

Strength in Weakness

2 Cor. 11:16-33

"Paul says, 'Let no one take me for a fool.' In most of its occurrences in the next few verses, Paul uses 'fool' to refer to those who boast in ways he finds unacceptable. In other words, they are fools from his perspective as a Christian. His readers must understand, therefore, that in the boasting of which he is about to embark, he is arguing ad hominem [directed against a person rather than the position they are maintaining]. This is no reflection of the real Paul, but only of the Paul who, to preserve the Corinthian church from moral and doctrinal seduction, must answer the real fools according to their folly." D.A. Carson

- I. You would think that those of us who are **true followers** of Christ could easily see through Satan's duplicitous, deceitful ways. It's easy enough to spot someone who is in a costume of sorts because it doesn't look natural, but Satan's disguises are much harder to recognize. The best way to identify his servants is by comparing their character with the character of Christ. Understand, we are not looking for perfection. Instead, what we are looking for is heartfelt devotion to Christ. Are they people of grace? Do they show a humble desire to submit to the Christ's Lordship knowing that apart from him they are nothing (1 Cor. 13:2)?

2 Cor. 11:16-21a

Eph. 2:8-9

Matt. 5:22

Prov. 18:6-7

ἄφρων *áphrōn* without reason, senseless, foolish, stupid, without reflection or intelligence, acting rashly. Strong's

signifies "without reason" (a, negative, phren, "the mind"), "want of mental sanity and sobriety, a reckless and inconsiderate habit of mind" (Hort), or "the lack of commonsense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual... or the imprudent ordering of one's life in regard to salvation" Vine's

Gal. 6:3 *If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.*

II. As **sincere followers** of Christ, we should know without a doubt that there is nothing we can or should do to earn favor with God. Yes, we are to live the gospel well. And yes, we are to make every effort to add to our faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, brotherly kindness and love. But those important expressions of our love for Jesus are meant to keep us effective and productive in our knowledge of him (2 Pe. 1:5-8). Their expression, as well as anything that we might go through or accomplish for him, are meant to glorify him and not ourselves.

2 Cor. 21b-29

Matt. 10:17

Acts 14:19

"Does the most elementary grasp of the gospel assure us that we are accepted by God solely by the merits of Christ Jesus the Redeemer? Carson

III. As **submitted followers** of Christ, we must acknowledge that His grace cannot be effectively expressed through us if we insist on living life under our control or the control of others, by our rules, in our strength or by our reasoning. To offer our bodies as living sacrifices means that we empty ourselves of ourselves so that he can freely express the power of His grace, love and mercy through us.

2 Cor. 11:28-31

John 3:30 *He must become greater; I must become less.*

"We are brought into God's kingdom by grace; we are sanctified (the process of growing in our faith to become more like Christ) by grace; we receive both temporal and spiritual blessings by grace; we are motivated to obedience by grace; we are called to serve and enabled to serve by grace; we received strength to endure trials by grace; and finally, we are glorified by grace. The entire Christian life is lived under the reign of God's grace." Bridges