

# "Warning: Deceit Ahead!" • 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *The Danger Of Deceit*

1. John Smith was a loyal carpenter, working for a highly successful contractor
2. One day the boss called him into his office and said, "John, I'm putting you in charge of the next house we build. I want you to order all the materials and oversee the whole job from the ground up."
4. John accepted the assignment with great enthusiasm and excitement.
5. For ten days before ground was broken at the building site, John studied the blueprints. He checked every measurement, every specification.
6. Then he had a thought. "If I am really in charge, why couldn't I cut a few corners, use less expensive materials, and put the extra money in my pocket? Who would know the difference? Once the house is painted, it will look just great."
7. So John set about his scheme.
  - a. he ordered second-grade lumber, but his reports indicated that it was top-grade.
  - b. he ordered inexpensive concrete for the foundation, put in cheap wiring, and cut every corner he could, yet he reported the purchase of much better materials.
8. When the home was completed and fully painted, he asked the contractor to come and see it.
9. The boss said, "John, you've done a magnificent job! You've been such a good and faithful carpenter all these years that I've decided to show my gratitude by giving you this house you've built, as a gift!"

### B. *The Church*

1. Deceit can be deadly!
  2. In the passage before us today we see Paul's strong warnings against deceit in the Church
  3. If Paul would be so careful and earnest in warning the Corinthians about the problems and danger of deceit, how much more would the Holy Spirit alert us to the its danger today
  4. You see, Jesus warned that the last days would be marked by deception
  5. In Matthew 24 and other passages, He warned that the days just prior to His return would see an *explosion* in false teachers and apostles
  6. And so great would the delusion be that even some of the elect would be carried away with it
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7. As I have said before, the duty of the pastor is to lead, feed, and protect the flock
    - a. this passage demands that I not only feed, but protect the flock
    - b. so, to that end, I am compelled to speak to some things going on today that may raise a few hackles

- c. but that's okay – because to be sure, what Paul wrote here raised considerable reaction in Corinth

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 1-4

**{1} Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly; and indeed you do bear with me.**

1. Some background is needed to understand what Paul means here
  - a. most of 2 Corinthians is Paul's dealing with the false teachers who had entered and were now troubling the Church at Corinth
  - b. these men had an agenda, and it was to turn the church away from the gospel Paul had preached and the Corinthians had so readily embraced
  - c. Paul's manner among the Corinthians when he had first come to them was humble and meek
    - 1) he had not promoted himself
    - 2) but had relied on the simple demonstration of the power of the Spirit, working through the gospel
  - d. by nature, the Corinthians *liked* the showy and flashy
  - e. so after Paul left, and the false teachers came, the false teachers capitalized on the Corinthians interest in status and appearance
  - f. these men maintained a regal appearance and were skilled in the art of oratory; they were great at making speeches
  - g. they poked fun at Paul's physical appearance and his seeming roughness of speech
  - h. they belittled the meek and humble nature of his ministry and deplored him as a small and unimportant man; why the name Paul even means "Little"
2. So if these men wanted to play the boasting and comparison game, Paul would play with them to show how really shallow they were
3. The *folly* he is referring to in v. 1 is this boasting and comparing
  - a. it was distasteful to Paul to do this
  - b. but if it would turn the Corinthians from their error, then he would employ it
4. Indeed, though he considered it foolish, he knew it was so much a part of the Corinthians mindset, they would gladly listen to him while he boasted and compared himself to the false teachers

**{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.**

5. The idea that the people of God are united with Him in a covenant of marriage is one firmly rooted in the OT
  - a. In Isaiah 54:5, the prophet says to Israel, "Your Maker, is your husband."
  - b. in Isaiah 62:5 he said, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."
  - c. it was natural for Paul to use the metaphor of marriage and to think of the Corinthian Church as the bride of Christ.
  - d. in fact, in Ephesians 5, Paul spells it out even more clearly

- 1) after defining the roles of the husband and wife,
- 2) he turns the table and makes this amazing statement

**This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. [1]**

- 3) in other words, after explaining the role of the husband and the wife, he turns the tables and says that really, he isn't speaking about marriage between a man and a woman,
- 4) he is showing the character of the relationship between Christ and the Church
- 5) marriage, perfectly lived by a husband and wife is but a dim reflection of the union between God and His people!
6. This verse (v.2) also captures that same idea – the Church is the Bride of Christ; now betrothed, soon to be wed
7. But in this verse, Paul adds to the idea by using a vivid picture drawn from Jewish marriage customs
  - a. at a Jewish wedding there were two people called the “friends of the bridegroom,”
  - b. one representing the bridegroom and one the bride.
  - c. they had many duties related to the betrothal period and wedding
    - 1) they acted as liaisons between the bride and the bridegroom;
    - 2) they carried the invitations to the guests;
    - 3) but they had one particular responsibility that was the most important
    - 4) they were responsible for guaranteeing the chastity of the bride
  - d. that's what's in Paul's thought here.
8. In the marriage of Jesus Christ and the Corinthian Church he is the friend of the bridegroom.
9. It is his responsibility to guarantee the chastity of the bride, and he will do all he can to keep the Corinthian Church pure and a fit bride for Jesus Christ.
10. His jealousy comes from the fact that he sees them being seduced by false suitors – men who only desire to take advantage of them and once they have taken what they want, they will be gone

**{3} 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.**

11. Paul's desire was to make sure that the Corinthians remained faithful to the Lord
12. But he knew how enticing the deception of the false teachers was
13. The danger of deceit is that it is often so subtle
  - a. in fact, in Genesis 3, when Satan is first presented, he is described as more subtle than any other creature
  - b. he didn't appear to Eve and say to her, “Eve, I hate you and Adam and want to kill you so eat that fruit God told you not to.”
  - c. while that is in fact *precisely* what his real intention was, if he had put it in those terms, she *never* would have been suckered
  - d. instead, he was *crafty* in his approach – the word means “all-working”
  - e. there isn't anything the devil won't stoop to in order to deceive, no depth he will not sink to accomplish his purpose of destroying men and women

14. The goal of the devil's deceit is that we might be turned aside from the simplicity of faith in Christ
    - a. the simplicity of the gospel is one of the stumbling blocks for the pseudo-intellectual
    - b. many people think that if something is important it is also complex
    - c. and since there can be little more important than the issue of eternal life, it should be the most complex thing there is
    - d. it offends some people that they may have to spend eternity with the simple-minded and unsophisticated
    - e. but the fact is – God is no respecter of person
      - 1) He does not love the intelligent any more than the simple
      - 2) there is no IQ limit to enter heaven
      - 3) one doesn't have to speak English – or come from a certain social level
      - 4) SAT scores don't matter to God!
  15. The danger in Corinth was that the false apostles played to this idea that salvation had to be complex
  16. The Greeks especially placed a premium on philosophy and the hidden mysteries of the universe – and the Corinthians were Greeks through and through
  17. They were being seduced from the simple message of Jesus by an elaborate and complex lie that appealed to their pride by making them feel they were insiders on an all important secret God had made known to just a few
  18. The gospel is no secret – and it certainly isn't complex
  19. The real power of our faith is that it is simple!
    - a. Jesus Christ died for our sins
    - b. and rose again from the dead to give us new life
  20. This is a message that is so easy to understand that even those who are classified as mentally dysfunctional are able to understand because it doesn't speak to the intellect – it speaks to the moral soul
  21. When Paul had first come to Corinth – they had responded to this message and embraced Christ and had started a love relationship with Him
  22. Then Paul had moved on, and the false apostles had come
  23. And now the Corinthians were being seduced to turn away from Jesus
  24. Paul sees the imminent danger and raises the warning cry!
- {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!**
25. Friends, these words should send a shudder down our spine!
  26. Paul is saying that it's possible they could be seduced and end up turning away from the faith – notice what he says at the end of v. 4 . . .
- you may well put up with it!**
27. This would happen if one of three things occurred
    - a. first, someone comes and preaches another Jesus whom Paul had not preached
      - 1) the Jesus Paul preached is the Jesus of Scripture

- a) He is God and Man; He is Lord, Savior, King, and Servant
  - b) He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world
  - c) He is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth
  - d) and in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead
- 2) one of the first ploys of the devil is to distort the identity of Jesus
- a) so the Jesus of the cults is not the Jesus of the Bible
  - b) the Jesus of Mormonism is the spirit brother of Lucifer
  - c) he was born as the result of sexual relations between Mary and a god named Elohim who had at one time been a Mormon man on a planet called Kolob
  - d) the Jesus of the Watchtower organization is merely the incarnation of the archangel Michael
  - e) and the Jesus of the Faith Movement is merely a man with an enlightened sense of self-awareness who recognizes his own innate deity and is our example of faith
  - f) his death does not atone for our sin – it is his example of positive confession, lifting him out of the pit of hell that makes him the first of a new race of men and women
- b. another deceit of the devil is to receive a different spirit from the Holy Spirit
- 1) the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ - in all He does, He promotes Jesus
  - 2) now, Jesus said He was the Way, The Truth, and the Life; the Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth
  - 3) but false teachers come and appeal to the desires of the flesh; they subtly twist and distort the truth and turn in into a lie – all in the name of religion
  - 4) when a believer turns from the truth to entertain deceit, they grieve the Spirit of Truth
  - 5) and if they persist, they may open a door to a different spirit, a spirit of deception and error
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- 6) it is with great concern that I have listened to the reports of both believers and unbelievers alike who give testimony to the strange things that happen to them in churches where the current Toronto & Brownsville so-called revival is taking place
- a) I've heard numerous reports of pastors who have gone to Toronto or Brownsville just to check out first hand what was going on
  - b) being critic or skeptics, they have stood in the background just to observe
  - c) and without warning, they end up on the floor in a euphoric trance state
  - d) then they return to their churches, and the phenomena is repeated among their own people
  - e) I've even read a couple reports about journalists, unbelievers, who attended these services and while in a state of complete unbelief, were knocked to the floor and experienced moments of euphoria

- f) but when they got up, there was no change to their spiritual condition, they were as lost as when they first entered the building
  - g) their explanation? They had none!
  - 7) they may not have an explanation, but I think we do – it’s right here
  - 8) they have received another spirit
  - 9) these people, having no Biblical basis whatsoever for what’s taking place in these meetings, still seek them out under the banner of not wanting to reject something that might be from God
  - 10) they have turned from what they KNOW to be true to what *might be* – and the enemy takes advantage of that to deceive them
  - 11) my friends, if powerful phenomena is the criteria to be used in determining that something *might be* from God, then we should be visiting the ashrams and communes of the Hindu gurus because the very same things that are taking place in this so-called revival have been going on there for years!
  - 12) having turned from the Spirit of Truth, people are being deceived by a powerful spirit of religious experience
  - c. another deceit the enemy foists upon the unwary is a different gospel from the one that saved them
    - 1) Paul speaks of the same thing in his letter to the Galatians
    - 2) there, false teachers had come in and were teaching that now that they had been saved, they needed to add a whole list of religious duties to their lives
      - a) circumcision, sacrifice
      - b) obedience to all the ritual law of Moses
    - 3) here in Corinth it was a bit different
      - a) these false teachers were saying that receiving Christ was just the starting point
      - b) but that if they ever hoped to attain to the highest levels of heaven, they needed to be initiated into the deeper mysteries of the faith
      - c) and that of course, involved a long course of instruction, that they were capable of taking them through, *if, and only if*, they could afford it!
      - d) so the Corinthians gullibly bought in to this deception and had paid the entry fee to these false apostles

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    - 4) amazing, but that sounds a awful lot like Scientology
    - 5) as well as certain Christian celebrities who charge vast sums to come and speak at a conference or to a church
    - 6) whatever happened to “Freely you have received, freely give!”? [\[2\]](#)
28. This mention of money drives Paul to the next verses . . .

## **B. Vs. 5-12**

**{5} For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.**

1. Literally – “super-apostles”: He is making fun of the false teachers at Corinth who were claiming to be God’s gift to the Church

**{6} Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.**

2. In comparison to the false teachers, Paul's speech was rough and uncultured
3. But when it came to knowledge, there was no comparison at all, he was light years ahead
4. There is a well known story which tells how a company of people were dining together.
  - a. after dinner it was agreed that each should recite something.
  - b. a well-known actor rose and, with all the resources of elocution and dramatic art, he declaimed the twenty-third psalm and sat down to tremendous applause.
  - c. a quiet man who sat across the table, was next.
  - d. he too began to recite the twenty-third psalm and at first there was some embarrassment around the table as his delivery could not compare with the actor
  - e. but before he had ended there was a stillness that was more eloquent than any applause.
  - f. when he had spoken the last words there was silence,
  - g. then the actor leaned across and said, "Sir, I know the psalm, but you know the shepherd."
5. Such was the case with Paul and the false apostles
  - a. they knew how to impress man
  - b. Paul was approved by God

**{7} Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?**

6. While the false teachers demanded the Corinthians support them, Paul had not taken a dime from them when he was there

**{8} I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.**

7. The Philippians had sent Paul aid while he was ministering in Corinth
8. Paul had a policy that he would not receive support from a church in a city he was working at that time – he would only take it after he had moved on
9. The reason why is he didn't want to be hindered from saying what needed to be said – and it can be difficult for a man to say hard words to those who are supporting him

**{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.**

**{10} 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!**

**{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.**

10. Here's the problem; the false teachers were pointing to Paul's refusal to take

support from the Corinthians as proof that what he had done in ministry there wasn't really all that valuable

11. The Greeks despised manual labor and elevated the pursuits of the intellect
12. They considered oratory one of the greatest skills a person could have
  - a. Augustus, the Roman Emperor, paid one orator an annual salary of 100,000 sesterces, equivalent today to about a million dollars
  - b. every town was entitled to grant complete exemption from all civic burdens and taxes to a certain number of teachers of rhetoric and literature.
13. Paul's independence was something the Corinthians could not understand.
14. Because they were immature and carnal, they better understood the carnal motivations of the false teachers, of who Paul now finally unmasks . . .

### **C. Vs. 13-15**

**{13} 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.**

**{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.**

1. These men, with all their regal garments and high sounding religious words, were nothing less than hell-spawned deceivers
2. Of course, they didn't wear badges that said, "Hi – I'm Demetrius, Servant of Satan"
3. The devil knows being honest will cost him ground – so he goes under cover
4. Nature provides a fitting illustration of Satan's tactics.
  - a. each spring the cuckoo bird can be seen mimicking the flight of the sparrow hawk.
  - b. it flaps and glides, soaring like a natural predator,
  - c. as it does this, it frightens songbirds and distracts them to the point that they leave their nests unattended.
  - d. the imposter then moves in and devours the unguarded egg, leaving one of her own in its place.
  - e. the songbird returns and continues to sit on the egg, thinking it is it's own
  - f. but when it hatches, it turns out to be a cuckoo

## **III. CONCLUSION**

### **A. The Great Danger**

1. Here is the great danger this passage warns us about –
2. Satan is a master deceiver
3. He transforms himself into an angel of light because he knows he cannot trick us if he comes as he really is, a messenger of darkness and evil who want to do nothing else but steal, kill, and destroy
4. How can we be safe from his deceptions?
5. By holding fast to the gospel of Christ – once for all delivered to the saints
6. By holding fast to the Jesus of Scripture
7. By not letting go of the Holy Spirit who leads us into Truth



8. While there are those who would criticize us for testing all things to see if they are from God
9. This is what we are told to do in 1 Thess 5:21
10. In 1 John 4:1 we find these telling words . . .

**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

11. Part of the special responsibility we have as believers who live in these days is to be specially careful because religious deceit is epidemic and institutional
12. Listen to these warnings of Jesus to His Flock . . .

**{Mat 24:11-12} “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. {12} “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**

**{Mark 13:22-23} “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. {23} “But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.**

13. Paul wrote this to Timothy – and see if this doesn’t make you sit up straight

**{1 Tim 4:1} Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons**

14. My dear brothers and sisters – we need to be diligent to ensure we are not being lied to

## **B. To End**

1. So, what else can I say as your pastor than to exhort you with strong words to study and feed on the Scriptures
2. Test everything you hear against the Word of God – Everything!

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[\[1\]](#) {Eph 5:32}

[\[2\]](#) Matthew 10:8