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A1405 – February 2, 2014 – 2 Corinthians 11:1-6
Ministering & Living Sound Doctrine

Last time in 2 Corinthians 10 Paul began to try to win over some of the Corinthians who had given their allegiance to his opponents. Allegiance to false teaching results in loss of fellowship and eventually being ensnared by the devil to do his will. Paul had invested too much in the Corinthians to allow this to happen. He is writing to convince them to turn aside from the false teachings of his satanically inspired opponents and give their heart to him. In order to do this Paul had to challenge the standards by which his opponents were judging him. If they judged him as walking according to the flesh Paul had to turn the tables and demonstrate that it was them who walked according to the flesh. Always there are two sources of standards at work; the fleshly view point, standards derived from man's fleshly reason and experience and the spiritual view point, standards derived from God's revelation. The question is what standards are controlling the situation? Paul is taking them to task for giving their allegiance to fleshly standards. For example in 10:7 Paul chided them for judging things as they were on the surface. This is fleshly. The implication is they needed to re-calibrate their standards to the spiritual view point of God's revelation.

In 10:7 Paul proceeded to compare himself with his opponents. He boasted that even if one of his opponents was an apostle, so was he, so his opponent had no advantage over him. In verse 8, if Paul were to out-boast his opponent he would not be put to shame because he used his authority to build them up, not tear them down like his opponent. In vv 9-10 Paul's opponents charged that his letters were weighty and strong, but his public appearance was weak and his speech lacked the proper rhetorical ability. Paul warns those who thought according to this human view point system would see that when he came he was the same in word as he was in deed. In fact he would be very bold. In verse 12 Paul did not dare stoop to the level of his opponents by

grouping himself with them or comparing himself with others, a sign of unintelligence in things that really matter. In verse 13 Paul would not do as his opponents did and boast beyond the measure allotted to him by God in his mission to the Gentiles. In verse 14 he was not overextending himself in his boasting, as if he did not reach Corinth. As a matter of fact he was the first one to come and preach the gospel in Corinth. In verses 15-16 all he wanted was the Corinthian's faith to grow so that he could extend his ministry beyond Corinth. In conclusion, in verse 17 Paul says if we're going to boast in anything it should be in the Lord, that is to say, to give credit where credit is due, not in us and our abilities but in the Lord and His power toward us in energizing our ministries. The reason given is verse 18, because it is not he who commends himself that is approved by God, but it is he whom the Lord commends. We will all be judged at the judgment seat of Christ and His commendation is the one we should be interested in. So then Paul was very different from his opponents; they commended themselves for their self-efforts but Paul depended upon Christ, seeking His approval.

In chapter 11 Paul continues to defend his apostleship over against his opponents. **I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.** This again is a jab at his opponents. He is stooping to the level of **foolishness** to demonstrate that even on their standards he is not inferior to them in the least. Here he implies they are foolish. This is a judgment. Paul doesn't hesitate to judge. He judged them as unintelligent in 2:12 and now foolish in 2:1. Of course, he is going to engage in a **little foolishness** as well but the only reason for doing so is to reveal the fleshliness of his opponents. To continue doing this he requests that the Corinthians continue to bear with him in **a little foolishness**.

In verse 2 he gives the reason for the foolishness, **For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.** The Greek word **jealous** is *zelos* and should be translated as the positive connotation, "zealous," rather than the negative connotation, jealous. Paul is saying, "I am zealous for you with a godly zeal." Paul was not jealous for their affection; he was zealous for them that they be faithful to Christ. He explains, **for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.** This is a figure of speech. There are a several figures of speech in these verses so be alert. Verse 2 is a metaphor. *A metaphor is a comparison without using like or as.* He is comparing the betrothal and marriage practices of 1st century Judaism with

the Corinthians betrothal and future marriage to Christ. In 1st century Judaism a father would betroth his daughter to a husband a year before the marriage. During that year it was the father's responsibility to safeguard his daughter's virginity against any male intruders so that on the day of the marriage he could present her a pure and spotless bride to her husband. If she had sexual relations with any other man during that year then she was considered a fornicator and unclean. By analogy Paul sees himself as the father of this congregation (cf 1 Cor 4:15). As their father he betrothed them to one husband, Christ. As their father he considered it his responsibility to safeguard their doctrinal purity so that on the day of the marriage to Christ he could present her as a pure and spotless bride. If the Corinthians fooled around with other suitors they were committing spiritual fornication and soiling their wedding garments. He was therefore zealous with a godly zeal for them to remain true to the husband he betrothed them to, to Christ, so that on the day of the marriage to Christ he could present them as a pure and spotless virgin. This, of course, refers to the importance of purity of doctrine.

All believers are to consider themselves as betrothed to Christ and therefore remain loyal to Him by remaining true to the word. This is part of our preparation for marriage to the Lamb. Listening to and putting up with false doctrine soils our purity. Therefore, by application, are you remaining true to your betrothal to Him? What doctrine are you listening too? Are you listening to secular teachers who profess to be wise but are fools? Are you listening to those who claim to be Christian but proclaim false doctrine? Who are you allowing to vie for your heart and mind? As your pastor I encourage you to remain true the one you are betrothed to, to remain true to Christ your whole life, so that on the day when you are presented before Him you are a pure and spotless bride.

In verse 3, **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.** Paul was very concerned. Here he uses a figure of speech known as simile. *A simile is a comparison using like or as.* Paul compares what the serpent did to Eve with what his opponents were dangerously close to doing to the Corinthians. The key to the comparison is deception. To **deceive** in the Greek means "to cause someone to accept false ideas about something." The serpent caused Eve to accept false ideas about the nature of God, man and nature. The means the serpent used to deceive

Eve are described as **crafty**. The Greek word means to show skill, cleverness and resourcefulness in a situation. The serpent skillfully deceived the woman by first casting doubt on the goodness and benevolence of God, then convincing her that she could become like God and finally persuading her that the tree had wisdom giving capabilities. This caused her to accept false ideas about the nature of God, the nature of man and the nature of the tree. After which when she looked at the surface of the tree it appeared different than it had before; it looked good for food and was pleasing to the eye and on the basis of what the serpent said it was desirable to make wise. She therefore took and ate. She was subtly deceived by the crafty deception of the serpent. This is how deception occurs, you listen to a false teacher, it sounds good and you are cunningly tricked into accepting the false teacher's authority.

In the same way the Corinthians were dangerously close to accepting false ideas about the nature of Jesus, the Spirit and the gospel as verse 4 shows. His opponents were teaching false doctrine and the Corinthians were apparently open to their teachings. Like the serpent, they were crafty and their arguments cast doubt on the nature of Jesus, the Spirit and the gospel. Perhaps they even promised benefits on the other side if they accepted their arguments as the serpent had promised Eve, something like a superior or hidden wisdom. In a very real sense the Corinthians were very near to repeating the Fall. Paul said he was afraid that their **minds would be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ**. As the serpent had infiltrated Eve's mind through false ideas so false teachers were infiltrating the Corinthian's minds through false ideas. To accept these ideas would turn them aside **from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ**. We would say what this means is "true dedication." They wouldn't be truly dedicated to Christ but rather to the false teachers who Paul characterizes in verse 13 as false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. They were indeed Satan's servants masquerading as servants of righteousness.

Verse 4 concludes with satirical irony, another figure of speech. *Irony is a form of ridicule expressed indirectly as a compliment in order to expose folly.* So while it appears on the surface that Paul is commending them he is actually exposing them as being full of evil! He says, **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. The final clause is the irony in that it sounds like a compliment but in reality it is ridicule. The false teachers had come and spread their false doctrine; the Corinthians were tolerating it, putting up with it, nicely allowing them to share their false views. We'd say, they gave the pulpit to false teachers and put up with it as if it was alright!

There are three areas of doctrine here they maligned; Jesus, the Spirit and the gospel. What they taught about Jesus, about the spirit and about the gospel is not perfectly clear but what is perfectly clear is that Paul did not teach the same Jesus, the spirit they were receiving was not the same Spirit they had received, and the gospel they preached was not the one they had originally welcomed. So these false teachers had a defective Christology, a defective Pneumatology and a defective Soteriology. Of course, you should never put up with a teacher that is defective in any one of these areas, much less all three. But they were bearing it beautifully, putting up with it as if it was just fine to get all the viewpoints on the table. Nonsense. Error is not to be put up with, it is not to be tolerated.

Now there are these three areas and we want to look at each one briefly. First, the Jesus they preached is said to be **another Jesus**. The Greek word for **another** is *allos* and most likely refers to another of the same kind. They likely preached Jesus but taught things about Jesus that were not correct. In other words it was close to the truth but it was not the truth. This resulted in them preaching another Jesus. They had a defective Christology. This is serious. For example, John MacArthur preaches Jesus but another Jesus. He preaches that Jesus is not the eternal Son of God but that He assumed sonship at the incarnation. This introduces an essential change in God. In other words, MacArthur believes in a different God and a different Christ than the Bible teaches. Do people care about this? No, they keep on listening to him. What MacArthur is preaching, however, is a doctrine of the angel of light. This is the way Satan masquerades the truth as a lie! Second, the spirit they received is said to be **a different spirit**. The Greek word for **different** is *eteros* and refers to a difference in kind. The **spirit** that the Corinthians received through their teaching was not the Holy Spirit that they had received when they first believed. It could only then be a false and lying spirit. They had a defective Pneumatology. This is again, very serious even

though people don't care. When Wayne Grudem opens the door for the Spirit's work today in tongues-speaking he assigns a work to the Holy Spirit that is not the Holy Spirit but a different spirit. Again, do people care about this? Not really. They think it's okay and let's just all get along. However, this is a false doctrine of the angel of light. This false spirit is masquerading as the true Spirit. This is the business of Satan to draw believers away from the truth. Third, the gospel they were listening to was a **different gospel**. The Greek word for **different** is again, *eteros* and refers to a difference in kind. Paul had said in Gal 1:6-10 that there is only one gospel of grace. Any distortion of this gospel is no longer the gospel. They had a defective Soteriology. Paul's instruction here, as everywhere else, is to cut yourself off from proponents of a false gospel. This is very serious. Again, John MacArthur preaches another gospel. He frontloads the gospel by saying you, as an unbeliever, must commit your life to Him, promise obedience, repent of your sins and make Jesus Lord of your life. Then he backloads the gospel by saying you must have a faith that works, that is, a faith that perseveres to the end of your life in good works and if you don't you were never saved to begin with. This is a false gospel. It is not free, it is costly and he admits this frankly. Eternal life is not a free gift, he says, it costs you everything. That is completely unbiblical. Do people care? Not really. They keep buying his books and listening to his sermons. This is the work of the angel of light. He distorts the person of Christ, the Spirit of God and the gospel in order to draw men after another which is not really another for there is no other. This is not funny. 2 Cor 11 is the most serious chapter in the Bible on rejecting ministers of false doctrine and accepting true ones. Paul was the true, they were the false.

I've given a few modern examples, there are hundreds more. Here we don't know exactly what so-called gospel they preached. However, from the context Garland says we can pick up these concepts; "It is clear from his [Paul's] criticism that their gospel allows for self-boasting and arrogance. It also gives them a warrant for assuming spiritual authority to lord it over others and to berate those who take the role of a humble servant. This gospel apparently places greater emphasis on human standards as valid criteria for evaluating others, on rhetorical showmanship, on racial heritage, and on ecstatic visions."ⁱ The true gospel is not consistent with any of these behaviors or emphases. Think about the true gospel for a moment; we quote 1 Cor 15, "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures...and He was raised on

the third day, according to the Scriptures.” Those aren’t empty words. Christ is a person depicted in the OT Scriptures as being the eternal Son of God and Christ did a work depicted in the OT Scriptures as dying on the cross for our sins, voluntarily, and God raising Him from the dead. All this is entailed in the gospel. It’s not just some nice words. It’s an entire person and His work. And if you just think about what He did, coming into the world and taking to Himself true humanity, what a humbling thing, even humbling Himself to the point of death, death on a cross. What behavior should those of us who believe the gospel now manifest? The same qualities as Christ; humility, self-sacrifice. That would be living consistent with the gospel. Paul’s opponents didn’t manifest humility and self-sacrifice, they manifested arrogance and self-exaltation! This was completely the opposite of the true gospel.

We could go on and on but in sharp contrast Paul reflected the true gospel; his opponents did not. In every way by word and deed these false teachers proclaimed a false gospel. And the truly damning danger is that the Corinthians were bearing it beautifully, putting up with it as if it was alright. The danger was verse 3, that these doctrines were satanically originated and if they continued to listen to it their minds would be led astray from being truly dedicated to Christ and verse 2, they would be presented before Christ as spiritual fornicators rather than as a pure virgin. The only possible application is for them and you to separate yourself entirely from false teachers and have nothing to do with them. They are servants of Satan, disguised as servants of righteousness, hell bent on destroying the church of Jesus Christ.

Verse 5, **For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.** Now the Greek **most eminent apostles** is “super apostles” or “extra special apostles.” The traditional interpretation, which I’ve taught before, is that it refers to the Twelve. In that case Paul would be saying I don’t consider myself inferior to the Twelve. I have the same authority as the Twelve. While that is perfectly true, I highly doubt that he means by the **most-eminent apostles** the Twelve. Instead, in this highly figurative passage it seems again to be an extreme case of sarcasm. Paul is sarcastically referring to his opponents as super-special apostles. In reality he’s ridiculing them. I myself am not in the least inferior to those super special wanna be apostles. When Paul says he **considers himself not in the**

least inferior he's invoking his own standards which are the divine view point standards.

Verse 6 makes this clear, **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.** As we've said his opponents accused Paul of walking according to the flesh because he was **unskilled in speech**, that is, in their valuation system he didn't have the proper rhetorical abilities as taught in the accredited universities; he wasn't smooth, witty, charming; he didn't use the popular techniques, etc.... These are all judgments based on mere surface appearance. And while Paul admitted that on those standards he didn't measure up, **yet** in the area of **knowledge**, intellectual grasp or comprehension of subject material, he was in no way unskilled. Paul was thoroughly knowledgeable, though we'd be quick to add, not by his own innate abilities. He stated elsewhere that he had humility of mind meaning that he recognized that his mind was not the greatest but God's mind was the greatest and therefore to think God's thoughts after Him was the way to think the greatest thoughts. Paul had knowledge of the Scriptures. This is what made him so knowledgeable. He made it his goal, as we've already seen, to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ because His thoughts are able to topple all strongholds. In Colossians he tells us that all wisdom and knowledge are hidden exclusively in Jesus Christ. So Paul was skilled in knowledge because he knew Scripture. And apparently the Corinthians knew that he was thoroughly knowledgeable because he says, **in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.** Paul had expounded the Scriptures to them both publicly and in writing. They had a tremendous amount of evidence that he was knowledgeable **in all things**. So while Paul didn't meet the criteria of his opponents, to speak with persuasive charm and rhetorical ability, he did speak with far more skill in knowledge than any of these so called super-special apostles.

Nor did Paul desire to speak with the approved techniques of rhetoric. In 1 Cor 1-2 Paul deprecated these techniques as tools to win men to the gospel because he concluded that their faith would be grounded in his speaking abilities and not in the Spirit of God who stimulates faith in an individual through the preached message of the cross. The preaching of the cross is the power of God unto salvation, not a special technique of speaking. So Paul repudiated the skillful speech his opponents required that he have.

Verse 7, a bit of sarcasm, **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?** It might seem absurd to conclude that Paul committed a **sin** by humbling himself so they **might be exalted** and for preaching **the gospel** without pay for those who actually understand the gospel. The gospel teaches us to abase ourselves in self-sacrifice for the service of others, as Christ has done for us, and to preach the gospel without pay because eternal life is a free gift. But for those who do not understand the gospel to abase oneself in self-sacrifice for others and preach the gospel without pay is ludicrous, even sin, missing the mark for how one ought to conduct himself. This is what they charged Paul as doing. But the absurdity of it seals the case that they did not understand the gospel. They acted exactly the opposite of the gospel. Rather than self-sacrifice they engaged in self-exaltation; rather than preaching the gospel freely they preached for money. Surely the Corinthians could detect the true from the false apostles.

It's important to recognize that the NT clearly teaches that a false gospel is not only identified by the message preached but also by how one conducts himself. In Gal 2 Paul opposes Peter to his face because his conduct was a false gospel. He separated himself from the Gentile believers when he had previously been eating with them. The message was clear. Gentile salvation is defective until they adhere to the dietary laws of Moses. This was a false gospel because it added to faith in Jesus...following dietary laws. Peter's aberration of the gospel was so influential that he even drew Barnabas into this false gospel and he too separated himself from the Gentile believers. It was a false gospel displayed not in word but in deed. Paul says it this way, their actions "were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel." A false gospel therefore is not only what is preached in word but can also be declared by deeds. Here his opponent's ministry was conducted in a fashion entirely contrary to the gospel. They engaged in self-exaltation rather than self-sacrifice and they preached the gospel for pay rather than for free. This was just as much a false gospel as preaching a false gospel. However, in their case they appear to have done both. Verse 4 shows clearly that they preached a false gospel and verse 7 shows clearly that their deeds were a false gospel. It reminds one of what one of the professors at my seminary says, "You are preaching the gospel a chapter a day by things that you do and words that

you say... if I followed you all the day through, what's the gospel according to you?" Go think about that.

Verse 8, now while Paul preached the gospel to the Corinthians without charge, he explains in this verse how he was supported. He says, **I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you.** It should be obvious that Paul does not mean that he broke into churches and stole money. What he means is that he used the **wages** given to him by other churches to support himself at Corinth. One of the obvious things then is that Paul did accept **wages** from believers. He certainly teaches in Gal 6:6-9 that a Bible teacher that is worth his salt has the right to be supported by believers in training. Now when I say believers in training I mean to exclude new believers. Paul didn't typically accept money from new believers because it's too close an association with the gospel. But he did have a right to receive support from believers in training. However, in some churches he didn't exercise that right because he thought it might damage the ministry. At Corinth that was the issue. He realized that he could not have contrasted himself with his opponents if he was receiving support from them. Therefore because of the unique situation at Corinth Paul abstained from taking wages from them and relied on support from other churches.

In verse 9, **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.** Paul mentions in Philippians 4:15-18 that the Philippians had supported him on multiple occasions by sending him gifts; twice even while he was at Thessalonica. These funds **fully supplied** his needs for some time so that by continuing to use these funds given by other churches he would not be a burden on the Corinthians. And seeing as he was still in a contest with his opponents he says he **will continue to do so.** Paul's refusal to accept wages set him apart from his opponents who were extorting funds as often as possible. They were in it for the money; Paul was in it for the gospel!

Let's summarize and draw some conclusions. In verse 1 Paul begs them to continue putting up with his foolishness. In verse 2 he was zealous for them because he, as their father, had betrothed them to the one husband Christ, so that when the day of the marriage to Christ came he could present them as a

pure virgin. In verse 3, he was afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve craftily so their minds would be led astray by the false teachers from being dedicated to Christ. His fears were well-grounded because the false teachers were teaching a defective Christ, a defective Spirit and a defective gospel, and yet they were putting up with it. In verse 5, Paul did not consider himself inferior to the super-special apostle wanna-be's. In verse 6 they judged him as unskilled in rhetorical speech but Paul in no way was unskilled in knowledge, he had amply demonstrated his superiority in knowledge. In verse 7 Paul had demonstrated behavior consistent with the gospel, humility and preaching the gospel without pay. In verse 8, his support came from other churches, particularly those in Macedonia so as to keep the Corinthians burden free.

In conclusion what can we learn? First, never put up with false teaching. False teachers and their doctrine will destroy you spiritually. They will lead your mind astray from the purity and devotion to Jesus Christ. You are betrothed to one husband, Jesus Christ and you are to learn loyalty to Him through sound teaching of His word. Anything less is entirely unacceptable. The angel of light masquerades as the way, the truth and the life. Do not be deceived. Second, what matters is not public speaking ability but content. Paul was not skilled in speech but he was in knowledge. Knowledge of the word of God is a key to godliness. People who deprecate knowledge of the word do so because they don't know the word well enough to know what they are speaking heresy.

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