

2 CORINTHIANS II

The Ruin of Religious Pride.

Student Guides

Daily Bible Reading

Day 1	2 Cor. 11: 1-12
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Whether it happens to be our favorite football team, a certain brand of automobile, or a thousand other things, most of us know the feeling of getting carried away with bragging.

What about religious bragging, however? Religious bragging surely seems to impact our spiritual health more than bragging about baseball teams. Whatever the case, there are ample opportunities for all of us to be caught bragging about our virtues and blessings.

Apostles were apparently no different. They were every bit as human as you and me.

So, is it ever acceptable to brag? If so, when? If so, how?

1. Paul's Guidelines for Godly Jealousy (vv. 1-12)

Paul begins the section with a plea to the Corinthian believers (v. 1). The Greek term twice translated "bear" literally means "to hold in", "to hold back," or "to restrain." Paul summons the Corinthians to tolerate his forthcoming rehearsal of the sufferings he has personally endured simply because he was an Apostle. Paul goes on to confess his passionate desire for the Corinthians believers (v. 2a). Paul obviously intends his meaning of "jealousy" to be good, for he qualifies the jealousy he feels with the term "godly."

Paul employs the beautiful metaphor of marriage to stimulate his hearers toward a solemn warning concerning purity in the church and the possibility of following a false Gospel (vv. 2b-4).

First, Paul is concerned for the purity of the bride (v.2). Paul possesses the right kind of jealousy. He was jealous over the church's *engagement* purity. Paul wanted the Corinthians to be "espoused to one husband." For a Christian to live a compromised life would be like an engaged virgin to be unfaithful. Paul was not only concerned about an *engagement* purity, he was also concerned about the *presentation* of the purity. Paul wanted a clean, spotless, and pure bride for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, Paul notes also the simplicity of the bride (v.3). Satan uses his subtlety to lure us away from the Bible's simple truth. Simplicity basically means a single-hearted faith in Jesus Christ.

Third, Paul's concern covered the fidelity of the bride (vv. 4-12). We are faithful to Jesus and Jesus alone. No other groom may take the bride, the church. Any other preaching is preaching another Jesus and therefore, another Gospel (cp. Gal. 1: 1-4).

Vindicating his apostleship (vv. 5-6), Paul went on to rehearse his financial policies (vv. 7-12). Paul displayed apostolic pride in the fact he preached freely the Gospel, depending upon no man to support him (vv. 10-12). Yet his vocation as a tentmaker became no excuse for churches to abuse other ministers who also freely preached the Gospel even though they legitimately lived from the Gospel.

2. Our Gravitation Toward Ungodly Jealousy (vv. 13-33)

While Paul demonstrates the possibility of “godly jealousy” being the sinful human beings we are, wed to a horribly depraved sin nature, we possess the tendency to gravitate toward an unhealthy, ungodly jealousy.

Paul describes in the clearest terms the false teachers who displayed godless characteristics (vv. 13-15). Jesus was careful to warn His disciples of false prophets (Matt. 7:15).

Three traits summarize the ungodly toward which the weak tend to gravitate.

First, they were “false apostles,” claiming they spoke the words of the Almighty, and were sent from the Almighty. Their claim, however, was false.

Second, they were “deceitful workers.” This was their bread-and-butter approach to success. The term translated “deceitful workers” denotes a lure or a trap.

Third, the ungodly were masters of disguise, for they “transformed themselves” into ministers of righteousness. If their father the devil could change himself (cp. John 8:44), the Corinthians should remain unsurprised if Satan’s workers could do likewise.

As a strategy to teach the Corinthians about ungodly jealousy, Paul reluctantly catalogued human comparisons in dealing with this sensitive issue (vv. 16-23). While he was obviously uncomfortable, he undoubtedly felt that in order to deal straight forward with the Judiazers at Corinth, he had to meet them, so to speak, on their home turf. And, since they placed so much stock in comparisons, this is where Paul found himself (vv. 16-19).

Wrap Up

Understanding how to deal with his critics without appealing to his service and sacrifice may have been one of the greatest challenges Paul faced with the Corinthian church. While Paul possessed a measure of Christ’s humility and encouraged a humble spirit in others, he nonetheless remained confident his service for Christ mattered in God’s Kingdom. Every believer must learn to walk the razor’s edge as did Paul. Being confident in Christ while remaining humble toward others is the perfect balance for retaining purity in the Christian walk.