

23 March 2023

2 Corinthians 11:16 ~ Creeps in the Church

As we continue in 2 Corinthians 11, it is obvious that the Apostle Paul was under attack by false teachers, ministers of Satan who had transformed themselves into ministers of righteousness.

Some of the characteristics of false teachers: They are tyrants, who lord over God's people, their ministry is all about them, they are always the hero in their sermons, (not Christ), they love the preeminence, they are always criticizing other preachers, in doing so, they exalt themselves, they're greedy and covetous.

What 2 Corinthians 11 teaches us is that the gospel ministry is NOT ONLY associated with preaching and teaching the truth of God's Word, but also an earnest contending for the faith of Jesus Christ against error, standing our ground against false teachers, their false doctrines, and their attacks against the Lord Jesus Christ!

When the Apostle Jude opened his epistle, intending to write to the saints about "our common salvation", he was INSTEAD compelled to warn them about false teachers who had crept into the church! Jude 3-4, 11-13

During Paul's entire ministry, he was forced to "CONTEND" with false teachers who personally attacked him, he was also consistently examined, and questioned about his doctrine, and the authenticity of his calling.

When Paul came to Corinth, Christ commanded him to stay there and preach the gospel and that no man would hurt him...no doubt it was the Lord's will to rescue MANY captive sinners in Corinth, and to thoroughly plunder Satan's Kingdom!

You can be assured that where Christ is snatching souls from Satan's Kingdom, the wicked one is not going to sit idly by without doing his worst to destroy the work of Christ!

And as we learned last time, Paul would not concede the church to these men that had crept into the church, and that is why he was compelled to do some "necessary boasting" regarding his ministry, something BTW that he abhorred doing.

One of his "necessary boasts" was that he preached the gospel free of charge, he refused to be a burden to the church, but he also wanted to cutoff any accusations that his adversaries might use against him.

Paul's heart was that the gospel and the Name of Christ would not be hindered or damaged in any way.

And then, KNOWING THAT SATAN'S MINISTERS were active in the church, this lit a fire in the heart of Paul, 1st because he loved Christ, and 2nd, because he loved the saints... hence,

he WOULD NOT back down and leave the sheep to be attacked by Satan and his creeps...

THAT IS WHY he was so zealous TO PROVE to the church, THAT his ministry and apostleship and calling to preach the gospel to them was from Christ! 2 Corinthians 11:16-22

In this 2nd part of 2 Corinthians 11, is "Part 2 of Paul's defense of his ministry, but from a different perspective:

In (Verses 7-12), Paul wrote, I preached the gospel to you free of charge, without being burdensome, I labored more abundantly than all others FOR Christ and for YOU; NOW, HERE, in the 2nd part of this passage, Paul wrote, I ALSO suffered more than they all that you might know Christ!

2 Corinthians 11:16-17: I say again, let no man think me a fool for boasting a little more.

Paul even added that his boasting was not something that the Lord commanded him to do...and yet, as we learned last time, it was "a necessary boasting", Paul was earnestly contending for the faith to prevent these false teachers from gaining the advantage in the church.

2 Corinthians 11:18: "Seeing that MANY glory after the flesh, I will glory also". Here we come to understand that there wasn't just one false teacher in the church, there were MANY...and they were easily identifiable to those who were spiritually minded!

They glory in the flesh, their gospel and their spirit are carnal and not after Christ, and you tolerate this!

It's amazes me that you will gladly continue to suffer under these tyrants and to tolerate their oppression over you. It's as if Paul wanted to give them a spiritual slap in the face! Wake up to what's happening to you!

2 Peter 2:2-3: "And many shall follow their pernicious (destructive) ways; and because of them, the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned (false) words make merchandize of you:" Acts 20:30, Matthew 24:11

These men have "crept into the church" to bring you back into bondage to the law, and you gladly suffer it, they are full of deceit, they intend to devour and take advantage of you, they are greedy, covetous, burdensome, and oppressive toward you, YET YOU SUFFER IT TO BE SO!

They have handsome smiles, bewitching personalities, and deep pockets. They are troublemakers of the Lord's church... their character ought to be discernable to us as Christians wherever they rear their ugly heads: The Lord Jesus warned us about their sort...

Matthew 23:4-6: "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders;

but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and (THEY) love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogue, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi". Matthew 23:14: They devour widow's houses, for a pretense, or they only PRETEND to care for them while they DEVOUR what little they have. Matthew 23:28: "They outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Galatians 6:11-18

Paul then made his boldest assertion to shut down the carnal boasting of these men that had crept into the church: 2 Corinthians 11:21-22

They have tyrannized and oppressed you while they have attacked me, and in so doing they have boldly asserted their own strength, while presenting us to you as weak and contemptible...

"Howbeit wherein ANY of these false teachers are bold, (I speak foolishly), I am bold also." 2 Corinthians 11:22-23 READ

In reading this passage over and over, I get the sense that these false teachers were continually trying to prove that they were EQUAL with Paul, and as qualified to preach, as he was... But here is where Paul showed that he was NOT as they were, they may have been Hebrews like him, but he was not a disguised pretender, he was far above what his adversaries claimed in themselves to be.

He was a Genuine Apostle of Christ!

It's interesting, here in (Verse 23), when Paul wrote, "I speak as a fool", it literally means, I am speaking as one who is "beside himself" and out of my mind...and this reveals to us how much Paul despised having to boast and prove that his ministry to the Corinthians was of Christ! In (Verse 23) and following is where these creeps could not follow Paul...and that is because they did not suffer for the gospel nor for the Name of Christ, for they refused to enter upon the holy ground of truth and suffering for the sake of Christ!

In the last part of 2 Corinthians 11, Paul provided his "credentials" and the "proof" of his apostleship and calling to the church from Christ; these false teachers that had "crept into the church" could NOT follow Paul here.

They were pretenders in every aspect of their ministering, but they could not pretend here... for they would not suffer for the sake of Christ.

When Christ called Paul, and saved him on the Damascus Road, and sent him to the city to wait for further instructions. Christ commanded a faithful disciple named Ananias to go and find him... Acts 9:10-16

One of the prominent marks of a true gospel ministry is... the ministry is NOT about the preacher, but it is first and foremost about Christ, and His gospel, His commands, and His glory!

In the church of Jesus Christ, CHRIST is the Hero and Victor in every sermon, He is the Only King, the Only Lord, and the Only Saviour!

And then finally, where there is a true gospel ministry, there will be real suffering and persecution.....but it shall not daunt the faith of God's people, but they shall continue in the faith, through every trial and suffering, and they shall finally be saved, after they have endured to the end!