

Mike Brown Hill Park Baptists 12th September



Youtube Video <https://youtu.be/XZ4ubsg7ZXI>

Good morning my name is Mike, and I need to realign myself daily to Jesus Christ. We continue with our study of second Corinthians and we've covered quite a bit of ground actually over the last number of weeks. Paul is writing again to the church that he founded in Corinth, one of many churches that Paul founded.

Corinth was a gentile church, with many Jewish converts who were steeped in the culture of ancient Greece its architecture, its politics, its art and poetry and its oratory, and it's difficult to overestimate the impact that ancient Greece has on the whole world, and particularly the West even today, two thousand years later, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle all of the ideas about democracy still live and breathe in many countries around the world, and although by A.D. 50 Greece's Golden Age had given way some what to Roman military dominance, the prevailing prevailing culture in Corinth was decidedly Greek, and the church at Corinth in Paul's absence had allowed itself to be infiltrated by false teachers mainly Judaizers who would not renounce the ordinances of Moses and they required the gentile converts to be circumcised and to obey the food laws etc etc, and the church of Corinth was also infiltrated by those who call themselves apostles, very much in the Greek style of heroic oratory and both of these groups belittled and criticized Paul. At every opportunity calling him as you remember short and weak and disabled and not a real apostle.

Now Paul wrote quite a bit of the New Testament and a number of idioms that we use in English today derive from Paul and I'm probably going to miss them out but the expression, 'all things to all men' was something that Paul said first, 'absence in body but present in spirit' is another of them and one that we'll find in this passage is 'those who suffer fools gladly' Paul's responding to these detractors and just listen to the sarcasm in his voice and also his distaste, his distaste, for being forced to defend himself.

So I'm going to read to you second Corinthians chapter 11.

Oh that you would bear with me in a little folly and indeed you do bear with me for I am jealous for you, with a godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ, but I fear lest somehow as the serpent deceived Eve, by his craftiness, so your mind may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, for if he who comes to preach another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it for I consider that I'm not at all inferior to the most eminent Apostles even though I'm untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge but we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge. I robbed other churches taking wages from them, to minister to you and when I was present with you and in need I was a burden to no one. For what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you and so I will keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Ikea why? because I don't love you. God knows I do but what I do 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. For such are false apostles deceitful workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ and no wonder for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transfer transform themselves into ministers of righteousness whose end will be according to their works. I say again let no one think me a fool, if otherwise at least receive me as a fool that I may also boast a little. What I speak I speak not according to the Lord but as it were foolishly in this confidence of boasting seeing that many boast according to the flesh. I also will boast for you put up with fools gladly since you yourselves are wise for 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 to our shame I say that we were too weak for that but in whatever anyone is bold i speak foolishly i am bold also 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 in labour's, more abundant in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often, from the Jews five times i received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned three times, I was shipwrecked a night and a day. I have been in the deep, in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness, often in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, besides the other things what comes upon me daily, my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak I'm not weak who is made to stumble and I do not burn with indignation.

If I must boast I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ who is blessed forever knows that i am not lying in Damascus the governor, under Aritas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes, with a garrison desiring to arrest me, but i was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

You can feel can't you that anger it jumps off the page and I wish when I was at school, I realized now how badly religious studies are taught in schools, or at least how badly they were taught 40 something years ago. I don't suppose it's any better now and I remember being thoroughly bored by these silly maps that i could never master about Paul's missionary journeys and we learned nothing of this passion of this, this amazing man, this muscular Christianity that Paul exudes all the way through the New Testament.

So I'd just like to look at a few aspects of that passage and the first thing that strikes me is the concern and the love that Paul has for that church in Corinth. The stakes couldn't be higher it's about their relationship with Jesus Christ and that relationship is at risk they're being led astray by false teachers. It sounds like Christ but it's not and Paul says he's jealous with a righteous godly jealousy and he uses the analogy of a Jewish wedding where the parents of the bride had to guarantee the bride's virginity. He says I've betrothed you to one husband and that's Christ and in verse three he said but I fear lest as the serpent deceive thee by his craftiness so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Some versions

say led astray instead of corrupted or they say seduced but the Greek word that's used has a stronger meaning actually than even corrupted it means to destroy to ruin completely and there is a simplicity in following Jesus that many people do not grasp why do men deliberately complicate things. One of our friends, when we lived in France, Rebecca she used to say to us being a Christian isn't easy but it is simple. It's not easy because belonging to Jesus means being constantly vigilant aware of Satan's craftiness attacking us where our defenses are the lowest.

One of my childhood heroes was a guy called Richard Feynman and Richard Feynman was a famous theoretical physicist I'm sorry I was, I was a strange kid and he did all of the early work on quantum mechanics and a lot of the later work on quantum mechanics until he died in 1988. In 1965 he won the Nobel Prize for physics and the story goes about a journalist who caught up with him, on the steps of the institute in Sweden, and the journalist said Mr Feynman could you explain to our viewers what it was that you got the Nobel Peace prize of sorry for physics and he turned to her and he said if i can explain, to the average, if i can explain it to the average person, it wouldn't have been worth the nobel prize, and I was quite disappointed in that, quite appalled, because what's the future for science if it can't engage the public and i think that it's one of the duties of scientists to actually explain the difficult things. The gospel is different because the gospel is simple but men will try to complicate it for their own reasons. Paul says don't be deceived the second thing that strikes me from this passage is Paul's defense Paul hates having to defend himself against his accusers who say that he's not trained in rhetoric amongst other things and we have to remember that in Greece, in 1850, orators were cultural icons they were the rock stars of the age, earning phenomenal salaries, and this was in Athens and Corinth and all over Greece and the people who had the best education had the most extensive training in rhetoric. Paul says that he doesn't have their training in oratory. In fact Paul calls himself idiot. Idiots which means at the time a layman plebeian, if you like, but he knows what he's talking about. He doesn't speak in the bombastic dramatic style of the famous orators of the day but in the common language of the people it's unadorned and his message is powerful and truthful and clear.

And the second charge of the people back in Corinth was that Paul was not supported financially by the Corinthian church and therefore they conclude that his message is worthless you can imagine them saying to each other well you get what you pay for but Paul explains why he supported himself during his 18-month stay in Corinth. He didn't take any money from

them and it was something that he had a right to ask for but he foregoes this right because he loves them and i think also he made his own way in Corinth because their financial support might well have made it more difficult for him to tell them some harsh realities. So he had money from the Macedonian the northern churches instead Paul's independence makes him free to be honest and forthright with the Corinthians and he also wants to pull the rug out from the false teachers who are apparently taking money from the faithful in Corinth, who Paul says are masquerading as Christians, and worse he calls them out as false apostles, deceitful workers. He actually calls them ministers of Satan.

And thirdly, Paul's boasting and he hates having to do it he says this is not how Christians should be they should not be boasting. Paul's nature is true Christian humility but he's forced into this unseemly boss thing in order to answer the ridiculous claims of those who have set out to destroy him. Only a fool would boast like this, Paul says, but apparently you suffer fools gladly so bear with he says you gladly suffer fools who put you in bondage and by that he means bondage to the law of Moses. You suffer fools who devour you they teach heresies, who steal from you, they take money as ministers and who exalt themselves and when Paul boasts note what he boasts about he doesn't boast of all the churches that he's planted, or all the souls he saved. He doesn't boast about the miracles that have happened, he boasts about his sufferings, his scars if there's a need for him to glory, pour glories in his infirmities and sufferings as the best evidence of his commitment to Christ, and his commitment to and his love for all the people. In his care he says three times he was beaten with rods. That was a Roman punishment and Paul was exempt from that punishment because Paul was a Roman citizen he says he was five times punished with 40 stripes, less one that's how the Jews referred to it this was a Jewish punishment. See the details in Deuteronomy and it sounds like it wasn't terribly harsh. Well it was harsh and people died under that punishment called 40 stripes less one because 40 stripes are permitted in Deuteronomy what happened was that the people who were administering the punishment decided that they would stop at 39 because under 40 stripes the person who was administering the punishment was exempted from any punishment. If the person died under that punishment and five times Paul suffered that three times he was shipwrecked there were robberies assaults hunger thirst there's a lot more detail in this chapter than there is in acts we're up to around about acts chapter 9 10 chronologically and acts up to chapter 9 chapter 10 doesn't mention half of this doesn't mention three quarters of this and on top of

that Paul says he has the constant 24 7 burden of all the administration and the concern for the churches he founded. The church in Corinth was young and it had to find its way surrounded by malign cultural influences the church had made some mistakes it had been infiltrated by false teachers masquerading as angels of light a different gospel had been allowed to take root and Paul warns against drift being led away from the true Christ and he urges a daily realignment a repentance if you like turning back towards Jesus always correcting your course because you've been buffeted by the world and as hill park baptist church emerges [Music] into an exciting new era of Christian service to the people of highlands let's have Hebrews 12 as our prayer let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising its shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Amen