

## **The Church of the Servant King**

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### **Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians**

(SB\_2 Cor\_chp11A)

#### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **CHAPTER 11**

##### *PAUL’S CONCERN FOR THEIR FAITHFULNESS (2 COR 11:1-4)*

<sup>1</sup> I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. <sup>2</sup>For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. <sup>3</sup>But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup>For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

##### *Observations*

- ✠ Paul considered the statements he was about to make to be “foolishness” (v. 1).
- ✠ Paul indicates that he was “jealous” for the Corinthians with a “godly jealousy.”
- ✠ The reason for Paul’s jealousy – Paul had presented Christ to them.
- ✠ Paul uses the analogy of marriage in which Christ is presented as the husband and the Corinthians are pictured as a virgin bride.
- ✠ Paul compares what could happen to the Corinthians to what happened to Eve when she was deceived by the serpent’s “craftiness.”
- ✠ The nature of the deception to which the Corinthians could succumb – the “simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”
- ✠ In verse 4, the nature of the deception to which the Corinthians could succumb is described – “a different spirit” which they had not received or “a different gospel which” they had not accepted.
- ✠ The phrase translated as follows in different translations:
  - NASV – “you bear this beautifully.”
  - NKJV – “you may well put up with it.”
  - The Message – “you put up with him quite nicely.”
- ✠ This phrase is translated from the Greek words *kalos anechomai* (Gr. καλῶς ἀνέχομαι). The word *kalos* is an adverb that means “well.” The word *anechomai* is a verb – the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, plural, present, middle, indicative and means that the Corinthians were “bearing” or “listening willingly” to false teachers. The Greek construction indicates that this was a present reality in these believer’s lives. The middle voice highlights the participation of the Corinthians – it was a volitional choice on their part to expose themselves to false teaching.
- ✠ The “if” in verse 4 is a first class condition expressing a condition that is present – there were false teachers in their midst. It was not just a hypothetical possibility.

##### *Interpretation*

- ✠ In verse 1, Paul considered his statements to be “foolishness” because, like the Thessalonians (2 Thess 3:7-9), the Corinthians were already familiar with Paul and his teaching; therefore, he should not have had to explain and defend his ministry and teaching.

<sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; <sup>9</sup> not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. (2 Thess 3:7-9)

- ✚ The motive of Paul's critics, rooted as it was in old-man thinking, in citing what they had done was self-glorification, but Paul's motive was rooted in new-man thinking, thus he was interested in the spiritual welfare of his readers.
- ✚ In verse 2, Paul probably drew upon his frame of reference for Jewish history in which God is described as "jealous" for His people Israel in contrast to the deceitfulness of those who enticed the Jewish people away from God (e.g. Hos 2:19-20; 4:12; 6:4; 11:8).

19 "I will betroth you to Me forever;  
Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,  
In lovingkindness and in compassion,  
20 And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.  
Then you will know the LORD. (Hos 2:19-20)

12 My people consult their wooden idol, and their diviner's wand informs them;  
For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray,  
And they have played the harlot, departing from their God. (Hos 4:12)

4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?  
What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
For your loyalty is like a morning cloud  
And like the dew which goes away early. (Hos 6:4)

8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim?  
How can I surrender you, O Israel?  
How can I make you like Admah?  
How can I treat you like Zeboim?  
My heart is turned over within Me,  
All My compassions are kindled. (Hos 11:8)

- ✚ Paul used this same analogy that had been used to express God's desire for Israel in Hebrew Scripture and during God's Jewish-centric program in describing God's desire for the Corinthian believers.
- ✚ This is the reason Paul could describe this "jealousy" as a "godly jealousy."
- ✚ This is also the reason that with regard to the Corinthians, Paul pictured himself as the father of a virgin bride in the Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor 4:15; 2 Cor 12:14).

15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. (1 Cor 4:15)

14 Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. (2 Cor 12:14)

- ✚ The "virginity" to which Paul referred is not physical, but a spiritual purity, free from involvement and attachment to the false concepts and teaching of other men.

✠ This idea is expressed in other passages as well.

<sup>27</sup> That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Eph 5:27)

<sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 Jn 3:2-3)

✠ Until the marriage is consummated at the Rapture of the church, the idea is that believers should reflect exclusive devotion to Christ.

✠ In verses 3 and 4, Paul highlights the fact that the Corinthians were placing themselves in a position of spiritual compromise. Paul uses another analogy – that of the events in the Garden of Eden.

✠ As Jesus Christ was elsewhere compared with Adam (e.g. Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45), Paul compares the church in Corinth to Eve.

<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Rom 5:14)

<sup>21</sup> For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Cor 15:21-22)

<sup>45</sup> So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor 15:45)

✠ Instead of resisting (cf. James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9) Satan's inducement to disobedience, Eve entertained the discussion and was lured by his cunning logic.

<sup>7</sup> Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (Jas 4:7)

<sup>9</sup> But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1 Pet 5:9)

✠ Paul considers the Judaizers and false teachers in Corinth to be tantamount to Satan's representatives in their promotion of a false doctrine. Their logic was deceptive. The Corinthians were not refuting this error. The middle voice of *anechomai* ("listen willingly") indicates the Corinthians embrace of this false teaching instead of rejection.

✠ The Corinthians should have spurned the false teachers (2 Cor 6:14-15), but the false teachers were tolerated instead (2 Cor 11:4). The NASV translation captures the irony that Paul probably intended – they were bearing up beautifully under these false teachers which was ironic considering how they should have been refuting their teaching and defending the Truths they had been taught by their spiritual father – Paul.

<sup>14</sup> Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2 Cor 6:14-15)

<sup>4</sup> For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. (2 Cor 11:4)

### *Application*

- ✚ Implicit in these verses is the idea that believers should be sufficiently grounded and rooted in the Truth so that they are able to participate in the discussions and debates of the day, yet do so in a way that upholds and defends the Truth.
- ✚ If believers are not sufficiently rooted and grounded in the relevant Truths at issue in any given discussion or debate, there is an increased risk that the believer will be deceived.
- ✚ The risk is further increased by the believer who “knows” the Truth, but who has not yet “internalized” the Truth.
- ✚ Distortions of the Truth, even seemingly slight distortions (in contrast to legitimate interpretive issues) need to be recognized as a part of Satan’s deceptive work.
- ✚ Consider the following verses to provide relevant instruction on these points:

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

<sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim 4:2-5)

<sup>1</sup>But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. <sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, <sup>4</sup>treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. <sup>6</sup>For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, <sup>7</sup>always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim 3:1-7)

### *PAUL AND FALSE APOSTLES (2 COR 11:5-15)*

<sup>5</sup>For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. <sup>6</sup> But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things. <sup>7</sup> Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? <sup>8</sup> I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; <sup>9</sup> and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. <sup>10</sup> As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. <sup>11</sup> Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! <sup>12</sup> But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. <sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> No wonder, for even Satan

disguises himself as an angel of light.<sup>15</sup> Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

### *Observations*

- ✚ Based upon Paul's statement in verse 5, Paul had evidently been compared to other "apostles" who were being positioned as more eminent than he.
- ✚ In Corinth, where rhetorical ability and physical appearance were highly valued in Greek society and culture, Paul was considered by his critics to be deficient (v. 6).
- ✚ However, this was not the case with his knowledge of doctrine or Truth.
- ✚ In verses 7-9, Paul expresses the same idea that he expressed in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9.

<sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; <sup>9</sup> not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. (2 Thess 3:7-9)

- ✚ In verses 10-13, Paul avows that he will not stop "boasting" in the "regions of Achaia."
- ✚ He is motivated to continue this practice because he loves them and his boasting will counter the arguments by the false teachers that they are Paul's equal – if not superior.
- ✚ In verses 14-15, Paul confirms that Satan's strategy is one of being a counterfeit – disguising himself as an angel of light. The strategy of the false teachers to disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness is consistent with Satan's strategy.

### *Interpretation*

- ✚ In verses 1-5, Paul has provided three reasons the Corinthians should bear with Paul instead of the false teachers:
  - Paul was known and proven to them and had a pure, unselfish motive – their devotion to Christ (2 Cor 11:1-3).
  - Their gullibility to false teachers instead of a proven teacher (2 Cor 11:4).
  - He was not inferior to the more "eminent" apostles (2 Cor 11:5).
- ✚ Rhetorical ability was highly prized in Greek culture for its persuasive capability, yet Paul recognized that content was more important.
- ✚ Paul's awareness of the tenuous and fickle nature of the believers in Corinth led him to take extra precautions in order to distinguish himself from the agenda driven, self-promoting false teachers. Paul did not ask for or accept any support from the Corinthians. He supported himself and received some support from the believers in Macedonia.
- ✚ In other places, Paul had written that apostles have the right to refrain from "secular" work for a living and to be supported by the gifts of their audience (1 Cor. 9:6, 14). However, Paul had made tents in Corinth and had refused to accept gifts from the Corinthians (cf. Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 9:4-15).
- ✚ We know from Luke's historical narrative in Acts that Paul had practiced his trade of leather working when he had first arrived in Corinth (Acts 18:3). When Silas and Timothy joined him from Macedonia, Paul stopped this work and devoted all his time to preaching and teaching (Acts 18:5). He apparently did this because these brothers had brought financial gifts with them from the Macedonian churches (cf. Phil. 4:15; 1 Thess. 3:6). Paul's principle was to preach and teach without charging those who benefitted directly from his ministry. This is a good policy in church planting, but it is not normative for a settled pastoral ministry (1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

- ✚ This indicated to some in Corinth that he did not believe he was an apostle. The Twelve apostles normally accepted support from the recipients of their ministries and these false apostles did so as well on a consistent basis.
- ✚ The "eminent apostles" were probably the false apostles who claimed to be eminent rather than the other genuine apostles, i.e. the Twelve Apostles (cf. Gal 2:9).
- ✚ The word "eminent" is the Greek word *huperlian* (Gr. ὑπερλίαν). This word means "preeminent" or "exceedingly." When combined with the word "apostle," it could be translated "super-apostle."
- ✚ The false teachers were apparently associating themselves with the Twelve Apostles and claiming a superiority to Paul on that basis (cf. Gal 2:9). They probably hoped to derive more legitimacy and authority by virtue of that association.
- ✚ Paul's use of *huperlian* was a way of injecting some irony into his argument.
- ✚ Without demeaning the Twelve, Paul affirmed his own status as an Apostle of similar, if not superior, standing.
- ✚ The fact that the early Christians used the word "apostle" in a general sense (e.g., 8:23; Acts 14:4, 14) and also in a technical sense (e.g., 2 Cor. 1:1) could have been part of the basis for some confusion.
- ✚ The word in the general sense means anyone sent out on the Christian mission, and in this sense the teachers in Corinth who were criticizing Paul were apostles.
- ✚ It might be more accurate to define the Corinthians' question about Paul to be one of what type of apostle Paul was rather than whether he was an apostle or not.
- ✚ It is possible that some of these false teachers were believers in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Acts 15:5).

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." (Acts 15:5)

- ✚ However, even believers can succumb to false teaching and promote false doctrine.

#### *Application*

- ✚ Believers should not gage the effectiveness of a Christian speaker merely by rhetorical ability.
- ✚ Those skilled in rhetoric have an ability to paint a picture in people's minds using vocabulary much like an artist has the ability to paint his interpretation of an idea or setting on canvas.
- ✚ Rhetoric is a talent – a talent that can be used to convince of the Truth or to manipulate through illusion and allusion to ideas without disclosing the reality.
- ✚ Believers should evaluate the life as well as the teaching of those in ministry. There should be no inconsistencies and there should be a willingness on the part of the person in ministry to go the extra distance to avoid even the appearance of contradiction.
- ✚ The more visible one is in ministry, the greater the extra distance one may need to go to avoid any appearance of impropriety, false motives, or selfish gain.