

2 Corinthians 11:16-30

“I repeat, let no one think that I am a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. What I am saying in regard to this boastful confidence, I am saying not with the Lord’s authority, but as a fool; since many boast according to human standards, I will also boast. For you gladly put up with fools, being wise yourselves! For you put up with it when someone makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or gives you a slap in the face. To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool — I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman — I am a better one: with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.”

I don't know about some of you but one of the hardest things for me when I was seeking summer employment during college and/or when I finished college was seeking a job. The hard part for me was the resume and interview process. I tried very hard to be a good worker wherever I was employed but before I could show them what a good employee I could I had to go through the interview process. Even looking at interview tips which are now online doesn't help much. Each interviewer is different; some want you to tell it all, I mean everything; others want a just a brief yet super concise synopsis. If you don't tell your interviewer how special and wonderful you are, you lose.

Or maybe during your interview you appeared laid back, one interviewer may think you are lazy and lack self-confidence. Another may think you are arrogant with confidence, another may see you as a braggart if you show the least little bit of confidence and highlight your achievements. I was offered one job after I answered one question, "when can you start?" I was offered another job months after my initial interview, a dexterity test, and a very strenuous physical abilities test.

I thought I had not scored high enough or was not the type of person they were looking for. My first position in ministry was offered to me following an interview on a Sunday afternoon and the job offer the following Tuesday.

I had gone into a strange city, had to sit and be interviewed by people I never met and did not know and convince them I was who they were looking for. To be ordained in the Methodist Church I had to go before the Board of Ordained Ministry, approximately 35 people and be interviewed by them. They saw and critiqued work I had written; heard a sermon I had preached, one sermon; and saw me under the pressure of an interview and they had to decide if I was fit to be an ordained minister in the South Carolina Conference.

It's tough enough to go through a process of having to let your resume speak for you or to defend your qualifications when applying for a position. But to be where I am today, this morning, I had to prove myself to certain people; because they were basically questioning my claims of who I was. Some of you might say so what, or maybe that's nuts! How can that happen? That happens every day to every one of us here this morning or at home in the bed, or on the golf course, or on the road, where ever you are. It happens every day. It especially happens to everyone who claims to be a Christian.

Again, I'll go on record saying I believe we use the term Christian to liberally today and too loosely. I personally believe we have over used the title Christian to the point it is almost a derogatory term today. Many people hear the word Christian and cringe. Why? Because of who Christians are.

You are probably asking yourself "what is he talking about being called a Christian is a good thing, Right?" But hear me out on this. Christians can be and often times are mean people, very mean people. Think about this, Christians are instructed through Scripture in **Matthew 7:1-2** "*Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.*" And in **Luke 6:37** "*Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;*" But in spite of Scripture Christians are some who very often judge and judge harshly, very harshly.

Now if I were to walk up town right now, or go to where you work, and ask people who know of you, notice I didn't ask your friends who you are. Who would they say you are? If asked the people of this community about us as a church who would people say we are? Who are we? Who are you? Before we can go forth and make disciples, as Scripture instructs us, we have to know who we are. Not who we think we are, but who we really are.

In our passage this morning Paul was actually being facetious when he listed everything he had done and/or went through for Christ. I believe he was making a point that's it's not about what you say you've done but what you're doing. But it's the last thing Paul says that should jump out at us. Paul says in **verse 30** "*If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.*" I heard a man this weekend say this very thing. He said he wanted his weakness to prove God's glory. How? By what he, a broken sinner had done for God. God loves us in our broken state and He desires a close and intimate relationship with us, but with that relationship come responsibility, and that responsibility is more than just saying yes to Jesus.

Before anyone says we are only human or its human nature and as such we are sinners so we can't help what we do. That is nothing more than a lame excuse to not have to change and continue sinning. Paul is clear in **Romans 6:1-4** "*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*" If we, if you have truly said yes to

Jesus Christ then obedience to Christ is a must we can't help not be obedient. If you, if we truly said yes to Jesus then we are obedient people to God and His word.

I heard a minister tell thousands of congregants on Christmas Eve "God does not want your obedience He just wants a relationship." The relationship part is true but with that relationship, a true relationship not just sitting in a pew saying "yes to Jesus." With God there is no pretending being someone we are not, with that relationship God doesn't expect us to stay the same, He expects us to change. Have you changed? Who are you?

Having a true relationship with Christ I believe comes a profound deep seated desire to follow, and as Scripture tells us in **1 Samuel 15:22** "*Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,*" obey meaning obedience. Who is this person to instruct people to do what is against Scripture? But on the other side of this who are we? Are we any different than him when we sit in church or with fellow church people and judge, condemn, and withhold? Who are we to pervert the Scriptures? Who are we to be selective with which Scriptures we will adhere to or with whom we choose to embrace? Who are we really?

When my parents arrived on the campus of Chowan College, now Chowan University, they asked people where they could find their son Kevin Dalton. Every person they asked said they had never heard of him. This campus is not very big and there were not really that many students compared to a Clemson or South Carolina. They rode around the center of campus stopping and asking and receiving the same answer. Until they made the comment about how strange it is no one knows a guy who wrestled and played football and was from Rhode Island. The person they said that to took them straight to my room. The comment made to my parents was “Why didn’t you say Rhode Island, of course we know Roadie no one knows Kevin Dalton.”

I was known by where I grew up, basically because I was the only person on campus from Rhode Island and with the coach calling out for Rhode Island to hold his block the title or name stuck. During my high school days most associated me with wrestling, some still do. I was viewed and/or known by what I did, by what I concentrated on. People acquire nick names all the time by what they do and/or did.

- Bucket Smith
- Pork Chop
- Wheezy
- Mooch

Who are we? Are we compassionate people, compassionate to everyone? Are we accepting people, accepting of everyone? Do people feel genuinely welcomed by all or only a select few? Are we genuine or is it just a front to look good? Who are we really? Who are you? Are we compassionate people, compassionate to everyone? Are you accepting people, accepting of everyone? Are all people genuinely welcomed by all of us or only a select few?

I'm not talking about anything other than us as a church, as individuals to stop and take an inventory of who we really are. Have we, have you said yes to Christ? If so what does that actually mean to you? Does it really mean something or was it just something you did as a youth because everyone else did? By saying yes to Christ do you seek to follow His leading, His example, or do you require for me as pastor to water down what the Scriptures actually say? Does your yes only mean something only as long I make you feel good by stroking your ego or with warm fuzzies from the pulpit.

In **Jeremiah 31:33** we read of God speaking to Jeremiah and making a promise saying *“I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* Is He your God? Be careful how you answer that question because your actions answer it louder for you.

Have you said yes to Christ? Is He your God? Does your life answer this question the same way your lips and actions do? Who are you really? You know who God is, God is love. Question is who are you? Before you can move forward, before we as a church can move forward we have to answer this question with absolute certainty. Who are we really? Who are you ... really? Are we just playing church? Are we saying something but not living it? God desires an intimate relationship with everyone, but it takes more than just saying yes to Jesus. It takes action, it takes obedience, obedience to His word not mine, it takes letting go of the control and letting God. Who are we really? Who are you really? Please think about this question and pray about it this week. Who are you?