

***Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians:
"For Such Are False Apostles, Hear Ye Not Them!"***

Review: "Beware, False Teachers and Evil Workers, The Apostle Paul Is Coming to Town!"

Paul's Ministry to the Corinthians Was:

- ***Bold, but Intending To Be Never Carnal and Always Spiritual***
- ***Authoritative, and Powerful, Whether in Letters or Deed***
- ***Proven by a Fruitfulness That Could Only Have Been of the Lord***

Paul's Ministry to the Corinthians Was:

- ***Bold, but Intending To Be Never Carnal and Always Spiritual***
 - ***Now in the next chapter we read of the challenges Paul faced regarding the Corinthian church. And, as we shall see, these challenges are ours as well.***

2 Cor. 10:1, 3-6

1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

...

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

- ***The stage is set here. It was Christ in Paul that he manifested in ministry. So Christ's meekness and gentleness and as we see in other verses, through his weakness the strength of the Lord was being manifested to all.***
- ***Here the spiritual dynamic operating in the believer living under the abundance of grace is highlighted so well. Paul sets himself forth as always as our example. Living Christ in a world of many challenges is what Paul faced with the Corinthians and it is also what we face day by day and hour by hour. Boldness in this context requires that balance that only the Lord's abundant grace can provide, with truth and the knowledge of God manifested above all.***

- ***Let the false teachers beware! The Lord will avenge. For we are all “weak in him” and “shall live by the power of God.” This is a major theme of Paul’s ministry and therefore his letters that is so often ignored. But we will not ignore it but will proclaim it — as he did so often. So, the apostle’s ministry to the Corinthians was in weakness made strong through Christ working out in him that bountiful supply that only he can provide. Some later references are helpful for our understanding:***
- ***Paul suffered from challenges daily through many vulnerabilities that his weakness brought necessarily upon him. The enemy was easily able to take advantage of these. But, in the end, he confesses, the virtue of this would be demonstrated before all as God’s perfect will for him — and for us all as well. This is, he writes here in such encouraging words, how grace bears its fruit in us. And it is therefore in ways far beyond our understanding, it seems, “for Christ’s sake” that we so suffer. This says it all: “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.” May these words be written on our hearts never to be forgotten.***

But Nevertheless, Even in his Weaknesses, Paul’s Ministry to the Corinthians Was:

- ***Authoritative, and Powerful, in Letters and in Deed***

2 Cor. 10:9-11

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters [alone].

10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

- ***The Corinthians were then exhorted to consider not “appearances” but the spiritual authority revealed already in his ministry toward them in Corinth. These letters of the apostle demonstrate the same authority revealed before in person and that will be revealed again, in person, and face to face soon but now necessarily through letters. The apostle’s ministry to the Corinthians would be, he asserts with great assurance, well proven, not only to them, but also to his adversaries when he would, of course, only he hoped and prayed, be present soon in the flesh.***

Introduction:

- ***As we have been seeing in our studies in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, his focus always is on grace and how it operates in the life of the believer. Lately we have focused on grace giving because so much of this letter highlights that. Last time we read and commented on two verses in chapter 12 that reveal so well the heart of the apostle's teaching on this subject:***

2 Cor. 12:9-10

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 distrs for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

- ***This teaching is so contrary to human nature and its thinking, isn't it? Our nature, still fallen and dwelling in every believer even now, tells us rather that we may by our own efforts (or prayers) escape the burdens that are otherwise "common to man" and that it is God's will for us to be free of such. If not, we are told, we have failed to live up to God's standards of holiness, of spirituality, of righteousness, even. They tell us that all of these blessings were secured in Christ's atonement, whether it is about health or wealth or anything else we believe we should have, and that all of these blessings are waiting for us here and now IF And that is a very big IF, isn't it? But that is not what Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, writes to us here, is it?***
- ***But Paul does draw a clear distinction between wants and needs. And, not everything that has been promised is for our blessing now. Much is preserved for our eternal blessing.***
- ***Indeed, as we have all learned, our own nature is the source of many issues in life and that which therefore bring us many other sorrows since it is always contrary to the will and purpose of Almighty God. And so it was with the apostle as well. But he did not dwell on that but on the transforming power of God's word of truth and grace as is so evident here in this letter. Let's continue today to revel in that truth today and consider well the Corinthian challenges to that revelation of God and its power together.***

Our Outline Today:

- ***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***

I. The Enemy of our Souls Is Subtle and Cunning — Beware!

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:1-3

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.

- *The apostle list here some of the challenges believers face with the greatest of them being from our (and the Lord's) arch-enemy himself, the serpent, even Satan! That is how great the challenge is to preserve the truth that has been revealed and to defend it with zeal. His concern for the Corinthians is that some of them have been so corrupted by the lies of the enemy that they may no longer be able to comprehend that most precious truth. See Rev. 12:9 & 20:2 for references. The one I will read is the former:*

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

- *Now the teaching becomes so much more explicit. For he outlines the enemy's lies in some detail and in a way that makes the severity of the spiritual threat so clear:*

II. Satan's Words May Even Seem To Be "Spiritual" in One Sense of the Word:

[READ] 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 throughly made manifest among you in all things.

- ***These are the details. 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). This is a critically important point. He continues similarly:***
 - ***“... 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 and Paul as the false.***

But the subject has not really changed, for the subject is still the same as earlier, that of Paul’s honesty and transparency as we would call it in the area of gifts and offerings again.

III. Paul’s Testimony Demonstrated Truth That Is Uniquely Christ’s:

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:7-12

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of *them*, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from

Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep *myself*.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

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.

- ***How is this subject introduced? Paul writes here:*** “Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?”
 - ***Here we see how the enemy turns everything upside down — black is really white and white black, good is evil and evil good, righteousness in actually sin and sin is what is righteous.***
 - ***The word here that says it all is the word “freely”. This is an adverb and means freely or without a cause. For example, our salvation: Rom. 3:24 “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”. It was by Paul’s choice that he chose to minister freely and without any obligation. And that was to in yet another way demonstrate in a very practical way the outworking of God’s unlimited grace. This was so different in every way from how the false teachers operated and how in the Greek and Roman worlds the promoters of religion managed their affairs, where the teaching was offered not freely but with a price tag attached and the more exalted the teacher was the more the cost would be. But not for Paul. He ministered freely and with no cost to those he served.***
 - ***He goes on in verses 8 & 9 to remind them that while with them (for nearly two years) he received no gifts or offerings from them but only from other churches. This was his policy, to be supported by gifts from other churches but not from the church where one was ministering — plus to support himself as much as possible through his tent making. That explains what he meant by “I have preached to you the gospel of God freely.”***
 - ***Verse 10 reveals the apostle’s testimony again:*** “As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting ...”. ***In***

other words, his boasting in this matter of freely ministering in Corinth was a boasting of his devotion to Christ. This surely highlighted the greed and self-seeking motivation of the false teachers. So many today would be well advised to head this teaching as well, wouldn't they?

- ***He closes this section by affirming that he gloried in this and would boast of it even with a little “tongue in cheek”:*** “as the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth ...”.

Many conclusions can be drawn from this. But it is enough to finish our speculation simply as he does in the next verse: “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...”.
That he might be an example to many, even the false teachers, was always his goal. They had no real and true reason to bring accusations against him for the reasons given. And they would do well to live their lives as he lived his, with all that meant.

IV. Discernment Between True Apostles (Paul) and False Is Therefore Needed:

- ***So, since things are often not as they seem and the full truth is so important to possess and to stand upon, he writes very directly now in opposition to those who claimed to be what they were not:*** “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” ***They had changed their outward appearance so that their true purpose was hidden from view.***

[READ] 2 Cor. 11:13-15

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.

- ***He concludes 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 hidden things shall be revealed at the judgment, however. Then all will be known.***
- ***The chapter ends with the strongest statement to be found anywhere in Paul's letters concerning his apostleship. We will look at it Lord willing next time.***

2 Cor. 11:30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

- ***But the overriding theme is weakness made strong as we share in Christ work of grace in us. And verse 30 says that so powerfully and in such an encouraging way that we may very well fall to our knees and weep considering all that the apostle has written here. Next time, Lord willing, we will dwell here together. Amen.***

Conclusion:

Our Outline Today was this:

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Does it strike home in our hearts? If not, why not?