A close-up of a hand

Description automatically generated

Last Week:

**2nd Corinthians 10:17-18** “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.” **18**For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.”

--------------------------

Paul is continuing his letter to a church he planted in Corinth. This is a church that in many ways has excelled in things of the spirit and growth, has failed in allowing serious sin to take place in the congregation, and false teachers to come in and influence many.

These false teachers were what some versions call “*charlatans*”. Charlatans are false teachers who influence people though deception and trickery for personal gain (money, influence, power).

Paul gets very defensive and protective of this church whom he loves in a very fatherly way. Some of his words are what he describes as “foolish” and self-confidence boasting, in order to make the point that, while he may not be as slick of a public speaker as these “charlatans”, OR as renown as some of the original apostles (that he calls “super-apostles”, he still carries a deep love for the Corinthian church. He desires for them to be protected from evil, and to be warned about what he calls *“false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.”*

**2nd Corinthians 11:1 “**I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me!”

Right away Paul sets the tone for what type of chapter this will be. Throughout the whole letter he has been very open and transparent about his feelings on this issue, but never more than this chapter. He is very straightforward here about how this situation makes him feel, and how he is emotionally reacting to the prospect of this church, whom he loves, being deceived and lead stray by these “false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.”

*[ Have you ever had someone say to you in the middle of a conversation “Can I be honest with you?”*

*What a question. How are you supposed to respond to that? You can’t say “No, keep lying to me or being untruthful…” You have to say “yes”. Nd then they can tell you how the REALLY feel. ]*

This is what Paul does in this chapter. He lets them know how he is feeling viscerally, not just the words that they are expecting him to say.

**11:2-4 “**I am jealous for you with a *godly jealousy.* I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. **3**But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **4**For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.”

He compares them with Eve who was deceived by the devil in the Garden of Eden which led to the first sin. He tells them when these false teachers come to you with a different Gospel, a different Spirit, and even a *different Jesus,* they gladly receive it, and do not detect the lies and deception.

**11:5“**I do not think I am in the least inferior to those “super-apostles.” **6**I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.”

Paul really was the most knowledgeable of all the apostles on matters of scripture, but by his own admission, he was not a good public speaker. His letters were bold, but in person he was timid.

**11:7-11“**Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? **8**I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. **9**And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. **10**As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. **11**Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!”

Back when he was living in Corinth and planting the church, Paul worked as a tentmaker with Priscilla and Aquila, and lived with them, to support himself and not be a financial burden on the church. He also raised support from the churches in Macedonia (where he was now writing from) so that the Corinthians would not feel that they were under any financial obligation to him. These “charlatans” are doing the opposite. They seem to be “fleecing” the church for money and resources.

**11:12-15“**And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. **13**For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. **14**And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. **15**It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

Very bold! He is being very direct that these “false apostles” are “servants of Satan, who also comes masquerading as an “angel of light” as they do.

**11:16-21“**I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. **17**In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. **18**Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. **19**You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! **20**In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. **21**To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about.”

This is a very unique portion of scripture. Paul is being very facetious and sarcastic. It is not the typical profound, weighty, theological, rhetoric they we are used to from Paul.

He does this to make a point, to prove to them how much he genuinely cares for them, and to let them know how much he willingly, and gladly sacrificed for them, and for the sake of the gospel.

He goes into a litany of his identity as a Jew, and the suffering he experienced (most of which is recorded in the book of Acts).

**11:22-28** **“**Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. **23**Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

**24**Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. **25**Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, **26**I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. **27**I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. **28**Besides everything else, *I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.*”

Along with all the physical suffering he’s been through, every day he carries the weight of concern about the welfare, safety, and health of all the churches he planted, including Corinth.

**11:29“**Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?”

There is a saying that states *“You’re Only as Happy as Your Least Happy Child”.*

This is true for Paul as he is again speaking of the emotional weight he feels for these churches.

**11:30“**If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. **31**The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying.”

After a long litany of accounts of his suffering for the gospel, he ends the chapter with some of the things he said in the previous chapter;

**2nd Cor. 10:17** “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

And also things that he writes in the next chapter.

**2nd Cor. 12:9-10** “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, … For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Verse 31 sounded like the conclusion of the chapter he wrote *“****31****The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying*.”

Did you ever tell a story of or a joke and leave out your favorite part, then just add it at the end, even though it’s out of context?

It feels like that’s what happened here, Paul left out one story that he wanted to add to the list, and didn’t have a *copy and paste* option in his word processer, so he just added it to the end…

**Final Verse…**

**11:32“**In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. **33**But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.”<>

He is referring to an incident that happened in Damascus (the capital of Syria) in Acts 9 when he was first saved.

**Acts 9:22-25**“Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

**23**After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, **24**but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. **25**But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.”

Paul wrote all this in hopes of recapturing the hearts of the Corinthian church by telling them of his deep love and devotion to them, and to the cause of the gospel. He was willing to suffer and sacrifice for them, something the false prophets that moved in among them were unwilling to do. He wanted to rekindle their love for the Lord, so that they would return to their “sincere and pure devotion to Christ” that he mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

**2nd Corinthians 11:3-4** **“**But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **4**For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.”

It's interesting that he compares their being led astray by these false teachers, to Eve who was deceived by the Devil.

Eve’s sin was not just eating fruit, she doubted the words that God spoke to her and Adam, and believed the deceitful words of the serpent instead because of her desire to gain knowledge over trust in God.

**Genesis 3:1-8 “**Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God *really* say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

**2**The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3**but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

**4**“*You will* ***not*** *certainly die*,” the serpent said to the woman. **5**“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God, knowing good and evil*.”

**6**When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”

From that moment on, sin entered the world. This sin, which is described as “the fall of man” completely destroyed the intimacy they had with God, and replaced it with shame. Instead of having deep fellowship with him, they “hid’ from Him. It was not just a result of “fruit eating”, it was a result of distrusting the words of God, and instead trusting and obeying the words of Satan who promised to make them more knowledgeable, more enlightened, and wiser. Instead they became spiritually dead, and overcome with darkness

We all face this temptation every day. We are faced with *trusting the Lord with all our* heart OR *leaning on our own understanding.*

There are those in the world, (and sadly sometimes in the church) that present a “different gospel” that may make some sense and in some ways “seem right”

But as Solomon warns us;

**Proverbs 14:12** “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

It comes down to a decision you need to make in every area of your life. A question you need to honestly ask yourself;

**Who are you going to trust?**

* The lies of the enemy?, OR
* The Truth of God’s Word?

If you believe those who come to you preaching a “different Jesus” , a “different spirit”, or a “different gospel”, then you are deceived right along with them, and are believing the “lies of the enemy” and will suffer in many ways because of it.

But, If you trust in The Truth of God’s Word?

…And Believe in the God who sees you, the God who knows your name, the God who hears your prayers and loves you,

…then you will have fullness of joy here in this life, and everlasting life in eternity with Him *in the life to come.* <>