

2 Corinthians 11:1-15 – “Challenging Deception”

1. Jealousy Over the Church – 11:1-6

11:1-2 - “Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. ² For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Continuing on with this same action we’ve been seeing Paul take over the last chapter, he picks things up again with having to confront these false teachers and all their bragging.

And its as though Paul feels it’s now time to give them a taste of their own medicine, so he takes some time to do a little boasting. But instead of calling it *boasting*, he calls it **folly**. Why? Because the only boasting we could ever possibly do is in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17).

Paul had to do something to stir up the hearts of the people. Paul will move in folly because he was jealous for them with godly jealousy.

- He’s not jealous of the false apostles moving in. God is not jealous **of** us, but **for** us. He has our best interest at heart, and He knows our peace and joy depends on our loyalty to Him. He’s jealous for us, not wanting something or someone to pull us away from His blessing.
- It’s how any husband would feel if some ex-con started making advances toward his wife. You’re not jealous of this guy, you’re jealous for your wife. You know that she’s in safer hands with you and you want the best for her.

Paul as their spiritual father has betrothed them to one husband – Christ!

Paul paints the picture of a best man, the friend of the bridegroom and his role at a wedding. It was the job of the best man to present the bride to the groom in purity and to vindicate the character of the bride.

- If there was any unfaithfulness it resulted in the bride being cast aside, sometimes with grave consequences.

But there was a real concern in being able to present this Corinthian church to Christ as a pure bride.

11:3-4 - But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not

preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

Paul is worried that the bride-to-be, these believers in Corinth, have been flirting with another and is dangerously close to being seduced into another gospel or of following a spirit that is not of God. In fact, there's a real concern that some have already drifted in unfaithfulness.

Be clear of this, Satan doesn't come as a monster with some obvious evil attached to him. He's not lurking behind the bush with a long red cape, horns and a pitchfork. He doesn't come at you with an obvious lie. He's crafty.

- **Genesis 3:1**, *“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”*
- The word **cunning** means crafty or subtle. Satan comes at you in very subtle ways. What he says may sound really good and true. He appears as very legit – that's his tactic.

These Corinthians may have thought they were on the right path, but if you listen to the enemy, you'll be far from the right path. Look at how he tempted Eve.

- 1) He **questioned** God's Word – *“Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree in the garden?”*
- 2) He **contradicted** God's Word – *“You will not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:4).
- 3) He **corrupted** God's Word – *“For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* (Genesis 3:5).

The simplicity that is in Christ Jesus (11:3). It's really quite simple. But it's been the method of cultists and false teachers to take you away from the simplicity we enjoy in Christ. They want to muddy the truth, make things complicated, and confuse you so you don't really know what's right or wrong for that matter. What you need to do is simply trust them, for they will guide you and illuminate the truth to you.

- Listen, if you are dependent on another for salvation (aside from Jesus), then you don't know the gospel.
- I'm thankful the gospel is not confusing, it's not complicated, you don't need special glasses to decipher it. God knew He would be working with people like me, so He made it as easy as possible.

This is the gospel right here, plain and simple:

Romans 10:8–13, *"But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*"

- How beautifully simple the gospel is! And how wonderfully powerful the gospel is! It's the means by which spiritually dead people are raised to life.
- Paul would say in **Romans 1:16**, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."*
- Charles Spurgeon was once asked if he could sum up the gospel. He said he could in 4 words: "Jesus died for me." That's it! Pretty simple.

It's quite alarming how the more educated some people get, the more prone they are to move away from the simplicity in Christ we enjoy. We don't need to add to what we have, we don't need to rethink it, or rediscover some hidden truth. We need to simply remain in the fundamentals of Christianity and hold fast to what the Word of God says.

"A wise, old pastor once gave some good advice to his young apprentice. He said, "Preach a full Gospel: *Christ and nothing less*. A plain Gospel: *Christ and nothing more*. A pure Gospel: *Christ and nothing else*." " (Sandy Adams)

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus...

This sort of thing has been going on a long time. Satan always comes with something looking good. Something looking almost true. He knows this world needs Jesus. So he looks to counterfeit the solution – he gives a substitute. He offers another Jesus, so people think they are okay without ever yielding to the real Jesus. He's very sly. There have been many Jesus' preached other than the One of the Bible. Jesus of the Bible is clearly presented as God's Son, but even more than that, He is God.

John 1:1–2, 14, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.¹⁴ And the Word*

became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 10:30, *"I and My Father are one."*

- Yet we see many people looking to pervert this. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus is actually Michael the archangel. He is a created being.
- The Mormons believe that Jesus was the firstborn spirit child. He was actually the brother of Lucifer and they both presented to God their plan for redemption. God chose Jesus' plan and this caused great conflict between Lucifer and Jesus, a sibling rivalry you would say. But this is obviously not the Jesus of the Bible.
- A man by the name of Jose Luis De Jesus Miranda in south Florida was declaring many years ago that he was the second coming of Jesus. And he actually garnered a huge following. Even though he was a former heroine addict, divorced from his first wife and remarried. Sounds just a little off from the true Jesus.

And as clearly false as many of these are, the truly astonishing thing is that people follow along. Paul was not so much amazed that there was this deception, but rather that these people ***put up with it!***

- Paul said in **Galatians 1:6–8**, *"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."*

Jesus showed in Matthew 24 that one of the biggest indicators of the last days would be deception. And we see it all around us today. It grieves me that so many Christians follow right after things that are clearly outside of God's Word. If you are not going to be faithful to stand upon the firm foundation of God's Word, then you can expect to fall. If you don't stand for something, you will fall for everything.

- And I don't care what sort of experience you may have, what sort of outpouring or signs you may see, if it doesn't line up with the Word of God, I want nothing to do with it.
- I think many are going to have to answer to God one day. Not just those leading the deception, but those who support and embrace those leading in deception. We need to be discerning in these days we live!

11:5 - *For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most* [*hyper=above; more than*] ***eminent*** [*lian=exceeding; greatly*] ***apostles.***

Paul would say in 1 Corinthians 15:9 that he is *'the least of the apostles.'* Even in his humility, he still saw himself as no less than these other eminent apostles, because they were not behaving as true apostles. They saw themselves as super apostles, but Paul has no problem showing his superiority, or his genuineness over these 'super apostles' as he sarcastically refers to them.

11:6 - *Even though I am untrained* [*idiōtēs=uneducated*] ***in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.***

These false apostles were winning people over by putting down Paul. They said he can't speak as professionally as we can.

But look at Paul's attitude: **1 Corinthians 2:1–5**, *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."*

Whatever Paul may have lacked in appearance or performance, he made up for it in knowledge. He had a true, authentic relationship with Jesus that stood out.

- There's an old story about a pastor who was celebrating his 50th Anniversary of Ministry. For this occasion, he had invited his personal friend, Richard Burton, to come and recite his favorite passage, Psalm 23. Richard Burton agreed to do this on the condition that the pastor would also recite it after him.

At the appointed time, Richard Burton stood and proclaimed the popular psalm with such oratorical mastery the congregation immediately applauded. And then this humble pastor stood up and began to recite, from heart, this beloved Psalm. After he had finished his not nearly so professional recitation, the congregation was in awe, and some moved to tears. Someone in the front pew with Richard Burton leaned over and asked him, "Why did people loudly applaud you and yet were silently moved by the pastor?" Burton replied, "Because I know the Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd."

Paul wasn't concerned with trying to impress them with smooth speech or entertainment, his focus was on delivering the truth of God's Word.

- And this brings great comfort to me. In a day where Pastors can be more concerned with entertaining and being flashy, I just really need to be faithful to preach God's Word. I mean, I may not be the kind of pastor you prefer. I may not be "witty" or "the most eloquent speaker" or have "personality" or "take care of my personal hygiene"... but if those are the things you're looking for, you're missing it. It's about the Word of God being taught and growing closer to the Lord and growing up in the Lord as a result.

2. Generosity For the Church – 11:7-11

11:7-9 - *Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. ⁹ And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.*

Some of these false apostles were even challenging Paul's legitimacy as an apostle because he didn't take support from the church in Corinth.

- But Paul did this as an example of laying down one's rights to help or bless others.
- The measure of success in God's service is never weighed by the size of your house, the car you drive, or the clothes you wear. In fact, often times service to God will require a forsaking of those things. Simply being a follower of Christ will at times require you to live 'without' more than 'with'.

But it is never an indicator of success or of the amount God loves you.

Paul didn't receive support from the Corinthians to show them he's not there for personal gain. He was supported in part by other churches (he didn't actually rob them, but this was a term used as hyperbole – an exaggerated expression meant to draw attention to the thought.) He was supported by the Philippians (Ph.4:15).

11:10-11 - *As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!*

Paul would continue to boast in the fact that he was more concerned for the church than for himself. And it was all motivated by love for them!

3. Warning To the Church – 11:12-15

11:12 - *But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.*

Paul won't back down in trying to expose these selfish and false leaders. If they're going to be a detriment to the growth of the church, then they gotta go. You don't let cancer stay unchecked in hopes it's going to improve itself. And as we read on, Paul is going to get very blunt regarding them.

- **Ephesians 5:11**, *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."*

11:13-14 - *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*

It is wrong to be attracted to people or follow people based on externals. This is Satan's tactic and strategy. He has nothing internally worthwhile to offer, so he must package it attractively. This is what the false apostles did because they followed their master – Satan.

- Remember, Satan is the father of lies. He is all about deception.
2 Corinthians 2:11, *"...for we are not ignorant of his devices."* Be aware of how the enemy comes against you. Don't be caught off guard, don't be fooled.

11:15 - *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

"If Satan himself poses falsely, it is not surprising if his agents do the same. How do they pose? As false teachers? As atheists? As infidels? The answer is no. They pose as **ministers of righteousness**. They profess to be **ministers** of religion. They profess to lead people in the way of truth and **righteousness**, but they are agents of the evil one.

Their **end will be according to their works**. They destroy—they **will** be destroyed. Their deeds lead men to their doom; they themselves will be led to final perdition." ¹

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (A. Farstad, Ed.; pp. 1860–1861). Thomas Nelson.