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**A1406 – February 9, 2014 – 2 Corinthians 11:7-15**  
**Ministers Of Satan**

Last time we saw in 2 Cor 11:1-6 that Paul used several figures of speech to show his concern for the Corinthian's spiritual well-being and to make evident the dangers of listening to the false teachers who were vying for their minds. In verse 1 Paul begged them to continue putting up with his foolishness. In verse 2 he was zealous for them in a godly way, because he, as their spiritual father, had betrothed them to one husband, Christ, so that when the day of their marriage to Christ arrived he could present them as a pure virgin, untainted by the natural accoutrements of false doctrine (metaphor). In verse 3, he was afraid that just as the serpent deceived Eve by crafty methods, so their minds would be led astray by the false teachers from the purity and simplicity of devotion to Christ (simile). These fears were well-grounded since in verse 4 the Corinthians were putting up with the false teacher's proclamations of a distorted Christ, a different Spirit and a different gospel (irony). To tolerate these teachings would soil their wedding garments. In verse 5, while his opponents and some of the Corinthians considered Paul inferior, Paul himself did not consider himself inferior to these extra-special apostles (sarcasm). While in verse 6 they judged him to be unskilled in rhetorical speech yet Paul in no way was unskilled in knowledge, he had given ample evidence of his superior knowledge. In the end, true knowledge is what matters in Christianity, not rhetorical ability as a public speaker.

The Corinthian's "basic problem" is that they have allowed the human view point standards of their culture to shape their understanding of what a true minister should be. Their lack of knowledge of the word of God opened them up to the danger of being unable to recognize those standards as foolish.<sup>i</sup>

Today in verse 7 Paul continues to compare and contrast himself with his opponents in order to help them recognize true vs false ministers. To begin he uses another figure of speech. Verse 7 is 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 is, of course, absurd to claim that Paul committed a **sin** by humbling himself so they **might be exalted** and for preaching **the gospel** without charge. The gospel teaches us that we ought to humble ourselves in the service of others because that is what Christ did for us in His cross work. The gospel also teaches us to preach it without charge since the eternal life offered is a free gift. Paul was therefore acting consistently with the gospel. If his opponents charged him as committing sin they didn't agree with Paul's gospel. Implied is Paul's charge against them; they were the one's committing sin by not ministering consistent with the true gospel. In all point of fact, verse 4 said they taught a different gospel which is not really another, for there is no other gospel than the gospel of grace in which Christ humbled Himself to exalt us by imparting to us the free gift of eternal life. How different must Paul's opponent's gospel be since it taught them to arrogantly exalt themselves and preach their message for pay? Surely from the radical contrast the Corinthians could distinguish the true apostle from the false.

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 opposed Peter to his face because his conduct was a false gospel. He had separated himself from the Gentile believers at table fellowship when he had previously been eating with them. The message to the Gentile converts was clear; Gentile salvation is deficient until they add to faith in Christ, adherence to the dietary laws of Moses. This was a false gospel because it added to faith in Christ...following dietary laws. Peter's distortion of the gospel was so influential that it even drew Barnabas aside and he too separated from the Gentile believers. They were preaching a false gospel by their very deeds. Paul says their deeds "were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel." Therefore a false gospel is not only what is preached in word but also what is declared by deed. Here his opponent's ministry was conducted in a fashion entirely contrary to the true gospel. It was a false gospel, a sinful distortion of the truth. We should remember what I mentioned last week, "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. Both in word and deed preach the true gospel.

Verse 8 explains how Paul was supported so that he could preach the gospel to the Corinthians without charge. **I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you.** Now it should be obvious that what Paul means is that other churches did support Paul with a **wage** and that he lived off those wages while at Corinth. So Paul did accept **wages** from believers under certain conditions. He clearly 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. For "the one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him." But Paul had a number of reasons for not accepting support. First, he did not accept support when he was ministering to lazy believers. Many of the Thessalonians didn't want to work, for whatever reason, and so Paul worked to demonstrate that he who does not work does not eat! Second, he did not accept support from new believers or in evangelistic situations. Paul didn't accept money on these occasions because it ran the risk of associating money too closely with the free gift of salvation. This distorts grace and Paul didn't seek to distort grace but to clarify it. The second is the reason he had not accepted wages from those at Corinth. They were not firmly enough established in grace. In time this worked out to Paul's advantage because when his opponents came in they required wages. They probably required up-front payment before they agreed to teach. So in the end it worked out that Paul could contrast himself with his opponents in this respect. So two reasons Paul did not accept wages from certain churches are one to be an example to lazy believers and two to allow them time to get fully established in grace.

In verse 9 Paul reveals more directly the source of his support, **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.** They simply weren't firmly established enough in grace to accept financial support for them. But some **brethren** from **Macedonia** met him in Corinth and brought a gift. Paul mentions in Philippians 4:15-18 that the Philippians had supported him on multiple occasions by sending him gifts; twice while he was at Thessalonica. These and other funds from believers in **Macedonia...fully supplied** his needs for

the time he was in Corinth so that he was not **a burden** to them. And now seeing that they were still not firmly established in grace but were flirting with another Jesus, a different spirit and a different gospel, he says he would continue to not be a burden to them. This refusal by Paul to accept wages set him apart from his opponents who were requiring funds up-front even to preach. The bottom line is clear; they were in it for themselves; Paul was in it for them! Thus the true was distinguished from the false.

In verse 10 Paul continues the subject of boasting. He says, **As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia.** **Achaia** refers to the southern portion of modern day Greece, what at the time was considered Greece, but primarily composed by this peninsula known as the Peloponnesian Peninsula, and extending partially north to the mainland including Athens. It was this region that Paul says **this boasting of mine will not be stopped in.** What would he continue boasting in? His humble service and his preaching the gospel without charge in the region. **Why?** Verse 11 shows that his motives could be misunderstood by the Corinthians. They might think it was because he didn't love them. However, that was not the issue at all. Verse 12 is the real issue. **But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that purpose clause, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in this matter about which they are boasting.** Paul wanted to distinguish his ministry from his opponent's ministry as much as possible. This way they could not **regard** themselves as being the same as Paul. Then they would have a barometer for distinguishing the true apostles from the false. This was Paul's chief aim, to distinguish the ministry of a true apostle as one of humility and preaching the gospel without charge over and against the ministry of a false apostle as one of self-exaltation and preaching for money.

In many, many ways the false apostles were doing everything they could to counterfeit Paul. They wanted to appear as much like him as possible so as to be able to come into his territory and deceive his followers so as to lead them astray from Christ whom Paul originally betrothed them too. This was the work of Satan. As Paul explains in verse 13, **For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.** Far from irony Paul now speaks frankly. Ministers who are characterized by self-exaltation and preaching the gospel for money are

labeled in the most derogatory terms available. First, they are **false apostles**. A **false apostle** is one who claims to be an apostle but without the divine commission to be an apostle. Since an apostle had authority - to claim to be an apostle was a strong claim. In Paul's day true apostles were prevalent so the ability to distinguish the true from counterfeits would be essential to the well-being of the believers. However, Eph 2:20 teaches that true apostles, along with prophets, were given to lay the foundation for the church. The foundation was completed in the first century. Therefore there are no true apostles today. Hence any claim to be an apostle today would be a bogus claim. The same is true for a prophet since they too were given to lay the foundation of the church. Anyone who claims to be a prophet today is making a spurious claim. They should be rejected. However, there are still true teachers today since this gift was given for the building up of the church until its completion at the pre-trib rapture. This means it is important to be able to distinguish true teachers from false teachers. How would we identify false teachers? In much the same way Paul identified false apostles. First, through listening to their teaching. In verse 4 there are other Jesus', different spirits and false gospels. This is not an exhaustive list but certainly we should be aware that these false teachings are readily available in virtually every Christian bookstore. So we need to be wary picking up an author we don't know about or listening to a teacher we don't know about. The Bible places a high value on listening to true orthodoxy. Second, we identify false teachers by observing their living. In verse 7 Paul indicated that their lives were characterized by self-exaltation and preaching the gospel for money. These are tell-tale signs of a false teacher. If a teacher is arrogant and always drawing attention to himself and talking about himself then you need to stay away. I wouldn't put myself under that teacher because they are drawing you to themselves rather than pointing you out to Christ. Also if a teacher is constantly egging you on to support him financially I wouldn't give them a dime. The Bible is high on the value of grace giving, not giving under pressure. So to identify a false teacher you need to do three things; first, listen to his teaching and ask if its orthodoxy or strange heterodoxy, even strange doctrines are not something to dabble in as they lead to useless arguing; second, watch his life and see if he is humble or arrogant and driven by ambitious pride and third, watch his life to see if he promotes grace giving or a constant egging you on to give to his ministry. In short you detect a false teacher by both word and deed.

Second, Paul calls these men **deceitful workers**. One who is **deceitful** is one who “violates trust in order to deceive.” Paul says these men’s work violated their trust in order to deceive them into false doctrine. This is the same way Satan had deceived Eve away from trusting God and this is always the way it works.

Third, Paul says these men are **disguising themselves as apostles of Christ**. They masqueraded as **apostles of Christ**, meaning they put on a mask such that they appeared to be messengers sent by Christ and wielding His authority, but in reality underneath the mask they were sent by Satan. Verse 14 makes it all too clear. But before we look at it one final observation in verse 13. Paul is doing something in verse 13 that is a no, no in churches today. Paul is name calling. And he didn’t hesitate to name call when he was trying to protect his converts. He loved these people and he wasn’t going to allow the blind to lead the blind. He was going to point out who the false leaders were so they could be detected. Tom Constable says it this way, “In our own day when people value toleration so highly and practice it so widely even in the church, we need to learn from Paul’s example of calling a spade a spade. The welfare of those under his ministry required him to identify his critics for who they really were. We will serve our generation faithfully if we do the same. We should point out teachers who lead others into error and warn people about them if we want to keep the naive from harm.”<sup>ii</sup> This is why I sometimes point out those teachers or religions who err and where they err so that you can be kept from following error. Error is not easy to detect. Error is often very close to the truth. And to put yourself under error, even error that is very close to the truth is harmful to your spiritual health because in reality what are you putting yourself under if you put yourself under false teaching? The doctrines of demons. Every false teaching in the world is ultimately spawned by demons and propagated by those who masquerade as the teachers of light. So go think about the fact that every wrong idea you had was spawned by demons. We’ve all been infiltrated. Every one of us. You have been deceived. That’s why we have to keep our eyes on this book. Study this book. Do you study this book because if you don’t study this book, every day you don’t study this book, you’re more and more a sucker. It gets easy after a while and your focus is on the wrong things; the things in themselves may not be wrong, but the emphasis is wrong, it’s called a wrong priority system and you don’t have the divine institutions as your priority system. You don’t have your responsible

dominion before God as the most important priority in life, you don't have your marriage before God as the second most important priority in life and you don't have your family as the third most important priority in life. Even if your priority system is out of whack it's out of whack because you are deceived. The evil one has worked his way into your life and that's just an example, we could go on all afternoon looking at your finances, looking at your attitude, looking at your diet, you name it. And you are suckers for it. Why? Because you don't want to put your nose in this book. Which means what? You don't want to face God. That's what it means. You're mad at Him or you're more interested in your little sin patterns or you don't have time for Him. Whatever the excuse, the more time you spend out of the word of God the more you are deceived, the two are directly proportional.

Verse 14, commenting on the reason why false teachers try to mimic the truth. **No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.** Now verse 14 says that Satan doesn't come like the world says Satan comes; with two red horns and a pitchfork. He rather masquerades **as an angel of light**. Last time I checked **light** was good and darkness was evil. So Satan comes as good. And, of course, originally Satan was good. God created everything very good. So Satan still remembers what it was like to be good; though now he is pure evil masquerading as good. Isaiah says pride was found in Him when he pronounced the five "I wills." I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the mount of assembly, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High." This is what is at the heart of counterfeiting, being as close to something as possible without actually being that something. So the characteristic of Satan pointed out in verse 14 is that he is the master of disguise; he is the master counterfeiter. Ryrie says, "The important thing to notice is, of course, that Satan did not propose a plan which was to be unlike God but which was to be like Him. He intended to oppose God by counterfeit. From the very beginning this was his openly declared purpose." He masquerades, yet behind the mask, if we were to peer behind it, our hairs would bristle up in fear for we would see pure evil (cf possibly Job 4:12ff).

Second, the nature of Satan as an angel of light. This is what he is masquerading as. He is an angel, a spirit being, but not of darkness as most would suspect, but rather of light. Yet God is light and in Him is no darkness, not even a bit but this is what Satan presents himself to be. He appears to look very much like God. What he offers us is not readily identifiable as evil but actually appears to be good and righteous and holy. As Ryrie says again, "This is particularly important for Christians to grasp. Satan is intelligent enough to know that if he put something in the Christian's path, perhaps some temptation, which is obviously not the will of God, the Christian will be alert to it and resist it. But if he can offer something good which, though good in itself, is not the best, then he will more than likely have gained the advantage."

Now if Satan is by nature a counterfeiter and appears as an angel of light what then would we expect his children to be like? Verse 15, **Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.** Paul says it is not **surprising** because frankly, they are children of the devil and according to the principle of like begets like those who are of the devil are like the devil. The devil masquerades as an angel of light so his children masquerade as angels of light. It may surprise some that Paul says the devil and his children are not in the business of unrighteousness, but righteousness. Yet this is a plain fact on the face of the text. If Satan dealt in unrighteousness his work would be detected a mile away. Instead he works in the business of righteousness, to produce a counterfeit so like righteousness that it remains undetected as unrighteousness.

For example, it may shock many Christians to know that Satan and his messengers are the authors of morality, particularly when most people judge whether someone is a Christian or not by their morality. It is far too often forgotten that morality is not the equivalent of spirituality. Satan can author morality; morality is one of the great deceptions of Satan. Hundreds and perhaps millions of professing Christians think they are going to heaven because they live moral lives; they don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't cheat. That is all morality but that is not spirituality. Satan can spawn morality but he cannot produce true spirituality, only the Spirit of God can do that. Morality may result but there is a morality that is not true spirituality.

In conclusion, notice the end of these **servants. Whose end will be according to their deeds.** Now I take it that these servants are unbelievers. Some writers are open to the possibility that they are believers and I hold out a possibility for that idea but I prefer to think of them as unbelievers. If they are believers then they will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ described in 2 Cor 5:10 and be judged according to their deeds and rewarded accordingly. But if they are unbelievers as I suspect from the language used in this chapter relating them to Satan then they will appear at the Great White Throne Judgment described in Rev 20:11-15 and be judged according to their deeds. No matter what judgment you appear at the judgment is on the basis of deeds or works, same Greek word. So unbelievers, since they don't have faith, are already under the penalty of the first death, which is spiritual death, they are dead in their transgressions and sins. So when they appear at the Great White Throne Judgment then all they have is their deeds. Since their deeds will be far less than perfect holiness then they are insufficient to please God and will be cast into the second death, which is the lake of fire. They will remain there in conscious punishment for all eternity. They are workers of Satan, masquerading as angels of light, and they will be recompensed for siding with Satan in rejecting Christ and doing the deeds of the devil.

In summary, in verse 7 Paul uses sarcasm to point up the glaring inconsistency of opponents conduct with the gospel message. Did I commit sin by humbling myself? Did I commit sin by preaching the gospel without charge? In all point of fact it was they who had sinned by exalting themselves and requiring payment to preach the gospel. In verse 8, Paul supported himself by depending upon the support of other churches. In verse 9 he had needs but he did not burden the Corinthians because when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied the support Paul needed in order to keep from being a burden to the Corinthians until they were thoroughly grounded in grace. In verse 10, since Paul carried the truth he would not stop boasting in the region of Achaia. Verse 11, why? Was it because Paul did not love them that he would not accept financial remuneration from them? By no means. Verse 12, it was so that the false apostles would be unable to claim to be Paul's equal. This would distinguish him from them. His conduct would reveal he was the true apostle and they were false. Such men, Paul says in verse 13 are false apostles, claiming to have the authority of Christ but in reality having no authority other than their own; deceitful workers, using lies

to gain an advantage over the Corinthians and disguising themselves as apostles of Christ, masquerading as the true. Was this any surprise? By no means, verse 14, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. In all truth they were of their father the devil, they were his workers. Since the devil as a master counterfeiter disguises himself as God so they as his children counterfeited as servants of righteousness. The devil comes as an angel of light, appearing to be righteous but in all reality unrighteous, so they as his children appeared to promote righteousness as well. The end of such servants, as verse 15 says, will be according to their deeds. Since their deeds were the deeds of darkness they will be punished forever in the lake of fire, each suffering some degree of punishment relative to their evil deeds.

In conclusion what can we learn? First, our lives should be consistent with the gospel message. We should be humble because Christ humbled Himself even to the point of death on a cross. We should preach the free gift of salvation because Christ offers the gift of salvation without cost. Any arrogance or requirement other than faith on the human part is going beyond scripture and is a different gospel. Second, our antennas should be up to detect false workers. They come and infiltrate under the cloak of righteousness. We must listen to their teaching and watch their behavior. Is their teaching orthodoxy or do they bring strange doctrines to our ears. Is their conduct consistent with the gospel or are they self-arrogating? Paul warned that the attacks would come from without and from within. We need to be alert! Stand fast. Always taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Counterfeits are a dime a dozen; the truth, well, it's a rarity these days. Study and train hard, then detection of the false will be easy.

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