 1:17, Revelation 2:23, 20:12-13, 22:12]

I speak foolishly because you put up with fools [2 Corinthians 11:16-21]

- ✧ Many as fools boast according to the flesh and the Corinthians put up with them.
 - ✧ They bring you into bondage, devour you, take from you, and exalt themselves, even strike you on the face and you put up with it.
- ✧ Paul is also able to boast and asked the Corinthians to put up with his foolishness in boasting.

Credentials as a Jew – Minister of Christ – Perils of tribulation [2 Corinthians 11:22-33]

- ✧ In all the things the false apostles (Judaizers) boast, Paul is even more qualified as being:
 - ✧ Hebrew
 - ✧ Israelite
 - ✧ Seed of Abraham
 - ✧ Minister of Christ

✧ Paul's greater qualifications for the sake of Christ:

- ✧ More abundant labors.
- ✧ Stripes beyond measure.
- ✧ Imprisonments.
- ✧ Near death often.
- ✧ Received from the Jews forty stripes minus one five different times.
- ✧ Beaten with rods three times.
- ✧ Once he was stoned.
- ✧ Three times he was shipwrecked.
- ✧ A day and a night he was in the deep.
- ✧ Often in journeys.
- ✧ Perils of waters, robbers, from his own countrymen, from the gentiles.
- ✧ Perils in the cities and in the wilderness.
- ✧ Perils at sea.
- ✧ Perils among false brethren.
- ✧ Often exhausted, sleepless, hungry, thirsty, cold and naked.
- ✧ Often fasting.
- ✧ Besides other things, what comes upon him daily is his great 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. [2 Corinthians 11:30]
- ✧ The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. [2 Corinthians 11:31]
- ✧ 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. [2 Corinthians 11:32-33]

2 Corinthians 12:1-21 **Visions & Revelations – Thorn in the flesh**

Vision of Third Heaven [2 Corinthians 12:1-6]

- ✚ Paul continues to give his qualifications as an Apostle though he realizes boasting is not profitable.
- ✧ I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was **caught up to the third heaven**. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was **caught up into Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
- ✧ Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.
- ✧ Though Paul is able to boast in all of this, he desires to speak the truth, not wanting to be a fool.
- ✧ Paul does not want the Corinthians to think of him above what they see in him and hear from him.

Thorn in the flesh [2 Corinthians 12:7-10]

- ✚ Paul is able to boast by the abundance of revelations, but God gave him a **thorn in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to buffet him lest he be exalted above measure.
- ✧ It might possibly have been a severe allergy that afflicted the eyes. [Galatians 4:12-15]
- ✧ Three times Paul pleaded with the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh.
- ✧ God answered him by saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."
 - ✧ When we serve the Lord in our weakness, the only power seen is of the Lord, that all praise and glory is to the Lord, not to us.
- ✧ Paul's conclusion is: "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Signs of Apostleship [2 Corinthians 12:11-13]

- ✚ Paul felt compelled by the Corinthians to make a fool of himself by boasting, when he should have been commended by them.
- ✧ Though he feels himself to be nothing, still he feels he is not inferior to the most eminent of the Apostles.
- ✧ The signs of Apostleship were demonstrated among the Corinthians with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.
- ✧ The only thing in which the Corinthians were inferior to other churches was in the fact that Paul did not allow himself to be a burden to them. For that he asked their forgiveness.

Ready to come to Corinth the third time [2 Corinthians 12:14-16]

✚ Paul is ready to come to Corinth the third time, and he is determined not to be burdensome to them by seeking their support.

✧ Paul is providing for the Corinthians like a parent does for his children.

✧ Out of love for the Corinthians, Paul would rather spend and be spent for their souls, though he feels he is loved even less.

✧ Not wanting to be a burden, Paul desires to catch the Corinthians by crafty cunningness.

We have not taken any advantage of you [2 Corinthians 12:17-19]

✚ With a clear conscience, Paul declares, he has not taken advantage of anyone.

✧ When he sent Titus with the brother, they did not take advantage of the Corinthians but walked in the same spirit and steps as Paul.

✧ Before God and Christ, Paul declares that they do all things for the edification of their beloved Corinthians.

Fear of possible disappointment [2 Corinthians 12:20-21]

✚ Now that Paul is planning to come to Corinth again, his greatest concern is that he may be a disappointment to the Corinthians, or they may be a disappointment to him, if he finds among them, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, or tumults.

✧ God may humble Paul in his boasting about the Corinthians to the point of mourning for many, if he finds that they have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.