

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 personally by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (I who am meek when present among you, but am full of courage toward you when away!)—

2 now I ask that when I am present I may not have to be bold with the confidence that (I expect) I will dare to use against some who consider us to be behaving according to human standards.

3 For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards,

4 for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments

5 and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ.

6 We are also ready to punish every act of disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

7 You are looking at outward appearances. If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, he should reflect on this again: Just as he himself belongs to Christ, so too do we.

8 For 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 ashamed of doing so.

9 I do not want to seem as though I am trying to terrify you with my letters,

10 because some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but his physical presence is weak and his speech is of no account."

11 Let such a person consider this: What we say by letters when we are absent, we also are in actions when we are present.

The Proper Limits of Boasting / What Constitutes Valid Commendation

12 For we would not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who recommend themselves. But when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

13 But we will not boast beyond certain limits, but will confine our boasting according to the limits of the work to which God has appointed us, that reaches even as far as you.

14 For we were not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach as far as you, because we were the first to reach as far as you with the gospel about Christ.

15 Nor do we boast beyond certain limits in the work done by others, but we hope that as your faith continues to grow, our work may be greatly expanded among you according to our limits,

16 so that we may preach the gospel in the regions that lie beyond you, and not boast of work already done in another person's area.

17 But *the one who boasts must boast in the Lord*. [[Jer 9:24](#)]

18 For it is not the person who commends himself who is approved, but the person the Lord commends.

Paul's Defense of His Apostleship

11:1 I wish that you would be patient with me in a little foolishness, but indeed you are being patient with me!

2 For I am jealous for you with 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 that just as the serpent deceived Eve by his treachery, your minds may be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus different from the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit than the one you received, or a different gospel than the one you accepted, you put up with it well enough!

5 For I consider myself not at all inferior to those "super-apostles."

6 And even if I am unskilled in speaking, yet I am certainly not so in knowledge. Indeed, we have made this plain to you in everything in every way.

Paul's Financial Independence During His Ministry Among the Corinthians

7 Or did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you could be exalted, because I proclaimed the gospel of God to you free of charge?

8 I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so that I could serve you!

9 When I was with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia fully supplied my needs. I kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.

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 And what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may eliminate any opportunity for those who want a chance to be regarded as our equals in the things they boast about.

The “Super-Apostles”

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

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

15 Therefore it is not surprising his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will correspond to their actions.

Justification for Foolish Boasting

16 I say again, let no one think that I am a fool. But if you do, then at least accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.

17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence I do not say the way the Lord would. Instead it is, as it were, foolishness.

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

19 For since you are so wise, you put up with fools gladly.

20 For you put up with it if someone makes slaves of you, if someone exploits you, if someone takes advantage of you, if someone behaves arrogantly toward you, if someone strikes you in the face.

21a (To my disgrace I must say that we were too weak for that!)

Paul’s Heritage and Trials

21b But whatever anyone else dares to boast about (I am speaking foolishly), I also dare to boast about the same thing.

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am talking like I am out of my mind!) I am even more so: with much greater labors, with far more imprisonments, with more severe beatings, facing death many times.

24 Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one.

25 Three times I was beaten with a rod. Once I received a stoning. Three times I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I spent adrift in the open sea.

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

27 in hard work and toil, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, many times without food, in cold and without enough clothing.

28 Apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxious concern for all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not burn with indignation?

Escape from Damascus

30 If I must boast, I will boast about the things that show my weakness.

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

32 In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to arrest me,

33 but I was let down in a rope-basket through a window in the city wall, and escaped his hands.

Paul’s Visions and Revelations

12:1 It is necessary to go on boasting. Though it is not profitable, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) was caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I know that this man (whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows)

4 was caught up into paradise and heard things too sacred to be put into words, things that a person is not permitted to speak.

5 On behalf of such an individual I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except about my weaknesses.

6 For even if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I would be telling the truth, but I refrain from this so that no one may regard me beyond what he sees in me or what he hears from me,

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

Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh

7b Therefore, so that I would not become arrogant, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to trouble me—so that I would not become arrogant.

8 I asked the Lord three times about this, that it would depart from me.

9 But he said to me, “My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” So then, I will boast most gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may reside in me.

10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with 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 yourselves forced me to do it, for I should have been commended by you. For I lack nothing in

comparison to those “super-apostles,” even though I am nothing.

12 Indeed, the signs of an apostle were performed among you with great perseverance by signs and wonders and powerful deeds.

13 For how were you treated worse than the other churches, except that I myself was not a burden to you? Forgive me this injustice!

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

14 Look, for the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you, because I do not want your possessions, but you. For children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

15 Now I will most gladly spend and be spent for your lives! If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

16 But be that as it may, I have not burdened you. Yet because I was a crafty person, I took you in by deceit!

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

18 I urged Titus to visit you and I sent our brother along with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit? Did we not behave in the same way?

19 Have you been thinking all this time that we have been defending ourselves to you? We are speaking in Christ before God, and everything we do, dear friends, is to build you up.

20 For I am afraid that somehow when I come I will not find you what I wish, and you will find me not what you wish. I am afraid that somehow there may be quarreling, jealousy, intense anger, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

21 I am afraid that when I come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I will grieve for many of those who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, 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 visit you. *By the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter will be established.* [[Deut 19:15](#)]

2 I said before when I was present the second time and now, though absent, I say again 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 is speaking through me. He is not weak toward you but is powerful among you.

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

5 Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize regarding yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you—unless, indeed, you fail the test!

6 And I hope that you will realize that we have not failed the test!

7 Now we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong, not so that we may appear to have passed the test, but so that you may do what is right even if we may appear to have failed the test.

8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the sake of the truth.

9 For we rejoice whenever we are weak, but you are strong. And we pray for this: that you may become fully qualified.

10 Because of this I am writing these things while absent, so that when I arrive I may not have to deal harshly with you by using my authority—the Lord gave it to me for building up, not for tearing down!

Benediction

11 Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice, set things right, be encouraged, agree with one another, live in 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 you all.

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