

# Studies in

## 2 Corinthians



### Lesson XIX

**Text:** 2 Corinthians 11:7-33 (NLT)

<sup>7</sup> Was I wrong when I humbled myself and honored you by preaching God's Good News to you without expecting anything in return? <sup>8</sup> I "robbed" other churches by accepting their contributions so I could serve you at no cost. <sup>9</sup> And when I was with you and didn't have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be. <sup>10</sup> As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one in all of Greece will ever stop me from boasting about this. <sup>11</sup> Why? Because I don't love you? God knows that I do.

<sup>12</sup> But I will continue doing what I have always done. This will undercut those who are looking for an opportunity to boast that their work is just like ours. <sup>13</sup> These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

<sup>16</sup> Again I say, don't think that I am a fool to talk like this. But even if you do, listen to me, as you would to a foolish person, while I also boast a little. <sup>17</sup> Such boasting is not from the Lord, but I am acting like a fool. <sup>18</sup> And since others boast about their human achievements, I will, too. <sup>19</sup> After all, you think you are so wise, but you enjoy putting up with fools! <sup>20</sup> You put up with it when someone enslaves you, takes everything you have, takes advantage of you, takes control of everything, and slaps you in the face. <sup>21</sup> I'm ashamed to say that we've been too "weak" to do that!

But whatever they dare to boast about—I'm talking like a fool again—I dare to boast about it, too. <sup>22</sup> Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. <sup>23</sup> Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again.

<sup>24</sup> Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. <sup>26</sup> I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. <sup>27</sup> I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

<sup>28</sup> Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger? <sup>30</sup> If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am. <sup>31</sup> God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, who is worthy of eternal praise, knows I am not lying. <sup>32</sup> When I was in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city gates to catch me. <sup>33</sup> I had to be lowered in a basket through a window in the city wall to escape from him.

## Discussion Questions

1. God communicated his word through earthly vessels—in this case, using the pen of Paul— in order to connect with us in the most human way possible. As such, we find various modes of communication common to many cultures, including figures of speech, idiomatic expressions—even irony and sarcasm. The apostle Paul was not afraid to ask tough questions or use a sarcastic tone to get his point across. At times, he is even playful in the way he approaches his audience. What communication techniques does Paul employ in our text to get through to the Corinthians? (cf. vv. 8, 16, 21)
2. Why was it important to Paul to not ask for money from the Corinthians to support his ministry? (vv 7, 9) Was Paul opposed to fundraising for his missions? (vs. 8)
3. What did Paul feel necessary to “boast” about? (vv 10-12)
4. What was the true nature of the people who were undermining the ministry of Paul? (vv 13-14)
5. Satan disguises himself as \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 15).
6. Why is it difficult to spot a false disciple? (vs. 16a) How will God respond to the schemes of wicked men? (vs. 16b)
7. In the remainder of the chapter (vv 17-33), Paul takes the perspective of “a fool,” in an attempt to beat his opponents at their own game (bragging). By assuming the contrary point of view, how does Paul expose the foolishness of boasting about human accomplishments? (vv 30-31)