

I. Review

A. 2Cor. 11:7-12

- i. Paul's critics were calling him an inferior apostle because he refused financial help from them.
- ii. Yet Paul states he did no wrong by preaching the gospel to them for free.
 1. In his earlier letter, Paul had written that apostles had the right to their living by the gospel (1 Cor. 9:1-14).
 2. He chose to forgo this right so as to not put a stumbling block in the way of the gospel (cf. 1Cor. 9:12b).
 - a. He did not want anyone accusing him of preaching the gospel for the sake of money.
 - b. While among them, he chose to get his living from being a tent maker (cf. Acts 18:3).
 3. In 2Cor. 11:9, Paul stated that he did not want to become a financial burden to them while he was with them.
- iii. Paul used his convictions regarding financial support to expose the lies of his critics!
 1. They claimed to work on the same terms as he did. But did they?
 - a. Paul never charged the Corinthians for his services but these men did!
 - b. Paul boasted in the Lord but these men boasted in themselves.

II. Continuation

A. Paul launches a direct attack against his critics

- i. As we know, looks can be deceiving, especially when people put on a spiritual front to further their selfish ambitions.
- ii. Paul's critics had convinced the Corinthians that they are genuine apostles.
- iii. For these reason, Paul exposes these "super apostles" for what they really are ...

B. 2Cor. 11:13 (ESV), "*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.*"

- i. Paul describes his rivals as deceitful (fraudulent, crafty) workmen.
 1. The Greek word for "workmen" is "ergates."
 2. This word is used for missionaries...
 - a. Luke 10:2 (ESV), "*And he said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'*"
 - b. These critics were deceitful missionaries!
 3. Keep in mind that these critics were not unbelievers who maliciously plot to infiltrate the church as undercover agents!
 4. They are professing "Christians" whom Paul accused of doing the devil's work.
 - a. These men claim to be doing God's work.
 - b. But their conduct reveals that they serve someone other than God...

C. 2Cor. 11:14-15 (ESV), "*And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*"

- i. Although these critics claim to be servants (ministers) of righteousness, their conduct was anything but righteous!
 1. A servant of righteousness lives rightly.
 - a. 1John 3:7-8a (ESV), "*Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.*"
 - b. 1John 3:10 (ESV), "*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*"

2. A servant of righteousness renounces deceitful practices and do not tamper with God's word.
 - a. 2Cor. 4:2 (ESV), "*But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.*"
3. A servant of righteousness does not boast in himself but only in the Lord. (cf. 2Cor. 10:17-18)
- ii. Not only are these deceitful persons Paul's rivals, as servants of Satan, they are rivals of God!
 1. Paul's words may sound harsh, but he is trying to reveal the seriousness of the situation and wake the Corinthians up!
 2. They needed to know that listening to these deceitful missionaries is to risk damnation!
- iii. Although these men were able to deceive some at Corinth by their flattery and smooth talk, they cannot deceive God!
 1. God will judge them not according to their appearance, commendations or skillful speech, but by their deeds...
 - a. 2Cor. 5:10 (ESV), "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*"
 2. Instead of watering as Apollos did, nurturing the church that Paul planted (cf. 1Cor. 3:5-9), these deceitful missionaries sought to destroy the church's founder by convincing them that:
 - a. He was a fickle man, telling the church "yes, I'm coming" and not showing up (cf. 2Cor. 1:15ff).
 - i. Paul explained to them that he avoided coming to spare them from experiencing a second painful and sorrowful visit (2Cor. 1:23; 2Cor. 2:1-4).
 - b. He was acting like an unbalanced man (cf. 2Cor. 5:13).
 - c. He lived as an unspiritual man (of the flesh) (cf. 2Cor. 10:2).
 - d. He was weak in appearance, bold in letters and unskillful in speech (cf. 2Cor. 10:1, 10; 11:6).
 - e. He didn't care for the Corinthians because he refuses to accept their financial support (cf. 2Cor. 11:7-11).
 - i. Paul did not want to burden them so he worked as a tent maker and received support from other churches while he was among them, teaching them (cf. Acts 18).
 - ii. Instead of appreciating Paul's sacrifice and selflessness, some condemned him for refusing their financial support.
 - f. They went as far as to insinuate that Paul, although he took no money from them, deceitfully used Titus and another brother to take up a contribution professed for the poor but it was really for his personal use (cf. 2Cor. 12:16ff).

3. **And what does God say about those who cause others to stumble?**
 - a. **Matthew 18:6 (ESV), “*but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*”**
 - i. **The phrase “*little ones who believe in me*” denotes the Christian who manifests the spirit of little children (especially those who are easily influenced).**
 - ii. **Jesus says it would be an easier judgment to die by drowning than to go before God’s throne with this type of sin hanging over your head.**