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Paul and the False Apostles

10:12 to 12:13



Chapters 10-13 are Paul's emotionally charged warning to **the Corinthians** to set certain matters right so **he** wouldn't have to do it when **the apostle** made **his** final visit to **them**. In these chapters **the false apostles** (to see link click [Af](#) - **The Problem of the False Apostles**) and **their** duped **followers** come more clearly into view, though **Paul** had made reference to **them** briefly in earlier parts of the letter. This is especially true of the outsiders, **the false apostles**, who like wolves in sheep's clothing had infiltrated the flock. **He** had already briefly referred to **their** arrival, but **he** now deals with **them** at considerable length, pointing out **their** damaging influence in the church at **Corinth**.

In this section **Paul** declares, with heavy irony, that **he** will not dare compare **himself** with **those** who praise **themselves**. Because **Paul** is outside **their** circle and cannot be compared with **them**, **their** comparison of **him** reveals **their** lack of understanding. The result of his ministry among **the Corinthians** would speak for itself. **He** had founded the church and they had not. **Paul** hoped that as the faith of **the Corinthians** grew, **his** ministry among **them** would increase and overflow so that **he** would be able to evangelize in regions beyond **them**, not **in another person's field**, being grateful for what **the Lord** had allowed **him** to do.

This section, while appearing to be about **Paul**, is indirectly about **those** who thought **they** were so spiritually superior and compared **themselves** to **him**. Only once does **the apostle** refer to **them**, and then only in an impersonal manner (**10:12**). It should be noted that he does not address **them** directly or prod **them** even indirectly. **They** were simply there,

offstage, as it were, not worthy of even a minor comment. **Their** method of attack was to brag about **themselves** as polished speakers compared with **him**, thus seeking to undermine **Paul's** position in **Corinth**. This forced **Paul** to respond to **them** over and over again.²²⁰

Paul had rejected self-praise and comparison as worthless. But now **he** asked **the Corinthians** to bear with a little foolishness of **his** own. The circumstances had driven **him** to that extreme. **Boasting** was clearly unwise; but if **he** ignored the slurs of **his rivals** the church might be persuaded that **they** were right all along. If **he** stooped down to **their** level, **he** would be **a fool**. Forced into a corner, **Paul** felt **he** must play **the fool (12:11)** and introduce **his** own so-called **boasting**. It was more than a case of fighting fire with fire. In the process, **he** turned **his foolish boasting** into a sly and devastating attack on **his opponents**. By repeatedly insisting that **he** was playing **the fool** by **boasting** (mirroring **his rivals**), **he** led **the Corinthians** to recognize how **foolish** and **boastful his rivals** were, and how **foolish the Corinthians themselves** had been for being taken in by **them**.

The difference between **Paul** and **his** rivals was that **Paul** admitted that what **he** did was **foolish**. **They** did not. **The apostle** undercut **his rivals'** continual **boasting** with the use of irony. **He** didn't **boast** about **his** glorious accomplishments, as **they** had, but lists a string of humiliating experiences and boldly contends that **he** is a better **servant** of **Messiah** because of them (**11:23**). The battle lines were drawn between **Paul, the meek** but true **apostle** authorized by **ADONAI**, and **the false apostles** working under the influence of Satan.²²¹