

**Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians:
"Are We Really Seeing Paul as the Lord Saw Him?"**

Review:

- ***The Enemy of our Souls Is Subtle and Cunning — Beware!***
- ***Satan's Words May Even Seem To Be "Spiritual" in One Sense of the Word***
- ***But Paul's Testimony Demonstrated Truth That Is Uniquely Christ's***
- ***Discernment Between True Apostles (Paul) and False Is Therefore Needed***

- ***The Enemy of our Souls Is Subtle and Cunning — Beware!***

2 Cor. 11:1-3 [READ]

1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

- ***Satan's Words May Even Seem To Be "Spiritual" in One Sense of the Word***

2 Cor. 11:4-6

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though *I* be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

- ***The enemy with his willing surrogates preaches and teaches in the name of the Lord:***
 - ***"... another Jesus": Another Jesus, yes, but of a different kind (heteros, not allos here); "... another spirit": Another spirit, yes, but again, one of a different sort (heteros, not allos here too). Note the progression here; "... another gospel": Another gospel, yes, but of a different kind (heteros, not allos here).***

***And then we have reached the perversion of the gospel itself.
This is the ultimate attack I would say, an attack on the word***

of God itself and on the very good news that all must read or hear for saving faith to grasp on to.

- ***And, by inference as one might expect, even “another apostle”!! The false teachers were promoting themselves as true and Paul was called an imposter. But is not this exactly how the enemy works so often? First a different Christ, then a different spirit, and then the gospel itself falsified. And since all of these are essential parts of Paul’s messages one might expect another apostle must be presented. In this case it was the false teachers themselves presenting themselves as the true apostles with Paul as the false!!***
- ***Discernment Between True Apostles (Paul) and False Is Therefore Needed. We will begin here again here today as we have the privilege of dwelling here again, in the realm of his boasting. In his strength made perfect through his weaknesses and his trials and his suffering. Amen.***

Our Outline Today: “Are We Really Seeing Paul as the Lord Saw Him?”

Do we know Paul as Christ knew him? Do we love Paul as Christ loved him? Those are serious questions for us all. Are We Really Seeing Paul as the Lord Sees Him?

- ***Seeing Paul Correctly Demands That We Know his Enemies Well***
- ***Paul’s Enemies Are Distinguished by Their Boasting According to the Flesh***
- ***Paul Is Distinguished by his Boasting According to the Lord’s Evaluation***
- ***Paul’s Chosen Example of his Boasting Is his Deliverance From Damascus***

Key Question Today: How do we evaluate others? Is it as the Lord sees them and knows them? Now that is challenging, isn’t it? But our main question today will be about the apostle Paul because of the scriptures set before us today here in Second Corinthians chapter 11.

I. Seeing Paul Correctly Demands That We Know his Enemies Well:

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:12-15

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

- *There is no middle ground here. Since he is in fact the minister of the Lord, those who attack him are the ministers of his enemy, satan. There is no middle ground here as there is so often in our modern world where there is ONLY a middle ground!*
- *And so he ends this section with a very strong condemnation. These leaders were acting dangerously true to form and just as they were in fact, as false teachers. But take full note of how evil they really were: As the instruments of Satan himself they presented themselves as “ministers of righteousness” just as Satan had with all subtlety offered himself to the other angels as an angel when he was not (for he was a seraph and not an angel) and as a “light-bearer”. In fact, his name was Lucifer!! It seems he had given himself that name or had the Lord named his creation such since he was the greatest of God’s spiritual creation. See Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 for the details.*
- *The enemy turns everything upside down — black is really white and white black, good is evil and evil good, righteousness is actually sin and sin is what is righteous. Even the gospel itself is at stake. Even the gospel. And, of course, the enemy must therefore discredit the apostle of the Gentiles too.*
- *And so Paul boasts often in this chapter. But we shall see that his boasting was only of what Christ was doing in him and that was through his weakness. His weakness and ours, for it all applies to us as well, for we are also made strong as we share in Christ’s work of grace in us. In first Timothy he again writes strongly about this as elsewhere:*

1 Tim. 4:1-3

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

- *Therefore Paul here identifies the source of those lies that can so corrupt the church with their subtlety. That source is satan himself. He works through his deceived instruments on earth, of course, the*

workers of deceit. All are identified here not as they portray themselves, as ministers of righteousness, but as they are in fact, as false and deceptive and evil in every way as ministers of satan.

- ***This is an excellent summary and sets our course well for the rest of the chapter. We need therefore to be well trained in discerning them, who are in fact, our enemies as they were Paul's so long ago. Paul's description of them here is radical and he will continue using the language of absolutes in this training course here on false teachers so that no one, ourselves included, who have been trained up by Paul, through this word of truth will remain ignorant about these essential truths.***

II. Paul's Enemies Are Distinguished by Their Boasting According to the Flesh:

- ***Now Paul launches into the real substance of the matter, if he hasn't already, first with a passing reference (however strong) to the Corinthians, and then with emphasis on himself.***

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:16-20

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

17 That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

20 For ye suffer, 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.

- ***The wording here in verse 20 may seem extreme. But the teaching is concrete and powerful as a result. Bear with me as he asks us all to bear with him as he begins here with these words: "... as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little."***
- ***He now will speak he says "foolishly" just as the false teachers in fact were "glorying in their flesh ... ", foolishly accepting these deceivers who openly disrespected them who had brought them into bondage and were effectively abusing them to their own advancement and at the Corinthians' great loss.***

III. Paul Is Distinguished by his Boasting According to the Lord's Evaluation:

- *Paul now now shares his testimony again with the Corinthians who in fact know him so well that this description of his service should hardly be necessary. But sadly it seems that it is.*

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:21-25

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:26-29

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

- *The apostle now highlights his own testimony in comparison with those deceivers point by point with a list that is exceeded no where else in his letters though the subject is found in other letters of course. He enumerates step by step his “weaknesses” for through them the Lord’s strength was made manifest as it were under grace and not by works. We will consider each one in order first asking a question rhetorically and then giving his response. Imagine the scene there in Corinth when the letter was read before the assembly. It must have been a scene to behold with the false teachers all there probably in their midst.*

He begins with some introductory words: “I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.” He says there that they were just that bold with the Corinthians, so he would be also, point by point:

- “Are they Hebrews? So *am* I ... Are they Israelites? So *am* I? ... Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am* I ... Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool), I *am* more”. ***In each case he is compelled to assert, “he even more”! But where they no doubt boasted in themselves, he never, but only with these words underscoring his as he calls them, “his weaknesses”. This is interesting language. What is his meaning here? His wording here is lengthy and seemingly could go on for ever and in every point, I would venture to guess, the deceivers had not even one true mark of distinction approaching those Paul lists here:***
 - “... in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft ...
 - Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one ...
 - Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep ...
 - *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren ...
 - In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness ...
- ***But he is not finished and adds one more mark of his ministry to summarize it all,*** “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?” ***Nothing else can be added except what he concludes the section of the letter with:*** “If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.” ***That explains it all, doesn’t it?***

IV. Paul’s Chosen Example of his Boasting Is his Deliverance From Damascus:

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:30-33

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.
 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

- ***To conclude the chapter, Paul adds what was for him a (or should we say, “the”) crowning event, a mark to distinguish his ministry above***

many others: “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.” **Why does Paul choose this mark?**

- ***This is so humbling really. What has preceded this, what is its historical context? Would this event be his legacy’s trademark? How can that be? Well, the answer is in scripture. For the Lord had already revealed that to him at the beginning and also reminded him of it later:***

Acts 9:22-27

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

- ***This surely must have struck a chord with the apostle as he begins his ministry for probably Ananias had shared with him just before this what the Lord had revealed to him of what was to come as this new apostle was sent forth by the power of the Lord himself to the Gentiles with the word of grace. These were the Lord’s words and later in this same second letter to the Corinthians (where we will dwell next time, Lord willing) these words with first the Acts account, then then in chapter 12:***

[READ] Acts 9:13-16

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

2 Cor. 12:2-10

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

- *That is a great statement indeed and we need to consider it carefully. It was true for Paul and he learned it one step at a time as only it could have been learned. And it is the same for us, if we would receive it for ourselves.*

For it is the essence of grace working in the hearts of his people. Christ suffered for us. He paid the penalty for all of our sins. And we are chosen therefore to suffer also for him. AS A MARK OF TESTIMONY OF HIS ABOUNDING GRACE! Amen and amen.

Conclusion: *On distinguishing the truth from the lies Paul is apostle of the Gentiles. It makes all the difference to know this.*

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