

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 29TH-30TH, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

GODLY JEALOUSY (2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-4)

Even though he'd been the one to plant this church and lead these Believers to Christ, Paul's authority as an apostle was being called into question in Corinth.

- Flashy, charismatic, and gifted false teachers had come to Corinth with new, exciting spiritual insights and had led these Believers astray from the true gospel into error and bondage (vs. 4 and 20).

These false teachers pointed to Paul's lack of giftedness and physical weakness as a sign that he wasn't really an apostle.

- For Paul, the one who introduced them to Jesus and planted this church, to have to defend his apostleship was absolute foolishness (v. 1).
- Paul's time and effort could be spent on far better things, but he needed to show the Corinthians that he truly was an apostle worth listening to.

In verse 2, Paul describes himself as a spiritual dad who has a daughter (the church of Corinth) engaged to be married (to her betrothed, Jesus).

- As a good dad, Paul sees it as his duty and privilege to protect his daughter with a godly jealousy and keep her pure so he can present her to her husband with joy and not sorrow.
- But just like the serpent deceived Eve, so too these Believers were being deceived (v. 3).

"... SEDUCED FROM A SINCERE AND PURE DEVOTION."

To be seduced means to be persuaded or enticed by someone's charm, attractiveness, or charisma.

- The same serpent who seduced Eve was working through false teachers to lure Paul's daughter (Corinthian Believers) away from her sincere and pure devotion to Jesus, her bridegroom.
- The same thing still happens today!

We must be so careful not to brand or label someone as a false teacher because of a secondary theological issue.

- These false teachers preached (v. 4):
 - Another Jesus (other than the biblical Jesus)
 - Another Spirit (other than the Holy Spirit)
 - Another gospel (other than the biblical gospel)
- The Corinthians "put up with" (tolerated) this falsehood and received it.

FALSE JESUS, FALSE SPIRIT, FALSE GOSPEL

- Latter Day Saints (Mormonism)
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- New Age Movement
- Scientology
- Universalism: "There are many paths to God—Jesus is simply one path out of many."
- Denial of Biblical Authority: "The Bible is a good book, but it wasn't divinely inspired—it's full of errors, contradictions, and outdated mythology. The Bible isn't the Word of God."
- "Word of Faith" movement: "It's always God's will for Believers to have perfect health and abundant wealth—we just have to speak out our blessings and claim them in faith!"
- Good Ol' Boy/Country Music Theology: "It's about what you believe, not how you live. As long as you've prayed the prayer to the man upstairs to get saved, you can live any way you want. Thank God for beer, trucks, girls, and grace!"

THE "SUPER-APOSTLES" (2 CORINTHIANS 11:5-15)

"SUPER-APOSTLES" (HYPERLIAN APOSTOLON), V. 5

These so-called, "super-apostles" were preferred by the Corinthian Christians over Paul.

- Paul's critics were saying that Paul was inferior to these super-Christians in every way.
- Even though the "super-apostles" were flashy, gifted, charismatic, and polished, Paul wants us to know that in no way was he inferior to these people.

By the standards of Greek and Corinthian rhetoric, Paul admits that he was untrained (a "novice") as an orator (v. 6).

- But even though Paul might not have been a polished and eloquent communicator, he had a surpassing knowledge of the truth of God and the gospel of Christ that he'd made clear to the Corinthians (sometimes polished speakers aren't really saying anything).

These "super-apostles" had apparently used their eloquence and flashiness to get money from the Corinthians (see 2:17) and then suggested that it was a sign of Paul's inferiority that he declined financial support (vs. 7-8).

- Paul had received financial support from other churches during his time in Corinth so he wouldn't be a burden to them (vs. 9-10), and now they were using that against him!

Paul's refusal to raise financial support from the Corinthians during his time in Corinth as a church planter was not because he was incompetent as a fundraiser or unspiritual—it was because he loved these people and God knew his true motives (v. 11).

- Paul would continue to preach without pay to sharpen the contrast between him and the false teachers who only ministered for pay (v. 12).

"FALSE APOSTLES, DECEITFUL WORKERS, DISGUISED THEMSELVES AS APOSTLES OF CHRIST..." (V. 13)

It's so easy for us to be persuaded by image and outward appearances, but this approach is dangerous and can lead to us being deceived.

- Image isn't everything! Satan is apparently beautiful and can appear as an angel of light (v. 14), so we must be discerning and see the hook beneath the bait and the destruction behind the seduction.

These polished, charismatic, flashy super-apostles may have looked and sounded like spiritual giants, but they were just servants of Satan in disguise (v. 15).

- They were really just after money, fame, and power and were willing to extort, abuse, and take advantage of others so they could get it.
- But in the end, they would be judged by God according to their works.

A LITTLE BOASTING (2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-23)

Paul is both sarcastic and quite hesitant to play the game of self-promotion by listing his apostolic credentials.

- Paul sees this as sheer foolishness to boast in a physical and humanly manner about his credentials.
- But if folks are pressing Paul for his ministry qualifications and how it stacks up against the super-apostles, he's willing to share (vs. 16-18).

Boasting about how great of a Christian and how spiritual we are is foolish. Paul basically says to these Believers, "You've been putting up with fools who do this kind of nonsense for a while!" (v. 19).

- Those "fools" had used their supposed spiritual superiority to exploit, abuse, enslave, and take advantage of these Believers who had let it happen. Paul sarcastically says, "I guess I'm just too weak to do those things to you" (vs. 20-21).

So even though Paul thinks it's dumb to have to play this foolish game of listing credentials, he begins by addressing the issue of Jewish heritage.

- Paul had an ethnically Jewish background just like his opponents.
- He was a Hebrew (not a Hellenized Jew, but a Jew of Judean descent), an Israelite, and a descendant of Abraham (v. 22).

Paul's opponents claimed to be special and preeminent servants and ministers of Christ—Paul claims that even though it sounds like he's out of his mind talking this way, he's even more of a servant than that (v. 23).

- Why? Because of what Paul had endured and suffered to serve Christ—labors, imprisonments, beatings, and coming close to death many times.

We need to be careful and discerning when it comes to following those who brag and boast in themselves.

- This is an indication of someone who is more interested in promoting themselves rather than promoting Jesus.
- When we brag, it's often a sign that we feel deeply inferior, that we're truly uninterested in others, and that we're trying to use others to feel special.

PAUL'S RESUME (2 CORINTHIANS 11:24-33)

PAUL'S RESUME (2 CORINTHIANS 11:23-28)

- Whipped with 39 lashes (5 different times), beaten with rods (3 different times), stoned
- Shipwrecked (3 different times), adrift at sea (1 night and 1 day), lots of travel
- Frequent danger from rivers, robbers, Jews, Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, at sea, from false brothers
- Toil, hardship, sleepless nights, cold, exposure

On top of all of this suffering, Paul experienced the pressure of anxiety for all the churches (daily)!

- When others Paul was ministering to were weak, struggling, and battling against sin, Paul knew it and would empathize with them and burn with righteous indignation (v. 29). There's an emotional toil attached to true ministry.

- Paul wasn't serving Jesus in ministry for popularity, fame, wealth, or religious clout.

Paul's faith and obedience to Jesus had cost him something—so it was valuable to him!

- If Paul's going to boast in anything, it's in the grace of God that has helped him in his weakness and knows his heart and true motives (vs. 30-31).
- Paul mentions his first (and perhaps most personally memorable) incident of persecution and hardship that's also reported in Acts 9:23-25.

Shortly after Paul's conversion, the Jews of Damascus initiated a plot along with the Gentile government to capture Paul.

- Paul had to escape through a window by being let down in a basket (vs. 32-33).
- Perhaps Paul mentions this last because it was such a humiliating and painful first reminder of just what his obedience to Jesus would cost him.

THE NEED FOR DISCERNMENT (VS. 1-4)

- In a world full of error, we must ask the Lord for the supernatural ability to make careful and wise distinctions in thinking about truth.
- Any teacher, messenger, or leader who preaches another gospel, Jesus, or Holy Spirit is to be rejected.
- Any teacher who mostly promotes and talks about themselves is probably not worth following.

SUBSTANCE OVER STYLE, FAITHFULNESS OVER FLASHINESS (VS. 5-21)

- Someone can be polished, eloquent, and sound intelligent or profound without actually saying anything at all.
- Every generation has their flashy "super-apostles" who end up getting a lot of press and air-time. Faithfulness to the substance of God's truth and His Word will endure the test of time.

TRUE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY (VS. 22-33)

- It isn't performance, political gamesmanship, or polished presentations—it's loving, sacrificial service that suffers for people, cries with people, rejoices with people, and endures weariness, criticism, and even danger all because of love.
- What has your faith cost you? If it's cost you nothing, it's probably not worth much to you.