

# The Corinthians

by Steve Gallagher

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*Steve Gallagher's sermon explores Paul's interactions with the Corinthian church, addressing issues of division, immorality, and the importance of repentance.*

**Duration:** 50:50

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 11:13

**Topics:** "Church Discipline", "Spiritual Leadership"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the intricate details of Paul's interactions with the Corinthians, highlighting the challenges he faced with false teachers, divisions, and immorality in the church. It emphasizes Paul's self-distrust and unwavering trust in the Lord, showcasing his deep love for the Corinthians despite the difficulties he encountered. The sermon also touches on the importance of discernment in identifying false teachers and the need for humility in ministry.

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## Transcript

Good morning, everyone. This morning, we are going to cover about two verses in the book of Acts. Those will be the first two verses of Acts 20, which we won't even get to for quite a while, but we're going to really go over two of the longest of Paul's epistles today.

Last week, we looked at his two-and-a-half-year stay in Ephesus and all the good that came out of that period of intense activity there. Really, what he's going into here in the story this week is probably even more intense. We're going to be looking at Paul's interactions with the Corinthians.

But what I need to tell you is that probably half of the story we're going to deal with today happened during his time in Ephesus. Last week, when we went through the story, we got right up to the end when there was the riot and then he left. So a lot of what happens in this story, we have to backtrack to pick it up.

So that's what we're going to do. What I want to do first of all, before we get into the details of the story, is I want to give you an overview of it because it can get probably a little confusing. So I want to lay out the outline of events.

So as I start going through it, I think it'll make a little more sense to you. While Paul was in Ephesus, some delegates from closed church, whatever that might have been, arrived in Ephesus to share some concerns they had about the church in Corinth. They were concerned about real serious division going on

there.

Then not long after that, it seems as though a delegation from Corinth came to talk to Paul and brought a list of written questions that they wanted answers for. There was a lot of confusion about different sorts of practical issues. So then they showed up and that's what precipitated him writing 1 Corinthians.

Then he sent that letter and then when he got word back that it was partially successful. In other words, most of those questions and issues were dealt with. But in the meantime, a group of Judaizers had arrived from Jerusalem and had started causing problems.

So he makes a quick, quote, painful visit to Corinth and then he follows that up. When that didn't even accomplish what needed to be accomplished, he followed that up with a quote, sorrowful letter, which he sent with Titus. Now that brings us to current events here.

Now he leaves Ephesus and he heads for Macedonia, stopping off in Troas on the way, doing some evangelization there and so on. He finally hooks up with Titus in Philippi, and Titus brings him word that most of the church repented. This is good news.

So that precipitates him writing 2 Corinthians, which we're going to spend some time in here this morning. Then he probably, after that, is probably when he went into a Lycaeaum, which is modern-day Yugoslavia, and he does some evangelization work there, which is really phenomenal. We don't hear anything else about what happened there, but that's a long trek away from Macedonia, further northwest.

But anyway, then he ends up in Corinth and spends three months there, and that'll be the end of today's lesson. So let's get back to 1 Corinthians. Closed people have told him about this strife in the church, this list of questions comes to him.

So this is what he's going to mainly focus on. The Corinthians were looking for advice on marital issues, food that had previously been dedicated to idols, women who were basically doing a lot of talking and chattering and usurping male authority in the church and so on, the observance of the Lord's Supper, and also the spiritual gifts, how they work in the church and how they fit in and so on. But also Paul wanted to address some other issues.

He made a strong statement about what God's love is, didn't he? And what we should all be striving towards. So that's 1 Corinthians 13, powerful chapter. He also talked about the nature and the significance of the resurrection, another powerful chapter.

Where would we be without these chapters? You see the problems that were going on there and all the questions and stuff provoked Paul to write these things that people for 2000 years have been being edified by. So those were a couple of the things that went on, but also he needed to deal with strife and immorality in the church. I wanna talk a little bit about strife in the church and let me just say, first of all, that strife always comes from pride.

Pride is always, always, always the basis for divisions in the church and for strife in general. And it's a sign of spiritual immaturity and all the thousands of different splinters of groups and denominations and everything in the American church basically shows us where we're at spiritually in the US. But anyway, in Corinth, what happened there is these different groups kind of started congregating together who wanted to attach themselves to various different figureheads.

And I wanna go through these figureheads that Paul mentions in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians. And let me just go through this quickly because it helps us to get a better sense of what the Corinthian people were in. Apollos is the first one mentioned or that I'll mention.

Apollos was a good man and he did nothing to promote, people following him and all of that. He was not in that spirit apparently. I mean, there's certainly nothing said in there that would make us think that.

In fact, I would think that he would be the first to tell you that he was inexperienced and that he needed Paul's guidance just as a believer, let alone as a minister and so on. So I don't think he did anything purposely to create a following. But Apollos was from Alexandria and Alexandria had a world famous school of rhetoric there which he almost certainly went through.

And he was a polished speaker. He was a professional speaker probably before he got saved. So he gets saved and he's just got the ability to eloquently express things and articulate things.

And this is the scary thing about ministers is it's so easy to assume that just because someone can make things seem so, I don't know, just they can express things in a powerful way. It's very easy to equate that with godly character. Now, it's not that Apollos was ungodly.

He just wasn't that mature. He hadn't gotten that far in the faith. He was not up to that level.

But those who followed him were basically comparing him as a speaker to Paul. And they complained about Paul's less flowery way of speaking. I think in my mind, Paul was like a truth machine.

He would come in, he wasn't looking to wow the crowds, he wasn't looking to impress people by himself. He wasn't looking to draw people after him like so many do. But he was not in that spirit.

He said, I didn't come with superiority of speech or wisdom. His message was simple. It was based in the word of the cross.

And that's what he brought. It's not a popular message, which also probably caused him problems. So that was the group that followed Apollos.

Those who were wowed by good speakers. And then you have Cephas, who was Peter, of course. This almost certainly was mostly the Jewish believers in the church.

And they just idolized Peter. Of course, they didn't know him. He lived 1,000 miles away or 600, however far it was.

And they would hear stories, oh, Peter was the main disciple. Peter would have been there for any length of time. It wouldn't have taken any time before they would have been picking him to pieces.

And that's the problem with idolizing ministers, is you start putting them up on a pedestal and then you start seeing what they're really like or their flaws, even if it is a godly man, like Peter was. Idolizing men is dangerous. People only do that because they want something for themselves from that person.

Anyway, the people who followed Peter or kind of aligned themselves with him, they were the ones who kind of were insinuating that Paul wasn't a true apostle. He wasn't one of the 12. And he was just some Johnny-come-lately or whatever.

And when the Judaizers would come in later, they would find in this group a willing audience for their message. Then we have those who are followers of Christ. Now, what does that mean? Aren't we all followers of Christ? Well, Paul's putting him in the list because this really was a segment of the group.

And I don't think it was like, okay, here's the guys who really were doing it right. I don't think Paul would have said it that way if that's what the case was. My opinion on it, and it's just an opinion, but I kind of think that the people who claim to be, oh, we are following Christ, I think they wanted to be more spiritual than all these guys who follow these inferior men, and they were going to attach themselves to Christ.

And to me, it has that feel of rebellion. Like, I don't have to answer to Paul. Who's Paul? I listen to Christ, that sort of thing.

I may be wrong about that, but that's kind of just an educated guess. And then Paul lists himself. In this group, there probably were those people who sincerely did follow Paul, I mean, in the sense of in the right way.

But also, I would say that it was in this group that there was an antinomian crowd. You know, antinomian means anti-law. They don't want to be told anything.

They're licentious, and they probably took Paul's message on grace and exaggerated it, just as we see in the church today. And as we often hear, exaggerated messages about God's grace, painting it all on one side. Well, that's what these people did.

They just want to hear God's grace, and that we really aren't, you know, don't need to get all bound up and worried about little sin issues and stuff like that. It's all God's grace. And so I think that that's probably what that group was made up of.

So not only does Paul have to try to deal with all this strife and division in the church, but he's also got to do it in face of all these accusations coming at him. And it's seeming as though he's being totally self-serving in what he's doing. You understand what I'm saying? How do you tell people not to follow Peter without it seeming like, you know, I want you to follow me in a self-serving way? It just, it had to be difficult for him.

All right, so those were some of the groups that were causing the strife there. Immorality was also another major issue in Corinth. Well, that makes sense because Corinth was probably the most wicked city in the Roman Empire in regards to sexual sin.

It just was rampant. There was 1,000 prostitutes who were attached to the temple there, there in Corinth. And I don't think it took anything for people to get into sexual sin.

So basically, this group are sex addicts, people who have either been involved in sexual sin and have really given over to it, and maybe they haven't quite come out of it, or maybe they never came out of it, I don't know. You know, it seems like there's a group there. Obviously, at Pure Life Ministries, we deal with both.

We deal with those who have been bound up but sincerely want out, like all of you guys here. But then there's also those who are not sincere, and they act like they want out, they want Christianity, they want the benefits of being a believer, but they also don't wanna give up their sin. So Paul had to deal with that licentiousness as well.

The other thing that he needed to deal with was raising a collection for the poor people of Jerusalem. You know, in the Jerusalem church, how do I say this quickly? The Christians in Jerusalem were being ostracized by this vigilant, fanatical Jewish population. So how do you get work? How do you get money to survive? There was probably, that was probably kind of laying at the root of why there was so much poverty amongst the church in Jerusalem.

And if you remember, James had said to Paul earlier that, you know, just don't forget the poor amongst us. And so that's what Paul's trying to do is take up this collection from all the different churches, and we'll get into that collection later more, but he'd taken up all his collection to take back to the church and to help them out. So he deals with that in both of these letters, 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

Paul knew that there was a real schism between the Gentile believers and the Hebrew believers. And he was always trying to mend the fence, you know, trying to take away the division and the gulf that, you know, existed between them. But he also knew that if he took up this collection with all these people who were enemies of his, quick to accuse him and so on, that he was gonna face the accusation that he was, you know, trying to, he was gonna dip into the funds himself and all that.

So he had to take extreme precautions in what he did. So that's basically 1st Corinthians. And if you read the book, with those things in the back of your mind, you will see exactly what he's doing and his purpose behind it.

And it'll make a lot more sense to you when you get into it. All right, while he was still in Ephesus, three more things happened that I need to touch on here. First of all, like I said, he received word that for the most part, the Corinthian believers had responded to what he wrote in the letter.

And, you know, most of the things that were addressed are never addressed again, or at least not in 2nd Corinthians. You don't hear anything about marital issues or food offered to idols or usurping women or the Lord's Supper or spiritual gifts or the resurrection or even strife. All those things were apparently dealt with, at least for the time being.

And so when he does end up writing 2nd Corinthians, all that has been resolved, which is good, you know. But something else had happened. A group of Judaizers apparently arrived from Jerusalem in this time.

And they were starting to stir up some dissent in the church. They were causing problems. So Paul makes a painful visit there.

And he refers to that in 2nd Corinthians 2, verse 4, and also 13, one and two. Actually, 2nd Corinthians 2, one. He talks there a little bit about, you know, having made that visit and so on.

I think what happened, just by some of the things that he expresses in 2nd Corinthians, I think what happens, he went there mainly to rebuke those men who were still in sexual sin. But I think he did it lovingly. I think his hope was, you know, I need to confront them, but he did it with tears in his eyes and probably more like imploring them, please leave this alone, leave this behind.

And while he was doing that, it seems as though the Corinthians really weren't getting behind him. They had these Judaizers that had just arrived there. They're bringing questions about Paul's authority as an apostle and stuff like that.

And the Corinthians as a whole didn't get behind him. And I think that's why it was so painful, that visit. But anyway, he made that visit.

You could get on a boat from Ephesus to Corinth. It's like going from, you know, JFK to Chicago or whatever, you know, O'Hare. There's constant flights going back and forth because these are major cities.

Well, that's how Ephesus and Corinth were, major commercial areas. So they had boats going back and forth constantly. So he just jumped on one of those boats, went over there, made the visit and went right back to Ephesus.

But when he got back, he heard after not too long that it didn't work, you know, that there were still real issues. So then he wrote a very strong confrontive letter. And that letter is not part of the Bible, you know.

Praise the Lord, he knew to keep it out of there. But he was very straightforward and confrontive in it. He calls it his sorrowful letter.

In 2 Corinthians 2.4, he says, for out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears, not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you. Now, I would imagine he really started questioning himself after that letter went out. I know what that's like.

You know, you send an email and it's like, oh, am I sure I should have done that? You know, and he started thinking about it and man, was I too strong and just, Paul was, if nothing else, he did not trust himself. He was self distrustful. And I'll get into that more later, but this is an example of that.

He sent this letter and immediately started second guessing himself. Let me just keep moving on. And so those three things happened and that brought about Paul leaving.

Well, actually the riot happened. He probably would have stayed longer. He was waiting for Titus to send word, but you know, when the riot happened in Ephesus, it kind of like, okay, I need to get out of here.

So he left Ephesus and went up North to Troas and you see it in Acts 20 verse one. After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples. And when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia.

So there it is. And that's where we're at in the story. That's what I was saying before.

So he goes up to Troas. He's hoping that Titus will deliver that strong letter and see how things turn out. And then Titus will make it over to Troas and meet him there.

But he waits and waits and waits. And finally, you know, he can't wait any longer. He's very upset.

You can see it in some of the things he wrote, like in second Corinthians two verse one, and then in verses 12 and 13, he says, now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ, and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother, but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. So he spent some amount of time there, probably evangelizing. It seemed as though he had a good opportunity to win souls for the Lord and get that work going stronger there in Troas.

But, you know, he was so upset inside about this confrontation that, you know, he couldn't wait any longer. And he decided, I'm just going to go across over to Philippi and hopefully I'll see Titus there. So he, you

know, well, let me also read this verse, second Corinthians seven five.

He said, for even when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side, conflicts without and fears within. And that's exactly what I'm telling you, or talking about. He had a fear that he had blown it, you know, that he went too far with this letter, too strong.

It just, I could just see it. I just have been there so many times and I know, you know, how that feels. So he goes to Philippi, spends some amount of time there.

Finally, Titus shows up and Titus brings good news. For the most part, the Corinthians had accepted his reproof and repented, but there was still a minority there in the church that were resistant, all the more so than before. Now they're really digging their heels in against Paul's authority.

But for the most part, most of the Christians there in Corinth repented. I'm gonna read some verses here in chapter seven, starting with verse six. But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you.

As he responded, as he reported to us, your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more. For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it. For I see that the letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while.

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance. For you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

And I'm gonna stop there, but he continues on with that vein of thought there in that chapter. So most of them repented, but there was still a minority who were being swayed by apparently two groups. There was the Judaizers, who had really gained a following there, and also the antinomians, you know, the ones who didn't wanna repent.

But this group of Judaizers apparently had one man in particular who was very arrogant and boastful, constantly talking about how great he was, you know, as a man of God and so on. And he would compare his own self-confidence with Paul's self-distrust. You know, when you've been humbled by God and really devastated by God, you become very distrustful of yourself.

And that's what Paul was. He was a humble man. He was confident in the Lord.

I'm gonna share a little more about this in a little bit. He was confident in the Lord, but he was not confident in self, big difference. And it's, you know, I don't know how to say it.

If you are trustful in yourself, you won't have the discernment to see it in people. But if you have been really broken by God and to the point of not trusting in self, then you can see false teachers for what they are. Now, what I mean by false teachers is the wide array from all the way from people who are absolutely unsaved, teaching errors doctrinally and so on, but all the way back to people who may be teaching the truth, but they're false in themselves.

They are conveying a false impression to those around them through their words and so on, just constantly putting forth this impression that they are something they're not. And I'm telling you, they are

extremely deceitful and persuasive. And you have to have discernment to know the difference in these two.

You know, what I mean by two, a true man of God and someone who is being motivated by self purposes. So, you know, Paul said of his enemies, he mentions them in four places in particular, I'll just say the first one in chapter two, verse 17, that they peddled the word of God. And let me just get it right down to the root of what that means.

To peddle the word of God means you are in the ministry for selfish purposes. It may have to do with money, but even a deeper issue than that is just self. Maybe you just want to bring followers to yourself and you like all the people to be gathered around your feet so you can be the great one.

Or maybe you want an enormous church or radio programs or whatever, self purposes, motivating why you're in the ministry. And of course, there's a lot of that in the American church. And I don't need to go into that right now.

In chapter three, verse one, they had letters of recommendation from Jerusalem. Chapter five, verse 12, they took pride in appearance. And chapter 10, verse 12, they commended themselves and compared themselves with each other, which is exactly what Jesus said about the Pharisees 20 years before this.

He said that they received glory from one another. The same spirit was in these Judaizers, the exact same spirit, and just creating this religious system where they could shine and be the big teachers and disdain everyone else and so on. That's what the spirit was that the Judaizers were in.

Some of the accusations against Paul were he was planning on stealing some of the money being collected for the saints of Jerusalem. He was not a true apostle. He was not one of the 12 hadn't even been commissioned by them.

He was meek and unimpressive in person, but bold when absent. He was a lousy speaker. He was always threatening, but never following through with his threats.

He was flaky, saying one thing and doing another. He was always on his way to Corinth, but never actually arriving. So you can see how they were just picking him to pieces, finding any kind of fault they could with him, any reason why they didn't have to submit themselves to his apostolic authority or do what he basically was teaching them to do, which what was his message? The word of the cross, right? It was the word of the cross, was the message that Paul carried forth in all his years of ministry, the message of the cross.

And that's the thing you always need to look at with a minister. Does this man bring me the message of the cross, or is it a lot of flattery and innocuous teachings and so on? That's really the dividing line right there. Well, anyway, so all this was going on.

So now he writes 2 Corinthians and he's got to deal with some issues here. His general purposes in writing this was to acknowledge and express his appreciation for the repentance and the way that most of the church responded to him. Paul wanted them to know that he loved them, but he knows, he sends this letter out and he knows that there's this group in there that are hostile to him.

So he sends a letter, he's expressing his love for the main group, but then he's got these deceivers, insincere people and so on in the church, causing all kinds of problems. So he had to warn them and he

had to defend himself also against their accusations. And you see it throughout the book of 2 Corinthians, him constantly being put in the position where he had to defend himself.

That is just a very hard thing to do. It's very difficult. When you have people who have turned in their thinking towards you and they have become cynical of you or they have some purpose that they don't want to believe in you, then to try to convince them that, how do you do it without being self-serving? I mean, it's just very difficult, but Paul was not defending himself in 2 Corinthians for selfish purposes.

He was doing it because he cared about those people and he was watching in his mind's eye, he could see this whole church just going astray because of these false teachers and some of the lies that they were perpetuating and so on. So it was his love for the people that motivated him to defend himself to them. All right, so what I wanna do is I'm gonna go through some sections of scripture here, something I don't typically like to do, do a lot of reading, but I'm gonna do it because I'm hoping that you'll get a better sense of what Paul was saying, what was going on and so on.

So we're gonna go through chapters 10 through 12 and just mainly just some sections in there. In chapter 10, verse seven, he said, you are looking at things as they are outwardly. And that is what superficial, immature believers always do.

They just have a tendency to look at the outward things. And Paul is operating, living and teaching on a whole different level, you know, and it's just difficult, it's a hard thing, but he says it for exactly what it is. Verse nine, for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.

For they say, meaning his enemies there, they say his letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible. Man, you know, how do you deal with people who feel that way towards you? He says, let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also indeed when present. For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves.

You know, and I understand this basic thing. In fact, I won't even focus on myself. I'll talk about David Wilkerson, who if you heard him preach, I mean, he could preach with fire, but if you get around him, he was the meekest, kindest, gentlest person, you know, he's just a humble man, but someone completely different, and a lion when he got behind the pulpit.

Well, Mike, you were part of the church, and I don't know if you were ever around him, but is that basically true? Yeah, so there's firsthand knowledge, but I had heard it from many other people around him also. You know, and that's how Paul was. He could write that one strong letter or whatever, you know, but when he got around them, he was just loved them so much.

That's what came out of him constantly. He didn't want to go around rebuking people. That wasn't what his desire was.

Anyway, let's continue on. Verse 18, for it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends. And you know, Paul had God's backing in all that he did, and he knew that those people didn't, and that was the difference.

Okay, chapter 11, verse three. I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received,

or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge. In fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? You know, here's one of the accusations. It's just so unfair. Someone was accusing him of having ulterior purposes in not asking them for money.

You know, he made a living when he was in Corinth by his tent making, and just so no one could accuse him of being in it for selfish purposes. So these people turned it completely around, which is the enemy always does, twists things and puts a black perspective on them, and actually makes it to where they're accusing him because he did that. It's just incredible.

Okay, chapter 11, verse 13, talking about these Judaizers. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. And you know, I've said it elsewhere in one of my books that the problem why people get deceived by false teachers is because they don't look like false teachers. You know, they don't come to us like a raging wolf, a ravenous wolf, they come to us like a meek sheep.

Or, you know, they don't come as a devil, they come as an angel of light. And so people, you know, in their simplicity, people tend to look for ravenous wolves and devils, you know, when they're trying to discern, but that isn't what to look for. Or at least you should be aware that that's not how they're gonna present themselves.

All right, let me continue on, verse 20. For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. To my shame, I must say that we have been weak by comparison, but in whatever respect anyone else is bold, I speak in foolishness.

I am just as bold myself. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I speak as if insane. I'm more so in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren.

I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there's the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. And you can hear the passion coming forth in Paul. Not to boast in himself, but to try to show these people the difference between his life, which stood for itself, and what these lying Judaizers were in.

All right, let me continue in verse 12. Verse 11, I mean chapter 12, verse 11. I have become foolish.

You yourselves compelled me, meaning that I've had to tell you all these things and so on. Actually, I should have been commended by you. For in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

You see what I'm saying? He had that right balance. He knew in himself he was nothing. He lived in that reality.

And yet he also knew it just was the reality of the situation that he was an eminent apostle. And I don't know how to explain how you can know that without being prideful, but that's what the case was. Let me continue.

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles. For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong. Here for this third time, I'm ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you, for I do not seek what is yours, but you.

Right there is the difference between a true man of God and someone who's in it for self. I do not seek what is yours, but you. Paul's overriding motivation in ministry was to see people come to the Lord.

That's what compelled him forward and all that he endured and went through and experienced and so on. And then in verse 15, really kind of says it all. I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls.

If I love you more, am I to be loved less? And you know, couple that with what he said earlier in 11:20 where he was talking about if someone comes along and enslaves you and basically mistreats you, then you welcome him with open arms. But if I come in humility and love, you treat me with disdain. And I wanna tell you that that is so true.

I can't tell you how many times I've had to humble myself with people. And when I humbled myself with them, then they treated me with disdain. But in the old days when I was stronger in myself, and by the force of my personality, people didn't tend to treat me with disdain.

You know, that's just the way it is. But when God humbles you, and you just are determined that no matter what, you have to do your utmost to walk in humility, you know, you just do it. And, but it's just one of the ways of human nature.

When you walk in humility, people tend to walk over the top of you. And, you know, I don't know what to say about it. Other than that, so anyway, those were some of the things that Paul expressed to the Corinthian believers.

Probably now he goes up into Illyricum, however you say it. And he did end up down in Corinth. You see it again in chapter 20, verse two.

When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. That means Southern Greece. And there he spent three months, et cetera.

And so Paul spends three months there in Corinth. And I think probably once the Judaizers figured he was, found out that he was on his way, I think they left. I don't know, you know, that's certain, because we don't hear anything else.

But I have a feeling they left. And Paul went there and just spent some time with these people. He loved them.

You know, even all the trouble that they gave him, he still loved them. You think by contrast of the church in Philippi, which he never had to rebuke for anything. Those people were fully behind him from the beginning all the way to the end.

You know, they supported him, they loved him. You know, what a blessing the Philippians were to Paul. Well, anyway, a few years after Paul died, Clement, who was one of his fellow workers, he said, it's in there somewhere, wrote a letter to the Corinthian church and he praised them for their purity.

So they did get the victory over the sexual sin in the church, praise the Lord for that. But apparently the divisions had come up again and he had to rebuke them for the strife in the church. And that's the last we hear of the Corinthian church.

We don't know what happened after that. Now, I just have a few minutes. Let me just say something here about this quality if the Lord can help me here to articulate what's in my heart.

This quality that you see in Paul, self distrust, I'm going to call it. In other words, not having no confidence in the flesh, as he said, his confidence was in the Lord and in the Lord, he was fully confident, but he had no trust in himself. Now, I want to just say something real briefly first before I really get into talking about false teachers.

Self distrust without trust in the Lord will leave you in condemnation and darkness and you'll just become swallowed up in hopelessness. Very easy to get into that. You know, it's right that we don't trust ourselves.

We absolutely have to come to that place, but you also have to have a sight of the Lord that carries you through. And when you have a sight of the Lord, you know, you keep that proper balance. Your trust is in him, not in self, you know, but if you have that self distrust and you don't have the confidence in the Lord, then what happens is you are continually finding, trying to, in your own abilities, please the Lord and, you know, live up to what you think he's expecting of you and so on.

And of course, you always fail. And so it just leaves you in a downward cycle of hopelessness and despair. So that's it for this week.

Next week, we're going to deal with Paul's epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. God bless you.

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