

Paul's Fourth Letter to the Corinthians – Part 4 (Fall 54)

2 Corinthians 10–13

Paul's Appeal to the Corinthians Not to Force Him to Exercise His Apostolic Authority

10:1 Now I, Paul, appeal to you myself by the humility and gentleness of Christ, who when I am present in person *am* humble among you, but *when I* am absent *am* bold toward you—

2 now I ask *when I* am present *that I will* not *need* to be bold with the confidence *with* which I propose to show boldness toward some who consider us as behaving according to the flesh.

3 For *although we* are living in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh,

4 for the weapons of our warfare *are* not merely human, but powerful to God for the tearing down of fortresses, tearing down arguments

5 and all pride that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

6 And we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is completed.

7 You are looking at things according to appearance. If anyone is convinced he himself is Christ's, he should consider this concerning himself again: that just as Christ himself *is*, so also *are* we.

8 For even if I boast somewhat more about our authority that the Lord gave *us* for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be put to shame,

9 so that I do not want to appear as if I were terrifying you by my letters,

10 because it is said, "His letters *are* severe and powerful, but his bodily presence *is* weak and his speech is of no account."

11 Let such a person consider this: that what we are in word by letters *when we* are absent, *we will* also *be* in actions *when we* are present.

The Proper Limits of Boasting / What Constitutes Valid Commendation

12 For we do not dare to classify or to compare ourselves with some who commend themselves, but *they* themselves, *when they* measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, do not understand.

13 But we will not boast beyond limits, but according to the measure of the assignment that God has assigned to us as a measure to reach even as far as you.

14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as *if we* had not reached you, because we have reached even as far as you with the gospel of Christ,

15 not boasting beyond limits in the labors of others, but having hope *that as* your faith is growing to be enlarged greatly by you according to our assignment,

16 so that we may proclaim the gospel in the regions that lie beyond you, *and* not boast in the things accomplished in the *area* assigned to someone else.

17 But "the one who boasts, let him boast in the Lord." [[Jer 9:24](#)]

18 For it is not the one commending himself who is approved, but *the one* whom the Lord commends.

Paul's Defense of His Apostleship

11:1 I wish that you would put up with me in something a little foolish—but indeed you are putting up with me.

2 For I am jealous *for* you with a godly jealousy, because I promised you *in marriage* to one husband, to present *you as* a pure virgin to Christ.

3 But I am afraid lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds may be led astray from the sincerity and the purity of *devotion* to Christ.

4 For if the one who comes proclaims another Jesus whom we have not proclaimed, or you receive a different spirit which you did not receive, or a different gospel which you did not accept, you put up with *it well enough!*

5 For I consider myself in no way to be inferior to the preeminent apostles.

6 But even if *I am* unskilled in speech, yet *I am* not in knowledge; certainly in everything *we* have made this clear to you in every *way*.

Paul's Financial Independence During His Ministry Among the Corinthians

7 Or did I commit a sin *by* humbling myself in order that you may be exalted, because I proclaimed the gospel of God to you without payment?

8 I robbed other churches *by* accepting support *from them* for the ministry to you.

9 And *when I* was present with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will keep *myself from being a burden*.

10 *As the* truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.

11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows *I do!*

12 But what I am doing, I will also do, in order that I may remove the opportunity of those who want an opportunity, that they may be found just as also *we are* in what they are boasting about.

The “Super-Apostles”

13 For such people *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder, for Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light.

15 Therefore *it is* not a great thing if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

Justification for Foolish Boasting

16 Again I say, do not let anyone think I am foolish. But indeed, if *you do*, accept me even as foolish, in order that I also may boast a little.

17 What I am saying in this project of boasting, I am not saying as the Lord *would say*, but as in foolishness.

18 Since many are boasting according to human standards, I also will boast.

19 For *because you* are wise, you put up with foolish people gladly!

20 For you put up with *it* if someone enslaves you, if someone devours *you*, if someone takes advantage of *you*, if someone is presumptuous *toward you*, if someone strikes you in the face.

21a I say *this* to *my* shame, namely, that we have been weak.

Paul’s Heritage and Trials

21b But in whatever anyone dares to *boast*—I am speaking in foolishness—I also dare to *boast*.

22 Are they Hebrews? I *am* also! Are they Israelites? I *am* also! Are they descendants of Abraham? I *am* also!

23 Are they servants of Christ?—I am speaking as though I were beside myself—I *am* more so, with far greater labors, with far more imprisonments, with beatings to a much greater degree, in *danger of* death many times.

24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews forty *lashes* less one.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. A day and a night I have spent in the deep water.

26 I *have been* on journeys many times, in dangers from rivers, in dangers from robbers, in dangers from *my own* people, in dangers from the Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers at sea, in dangers because of false brothers,

27 with toil and hardship, often in sleepless nights, with hunger and thirst, often going hungry, in cold and poorly clothed.

28 Apart from these external things, *there is* the pressure on me every day of the anxiety about all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I *am* not weak? Who is caused to sin, and I do not burn *with indignation*?

Escape from Damascus

30 If it is necessary to boast, I will boast *about* the things related to my weakness.

31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

32 In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to take me into custody,

33 and I was lowered through a window through the wall in a rope-basket, and I escaped his hands.

Paul’s Visions and Revelations

12:1 It is necessary to boast; *it is* not profitable, but I will proceed to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or outside the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven,

3 and I know this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—

4 that he was caught up to paradise and heard words not to be spoken, which *it is* not permitted for a person to speak.

5 On behalf of such a person I will boast, but on behalf of myself I will not boast, except in my weaknesses.

6 For if I want to boast, I will not be foolish, because I will be telling the truth, but I am refraining, so that no one can credit to me more than what he sees *in* me or hears anything from me,

7a even because of the extraordinary degree of the revelations.

Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh

7b Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, in order that it would torment me so that I would not exalt myself.

8 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would depart from me.

9 And he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, because the power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore rather I will boast most gladly in my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may reside in me.

10 Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in calamities, in persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Proof of Apostleship

11 I have become a fool! You compelled me, for I ought to have been commended by you, for I *am* in no way inferior to the

preeminent apostles, even if I am nothing.

12 Indeed, the signs of an apostle have been done among you with all patient endurance, both signs and wonders and deeds of power.

13 For in what respect are you made worse off more than the rest of the churches, except that I myself was not a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Paul's Plan to Visit the Corinthians for the Third Time

14 Behold, this third *time* I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden *to you*. For I am not seeking your possessions, but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

15 But I will spend and be expended most gladly for your lives. If I love you much more, am I to be loved less?

16 But let *it* be. I have not been a burden to you, but *because I* was crafty, I took you by cunning.

17 I have not taken advantage of you through anyone whom I sent to you, *have I*?

18 I urged Titus *to go*, and I sent the brother *with him*. Titus did not take advantage of you, *did he*? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same footsteps?

19 Have you been thinking all this time that we are defending ourselves to you? We are speaking in Christ before God, and all *these things*, dear friends, *are* for your edification.

20 For I am afraid lest somehow *when I* arrive, I will not find you as I want, and I may be found by you as you do not want. *I am afraid* lest somehow *there will be* strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, pride, disorder.

21 *I am afraid* lest *when I* come again my God will humiliate me in your presence, and I will grieve over many of those who sinned previously and have not repented because of their impurity and sexual immorality and licentiousness that they have practiced.

Paul's Warning—I Will Use My Authority If I Must

13:1 This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. By the testimony of two or three witnesses every word will be established. [[Deut 19:15](#)]

2 I have already said when *I* was present the second time, and *although I* am absent now *I* also say in advance to those who sinned previously and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*,

3 since you are demanding proof that Christ, who *is* not weak toward you, but is powerful among you, is speaking in me.

4 For indeed, he was crucified because of weakness, but he lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we will live together with him because of the power of God toward you.

5 Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize regarding yourselves that Jesus Christ *is* in you, unless you are unqualified?

6 And I hope that you will recognize that we are not unqualified!

7 Now we pray to God that you not do wrong in any way, not that we are seen as approved, but that you do what is good, even *though* we are *seen* as though unqualified.

8 For we are not able *to do* anything against the truth, but rather *only* for the truth.

9 For we rejoice whenever we are weak, but you are strong, and we pray for this: your maturity.

10 Because of this, I am writing these *things although I* am absent, in order that *when I* am present I may not have to act severely according to the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

Benediction

11 Finally, brothers, rejoice, be restored, be encouraged, be in agreement, be at peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.

12 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit *be* with all of you.