

## 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Sometimes we have to do things that we would not normally do or even want to do. When this is the case we often ask those involved to bear with us as we do what is necessary. Such was the situation for Paul as we come to 2 Corinthians 11.

### Summary

**In 2 Corinthians 11:1-15, Paul speaks in defense of himself and his motives and is compelled to write candidly about those who opposed him in Corinth and had poisoned minds against him.**

#### 1. Gullible Church vv 1-6

The reason for Paul having to give his defense is found in the previous section of Paul's argument (2 Cor 10:17, cf. Jer. 9:23-24).

Wise people do not boast about who they are or what they possess rather they boast about the greatness of God and His works and ways.

There is a definite change of mood at the beginning of Chapter 11.

Having been so emphatic that the glory of God should be our only aim, and that the Lord's commendation should weigh more heavily with us than our opinion of ourselves, the apostle now finds it necessary to say something about himself.

Paul has been forced to take this personal tone because of his opponents.

Paul also writes as he does because of his concern for the church in Corinth.

The idea that the LORD was married to the nation of Israel occurs frequently in the Old Testament. Whenever the Israelites flirted with the religions of the surrounding nations, the Lord reacted with all the indignation of a jealous spouse.

For a believer to allow his devotion to Christ to cool and become lukewarm whilst he gives his affections to something else is to play the spiritual harlot.

Paul portrays himself as a proud father who had 'betrothed' his daughter, the church at Corinth, to the best of husbands, the Lord Jesus Christ (11:2).

Now, however, just 'as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning' (11:3), it seemed that the church was on the verge of giving her heart to another.

She still thought that she was devoted to Jesus, but a terrible deception had taken place. The grooms had been switched and the bride-to-be did not appear to know it. Paul squarely lays the blame for this deception at the door of his antagonists (11:4).

Having gained the confidence of the church, they had subtly presented a modified Christ, 'another Jesus' quite different from the one that Paul preached (11:4).

The church had not had the discernment to know that it was being hoodwinked.

Paul's opponents were probably trying to insist that certain Jewish rituals were essential for salvation. They preached a gospel of Christ plus works.

This approach is still with us, it takes many forms, but they all end up with a diluted Christ and a 'different gospel' (**11:4**) from that which Paul preached.

Those who are taken in by a different gospel will eventually 'receive a different spirit'. Their sense of assurance, freedom and peace of heart and mind will give way to anxiety as they drift away from depending for their salvation on what Christ had done for them and began instead to depend on their own efforts. Counterfeit Christs are still with us. Only one Christ can give you security of heart and set your spirit free.

Paul's rivals had come to Corinth and caused mayhem, preaching a different gospel, that was focused upon an inferior and unbiblical Christ that would lead not to peace within, but to multiplied anxiety, yet the Corinthian believers accepted it all without raising any objection (**2 Cor 11:4**). The need is as great now as it was then for biblically educated and discerning congregations. This same note is found in **vv. 5-6** where Paul makes it clear that he did not consider himself in the least inferior to these self-styled 'super apostles' with all their polished presentation skills (**2 Cor 11:5-6**).

## 2. Free of Charge Gospel vs. 7

Paul continues with a question (**2 Cor 11:7**).

Paul's opponents made great capital out of his refusal to take money from the Corinthians. In the ancient world, you could make serious money if you were a great orator. Paul's detractors thought that you could judge the worth of a man by the size of his fee. By contrast, Paul was willing to endure humiliation and public scorn if he could make the point that the gospel was not a product to be bought with money (**2 Cor 11:7**).

Did the Corinthians make the connection that it was Paul, and not his opponents, who was being Christ-like (**2 Cor 8:9**)? Self-promotion or self-abasement, megastardom or servanthood; which attitude most resembles that of Christ (**Phil 2:5-11**)?

## 3. Concluding Warning

Paul was concerned that the church in Corinth had been seduced, led away from 'the simplicity that is in Christ' (**11:3**) to a different gospel' (**11:4**).

Those responsible were the 'false apostles' (**11:13**) who had preyed on the church.

The church, itself, was not entirely without blame, however.

It had allowed itself to be taken in by smooth-talking deceivers.

May God help us to be on our guard against smooth-talking predators who wish to turn us aside from Christ and His Gospel.