

2 Corinthians

“Winning Through Weakness”

III. Main Teaching: 1:15-13:10

D. 10:1-13:10 Winning Through Weakness

2 Corinth. 11:16-22

“Basket Cases for Christ”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 16-21 The Silence of self

III. Vs. 22 No human “*coat tails*”

I. Intro.

Paul had been driven reluctantly to speaking about what the Lord had done through his ministry which 5 times in this section he refers to such talk as “*boasting*”. He follows up 6 times clarifying such “*boasting*” is “*foolishness*”. He will start out detailing his ancestry and upbringing in verse 22 then move to God’s work in his life to which he again says to speak of such things is to speak as a fool (verses 23-29). Finally, in verse 30-33 Paul speaks of the blessings and work of God as he boasts in his weakness and failures. The amazing part of this “*boasting of Paul*” is that even in his boasting he mentions items that few of us would consider worthy of bragging about things like:

- Stripes
- Prisons
- Deaths
- Beatings
- Shipwrecks
- Perils
- Weariness and toil
- Hunger and thirst
- Cold and nakedness

The fact that Paul didn't bring up things like:

- The conversion of the Proconsul on Cyprus
- Or that the whole city in Antioch in Pisidia (modern day Turkey) came out to hear him preach and we are told that "*as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed*". So much so that the "*word of God was being spread throughout the whole region*".
- In Lystra a crippled man was healed instantly and left such an impact that the folks in that area said of him that the "*gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.*"
- He doesn't mention the conversion of the Philippian Jailer.
- Or the fact that at Thessalonica his adversaries said of his ministry that "*These who have turned the whole world upside down have come here too.*"
- Paul doesn't even give a foot note to the unusual miracles done by his hands when sweatbands and work aprons which were swiped from him were being used to heal the diseased and demon possessed while at Ephesus.

The conclusion we can draw in Paul's boasting is that what he was most proud of wasn't the work that God was doing THROUGH him it was in the work God had done IN him! And yet even that was foolish to talk about. Why? Because Paul didn't even want to talk about what the Lord had done in him, he only wanted to talk about the LORD!

The sad reality is that many of the Corinthian believers had been swept away by a group of men claiming to be apostles of Christ who had come from Jerusalem, boasting about all their tremendous accomplishments for Christ. As a result, the Corinthian's were in danger of following their false teachings rather than listening to the apostle who had won them to Christ and who had so faithfully taught them and prayed for them and loved them. Paul finally resorts to boasting, because it's the only thing that will impress them, and win them back to the simplicity of the gospel.

II. Vs. 16-21 The Silence of self

Vs. 16-18 Notice verse 17 where Paul says, “*What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.*” Paul says, what I’m about to do is not right “*for a Christian to do*”. **Christians aren’t to brag about who they are, what they have done, where they have been, who they know and what their accomplishments are.** Some of the Corinthians had swallowed these false teachers' line and had put up with arrogance and insult from them without protest.

Vs. 19-21a **Any ministry that requires arrogance and bragging in order to get people’s attention is at best giving people the wrong focus for excitement!** I find that such ministries are very subtle in how they boast as they inter mix glorifying God with the worship of the ministry or the style in which God has worked. I recently sat through a study where the speaker made mention that he was surprised that he had been given the opportunity to speak and wondered if they had made a mistake in asking him. At first I thought that this was an admission of humility until he went onto say that because he thought that someone had made a mistake in asking him to preach he intended to preach like a man who stole a car (“*fast and reckless*”) before someone changed their mind, (*this by the way drew a loud laughter and applause*). I would have been far more impressed if he would have said after thinking that they may have made a mistake in asking him to preach that because of this he was going to drive the car like a man who had caused the death of a loved one in that very car, “*broken and unworthy*”. As exciting and entertaining as “*fast and reckless*” is to **watch** I would much prefer to **ride** with the “*broken and unworthy*”.

That is the back drop of Paul's boasting (which he still refers to as foolishness) but **Paul's boasting was on the "things that had caused him to be broken and unworthy"**. These Corinthian false teachers were using outward things as marks of success and credibility.

III. Vs. 22 No human "coat tails"

Vs. 21b-29 As we read 2nd Corinthians Paul is in Ephesus which means that he is only in the 19th chapter of the book of Acts, thus the events that surround him in the rest of Acts have not happened yet. But still reading these **23 accounts** of his life is beyond comprehension. Furthermore comparing the list that Paul puts forth here compared with the Acts account reveals that the book Acts only records 1/4th of what is recorded here. What that says is that Paul suffered for more than what was recorded and Acts just skims the surface. Such actions cause us to ponder what ought to be the truth for each of us concerning the lost: **The desperate tides of the whole world's anguish out to go through the single channels of our hearts!** Here Paul takes up **three things they were bragging about "ancestry, activity and anxiety"** and we will take up two of those next week:

1. Vs. 22 **Ancestry**: "Are they Hebrews?" The first thing they were boasting about was their **ancestry**. It is amazing how much stock people put upon the family they were blessed to be born into as if they had a choice. Others seem to think that because they can trace their lineage to famous people that have left an impact, that somehow genetically those "blessed jeans" have been passed down. Consider Nathanael's estimation of Jesus in John 1:46 where he said to Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Paul admits that bragging upon ancestry is

foolish and to show it so he says, *“If you think that those kinds of things are important, they say they are Hebrews related to the chosen nation speaking the native tongue, well, so do I. Are they from the chosen nation, so am I? Do they trace their roots back to Abraham and God’s covenant with him? Well, so do I.”*

It’s clear that Paul no longer believes these things matter. In Matthew 3:9 during an exchange with the religious leaders who were thinking that their ancestry was what mattered the most Jesus said to them, *“do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”* **There are some Christians who like to brag about their spiritual ancestry as they brag about what school they attended, church they went too or pastor they sat under.** But these things have no value before the throne of God. **There are no human “coat tails” in the kingdom of God.** And when an individual drops these names, schools or places the only thing about the individual it reveals is their arrogance!

Next week we will conclude the 11th chapter but by way of application this morning allow me to make **two points**:

1. First to us servants, be that pastors or anyone else actively involved: It is an ongoing temptation to use one’s **position** and **gifts** to create a circle of admirers but these two things were not given to us for our own ego trip. They are not given to prop up our own need of being needed. They are given that we may lay down our life’s to reach souls, lost, hurting and needy souls in the Church and outside of the Church. To do our calling the greatest thing the servant must have is

brokenness and humility least what he endeavors to do FOR God becomes more about his fame. Remember the most efficient pitcher for the distribution of “*Living Water*” is the not the famous pitcher, the fancy pitcher, nor the fantastic pitcher; No it is the “*empty pitcher*” that is the most useful to the Master! Let us by way of the Holy Spirit pray to by empty of self and full of Him that He may pour us out upon whom He wishes!

2. Generally to all of us: When we consider the 23 things listed here of Paul’s sufferings we have to ask ourselves this single most important question; “*What would cause a person to suffer so much, for something that he didn’t personally benefit from?*” I suggest to you that Paul’s suffering speaks to three things that we must ask ourselves as Christ’s followers if we too understand:
 - a. **He had learned the value of a soul:** There are only two possibilities either the value of the lost is far greater than I realize or Paul was insane. Paul valued the lost soul more than anything in this life and in fact he valued souls more than his own life.
 - b. **He knew the power of the gospel:** Paul understood that what he had the privilege of proclaiming was not “A” message but “THE” message. Apart from the gospel mankind has no hope and the individual person has no hope. Paul knew there was no plan “B”, no short cut; the Word of the gospel is the only Word that can change a soul now and for eternity!
 - c. **He had experienced the victory of love:** Paul had already proclaimed in the 5th chapter what compelled him to keep going when he declared to the Corinthians that it was none other than “*the Love of Christ that*

constrained' him. He understood the absolute certainty that the LOVE of Christ will have upon each and every soul that turns to and trusts in Jesus!

*** Give an opportunity for people to receive Jesus!