

## **Week of August 6 - 12**

### **Paul's Fear of False Prophets (2 Corinthians 11:1-15)**

Paul feared the Corinthians would listen to “messengers from God” who were spreading false teachings about the Gospel and Jesus Christ. They commended themselves and insisted they had authority over others in the church. He added that if anyone presents a different gospel to the church, or portrays Jesus in a manner contrary to the Gospel, then that person is a false teacher. Paul explained that although he was not a good speaker like these phonies, he was superior to them in his knowledge and understanding of God and his salvation through Jesus Christ. He said he received financial support from his own job and other churches so no one could accuse him of being a burden to them financially or taking advantage of the Corinthians.

He defended his request for a donation to the church in Jerusalem, telling them he tried not to burden them beforehand, and now it's their turn to support those who were burdened financially.

Paul add that these phonies who boast about themselves and say they are equal to Paul and his companions are false teachers and liars. He compared them to Satan, saying "God never sent those men at all; they are "phonies" who have fooled you into thinking they are Christ's apostles. Yet I am not surprised! Satan can change himself into an angel of light, so it is no wonder his servants can do it too, and seem like godly ministers. In the end, they will get every bit of punishment their wicked deeds deserve."

### **Paul Talks about His Suffering for Christ (2 Corinthians 11:16-33)**

Paul told them that since these false prophets are worldly in their thinking, he compared their boasting to his boasting, telling them how he had suffered for Jesus Christ. “Do they brag that they are Hebrews? Well, so am I. Do they say they are Israelites, God's chosen people? So am I. And they say they are descendants of Abraham? Well, I am too.

Do they say they serve Christ? But I have served him far more! I've worked harder, been in jail more often, whipped times without number, and faced death again and again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I was in the open sea all night and the whole next day. I've traveled many weary miles and have been in great danger from flooded rivers and robbers and from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I've faced grave dangers from mobs in cities and death in the deserts and stormy seas and from men who claim to be brothers in Christ, but are not. I've lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. I've been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food; often I've shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

Then, besides all this, I always worry about how the churches are getting along. Who makes a mistake, and I don't feel his sadness? Who falls without my longing to help him? Who is spiritually hurt without my fury rising against the one who hurt him?

But if I must brag, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am. God knows I tell the truth. For instance, in Damascus, the governor under King Aretas kept guards at the city

gates to catch me, but I was let down by rope and basket from a hole in the city wall and got away!"

### **Paul's Vision and His Thorn (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)**

Paul told about a man who was taken up to Heaven 14 years earlier and "heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat." Paul isn't very clear as to whether he saw this happen, or if he had a vision of it. But based on his wording, he's referring to himself. He explained, "Because these experiences were so tremendous, God was afraid I might be puffed up by them, so he gave me a physical condition which has been a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to hurt and bother me and prick my pride. Three different times I begged God to make me well again.

"Each time God said, 'No, but I am with you; that's all you need. My power shows up best in weak people.' Now I'm glad to boast about how weak I am; I'm happy to be a living demonstration of Christ's power, instead of showing off my power and abilities. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I'm happy about "the thorn," and insults and hardships, persecutions and difficulties; because when I am weak, then I am strong. The less I have, the more I depend on him."

His thorn in the flesh was probably given to Paul 14 years earlier after he'd received this revelation, to keep him from being too proud.

### **His Concern for the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 12:11-21)**

Paul explained that the evidence he is a true apostle was the miracles and the power of God supporting him and added that the only wrong he did was making a great effort not to burden them financially. Paul said neither he nor anyone he sent, has taken advantage of them.

He mentioned that he worried that when he visited, there would still be sin and divisions. Paul said, "I'm afraid that when I come to visit you, I won't like what I find, and then you won't like the way I will have to act. I'm afraid that I will find you quarreling, and envying each other, and being angry with each other, and acting big, and saying wicked things about each other and whispering behind each other's backs, filled with conceit and disunity. I'm afraid that when I come, God will humble me before you and I'll be sad and mourn because many of you who've sinned became sinners and don't even care about the wicked, impure things you've done: your lust and immorality, and the taking of other men's wives."

### **His Final Warnings and Farewell (2 Corinthians 13:1-14)**

He warned them again about the sin he addressed in his first letter and added that if he finds anyone still sinning, he will address the issue harshly with the power of God.

Lastly, he challenges them to "Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Do you feel Christ's presence and power more and more within you? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when you aren't at all? I hope you can agree that I have stood that test and truly belong to the Lord."

He prayed they would live good lives, not because it would be a feather in his cap, proving that what he taught was right. He wanted them to do right, even if he was despised. His responsibility was to encourage them to do the right thing at all times.

He said his greatest wish and prayer was that that they would become mature Christians.

He closed the letter with these last words: Be happy. Grow in Christ. Pay attention to what I have said. Live in harmony and peace.

### **Paul Finally Visits Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3)**

Paul finally left Ephesus. He sent for the disciples, preached a farewell message to them, said good-bye, and left for Greece, preaching to the believers along the way in all the cities he passed through. He was in Greece for three months and was preparing to sail for Syria when he discovered a plot by the Jews against his life, so he decided to go north to Macedonia first.

### **Introduction to Romans**

The Book of Romans is a systematic summation of the doctrine of salvation, as seen throughout the Bible. Paul wrote the letter in AD 57 to the believers in Rome, to the "Romans," to give them a concrete theological foundation to construct their faith and to live for and serve God effectively.

It is beautifully written about God's grace and the righteousness that comes by grace through faith and is the foundation of the entire Christian faith and has changed the hearts of many as they read and understand it.

God called Paul to establish churches in the Gentile world for worship and ministry. Rome was the capital of the gentile world, and a church was already there.

The Jews continually challenged Paul regarding the Gospel of Christ and the Law of Moses. He wanted to clear up any confusion by creating a strong doctrinal statement. He addresses the same issues as in his other letters: false doctrine, false teachers, and troublemakers who would stir up dissension in the church. Throughout Romans, it's clear that in the Roman church, there were many Jews and gentiles.

Understand that the Book of Romans was just a letter written by Paul (a long one). Initially, it had no chapter or verse numbers; it was only one long letter.

### **The Gospel Is the Power of God for all Jews and Gentiles alike (Romans 1:1-32)**

Paul began by introducing himself and summarizing the Gospel message of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done, as well as who it affects (the Gentiles). Paul has been called to be a witness of Jesus Christ to the gentiles (those who are not Jews by birth).

He proclaimed, "I am not ashamed of the Good News about Christ. It is God's powerful method of bringing all who believe it to heaven. This message was preached first to the Jews alone, but now everyone is invited to come to God in this same way. This Good News tells us that God makes us ready for heaven, that is, makes us right in God's sight-when we put our faith and trust in Christ to save us. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scripture says, "The man who finds life will find it through trusting God."

He then said God had given plenty of evidence in his creation for his existence. But some people gave up the knowledge of the true God for fake beings created by us out of wood and stone, worshipping things created instead of the Creator. They know about God but refuse to honor Him. Honoring Him is a lifestyle He expects. Instead, they are left clinging to whatever strikes their fancy. They created their own theories about the origin of life and the universe. They were not wise but morons. Their gods were football players, movie stars, pastors, nature. They had warped affections and twisted minds. It is a sad tale of lives wholly spent on destruction of oneself and everyone nearby, lives incapable of any other kind of lifestyle.

He explained the outcome of rejecting God, giving the example of the sin of homosexuality, and explained that's why God let go of them and let them do all these evil things so that even their women turned against God's natural plan for them and indulged in sex sin with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relationships with women, burned with lust for each other, men doing shameful things with other men and, as a result, getting paid within their souls with the penalty they so richly deserved.

So it was that they gave God up and would not even acknowledge him, to doing everything their evil minds could imagine. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness and sin, greed and hate, envy, murder, fighting, lying, bitterness, and gossip. They were backbiters, haters of God, insolent, proud, braggarts, always thinking of new ways of sinning and continually being disobedient to their parents. They tried to misunderstand, broke their promises, and were heartless. And without pity. They were fully aware of God's death penalty for these crimes, yet they went right ahead and did them anyway and encouraged others to do them, too.

### **God's Principles of Judgment (Romans 2:1-17)**

Paul continued making his point that everyone is guilty of sin, and when we judge others, we are judging ourselves. If we continue to sin, we are just as guilty as others who sin.

He warned Jews that living by the law and circumcision does not make them righteous in God's eyes. This came as a shock, but he stressed that living by rules and regulations only brings about judgment and condemnation. A true Jew is one that has experienced circumcision of the heart by the Spirit of God.

The law condemns those who rely on Jewish law instead of faith in Jesus Christ since they haven't always kept it. The law condemns all who have not obeyed, but the law cannot condemn those who have faith in Jesus Christ. However, we are still expected to follow the law in either case, for the law is the will of God.

Jesus Christ died for our sins so that we could obey the law and be considered righteous. Under the law by itself, no person could ever be regarded as righteous because we have all sinned at least once in our lives.

Paul explained that circumcision, which is supposed to be a physical representation that you are under the law and part of God's people (a Jew), is a physical representation of a spiritual thing. True circumcision" (genuinely being God's people) is spiritual and is based on whether someone

obeys the law. If someone does not follow the law, then he is not truly circumcised in his heart, even if he physically is.

He claimed that spiritual factors determine God's people, not physical, meaning that being a Jew by birth does not make you a Jew spiritually.