

- He shows how it was all personal loss and suffering for him though some said he was to be blamed.
- We see how very early Satan was making the church, not the world, the scene of his activities; he does it all under a religious guise:
 - False apostles,
 - Deceitful workers,
 - Transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.
- And it is not amazing, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.
- It is no big deal therefore if his ministers also transform themselves as “ministers of righteousness.”

It was a great criticism of the Corinthians that they had not discovered the character of those evil workers.

It is a great criticism to us when any of us who **are not** ministering the interests of Christ find support from uninformed believers.

*Revelation 2:2-3 (NASB) 2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;
3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.*

This is a great compliment to the church at Ephesus.

WHAT DOES PAUL FEAR?

Paul fears worldliness.

It is this feature of the fear of worldliness that is on the mind of the Spirit about the saints or churches, and shaping apostolic ministry, which has opened in connection with 2 Corinthians.

The fear about Corinth

- was not concerning religious or Judaizing influence.
- Neither was it fear (at least in the second epistle) from a non-believer's mind,
- or from the activity of an unclean and lustful nature, but

"the god of this world" was feared by Paul.

Paul offered himself as a practical witness of a way different from this man of the world.

1. Paul refuses to know himself, or to be known by the saints, except according to his *extent in the Spirit*, and not as he was by nature or in the flesh.

2. He glories only in either his

A. *Infirmities* or

B. *In such dignities as separated him from all worldly estimation,*

C. *As his rapture into paradise; for the world would not understand this kind of honor.*

This is how Paul presented himself in **contradiction** of the man who gloried in the flesh.

External Pressure:

What were the external things?

2 Corinthians 11:23-27 (WEY)

23 Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if I were out of my mind.) Much more am I His servant, serving Him more thoroughly than they by my labors, and more thoroughly also by

1. **my imprisonments,**
2. **by excessively cruel floggings,**
3. **with risk of life many a time.**
4. **24 From the Jews I five times have received forty lashes all but one.**
5. **25 Three times I have been beaten with Roman rods,**
6. **once I have been stoned,**
7. **three times I have been shipwrecked,**
8. **once for full four and twenty hours I was floating on the open sea.**
9. **26 I have served Him by frequent traveling,**
10. **amid dangers in crossing rivers,**
11. **dangers from robbers,**
12. **dangers from my own countrymen,**

External Pressure:

What were the external things? (continued)

- 13. dangers from the Gentiles,**
- 14. dangers in the city,**
- 15. dangers in the desert,**
- 16. dangers by sea,**
- 17. dangers from spies in our midst,**
- 18. with labor and toil,**
- 19. with many a sleepless night,**
- 20. in hunger and thirst,**
- 21. in frequent fasting,**
- 22. in cold, and**
- 23. without sufficient clothing.**

28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

INTERNAL PRESSURE

Burdened Paul on top of all the external difficulties that he endured. Specifically, concern for the weak and the moral failures of his converts.

Notice that the pressure was daily.

Anxiety for all the churches is the added explanation of that care, day by day, which pressed on Paul.

29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

This compassion is not of man: it is the divine compassion of Christ Himself, burning in the heart of His servant, and blazing forth in love to reach and to bind to the one Bridegroom the hearts of those to whom he ministers." [Note: Hughes, p. 418.from Constable]

To bear with the feebleness of the weak, to listen again and again to the complaints of the offended, to correct the foolishness of saints, and contend for the truth against false brethren, all this must have been the most testing thing of all. Yet he did it. **Kelly**

• Rather than boasting about his strengths, as his critics did, Paul
30 *If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.*
boasted in his weaknesses, humiliations, and sufferings.

- These would not initially impress others with his qualifications as an apostle, but these afflictions had come upon him as he had served others and Christ faithfully.
- They were evidence that God had supernaturally sustained His servant through countless discouraging circumstances.

They were, therefore, the greatest possible proof and vindication that Paul was an apostle.

31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Paul's boast was that he resembled the Suffering Servant; his life was like that of Christ.

Paul called God as his witness that his claims, which probably seemed incredible to those who did not know him well, were true.

Was this self-praise?

Paul gloried in what he had gone through, he required power to go through all these things; it was not in his own power he went, and the sustaining is wonderful.

32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,

33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.

1. This was his first taste of suffering for Christ, never to be forgotten.
2. Happened at the outset of his ministry and God was underscoring his weakness. This was a new experience for Saul of Tarsus.
3. You wouldn't find any of the super apostles boasting about these things.

