

Gladly Bearing With Fools

-- March 8, 2009/ Sun Valley Bulletin

In order to awaken the Corinthians to a serious threat to their spiritual well-being, Paul used obvious irony, **2 Corinthians 11:19**: *“For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.”*

You might call this the abused wife syndrome. We have all known of women who had devoted husbands and walked away. Their friends are astounded, but the astonishment is not so great as when we see a woman stay with a man who regularly loses his temper and bruises her face, arms or neck. Everyone screams, “How can you can bear with such a brute?!” Or we might say, “How can you suffer this fool gladly?!”

The Scripture continues, *“For ye suffer (margin: put up with), if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.”* There were arrogant Jews who demanded they submit to the bondage of the Mosaic Laws of circumcision, refusing all proscribed foods, keeping the special feast days and Sabbaths, etc. These humble brethren in Corinth seemed to enjoy such abuse. They listened to the criticism of Paul as an inferior and permissive teacher, too soft to be worthy of their respect. Such teachers were predators who looked at the church as food to be devoured, taken advantage. How could the church bear it? These were arrogant men, fleshly men, abusive men after a manner: striking them on the face, and still they listened and followed and their numbers grew.

To this day we have a great attraction to such fools. If they can tell a good story, make us laugh and cry; if they demand high standards of us, somehow we are not supposed to expect the same standards of them. They seem to be always be selling something and you get the creepy feeling at times that he might have designs on your wife or daughter. Somehow we take it and remain loyal supporters even when he cuts us down and embarrasses us or insists that we accept his judgments and leadership. The more arbitrary he is, the more secure we feel blindly following him.

Jesus said, “They are blind guides! If the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch.” Who is the greater fool? The leader or the follower? Do our leaders all have to have type A personalities? What is wrong to learning from a humble teacher and following Jesus? John says, Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God.