

## 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

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[ 0 : 00 ] chapter 11, 2nd Corinthians chapter 11. And by the way, I appreciate the songs that remind us of the position of Christ. There's nothing wrong about singing of the multitude of crowns that are upon his head.

Because it reminds us that one day for the faithful we will be crowned, but we do not wear our crowns on our head. We take our crowns and cast them at his feet. And so thank you for that reminder. 2nd Corinthians chapter 11, we're making our way through the book of 2nd Corinthians. If you have not been with us, we are just making our way through this letter to the church at Corinth. Not a more wicked, desperate church than we will ever find in the New Testament than the church that was at Corinth.

But that was in the writing of the first letter of 1 Corinthians in which Paul refers to them as the saints which are at Corinth. So we know in context that this letter was written to the redeemed, to the saints, to the believers, to the church.

It's not written to the world. It's written to the church. The first letter is a letter of rebuke and correction. The second letter is a letter of admonition, encouragement to walk out in authentic faithfulness of your relationship with Christ.

[ 1 : 02 ] So they have repented of their sins. They've turned away from those matters. They have sought the Lord, at least tried to walk in faithfulness to the extent that Paul says, okay, the discipline you've rendered, it is enough.

And now he is encouraging them because much like every other church that exists when God plants a church, we can refer to church planters or individuals that the Lord uses. Paul would be one such.

But we also know that he who builds the church is Christ himself. So it is the Lord who plants the church. And when he puts that church in a particular region, he puts that church there for a purpose.

And it is to minister in that community. And the best way to minister in that community and beyond themselves is to live out their faith authentically or to live it out accurately, to live it out not being distorted or contorted by the world, but being those who live out in sincerity, actually what they profess.

It is what we call letting our works and word match. So not only proclaiming one thing, but also living it out. And so we've been making our way through that.

[ 2 : 05 ] Now, as Paul is coming to the 11th chapter, we're going to pick it up in verse 16 and read to the end. But you need to know that Paul now is discussing with the church this reality that after he came, much like everywhere else that Paul went, immediately after he came and he began to share the gospel, people responded to the gospel.

He appointed elders and leaders in the church and then he left because he was not called to ever be a local pastor. He was called to be one that the Lord used in missionary activities. So as after he left, people followed him and they came after him, these false teachers.

That were really demeaning Paul and they were saying, well, Paul's okay, but you need this too. They were adding too, as Paul would say, to the gospel. It was not just faith in Christ. What he refers to is the simplicity and the purity of devotion to Christ.

There's surely there was something much more. You know, when we talk about the gospel, really what we're talking about is something that is not simple to live out. That is, it costs quite a bit, but it's simple in nature.

It is a surrender to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And it is being devoted to him and to him alone. It is nothing in addition to that. There is nothing else that you must do to earn that.

[ 3 : 20 ] There are a multitude of things that you do because of that, but there's nothing else that you do in addition to that. You are wed to the groom who loves you so, which is Christ.

Now, I say that, you know, in light of the reality that when I stand with a couple on their wedding day, they've come down that aisle because someone loved one another, at least theoretically, right?

We pre-marriage counseling, we work that out. Out of deep devotion and love for one another with all their faults, with all their shortcomings, and there's nothing else they must do. They just come and they join together. Now, life looks totally different because of the vows we exchanged there. Life ought to look totally different. So, while they had to do nothing because of it, they would do a multitude, in order to gain it, they'll do a multitude of things because of it. And we see that here. Now, we pick up in verse 16, where Paul is really safeguarding the congregation there in the first 15 verses. Now, we're going to look at a defended position of Paul, starting in verse 16.

[ 4 : 20 ] If you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and read the word of God, 2 Corinthians chapter 11, starting in verse 16. Paul says, again, I say, let no one think me foolish.

And if you do, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little. What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting.

Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly, for you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.

To my shame, I must say that we have been weak by comparison, but in whatever respect anyone else is bold, I speak in foolishness. I am just as bold myself. Are they Hebrews?

So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I speak as if insane. I am more so in far more labors and far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

[ 5 : 24 ] Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea.

Dangerous among false brethren. I have been in labor and hardship through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever knows that I am not lying.

In Damascus, the ethnarch under Aretas, the king, was guarding the city of the Messines in order to seize me. And I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands. Let's pray. God, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you that we have the opportunity of gathering together and reading the word of God with one another. And we pray now, as we have read it and seen it, Lord, that you would speak to our hearts and minds.

[ 6 : 38 ] We pray that the truthfulness of scripture would captivate us, that it would garner our attention, Lord, that it would mold and shape and conform us to your glory and your image. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. As Paul has sought to safeguard the church against the false teachers which have crept in, now he has led to defend his position.

Because as is often the case, those who came in after Paul and those who come in after any individual who is dealing in truth deal with half-truths and part of the half-truth is they begin to belittle those whom the Lord has used.

Those who followed Paul, we see it in every one of his letters almost as he writes to these particular churches, came in trying to belittle Paul in the sight of those he had led to Christ.

Evidently in context, we can see here in particular from these verses that these were Jewish individuals. So as we see it in its proper context, more than likely they were Jewish individuals who were professing Christ but was professing Christ in addition to their Judaism.

[ 7 : 48 ] And they were seeking to add to the gospel that believing in Christ is great but you also need to be circumcised. You need to keep these festivals. You need to make sure that you do all of these works. And as Paul was being used by the Lord to reach beyond the Jewish borders, to be a light unto the Gentiles as the Lord Jesus had told him he would be, these individuals were afraid

that what they had spent their entire life looking at, that is the law, was being diminished and belittled and therefore they wanted to ensure that that which they had safeguarded while missing the beauty of the gospel, they were holding on to the legalism of the Old Testament and therefore trying to be those who walked behind him.

They weren't speaking outright lies but they were absolutely outright false teachers. And Paul was forced often to defend his own position. Now, I want you to understand in context, Paul is not so much about defending his character traits of himself.

The defense that Paul is attempting to make is a defense for the gospel. Because Paul was afraid that with the incoming of false teachers and the distorting and twisting of these realities, that it was the gospel that would be lost in the mix.

My friend, you do not have to study church history very long before you see that the gospel was twisted very easily and that is a battle that has been ongoing ever since the coming of the church. We can locate the birth of the church in the book of Acts and then we can locate very quickly by the time we get to when Paul wrote these letters, how the church was being twisted and distorted and false teachers were already creeping in.

[ 9 : 31 ] We can read church history and see how these matters have continued perpetually throughout history. While the theme may change, the goal is always the same. In today's day and time, I would say that we have more of this going on than even there was then.

So these things have direct application to us because let's make no bones about it. Doctrine matters. It absolutely matters.

We speak of these realities here that we call big rock and little rock issues and that is there are big rock issues in which we must be in agreement because they are doctrinal matters.

They are what we call essential to salvific faith. There are small rock issues in which we can differ in opinion and still walk in fellowship. That's okay. We've seen that throughout history.

We've seen that even in our own lives that we don't have to agree and really it would be more scary if we all did agree on everything in every way. Then we would refer to it as a cult. If we do not have our own minds and our own interpretations of scriptural passages, there are some things in which we can disagree on and it's okay.

[ 10 : 38 ] But the gospel is not one of them. There are big rock matters which are worth defending. And that is we need to take a step. Adrian Rogers used to say to pastors when he would do his pastor training institutes of which I had the opportunity to go through posthumously right after Adrian died.

He would say, pastor, you need to know the hill you're willing to die on. And he was very clear in that. He said, put your stake in the ground, know what doctrines matter, die on that hill and let the other hills go.

And he said, you just need to know that. So there are those matters in my own life in which we can say in the gospel is absolutely one of them in which we have to defend our position. And this is what Paul is doing. And the reason we need to do it first and foremost is we see the harm caused by false teachers.

If there was no harm, if there was really no concern, then why would it matter? Let me give you an example. When we start talking about end time events, that is how you interpret the book of Revelation.

My interpretation of the book of Revelation is that the church is raptured. By the time we get to the fourth chapter and the fourth chapter, we see the church gathered in glory around the throne worshipping. And everything that happens after chapter four is the tribulation period leading up to the thousand year reign of Christ of which the church is not a part of.

[ 11 : 57 ] You say, okay, well that makes a lot of sense. Well, there are other people who don't see it that way. They think the church is going to go through the tribulation. Well, let me tell you what I have found. Those who believe the church is going to go through the tribulation are usually working harder to ensure they are the church because they're afraid that they will be purified by going through the tribulation.

That way they're really studying the gospel to make sure they're pure. So their interpretation of the matter causes them to walk in greater holiness than those who say that's not for me. So I can fellowship with that and I'm not going to die on that hill.

Now, I have my reasons for interpretation. This morning is not the opportunity. I believe in the law of double judgment and double jeopardy. I'm not going to get into all of that. This is not the time for that. But what I have found is those who differ from me are seeking to walk in holiness.

And if it's causing them to walk in holiness and faithfulness, then praise be to the Lord God above. Even Paul said those who preach the gospel from wrong motives, if they're exalting Christ, then glory to the Father, right?

Let them exalt Christ. So we understand this. This is not what we're talking about. We're talking about the harm. If there are things that cause harm to the gospel that are detrimental to the church, then we need to stand up for that.

[13:09] Paul says, again, I say, let no one think me foolish if you do receive me even as a fool. Now, Paul admittedly says, the way I'm about to go about this argument is not the way that Christ would have.

That does not mean he's being anti-Christian. It does not mean he's being un-Christian. He says the humility of Christ was never displayed in this way, but I feel compelled at this moment.

I feel compelled to do things differently because this is the manner the false teachers are operating in. This is how they are operating. And since you are welcoming them, maybe you will welcome me. This is where Paul says, I become all things to all people without forsaking the gospel. Friend, let that be an admonition to you. Meet people where they're at. Instead of expecting them to be where you are, meet them where they're at.

And walk with them in that reality. Don't look at them and say, well, you need to be more mature than that. You ought to be greater than that. You need to be stronger than that. You need to know more scripture than that. If you know it, then praise the Father that you do, but you come to where they are.

[14:11] Paul says, I'm going to be foolish for just a minute. Are you willing to be foolish to defend the faith? Paul was. We ought to be counted as fools to say, I know this is what I believe and this is why I do it.

Paul says that they have accepted those. This is what I'm saying. I'm not saying as the Lord would. But he says, look in verse 15, since many boast according to the flesh. One thing you need to know about false teachers is they, for lack of a theoretical or theological way of saying it, they love them, a lot of them.

They love themselves. They boast according to the flesh, he says. They are proud of who they are. By the way, pride is one of those things which the Lord, scripture tells us, hates.

The prideful look. They boast in the flesh. Their boast is not necessarily in the Savior, but they are boasting in themselves.

And this ought to be a cause of alarm. There's nothing wrong. One thing that I've had to learn, and I'm still learning it, is, Pastor, you don't always have to give examples from your own life.

[15:17] I give it, especially in counseling, because I know me better than I know anybody else. And so I can know my failures. I can know my stumblings. I can know all those things. But I try not to give anything. Well, this is where I've done it right.

Because you know what I have found? For every time I've done it right, I've done it wrong probably 10 or 20 times. And so if I'm going to boast, I'll be like, Paul, let's boast in weakness, because then we see who the Savior is.

We don't need all these stories about those who are great and good and awesome. Because when I find someone who has it together, the one thing that it does to me is it shows me that I'm not them. Right? I remember there have been seasons where I thought, oh, I was okay at something, and I would meet somebody else that was really good at it. And I was like, oh, I'm falling way short. I'm never going to be that.

And that's okay. But Paul said they're boasting according to foot. So I'm going to do that. I'll boast a little bit. But look at what he says. He gets into the harm that they are causing. He says you're receiving them gladly.

[16:12] In verse 20 he says, for you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you. Now, back up what he says in verse 19. He says, for you being so wise. You need to understand the context. Corinth, the city itself and even the church, go back to 1 Corinthians, prided themselves in their wisdom.

He says you are so wise. You accept the foolish gladly. What we have found in history. I mean, if you study, and I hope you ought to be able to defend your faith, so that's the apologetic, right?

It is those who profess to be wise that seem to be held captive by the most foolish of arguments. It's really astounding. Those who profess to be wise according to this world are the most easily held by the foolish arguments.

We can get into that a little bit later, but it is a reality. He says you're so wise that you tolerate the foolish gladly. For you tolerate it. Look at this. Here's the harm. If anyone enslaves you, you know what the danger of false doctrine is?

It enslaves you. See, Christ came to set you free. But the moment you begin to add anything to that freedom of Christ, it becomes enslaving.

[ 17 : 29 ] If you don't think so, then open up your Old Testament. This is why you ought to study the Old Testament. Just go to the book of Leviticus. Read through the book of Leviticus. Start in Numbers. Read Numbers in Leviticus. And tell me if you don't feel a weight of burden because this is what the Lord your God expects.

This is what he expects. And then if you go to the gospel, you'll find in the gospel that Jesus says that if you break one of those commandments, then you are guilty of all of them. You say, well, I've never murdered.

Yeah, but have you hated anyone? Have you looked at anyone and got angry at anyone? You ever lost your temper? Have you ever called someone, you fool? That's what the translation is. Rock, are you fool? Have you ever lost your cool a little bit?

Now, all of a sudden, you're guilty of adultery. You're guilty of murder. You're guilty of fornication. You're guilty of all of it, right? You bear the weight of that, and it begins to enslave you. And then you come to this reality that there's no way he could ever love me because of all the things that I've done.

That's false doctrine. It becomes a weight of guilt, and it rests upon you, and it enslaves you. If anyone devours you, it will eat you from within, right?

[ 18 : 31 ] If anyone takes advantage of you, if anyone exalts himself, if anyone hits you on the face, notice the harm. The harm of false doctrine is that it is always the adherents to it that suffer.

It is something that brings great detriment to the church. While it may make the congregation feel good, it may make them have an emotional response.

Admittedly, I understood this. When I came and sat before the pastor search committee here eight years ago, and I sat down. By the way, October is pretty, it would be actually December of this year. I realized that this is my 20th year in the ministry, pastoral ministry. I was like, man, I'm getting old, right? So anyway, I had the opportunity to sit down, and I told them, I said, I'm just going to be honest with you.

There's no razzle and dazzle. There's no showing lights. There's no goosebump feelings. There's nothing. It's going to be, we're going to get into the Word of God, and we're going to preach through Scripture. It's going to be boring. I said, but it's going to be boring to the point that we're just going to build and build and build.

[ 19 : 39 ] That's all I want, because that's what it takes to know your doctrine, right? Sometimes we can have an emotional response to the gospel. There are parts of the gospel that I read.

There are psalms. I read Psalm 73 this morning. What a psalm Psalm 73 is. Lord, in my soul, I was downcast. In my soul, when I considered the wicked, I looked upon them, and I said, The ungodly is fat.

Their bellies are full. They never are in want. They get everything they want, and God, it just doesn't seem fair. The necklace around their neck is a beautiful necklace, and I look at myself, and everything's falling apart. The psalmist cries out and says, God, it's not fair.

He said, but then, when I came into your courts, he says, but when I came into your presence, I realized it didn't matter the worldliness they got, because in the end, you will cast them out. But I'm welcome into your presence.

Now, when I read that psalm, my emotional response is, praise be to the Lord God, and it raises me up. Then there are times when I read the Gospels, or I read the Old Testament, that the emotional response is not so good, right?

[ 20 : 39 ] It's like, woe be me, and I'll beat my chest and say I deserve to die. So it's not so much our emotional response as it is the doctrine that undergirds it. But the false teachers, they aim for the emotion.

They don't aim for the mind, and I want you to understand that, okay? Because, friend, I'm not trying to be mean, but your feelings, they lie. Your feelings are subjective to your circumstances, and therefore, if you are feeling good, and your circumstances when you came in here were good, and you were having a good day circumstantially, then your feelings may make you feel good. If circumstantially you were not having a good day, maybe your car battery was dead, maybe all your tires were flat, maybe every one of your cars were messed up, maybe it wasn't a good night last night, maybe everything fell apart on you last night, and you're just not feeling it today. It's okay, because God is going to go beyond your feelings and give you a truth. Truth does not lie, but feelings lie. But what we find here is the false teachers are harmful because they deal in the avenue of feelings.

They slap you, they hit you, they mislead you, they twist you, they contort you, and they lift up themselves. There's the harm. Number two, we notice the heritage lived by fellow believers.

[ 21 : 57 ] Now we need to understand this, this is encouraging. And one thing I love about the gospel, one thing I love about scripture, and hopefully you love it too, I love the fact that when we open up the pages of the Bible, we find real people going through real stuff.

That we're not given some pie-in-the-sky, cloudy mentality where everything is right. We find reality lived out. And more than often we find this same heritage lived by fellow believers.

Paul says that these people are bringing themselves up. They are exalting themselves. They are boasting in the flesh of their degrees and all of the things that they have. Paul says he's going to boast in the flesh.

But notice the boasting of Paul. Paul is not boasting about who he is. Rather, Paul boasts about what he has went through. See, Paul, he says, are they speaking as Hebrews?

He said, I'm a Hebrew. He said, are they descendants of Abraham? I'm a descendant of Abraham. Are they Israelites? I'm an Israelite. He says, I'm all of these things.

[ 23 : 00 ] What Paul doesn't always boast about is not only was he a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he says this elsewhere, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. That is, he was the strictest adherent to the law that any Hebrew could ever be.

And then he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, which is the greatest teacher. He went to the greatest educational institute that any Jew could ever go to. He came out with a degree like nobody else. See, his pedigree, because think about Paul's pedigree. He was a Jew of the Jews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees who attended the best university. And on top of all that, he was also born a citizen of Rome.

He didn't pay for his citizenship. He was born a citizen of Rome. In his world, Paul had every reason to boast. He was everything that everybody was trying to be.

He was a Roman citizen with all of the benefits of that is. That is, you cannot arrest me without due trial. You cannot accuse me. You cannot beat me. You say, wait a minute, he got beaten. Right, but they weren't supposed to.

[ 23 : 59 ] He was a Jew by the highest standards of Judaism, that is, Pharisees. He went to the greatest educational institution they had, the feet of Gamaliel. But he says, I'm all of those things, but I'm also this.

Are they followers of Christ? I speak as if in saying I more so. How does he validate his walk with the Savior? Look at what it says. He speaks of what he has suffered.

The validation is not on the information he has collected. The validation is in the life that he has lived. Many, many people boast of what they know.

But they don't boast in how they live. I've told you this before, and it's something that you need to understand and you need to hold on to. Most, quote, unquote, Bible scholars, because the temptation is for you to pull up a resource, and it says Bible scholars say this.

Most, quote, unquote, Bible scholars, especially from our higher levels of education, are nonbelievers. They know a lot about the pages of Scripture.

[ 25 : 12 ] But they don't know the Savior it points to. Most of them are agnostic. They say, well, I don't know if there is or not.

But they are still Bible scholars. We have great educational institutions who offer Bible classes from a historical perspective and an educational bent.

Friend, listen to me. You don't know the Savior with a mind alone. It is the moving and the leading of the Spirit that draws man. So Paul speaks of his life.

He says, I'm more so in far more labors and far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes. Some of your translations say 40 minus 1.

Why? Because in Jewish mindset, if you beat someone 40 times, it would kill them. So the Jews in their legalism said, we don't want to kill them. We want to discipline them. So we'll make sure that we'll cut off one.

[ 26 : 13 ] So we'll do it 39 so we can get them to the brink of death. But we won't be guilty of murder. So that's the 40 minus 1 or 39. They knew anything over 40 would be detrimental.

And in case they lost count, they would be sure to take one more off. It could be 39 or it could be 40. Now, in contrast, the Romans didn't care. This is why he said, and beaten with rods.

So he was beaten by the Jews to the point of death. Five times, he said, three times I was beaten with rods. The Romans didn't count because they didn't care. You say he was a Roman citizen, right.

He didn't have to have that right, but he did. Once I was stoned. Oh, that's one of my greatest. I love that account of Paul when he was stoned. Do you remember that? When he went in there, they wanted to worship Paul.

They wanted to lift him up as being the mouthpiece of the false god. And Paul says, what are you doing? They tore their clothes. The people of the city got mad. And they stoned him. And they thought they killed him. And they left him for dead.

[ 27 : 09 ] And he's out there under a pile of stones. And all the other believers are gathered around. Go read the book of Acts. I love this. Because they're gathered around. And it says, and then Paul got up. And not only did Paul get up and leave, Paul got up and went back into the city.

And stayed the night. Why? Because there were believers in the city that he wanted to encourage. That's a life. Being lived for the glory of the Savior and not for the safety of the man.

Right? That's not one boasting in himself. He just gets up, moves aside the pile of stones, and goes into the city and stays the night, and then goes to the next church.

What an account. What a life being lived. He said, all of these things I've done. Notice the boasting of Paul. He's not boasting in what he knows. He's boasting in the one he walks with.

Friend, listen to me. The heritage lived out by fellow believers is not always a heritage of ease.

That's why faith is simple, but it's not easy. Sometimes it's a heritage of suffering.

[ 28 : 12 ] It's a heritage of discomfort. It's a heritage of uncertainty. It's a heritage of faithfulness.

But it is a heritage lived out on a daily basis for the glory of the Savior and not for the recognition of the man.

There were so many rights, quote, unquote, that Paul could have claimed that he never did. And there are times we open up the book of Acts where Paul says, hey, I'm a Roman citizen.

You can't do that. Notice what happens immediately following when he does claim that right. He stops them from killing them so he can share the gospel with them. Understand these realities.

This is the heritage that is still today being lived out by multitudes and multitudes of fellow believers. But it is a heritage not being lived out by false teachers.

See, one of the realities that persecution brings to the church, and while so many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who reside in countries where they are persecuted for the faith, they are not praying to be alleviated from their persecution.

[ 29 : 16 ] They are praying to be able to endure their persecution. And it's astounding. The reason they give for it, and it's something that we ought to pay attention to, persecution has a way of refining. That is, when it costs something to believe something, then the false teachers are not present anymore.

Persecution has a way of refining. Read your church history. You know when the greatest atrocities and the greatest heresies crept into the church. It is when it was declared the national faith of the Roman Empire.

When the stamp of approval of the Roman government was put upon it, Constantine said, that's it. And it was declared the national religion of a nation. All of a sudden, it became, prior to that time, about 5% of Roman citizens were a part of the church.

After that time, it was about 95%. You say, oh great, that was the spread of the gospel. No, that was the spread of being in a place of recognition, and if the emperor loves it, then we ought to be there too.

And it began to be crept in and crept in and crept in. All of a sudden, false doctrine, because it was the persecution that preserves the church. False teachers don't like that suffering.

[ 30 : 34 ] And it is the refining fire of the church. We understand that. Over and over again, we can see this, my friend. And we see it time and time again.

It is the heritage lived by fellow believers. Third and finally, look at this humility embraced by full surrender. We see the harm caused by false teachers. We see the heritage lived by fellow believers. And we see the humility that is embraced by full surrender.

Paul does not boast of who he is. He does not boast of what he has accomplished in the flesh. He himself says, if I have to boast. He says, if I'm going to be foolish. If I'm going to be so foolhardy as these individuals.

If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. This isn't a false humility. This is a true humility. And Paul is going to display that. Paul says, I don't care how strong I am in one aspect.

I don't care how much I know. I don't care how much I understand. See, Paul said at the feet of Gamaliel, sure, he had the greatest higher education than a man could get. But he got his true education when he was in the wilderness of Arabia for three and a half years.

[ 31 : 35 ] And he says himself that Christ taught him. No one else was there. No one else was present. It was in that season of brokenness when nobody knew what to do with Paul because he was persecuting the church.

And all of a sudden, he says he loves the church. And the church didn't even know what to do with him. So they cast him out and he went into obscurity. We see this when we study the life of Paul. All of a sudden, he vanishes for about three and a half years. Where he's at is in the wilderness of Arabia.

And he's learning at the feet of the Savior himself. That's quite an encounter, right? And not until Barnabas, thank God for the Barnabases, right? The sons of encouragement who went and found Paul and said, hey, Paul, I could use you.

Let's go. And he took him to Antioch. Then all of a sudden, he's ready to be used. And there's this weakness that comes from people not knowing or not caring about you, not anybody wanting to do. Paul says, they didn't know what to do with me.

And all they heard was that he who used to persecute the church now is embracing the church. And they were afraid of me. Nobody even wanted to talk to me. Nobody wanted anything to do with me. So he was an outcast. But the Savior met him there.

[ 32 : 29 ] He says, if I have to boast, I'll boast of what pertains to my weaknesses. He said, you know how weak I am? He says, when I was in Damascus, I had to be let down in a basket through a window in the wall.

He was to show us. He who so proudly set upon his horse on Damascus Road to go lead the Christians away and imprison them, met a light that shone brighter than the noonday sun.

And he heard the voice alone with no one else there. He who was so proudly riding his mount in was let down in a basket through a window to get out. Why?

Because he met the Savior. Some of us have been knocked off our horse and we've spent our whole lives trying to get back on that horse when all we need to do is get into a basket. Humility can be mimicked, but when it's genuine and it's authentic, it is a very attractive thing.

Paul says, I'm not going to boast about who I am. You notice when you look throughout church history and even when you look in church present, let's move beyond church history and let's move in church present.

[ 33 : 45 ] The false teachers, while they may claim humility, too often live lives that are the exact opposite of that.

I don't know how unfair it is or how judgmental it is, so I'm not going to endorse either one of it, but there are some people who spend their whole times displaying and publicizing the amounts of money that false teachers spend on their clothes and shoes.

And it is of great detriment to the church. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with looking nice. Hey, Adrian Rogers himself used to say when they walk into the building, pastor, you ought to be the nicest dressed individual.

They ought to know who the pastor is. I tried to do that for years by wearing a tie. I couldn't breathe so well wearing a tie, so I'm sorry I had to get rid of the tie. But I took that as encouragement.

He would say, you know, keep your socks pulled up. Don't have your socks slouched. You know, don't sit in a way that looks unbecoming. You need to represent your office. I understand that. But there also comes this sense where you're going above and beyond that, and you're just promoting self.

[ 35 : 00 ] And when the world can take notice of that and begins to just spend their hours and their days picking apart everything but what you're saying, all of a sudden you're not walking in humility. So we need to realize these things.

There is great danger in false teachers, and we ought to be willing to defend our position of just being great adherents to the gospel and to the gospel alone. It is the simplicity and the purity of devotion to Christ that really matters.

That's it. And Paul says, I will defend that until my last days. Because apart from that, much harm is being done, not only for the sake of the kingdom, but to the people of the king.

And the flock is worth guarding, he says. As a matter of fact, the admonitions we get of leaders from Peter is that they are to defend the flock that is among them.

How do you do that? You defend your position on the stances you take. Let's pray. God, we thank you so much for this day. Father, we are so thankful for the opportunity you've given us of gathering together.

[ 36 : 07 ] Lord, now as we come to this time, this time of invitation, we pray that you would take your word and you'd speak to our hearts. Lord, I know there's much before us. There's still a lot to be done during this day and this time together.

But Lord, may we take a moment to be still. First, to examine where we are before you. Would you search our hearts and know our minds? Help us to know if we're fully surrendering our lives to you and your lordship.

Lord, if not, may we respond to that. And Father, ask us, to the very depth of our being, are we walking in purity and simplicity of devotion?

Lord, are we allowing false doctrines to enslave us and to hold us captive? Lord, do we have a wrong that we need to repent of?

Father, take this time, search and try my heart. And may I be open and exposed before you for your glory and honor. Father, we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

[ 37 : 23 ] Please stand and as we sing, Have Thine Own Way. And it is actually hymn number five.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 40 : 05 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.