

BOOK OF 2 CORINTHIANS
PAUL’S HEART TOWARD THE CHURCH
2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

Introduction

Quickly summarize the earlier part of the chapter.

Here we see the Apostle’s final thoughts of what he has just said now that he has finished the defense of his ministry—The things we’ve seen in last couple of sessions of our Bible study – How he boasted of his credentials, his supernatural revelations, his labors, and his sufferings for the cause of Christ!

Vs 11

He begins by saying...**“I am become a fool in glorying...”** (Vs 11)

Five times in this passage Paul has called himself a **fool** and **twice** he said that he was speaking **foolishly**. By this, he meant that it SHOULD NOT have been necessary for him to defend himself! He SHOULD NOT have been compelled to **boast** of all his **suffering** and all his **unselfish labor** among them and others!

Nevertheless, he is compelled to do so in order to defend the authority and place as an apostle that the LORD had given him.

He is saying that this Church at Corinth, instead of doubting his authority or his message, **should have** come to his defense since His work among them was so obviously of God!

He was the anointed, empowered apostle who was sent to them to turn them from the darkness of heathendom into the light of God’s glorious kingdom!

So Paul highlighted the gravity of the Corinthians’ failure toward him by speaking to them about their failure to commend him even though he was commendable! (2 Corinthians 12:11)

When Paul said that he had become **“a fool,”** he meant that he had performed the actions of a fool when he boasted of his credentials, his supernatural revelations, his labors, and his sufferings for the cause of Christ!

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The Corinthians forced Paul to engage in **foolish boasting**, because **they had failed to stand up for him** when he came under personal attack by the false teachers.

When Paul referred to **“the very chiefest apostles,”** here it is believed that he was referring sarcastically to that group of false apostles in Corinth who had been attacking him and seeking to undermine his apostleship. Even though this statement was true even when compared to the other legitimate apostles! (Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:10)

Vs 12

Paul highlighted the gravity of the Corinthians’ failure toward him by speaking of their failure to commend him, even though he had shown in his ministry the signs of a true apostle among them.

He first mentions the **“signs of an apostle”** were done among them **“in all patience.”** (*patience = cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy*) The very fact that Paul **continued to minister among them** and **had no quit in him in spite of adverse consequences** was in itself a sign that he was an apostle!

Next he mentions the **“signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds”** done among them that were the authentication by the Holy Spirit of both of the messenger and the message!

signs = an event or phenomenon that is an indication or a proof; a remarkable transaction, event or phenomenon.

wonders = something so extraordinary as to excite wonder or astonishment; a sign or indication of some future even.

mighty deeds = things wrought by miraculous power.

Cf. Romans 15:17-19

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Vs 13

Here Paul highlighted to the Corinthians the gravity of their failure toward him by speaking to them about how they had failed to commend him even though he had given them special consideration in serving among them without pay from them!

He again uses sarcasm in saying, *"forgive me this wrong."* The idea is that in them not being required to support Paul financially, they had essentially treated what they got from him as worthless. (*"good for nothing"*)

i.e. Had the Church been required to support Paul financially maybe they would have thought differently about what they received of him!

Vs 14-15

Paul focused the Corinthians' attention on the loving and sacrificial character of his apostolic ministry as manifested by his no-charge policy!

He had not taken anything from them before! And again, the next time that the LORD allowed him to come among them, he still would not be *"burdensome"* to them! He wasn't changing his policy!

Paul believed that his no-charge policy testified to the true apostolic character of his ministry! After all, Christ, the one who had sent him to the Gentiles, had also suffered on behalf of those to whom He had been sent.

Paul was willing to both spend (financially) and be spent (personally) on their behalf!

Paul was NOT going to let their lack of love for him affect his love for them!

Vs 16-18

Paul called those Corinthians who were still rebelling against him to make a final decision about whether his no-charge policy was a ploy to rob them or a means to sacrificially serve them as would be expected from a true apostle!

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Even when he sent Titus and another brother to them, Titus nor Paul required that the Church support them while they were among them!

Vs 19-21

All that Paul and those with him were concerned with was **edifying this Church at Corinth!** Everything they had done was to that end! They had not filled their pockets or sought to exalt themselves, but rather to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ among them and to build them up in the Lord!

Paul had not been defending himself to them throughout this epistle in order to serve himself, but rather to serve them as he, standing before God, spoke to them in Christ.

There were still many young converts at Corinth who were still *"carnal"* and not *"spiritual"* as Paul had hoped! Paul outlined his fears here if he arrived at Corinth for the third time and found things still the way they were.

Paul was afraid that if there was no repentance that neither he nor the unrepentant would find what they wanted from each other when he arrived on his third visit. (**Vs 20**)

(Have you ever gone into a situation with certain expectations of what you were going to do only to find that you had to deal with other things than what you had originally intended because of what you found when you arrived?)

If Paul found certain bad behavior among the unrepentant when he came to Corinth, he, rather than coming to them in gentleness as he hoped, he would be forced to come to them with a rod of discipline.