2 Corinthians 11:1-15 or 21a

Paul is humble when face to face with them, but bold toward them when away. Paul *urgently* asks that when present, he need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think the apostles are acting by human standards. The apostles’ weapons of warfare are not merely human but have divine power to destroy strongholds. They destroy arguments, destroy every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. The Corinthians and the apostles belong to Christ. The Lord gave the apostles authority for building up and not for tearing down. Paul’s antagonists are saying, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” The apostles do not compare themselves to the Sophists. When the Sophists measure or compare themselves to one another, they do not show good sense. The apostles were the first to come all the way to Corinth with the good news of Christ. The apostles’ hope is that their sphere of action among the Corinthians may be greatly enlarged as the faith of the Corinthians increases; so that they can proclaim the good news in lands beyond Corinth. It is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends.

 *What strategy did you test in our war against non-believers?*

**2 Corinthians 11:1-6**

Note: Titus brought good news, but the false teachers have not gone away.

**Vs. 1:** Paul wants the Corinthians to bear with him in a little foolishness.

 *What does it mean to be a fool? Or to be foolish?*

**Vs. 2:** Paul feels a little jealousy for them. He promised them in marriage to one husband, to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Note: A Jewish betrothal was so binding that it could only be broken by a divorce decree. If the bride-to-be’s fiancée died, she was a widow. Chastity was a serious matter.

 *What is Paul saying that he is feeling?*

**Vs. 3:** Paul is afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, the thoughts of the Corinthians will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

 *Why use the example of Adam, Eve and the serpent?*

**Vs. 4:** If someone comes proclaiming another Jesus than the one Paul proclaimed, or if they receive a different spirit from the spirit they received, or a different gospel than the one they accepted, the Corinthians submit to it readily enough.

 *What were these false apostles doing that was so wrong?*

 *Why are the Corinthians so eager to accept what they say?*

**Vs. 5:** Paul thinks that he is not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.

**Vs. 6:** Paul may be untrained in speech, but he is not untrained in knowledge. Certainly in every way and in all things the apostles have made this evident to the Corinthians.

 *What do you prefer, a moving or a knowledgeable speech? Why?*

**2 Corinthians 11:7-15**

Note: During Paul’s day, cynics begged, sophists charged fees, philosophers attached themselves to wealthy patrons, and Stoics would do all these and manual labor if needed.

**Vs. 7:** Paul asks if he committed a sin by humbling himself so the Corinthians might be exalted, because he proclaimed the God’s good news to them free of charge?

 *What are Paul’s feelings?*

**Vs. 8-9:** Paul says that he robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve the Corinthians. When Paul was in need, he did not burden the Corinthians. His needs were supplied by the friends who came from Macedonia. So Paul refrained and will continue to refrain from burdening them in any way.

 *Why was it so important to Paul that he not accept anything from the Corinthians?*

**Vs. 10-11:** As the truth of Christ is in Paul, this boast will not be silenced in Achaia. Why? Because Paul does not love the Corinthians? God knows that Paul does.

 *Why does not asking for help from the Corinthians cause them to think that Paul does*

*not love them?*

**Vs. 12:** What Paul does, he will continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want to be recognized as equals to the apostles in what they boast about.

**Vs. 13:** Such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguised as apostles of Christ.

 *What is your opinion of these labels for the false prophets?*

**Vs. 14:** No wonder, even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

 *How does Satan disguise himself as an angel of light?*

**Vs. 15:** It is not strange if Satan’s ministers disguise themselves as minister of righteousness. Their end will match their deeds.

 *What is Paul telling the Corinthians about the false apostles?*

Note: Paul criticized these false teachers (see 6:7-10). Now he says they are led by Satan.

 *Have you been accused of not loving someone because you did not ask for their help?*

 N.T. Wright writes, “The generous-hearted liberal who hates to say anyone at all is wrong can easily fail to spot real evil. The narrow-minded conservative who hates to say anyone else is right can easily label good as evil.” *What are your thoughts on this?*

**2 Corinthians 11:16-21a**

**Vs. 16:** Paul repeats, let no one think that Paul is a fool; but if they do, then accept Paul as a fool, so that he too may boast a little.

 *What is Paul asking here?*

**Vs. 17-18:** What Paul is saying regarding this boastful confidence, he is not saying with the Lord’s authority, but as a fool. Since many boast according to human standards, Paul will also boast.

**Vs. 19:** The Corinthians gladly put up with fools, being wise themselves.

 *What is this saying about the Corinthians?*

**Vs. 20:** The Corinthians put up with it when someone makes slaves of them, preys upon them, takes advantage of them, puts on airs, or gives them a slap in the face.

**Vs. 21:** To Paul’s shame, he must say that the apostles were too weak for that!

 *What does Paul mean by this?*

 *What strategy will you use this week in our battle against non-believers?*

**Who can bring treats next week?**