

2 Corinthians 11:7-15, "Don't Be Misled"

10.3.21

Last week I shared with you what I believe is the greatest problem being faced in the Church today. **Lack of discernment**. I'm convinced this has been the issue that has always threatened and devastated the Church, since its founding 2,000 years ago. Hosea the prophet said, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge." This lack of knowledge is: **Lack of discernment**...and it leads to gullibility. You see, Christians who lack discernment can be easily seduced by what appears to be "truth," but isn't. G.K. Chesterton said, "When people abandon the truth, they do not believe in nothing; they believe in anything." Just look at all the religions of the world that have developed through the centuries...thousands of religions and cults.

Church family, the real danger...(and has always been the real danger in Christendom), is not unbelief, but wrong belief; not the doubter, but the deceiver, not deception outside the church, but deception inside the church. Satan's greatest work is done through deception...the subtle infiltration of saboteurs who exploit the gullibility of Christians. Listen, what really threatens the church is what sounds Christian, what sounds biblical, what sounds right, but is dead wrong, because it's not 100% truth, AND if it's not 100% truth it's not actually Biblical.

Satan is so deceptive. That's why he's called "The Deceiver." He's powerful and cleverly subtle. And this is why Christians find it hard to believe THAT someone who can come across so nice and so friendly, someone who sounds so spiritual, talks about Jesus, could ever be a deceiver doing the Devil's work. Are you gullible today? I'll tell you AGAIN why and how we might be. It has to do with our knowledge of Scripture.

You see, the absence of discernment is simply a result of an ignorance about Scripture. Christians get duped because they don't know the Bible, because they can't have spiritual discernment if they aren't grounded in the truth of God's Word. And listen, (as we said last week), if you don't have discernment, you will be spiritually immature, and if you are immature, you easily be duped...be gullible...like a child. After all, who is more gullible than a child? As parents, we have to protect our children, right? We have to tell them, "Don't talk to strangers," we have to tell them what they should and shouldn't eat, etc. Right? We have to protect them from ideas that can corrupt their souls.

Church family, I know we say this so much...but please understand, the only way we can be discerning is to know the Bible. We have to read...the Bible. That's what clears the fog of deception, so we can discern the wiles of the devil and his servants. And this is what Paul was desperately seeking to remind the people of in Corinth...because so many were being duped and tricked by false teachers who had infiltrated the church. In fact, this second letter, as John MacArthur says, "is an antidote to spiritual seduction." Let's see this now as we look at our passage under the title of "Don't Be Misled."

2 Corinthians 11:7-15

⁷ Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! ¹² And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their

boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

What we just read is quite a contrast between what is false and what is true. Paul has been forced to defend his ministry and the Gospel. It's repulsive to him, but he does it for the sake of the truth.

You know church, it's really mind-boggling to me...but, here's Paul...this champion for Christ who is known throughout Asia Minor and Europe for all the miracles he's performed in the name of Jesus. He's healed the sick, and even raised the dead...literally thousands of lives have been changed...because he's brought the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to them...and yet, the Corinthians turned on a dime on him. They were being brainwashed by these False Teachers.

You would think people could look at his body of work...his life...his ministry...his track record and THEN COMPARE all of that to the lies being told about him and say, "Nah...I don't believe that stuff...that can't be true." But, you know what I've learned...people will believe almost anything. It doesn't matter what you've done or how you've lived...just let some salacious accusations be made, (that aren't even true) and so many people will go along with it and just throw the baby out with the bathwater. That's what had happened to Paul in Corinth and he's so frustrated.

Remember Paul's in Macedonia when he writes this second letter and he's heard all the accusations through Titus...and Paul says sarcastically:

2 Corinthians 11:7

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge?

Oh, the sarcasm comes through with a sharp point because Paul is the exact opposite of these false teachers. They are fleecing the flock in Corinth...they're taking money for their teaching...while Paul never took a dime. He preached free of charge, even though it was within his right to receive pay for his time and service there (18 months). **Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 9.** Let me remind us that Paul has been dealing with this all the way back in his first letter to them in 1 Corinthians 9.

1 Corinthians 9:11-15

¹¹If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹²If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. ¹⁵But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

How did Paul provide for himself? Remember, he was a tentmaker, leather worker and he worked constantly to provide for his needs and his team...Titus, Timothy, Silas and times Dr. Luke. He did all of this just to try to keep their heads above water...and yet, he's trying to preach and teach and minister and get the Gospel to people and this was such a strain on him. He worked night and day

and at times HE REALLY NEEDED HELP FINANCIALLY to keep going, and as always, the Lord provided that help, and he did so through the churches up in Macedonia, some 200 miles away. See this map...remember the churches there...



See the top-middle, Macedonia, see Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea...those are the churches of Macedonia. They were the ones who helped Paul when he was in Corinth (see middle of the map) down in Achaia. Watch how Paul describes this...in verses 8-9...

2 Corinthians 11:8-9

⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

Paul is obviously being facetious...he didn't actually rob these churches...we know that...but, the Greek word for "rob" in verse 8, is a word used in a "military context," and it means to: "plunder or to pillage." It's like stripping the armor off a dead soldier. It's a word for plundering in battle. That's how Paul felt...he felt, in some respects that the churches in Macedonia were being pillaged to help the church in Corinth. Remember, these churches up there were already very poor; and yet, they gave so generously to HELP in the relief offering for the believers suffering in famine down in Jerusalem.

BTW... when Paul was in Thessalonica, the Philippians sent him money for his work there twice and did you know that when Paul was under arrest in Rome, awaiting trial before the Emperor, the Philippians sent him gifts by Epaphroditus, and it's then that Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. The point is: those Macedonians, particularly the Philippians were amazing...the Corinthians NOT SO MUCH...and that's why he never took a dime from them. See verse 10.

2 Corinthians 11:10

¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia.

Paul was saying... "I've not taken any money from you and this will be known even in the regions of Achaia." You say, were there other churches in Achaia besides the one in Corinth? Look at this map. See Achaia...middle-bottom. Do you see Corinth?



Do you see the city beside of Corinth? Cenchreae (sin-cree-Ah). Have you heard of that city before? If you know your Bible you have. The wonderful servant of God, Phoebe, was from there.

Romans 16:1

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae,

So, there was at least one other church in Achaia that we know of. The point is...even the believers in Cenchreae (Sin-cree-Ah) would know Paul and could vouch for his character and how he took nothing from the Corinthians. **Now watch verse 11**...I can almost see Paul in tears as he penned these words...

2 Corinthians 11:11

¹¹ And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

Paul turned to the only court of appeals that he knew...because he SURE WAS NOT getting a fair trial with the Corinthians. Paul was saying: "God knows I love you, and I have nowhere else to turn." Church, that's where we have to rest sometimes when we're falsely accused and people won't believe us. You see, when the false teachers came against Paul and said, "He doesn't really love you. He's not a loving person," Paul said...I guess my only recourse is to turn to heaven and the Lord...because He knows my heart. The false teachers were despicable...saying he was unloving!

And you know what, church family, this is a common criticism of our day too. Because when you and I espouse the teaching of the truth from God's Word and we stand on that truth...and we point to what is sound and doctrinal, and point out the truth from error, well, I promise you...we're going to be deemed as unloving. Paul knew he wasn't going to get a fair shake from a lot of those Corinthians, so he said, "If you can't tell that I love you by all that I've done for you...spending 18 months with you, working my fingers to the bone...taking nothing from you...well...all I can do is to refer this to the tribunal of heaven...God knows my heart. And that's why Paul said this in verse 12..."

2 Corinthians 11:12

¹² And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.

These False Teachers had been incessantly accusing Paul of having ulterior motives for being in Corinth. Remember, they said, "He's taking up this love offering for the saints in Jerusalem suffering under famine FOR HIMSELF." And that's why Paul had to send in Titus and two other men that had been approved by the churches, to finish taking up the offering. The accusations just NEVER STOPPED! So, Paul flips the script and says...Church...you are the ones being deceived...

2 Corinthians 11:13

¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

Turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 20. I want to show you something that really summarizes Paul's teaching to all the churches that he ever wrote to in the NT (and remember, Paul wrote ½ of the NT).

Acts 20:17-38

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.^[c] ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by^[d] the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,^[e] which he obtained with his own blood.^[f] ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" ³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

What we just read is a synopsis of how Paul felt about all the churches...AND THE CHURCH AT CORINTH...he loved them SO MUCH! He was desperate to make sure that they didn't fall for the lies (like Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden). He felt like a father who wanted to get his

daughter, the bride, (the church), safely into the Groom's hands (the Lord Jesus), and the only way that was going to happen, was if the church didn't fall from within because of deception and lies.

Church family, critics today, even in the "Christian church," don't like people who speak the truth. Because if you speak the truth, it's going to feel really potent to this watered-down culture. You see, I'm convinced Paul would have a hard time if he were alive today, because the culture is very similar to his day... Today, there's very little conviction and an awful lot of tolerance. But LISTEN CAREFULLY, truth is always intolerable to those who love error and sin. The people who cry "foul" the loudest about you speaking the truth are the people who have the most to lose, because the truth exposes their error, right? They will lose their precious and protected error, and so they attack!

Dear brothers and sisters...we're not going to win the world to Christ by watering down the truth. When we do...it loses its potency and ability to save, because its not the Gospel. We're not going to win the cultural wars trying to get everybody on the same page all agreeing, while sweeping sound doctrine under the rug. Whether we realize it or not we're in the process of losing the Christian faith in America. Listen...I'm not saying Christianity is going to totally die in America...but, it's on a downward decline... No, it won't totally go away...God always preserves a remnant. But truth can get lost and almost disappear. That happened in the Dark Ages between 500 and 1000AD. During that 500-years, there were just vestiges of a remnant that remained. And that's where I believe we're headed again, IF we keep watering down the truth to please everybody.

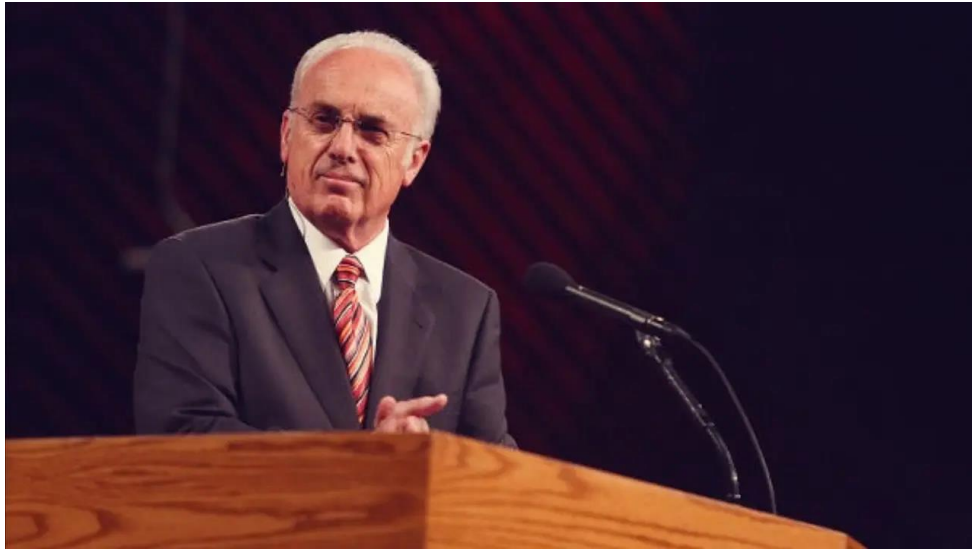
Church family, don't be misled...a real servant of God wants to hear the truth. You can tell a person's love for truth by how they respond when they're confronted with it. If it indicts what they believe and what they teach and they fight back in anger, then you know they're trapped in error and they love their sin more than truth. AND that was the false teachers of Corinth. Liars...masqueraders! See 13.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And 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.

Did you catch that phrase used over and over: "disguising themselves?" Paul said, "It's all a masquerade." It's the Garden of Eden again...it all sounds legitimate and good...but it's all about Satan's subtlety, his masquerade and lies. And that's who Satan is. He disguises himself as an angel of light. He claims to be an angel of light.

You say, "What does that mean?" Listen, DARKNESS is his kingdom, and LIGHT is God's kingdom. God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. Jesus is the light of the world. We are light, and Ephesians 5 says that we're to walk as children of the light. Therefore...Satan, knowing all of this seeks to come as an ANGEL OF LIGHT. He never comes as an angel of darkness, because he couldn't trick anyone that way. ARE YOU GETTING THIS... so he comes pretending to be part of the Kingdom of God. And that's why he has developed such seductive doctrines that sound like truth. And church, this is why Satan is so effective in a church, because he looks like the real thing. John MacArthur says this:



“Satan is most effective against the church, not when he attacks the church, but when he joins the church; not when he attacks the pulpit, but when he stands in it.” John MacArthur, Pastor and Theologian

The people John MacArthur is talking about are the ones Jesus talked about in Matthew 7.

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Church, hear this and we’re done. This not a time to be fooled...it’s not a time to be misled. It’s not a time to be tricked by slick sounding words or slick sounding people. Instead, it’s a time to know the truth and live by it, stand on it, shout it from the roof tops and rest in it. Jesus is looking for men and women and boys and girls who are willing to give their lives for His Kingdom and the truth of His Word...to not be afraid, to not back down, to not be deceived. Because one day...(if we have chosen to follow Him and live for Him)...we won’t hear the words “Depart from me,” no, we’ll hear the words: “Well done good and faithful servants, enter in to the kingdom I have prepared for you!” Don’t be misled!
