

05/26/2019

Sunday Morning Service

Don't Play the Fool

The title of our sermon this morning is Don't Play the Fool...Don't Play the Fool. Our text is 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 16-21. As we come again to consider this second canonical letter to the church at Corinth from the Apostle Paul. In chapter 11, Paul is giving us an introduction to what many have called his 'fool's speech'...a 'fool's speech.' And that speech begins in earnest in verse 22. It's a speech where the Apostle Paul embarks on a fool's errand. Paul is about to answer the fools in Corinth according to their own folly. And Paul is about to do something that he's very reluctant to do. He's about to boast in his own ministry. He's about to, in essence, boast about the work of the Lord that he's done through the Apostle Paul. It makes Paul very uncomfortable. Paul is obviously, extremely reluctant to do this. He has indirectly expressed reluctance to it throughout this letter...the extent of this letter as we've been working verse-by-verse through 2 Corinthians. And even now he's taken most of chapter 10 and the first 21 verses of chapter 11 to get around to doing it.

So why does Paul stoop to this level? Why does Paul here, submit himself to this shameful course of action you could say, and boast? Well Paul is motivated by a deep concern for these beloved believers...his beloved brothers and sisters in Corinth. Paul is deeply concerned. The Corinthian church, a group of people...of believers, that Paul loves very much...this church has been infiltrated by false teachers...infiltrated by fools, and influenced by their deception. These worldly wise men have swept into Corinth, touting their own credentials, glorying in their own greatness, glorying in their own skill, boasting in their own abilities, name dropping...right?...boasting in their credentials, teaching their own deceptive doctrines, and they are leading away disciples in Corinth after themselves....leading away disciples, away from the Apostle Paul, away from the gospel, away from the word of God and after their own destructive heresies. They're leading them away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so Paul understandably now is on the offensive...Paul's on the offensive. In chapter 10, verse 7, he explains that the Corinthians are judging according to the flesh. They're judging according to outward appearance. They're being enamored with these self-appointed, so-called apostles of Christ...which are ministers of Satan. The Corinthians are judging according to externals...they're judging according to outward appearance...they're not judging according to righteousness...they're not judging with a righteous judgment. Paul says in chapter 10, verse 17, listen, it is not those who commend themselves who are approved, but those whom the Lord commends. The Lord certainly hadn't commended these upstarts in Corinth. He hadn't commended these false teachers. He hadn't sent them running and yet they run. They presume to speak a word from Him and they are spouting lies, and the Corinthians are being taken in with their deception.

This foolish boasting...this worldly boasting is having an influence in Corinth, so much so that Paul is deeply concerned. It's a concern that he clearly expresses in chapter 11, verse 3. Paul says, *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* You're being led away. Don't you see? You're being deceived...don't you see? You're being led away from the simplicity that is in Christ; the simplicity of the gospel. Verse 4, *For if he*

who comes...preaching...preaches another Jesus whom we've not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received...or if you hear...if you listen to...a different gospel which you have not accepted-...you foolish Corinthians...may well put up with it!

So what's the plan here then? What's the plan? Well, in part, Paul is going to boast as well. Paul is going to have to boast as well. Certainly not as they do. Not boasting in their flesh. Not boasting according to outward appearance. You'll notice that Paul's boasting, as we work through the chapter, is entirely different. But, nonetheless, Paul is going to stoop, he's going to play the game that these false teachers in Corinth are playing, and he's going to resort to boasting. And, Paul has several reasons for doing this. One of the reasons...one of those is given all the way back in chapter 5, verse 12. Look at chapter 5, verse 12. One of the reasons that Paul is going to resort to boasting...and he spends all of these chapters working his way toward doing that...is given to us in verse 12. Paul says, because...*we do not commend ourselves again to you...but we're going to boast...I'm going to take this course of action to give you an opportunity to boast on our behalf.* In other words Corinthians, I want to give you ammo so that you know how to answer the false accusations of these false teachers....*that you may...verse 12...have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart...if we are beside ourselves, it is for God;... if we are of sound mind...Corinthians...it is for you...because...the love of Christ compels us.* Paul, compelled by the love of Christ, Paul compelled by his love for these people is going to embark on this foolish mission, so called, and boast.

Another reason that he gives us...another reason for this course of action is given to us in chapter 11, verse 12. Paul's desire, in chapter 11, verse 12, is to cut off any opportunity for these false teachers in Corinth and he aims to do so, in part, by boasting himself. In other words, Proverbs, chapter 26, you answer a fool according to his folly so that he doesn't remain wise in his own eyes. Right? Paul is going to cut off the opportunity that these false teachers in Corinth presume to have among the people, and he's gonna do so in part by answering the fool according to his folly. Verse 12, *what I do...* Paul says...*I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.*

There's another reason that Paul gives for this course of action. It's found in chapter 12, verse 11. And that is the foolishness of the Corinthians themselves. Verse 11, *I have become a fool in boasting...why?...because you have compelled me...I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing.* Paul has become a fool in boasting because the Corinthians themselves have compelled Paul to this course of action. Paul thinks to himself, 'It's gonna take this...it's gonna take me doing this to try to open their eyes...it's gonna take me embarking on this course of action to try to help them see.' It is shameful. It appears as though the false teachers aren't the only fools in Corinth. The Corinthians have been terribly foolish themselves.

Judging according to outward appearance...being persuaded...allowing themselves to be persuaded by this wicked and worldly boasting. Many have failed in their responsibility to Paul to uphold the gospel that Paul is preaching. They have failed in their responsibility to the church to deal with wicked, false teachers...to deal with sin in their midst....they failed in their responsibility to the Lord Jesus Christ to uphold the gospel as the pillar and ground of truth. And now they have forced Paul's hand and Paul has to something that he considers foolish. Many in the church at Corinth are themselves foolish and that's why they've been so easily duped by fools. They found themselves influenced by deception because they themselves have been acting foolishly.

Now think with me for a moment. Think with me back to a time when you had to do something that made you feel foolish. You were self-conscious about it. You didn't want to do it. Right? But you're compelled to do it. For some of you that may have been in your childhood; for some of us it may have been like yesterday. Right? Where you were compelled to do something foolish. I remember as a kid, I had this pair of jeans. It was back in the day when bell bottoms were in style. These were bell bottoms...I loved them and I wore them several times a week to school until I wore a hole in the knee and I didn't want to give up my jeans and so I asked my Mom to fix my jeans. My Mom fixed my jeans by putting on my jeans...on the hole...a bunny rabbit patch. For a middle school boy...like that..."Do we have any other patch?" But I loved the jeans so much, I wore the jeans with the bunny rabbit patch on them, to my shame. I felt foolish. Right? (laughing) It was worth it. I loved those jeans.

Think about something that has made you feel foolish. Something that you were compelled to do. Something that made you feel entirely out of sorts. You didn't feel like yourself doing it. You felt foolish doing it. Why? Why? Because it was something that you didn't normally do. It was something that was out of the ordinary. Something that was out of your comfort zone. It was something that wasn't consistent with your personality. It's not consistent with your character. It's not consistent with your nature. It's not consistent with who you are. It's not consistent with who you are and so you feel foolish. That's how Paul feels about boasting of himself. This endeavor of boasting...boasting is so distasteful to the Apostle Paul that he feels foolish doing it. It's not consistent with his character. It's not consistent with his nature. It goes against the grain of everything that Paul understands and knows to resort to this. Paul knows the Lord never boasted. This is not the example of the Lord Jesus Christ is it? The heart and mind of the Lord's bond slave is averse to boasting of himself. We boast only in the Lord. Right? Only in the Lord. And we see it in Paul's reluctance here don't we? His averseness...the distaste of this is written all over the page isn't it? It's like reading the account of David, drooling on his beard and acting like a madman to escape the King of Gath. Right? David...David is a mighty man and he is drooling on his beard, playing the fool, to secure his own safety. He played the fool. It's inconsistent.

Well what was entirely inconsistent in the life and the practice and character of Paul was entirely consistent on the part of the false teachers and many in the church at Corinth. And there you have your difference. Right? There's the difference. What was inconsistent for Paul was essentially of the character and nature of the false teachers in Corinth and shamefully among many of the Corinthians themselves. It was consistent with their character.

You and I have to remember, we live in a world where we are surrounded by fools. Presuming themselves to be wise...what?...they became fools. Futile in their thinking, darkened in their minds. We are surrounded by foolishness. We are surrounded by fools who propagate foolishness and we're surrounded by fools who drink that foolishness down like water. Listen, we cannot be fools ourselves. We cannot be fools. We have the word of the living God. We have, if you're in Christ, you have the mind of Christ. We are partakers, in that sense, of the divine nature. We cannot conduct ourselves foolishly. We cannot act foolishly. We cannot make foolish decisions. We cannot portray ourselves foolishly. We can't do foolish things. We can't give a testimony of foolishness. Don't play the fool! Let us be fools for Christ. Right? Listen, if Christ is not raised from the dead then we are of all men...we are the most to be pitied...why?...because if Christ isn't raised then I'm a fool, in putting all my hope in this. But listen brother...listen sister...*Let God be true and every man a liar*. This is not foolishness. Amen? We cannot be fools ourselves. We cannot conduct ourselves in foolishness. We cannot play the fool.

So Paul then, from this text, exhorts us today and he exhorts the Corinthians. And I want you to draw two points from our text this morning. I want you to see the fool's pride and I want you to see the fool's peril. The fool's pride and the fool's peril. Let's look at our text together, beginning in verse 16. Paul says, I say again, *let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little*. Now first in verse 16, he wants the Corinthians to understand what he's doing and he wants the Corinthians to give him a fair hearing. "Hear me out", Paul is saying. He pleads with them...*let no one think me a fool*. Now this is the second time that Paul has appealed to the Corinthians for this understanding. Right? It's the second time that Paul has appealed to the Corinthians for them to give him a hearing; for them to lend him their ear so to speak. He did this first back in verse 1...*O, that you would bear with me in a little folly... indeed*, Paul says...pleads with them, *bear with me*. "Hear me", Paul is saying. Bear with me in some foolishness. But listen, verse 16...don't think of me as a fool. I'm not a fool even though I'm engaging in this little piece of foolishness here.

Now it's taken Paul fifteen verses to get from verse 1 back around to this appeal...the second appeal in verse 16. It's a point that shows how reluctant Paul is to actually do it. Paul is reluctant to do this. And he wants the Corinthians to think rightly about it as he enters into this argument...as he enters into this boasting. He says, I'm about to engage in some foolish boasting but please don't consider me just another link in the chain. The 'chain, chain, chain of fools'. Right? That will be the only time you will ever hear a quote from Aretha Franklin in a sermon...I hope (laughing) Paul says, I'm doing it to make a point. Right? I'm boasting to make a point. This is not my general M.O., not like it is for these false apostles. This is not how I generally operate and you Corinthians, you should know that.

However...however...verse 16, if you think I'm a fool, *at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little*. That little word "*also*" is pretty key. Right? If you consider me a fool for stooping to this level. If you think I'm a fool for boasting like one, at least hear me out....at least receive me as you have other fools in the chain. Do you see? That little word "*also*" is key. That I also may boast...that I may boast too, just like others have boasted...it's a passing reference to the false teachers who have been boasting. Right? It's a passing reference to the fact that the Corinthians have gladly received them. The Corinthians have been lending *them* an ear. The Corinthians haven't dealt with them; they've been hearing them out. Paul says, If you think me a fool, at least hear me out just like you would one of them. Give me a hearing too. You've been listening to them, the least you could do is listen to me.

Paul told them in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, that he had *become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some*. Remember that? Well here, Paul is stooping to the level of a fool to win fools. He wants to persuade those in Corinth who are being influenced.

So Paul goes back then to considering the fact that he is about to play the fool here. And he takes one step toward that in verse 16, and already with one step he feels compelled to offer more explanation. That's what we get in verse 17. More explanation. "Listen. I know I'm about to boast...about to enter into this foolishness of boasting...before I do, remember...verse 17...that *what I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly in this confidence of boasting*. Paul's not comfortable with this. I think that's obvious, isn't it? It doesn't sit well. This is not in Paul's nature. It's inconsistent with his character. Boasting is obviously easy for false teachers. That's true in our day isn't it? Boasting...easy for false teachers. That's all they do. They're windbags who boast of their own importance...boast of their own heresies. Easy for false teachers, but it's proving very difficult for the Apostle Paul.

So he qualifies about what he's about to say. He offers a disclaimer. This is not what the Lord would say...this is not what the Lord would do. I'm about to play the part of a fool in boasting but don't attribute that foolishness to the Lord. I'm speaking foolishly, Paul says.

Now Paul...his motivation for doing this is to be careful not to off load or attribute any of the shame that Paul feels for doing this, and transfer any of that to the Lord Himself. Right? Paul feels some shame over having to resort to this course of action and he wants to be very careful that that's not something that he attributes to the Lord. It's certainly foolishness. All boasting associated with the flesh...all boasting is foolishness.

But what characterizes...what drives this boasting in verse 17? It's the word there "*confidence*." In this confidence of boasting. The word "*confidence*" in verse 17, refers to the assurance with which someone speaks. If someone speaks with assurance...someone is very assured of themselves, we say they speak with confidence. Right? They speak with confidence. They speak in such a way that communicates an unwavering belief in what they're saying. They're firm about it. Right? They believe what they're saying. They believe what they're saying. They have a firm belief and so they speak with confidence. That's here that we see the fool's pride...it's here that we see the fool's pride.

1.) The Fool's Pride

This isn't produced by the Spirit on the part of the fool. This isn't produced by the Spirit in the heart and mind and conduct of a false teacher. This is produced by the flesh. Here's where we see the fool's pride. Paul describes it in verse 18,...*seeing that many*...here it is...*boast according to the flesh. I also will boast*. It's here again in verse 18 that we begin to see the stark contrast between Paul and the boasting of these false teachers in Corinth. This confident boasting of the false teachers in Corinth is according to the flesh. In other words, all of their confidence is in the flesh. Their unwavering assurance is in the flesh. It's pride...it's pride. This is not what the Spirit produces. This is what the flesh produces. This is the kind of boasting that is produced in the flesh. It feels good to the flesh. It gratifies the flesh. It pleases the flesh. It indulges our fleshly impulses...our fleshly desires. It makes us feel good. It's focused on the flesh. It's centered on the flesh. Outward appearance...externals. Right? Those who are of the flesh, love it. And this is what they love to boast in. They love this boasting.

Now of the many places that this phrase "according to the flesh"...of the many places that it's used in the New Testament, most often has two reference. One, it refers to natural birth, or natural, ethnic or physical relationships. Right? 'Born according to the flesh.' In Romans 9, Paul refers to his kinsmen according to the flesh...ethnic Jews. Right? But secondly in the New Testament, it refers to that which is corrupt by nature in sinful man. That which is fleshly. That which is carnal. '*Sarx*.' Right? That which is worldly, as opposed to that which is spiritual. That's the boasting of these sinful men in Corinth. It's worldly...it's fleshly...it's carnal...it's according to outward appearance...it is according to the flesh.

Now one of the best passages of Scripture to see that distinction...to see that contrast, is in Romans, chapter 8. Turn with me to Romans, chapter 8. That which is according to flesh. Set apart or distinguished from that which is spiritual, or according to the spirit. We see this in Romans, chapter 8. In their boasting they're going to be distinguished from one another. One will be carnal, fleshly, according to the flesh. We'll see Paul's boast in something else entirely. Look at Romans chapter 8, verse 1. Paul says here, *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk*...here it is... *according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*. Listen, there are two types of people

in this world. There are those who walk according to the flesh. They walk according to the dictates of their own heart. They walk according to the dictates of their own sinful nature. They walk according to the dictates of their own mind. They do not walk according to the Spirit. There's another type of person in this world who walks according to the Spirit. Why? Because that one has been caused to be born again by God's Spirit and God has indwelt them with His Spirit and they yielded to the Spirit walk according to the Spirit. Their minds being renewed by the word of God. Their desires being renewed by the word of God. Their impulses...right?...their nature being renewed by the Spirit of God. They walk according to the Spirit.

Listen, verse 2...*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.* It makes one free from walking according to the flesh. *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, so that...*verse 4...*the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* When you walk according to the Spirit you fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. Do you see verse 4? *For those who live according to the flesh, they set their minds on the things of the flesh.* What will please the flesh? What will gratify the flesh? What can I do to indulge my flesh? Those things which are carnal, worldly wisdom, worldliness. They set their minds on the things of the flesh. *But those who live according the Spirit...*verse 5...*they set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* Their gaze is fixed upon eternal and unseen things in the heavens. Why? Because this life is a vapor and our inheritance is in heaven with Christ. They walk according to the Spirit.

*For...*verse 6...*to be carnally minded...listen...to be entrenched in a mindset that is fleshly...to be carnally minded is death.* Let no one deceive you. Carnal mindedness is death. That's why the 'carnal Christian' is such a damning heresy. *To be carnally minded is death, Paul says, but to be spiritually minded...to have your mind renewed...to have your heart and nature renewed...to be spiritually minded, by the Spirit of God...is life and peace. Because...*verse 7...*the carnal mind is enmity against God;...God is opposed to the carnal mind...for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh...those who walk according to the flesh...cannot please God. But...*look at the contrast in verse 9...*you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.* Those whom the Spirit of God indwells walk according to the spirit....*if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he is not His.* Verse 10...*And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors- not to the flesh, to live...or to walk...according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.* And Paul goes on and on.

This contrast....right?...between flesh and spirit is the very contrast that is causing so very much discomfort for Paul in his boasting. He doesn't want to be associated with that at all. Doesn't want to be associated with that in the minds of the Corinthians...doesn't want himself to be perceived as being associated with that at all. Hear me in this foolish boasting for a moment but don't associate me with walking according to the flesh. Paul's boasting isn't sinful. Paul's boasting is not sinful. But he doesn't want to appear to be fleshly. That's where pride comes from. Pride pours out of our flesh. It flows out of the heart of a man and defiles him, the Lord Jesus Christ said in Mark, chapter 7, verse 20, listen. *He said, what comes out of a man,...that's what...defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men,*

proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy...and with this list of atrocities...pride...and...foolishness. All these evil things come from within...out of the heart of man...and defile a man. Listen, we must cast off foolish pride. Wherever you find it, pour contempt on it, as Paul does. Wherever you find it, cut it off.

There are many reasons why we should be diligent and vigilant in doing that...right?...many reasons. Let me give you just a couple. The first is this. It's because God hates it. God hates it! Why would anyone in their right mind want to be known by, characterized by something that God hates? The only one who would presume to do that is a fool. Proverbs, chapter 6, verse 16, There are six (break in audio)

These six things the Lord hates, yes seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among the brethren. Proverbs 6: 16-19

(Audio begins again)

Proverbs, chapter 8, verse 13, *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;...and what is the evil listed there?...Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth...God says...I hate.* God hates it. James says, that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Why would anyone want to be characterized or known by something that God Almighty is opposed to? Who would want to be opposed by the living God? Who but the fool would continue on a course that is opposed by God. His way is doomed. His way is doomed. He will fall. There is a way which seems right to a man but that way which seems right to a man, is the way to destruction...the way to death...is a way which leads to death. God Almighty opposes the proud. He stands against the proud. He regards the lowly. He regards the humble. He stands against the proud...the foolish, the arrogant...He stands against the haughty. He gives grace to the humble. Do you need grace? Then cast off your pride. Cast off foolishness. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Do you see yourself as needy?...as desperately needy? Because we are. Do you at a guttural level feel...sense...that apart from Him you can do nothing?...that apart from Him you can do nothing to please Him? Those who are well have no need of a physician. Those who are well don't go to the doctor. Those who are sick...those who are sick need a physician.

Humility...humility is right and true to the degree that you are humble. In other words, humility is the right understanding...it's a right apprehension of who we are as creatures...who we are as people...who we are as being subject to God our Creator who is perfect, holy and just. Right? Humility...a humble understanding, an apprehension of our condition...our true condition before Him, is an apprehension of things as they really are. It's an apprehension of truth as it really is. And everything that you need and everything that you have comes from Him. I'm taken by...right?...when you read in the Old Testament, the rain comes and it's not just "Oh it's raining today". No! God sent the rain. It's sunny outside. God gave us a sunny day. Right? The harvest yields a produce. God blessed us with a harvest. The harvest doesn't yield a produce. God didn't bless us with a harvest. Right?

Humility is a right apprehension of things as they really are. We are destitute apart from Him. We are desperately needy and He is the one who provides all that we need. Everything that we have comes from Him. Everything that you're going to have comes from His hand. So why do you fret and why do

you worry and why do you scurry about as if it's entirely up to you? It's not. Be faithful brother. Be faithful sister. Be faith filled and go to the Lord. The Lord is the one who provides all that we need

Now the Corinthians have been suffering under the consequences of their own foolish pride for quite a while at this point, as we get to 2 Corinthians, chapter 11. We see a picture of that back in 1 Corinthians. Turn back to 1 Corinthians, chapter 4...1 Corinthians, chapter 4. This foolish pride...this self-willed, self-reliant confidence isn't new to those at Corinth. We find it addressed here in 1 Corinthians, chapter 4, beginning in verse 6. Now listen, as we get into this text they're making...the Corinthians are making fleshly, carnal, prideful, foolish judgments about those men who are serving in the church. They're playing the fool. They're making judgments just like they are in 2 Corinthians, chapter 10. Back in 1 Corinthians, chapter 4, they're making judgments according to the outward appearance. They're making judgments according to externals. "I like his preaching". "I don't like his preaching". Right? "I relate to him, he's got a great personality" "Yeah, I don't like him so much". Foolishness! Foolishness! In their pride...can you see how that's divisive? And that's what they're doing, they're creating factions in the church. "I'm of Apollos". "I'm of Paul". "I'm of Christ". Right? They're being divisive. They're causing factions in the church. Paul tells them in verse 1, listen. This is the way that you evaluate a man of God: faithfulness, faithfulness to the word of God, faithfulness in his ministry, faithfulness. Paul says, listen, *it's a very small thing that I should be judged by you*. Then he says this in verse 6, *Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, so that none of you may be puffed up...or haughty...or arrogant...or prideful...on behalf of one against the other*. Your prideful foolishness in Corinth is creating factions and divisions. You should not think beyond what is written in the word of God. Don't play the fool.

Then he asks them in verse 7...*who makes you differ from another? Who makes you different from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it...then why in the world...do you boast as if you had not received it?* Foolish boasting. Let me ask you. What good thing do we possess that isn't a gift from God? What good thing? If it's a gift, then why would you or I be puffed up about it? It's a gift from God. What right do you or I have to boast in those things? You boast, puffed up, as if it's your doing. That's what boasting...prideful boasting is. Putting all your confidence in your flesh. Putting all your confidence in that thing which you've been given. Rather than keeping your confidence in the One who gave it to you. Right?

And in that, the Corinthians, making themselves out to be somehow better than their brother. Foolish pride is little more than self-confidence rather than confidence in God. Foolish pride is self-reliance. Don't boast. You gotta remember that that which has been graciously given, can just as easily be taken away. Don't boast. Pride...when you think about it in that sense...pride is lying about God. "This is mine. I have the power within my own hands...within my own abilities to make wealth. All this I've done by the sweat of my own back." It's lying about God. It's lying about others. It's lying about yourself. It's not things as they really are. You are desperately needy! Poor! Miserable! Blind! Naked! Pride...do you see?...blinds. It blinds us to the truth. Blinds us to things as they really are.

Paul says to them in verse 8...he says, *You're already full! You are already rich!* That's his sarcasm. *You have reigned as kings without us*. They're prideful. Right? *And indeed I could wish that you did reign, that we also might reign with you!* But look at the contrast between their foolish and prideful boast and then Paul's boast beginning in verse 9. *For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last*. Here's Paul's boast, we are...*as men condemned to death;...we have been made a spectacle to the world, both*

to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ!...professing to be wise, they were fools...we are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! Do you see the contrast? To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, we are poorly clothed, beaten and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled; we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. Wow Paul, that's some boasting. I don't know that Paul understands to do it. (laughing) He's just...somebody needs to come along and say..."No, no, no, no Paul, that's not how you're supposed to boast." No, that's Paul's boasting. What a contrast. Right? What a contrast.

Paul is about to make the very same contrast again in 2 Corinthians, chapter 11. The same contrast. The Corinthians...the Corinthians are still facing the same sin in 2 Corinthians. Again making worldly, prideful, foolish judgments. But now, watch this. Not about men in their own church but now about false teachers...false teachers. There's a downward spiral. Do you see? There is a downward progression and it is dangerous. It is deadly. Repent of your pride. Repent of your foolishness or it will continue to spread like a leaven. And it will devour you. The fool's pride inevitably leads to the fools' peril. The fool's pride leads to the fool's peril.

2. The Fool's Peril

Back in 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, look at verse 19. Where has their foolish pride gotten them? In the time that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, until now Paul has penned 2 Corinthians. Where has their foolish pride gotten them? Verse 19, *For you put up with fools gladly since you yourselves are wise.* You see the same adjudication, the same description. The same problem. How have these false teachers gained such influence among you? Because you consider yourselves to be wise. Your foolish pride has led you to this point, to the point where they're acting as though they are ashamed, not of the false teachers, but acting as though they're ashamed of the Apostle Paul. They're too wise to be under this poor, impoverished, laboring, crying, pleading, so-called apostle, servant of God.

What's the result of their foolish pride? They are being assaulted and they're being led away in the error of these false teachers. They're being led away by these deceivers. Look at verse 20, *because you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face.* They've been swept away in foolishness themselves because they have not repented of their foolishness. In their own pride they presume themselves to be wise and so they're taken away as fools. Self-confident, self-reliant. Where does self-reliance...and where does self-confidence...where does pride and foolishness lead? It leads to bondage. It leads to deception. It leads to gladly putting up with fools. It's a downward spiral isn't it? It spreads like leaven. It continues.

They've gladly put up with it when someone has '*katadouloō*', brought them into bondage...enslaved them. They've gladly put up with these false teachers who have come in...these false apostles who are treating the Corinthians as their slaves to serve them. They're not there to serve the Corinthians, they're there so that the Corinthians can serve them and through their heresy they have brought them into bondage. They've enslaved them to serve themselves. That should be like absurdly obvious in our day but it's amazing how the gullible, those who are foolish, follow fools in their folly. Isn't it? "We'd like to pass the plate a fourth time today because I really need a Learjet. Why do I need a Learjet because I've got to do ministry." It's like...foolish for me to even bring up that example, it's so ridiculous. Listen, there are a lot of examples that hit a lot closer to home...right?...than those. It is absurd foolishness. They've gladly put up with it as these false teachers have exploited them...exploited them. As if someone

devours you. That's what the word means. It speaks of...or it's a reference to these false teachers exploiting the Corinthians for personal gain. They're out for their money. Right? They're out for their...they want the Corinthians to support them, to pay them. And so it speaks of consuming their financial resources...devouring their financial resources. These false apostles are parasites and they're living at the Corinthians expense. Do you see? They've gladly put up with it as someone has literally taken...if one takes, 'lambanō'. The word denotes bringing someone under your sway by craftiness, by deceit. Not just under their power...not just under their power...not just under their influence, but taking them in. Do you see? By ensnaring them. They have been ensnared by these false teachers. They have gladly put up with it as someone has exalted himself. Here speaking of specifically, exalting themselves over the Corinthians as more important. Never mind biblical teaching that we should esteem one another more highly than ourselves. These false teachers are esteeming themselves as more highly than them. And the Corinthians are awed by it. Even to the point, verse 20, they've gladly put up with someone striking them on the face. I believe that's a metaphor for insulting them...insulting them. Insults. My how far they have come.

Maybe you have as I have known someone, who has professed Christ for a very long time, many years...many years. And because of pride, because of foolishness, because of self-reliance, because of self-confidence; you don't see them grow, you don't see them make progress, you don't see them really bearing fruit. What you see is someone who claims to be set apart to Christ and yet in reality is set apart to worthlessness....set apart to futility. Why? Because of pride...because of self-reliance...because of self-confidence...self-indulgence. Repent of foolishness. Repent of pride. Pour contempt on that which rises up in your flesh that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. We have mighty weapons that are strong in Him for pulling down strongholds. Right?

The difficulty that Paul is having now in Corinth is the difficulty of correcting them for their foolishness...correcting them for their pride. It's gotten to the point now in 2 Corinthians, Paul is dealing with the very same issue again. And he's having to resort now to boasting in order to correct them. And Paul's having difficulty. Proverbs, chapter 12, verse 15, *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is...what?...is wise.* In other words, when you are overcome or overrun with pride, confidence, self-reliance, then you are wise in your own eyes....you're wise in your own eyes. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.* We need wise counsel. The one who heeds counsel is wise.

Can you be corrected? Are you entreatable?* When someone comes to you are you entreatable?* Will you respond? Sometimes...right?...the very first response from our own flesh is a prideful one, it's a fleshly one. That's why it's a response right out of our flesh. Often that comes percolating to the top before we can have a reasonable, biblical, Spirit fueled response. But pour contempt on that thing and be entreatable.* Can you be corrected? Are you teachable? When you sit, when you listen to a sermon...sermons, like the ones that you've heard today...when you sit, are you arguing in your mind? Are you critical? Do you have a critical spirit or do you have a teachable spirit? Are you lifted up in pride? "I could do that so much better." Yeah, you probably could. Are you learning anything? Are you teachable? Someone comes to you...sometimes it's going to be many that come to you and say, "Listen, I don't think you're making a wise decision." Do you listen to them? "Ahhhhh....they don't understand. Nobody really understands me."

Paul is having trouble, difficulty correcting the Corinthians. He wants their eyes to be open. To see things as they really are, and they're not getting it so far. Paul is now about to resort to this... what he deems

to be...this foolish comparison...this bit of folly in order for them to see it. Why would Paul go to these lengths? Why does Paul do it? Love. Paul is motivated by love. It's by love.

Look at verse 21. I want you to see that in verse 21. Paul says, *To our shame I say that we were too weak for that!* Paul takes the shame upon himself. He takes this shame in order to open their eyes. He's been humbling himself all along the way. Right? All along the way Paul has been humbling himself. We just got done looking at that the beginning of chapter 11. And that Paul doesn't even accept support from them. Paul says, listen, I robbed other churches so that I wouldn't be burdensome to you. Paul has humbled himself, and humbled himself, and humbled himself; and here he is, he's humbling himself again...*to our shame I say that we were too weak for that.*

What is the character...what is the nature of Paul's boast? The fool's speech of verse 22. *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?- I speak as a fool- I am more:...*How? How Paul? What is your labor for Christ distinguished or characterized by? *...labors more abundant...stripes...too many to count...prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one...scourged five times...three times beaten with rods; once...stoned; three times...shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; journeys often, peril of waters, perils of robbers, perils of my own countrymen, perils of the Gentiles, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness...all kinds of perils...perils in the seas, perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, cold, naked- and besides all that, what comes upon me constantly: is my deep concern for the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast...Paul says, then...I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity...the things which involve my weakness.*

Paul's boast is of an entirely different character. Do you see? And it's out of love. Why would anyone endure such hardship? Listen. If it's not love, if it's not for the Lord Jesus Christ then we should all go home. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. We are of all men most to be pitied. We are fools. What would motivate such love? What would motivate such endurance? What would motivate such perseverance? The Lord Jesus Christ. The forgiveness that we have in Him. Our eternal destiny. Souls are at stake and Paul humbles himself in love.

The prideful fool, being puffed up with pride will, as Paul says, fall into the same condemnation as the devil. If you leave here thinking to yourself, "Ahhh...I got this. I'm doing just fine so far" ...which is a bold faced lie outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. "I'm going to continue to do fine after I leave here today and you continue in your sin, and you continue in your self-confidence, you continue in your pride, you continue in your foolishness; if you continue on that course, and when you die which could be this afternoon, in the next hour, in the next day, the next week, the next month, the next year...if you continue along that course, you will incur, suffer, be bound for the same condemnation as the devil. The prideful fool, being puffed up with pride, will fall into the same condemnation as the devil. You can see the downward spiral in Corinth, can't you? Turn around. Don't play the fool. Pour contempt on your pride. Humble yourself. The fool's pride inevitably leads to the fool's peril.

All praise, honor, and glory to the One who gives much grace to the humble. Amen? Let's pray. As we go before the Lord in prayer, pray silently. Ask the Lord to reveal to you, by His Spirit, through His word any prideful way in you or how have I played the fool, how have I been foolish. Please Lord, humble me. Help me Lord to see and to repent of my pride. And when you are done praying, you are dismissed.