

2 Corinthians 11:1-6, “Protecting the Church”

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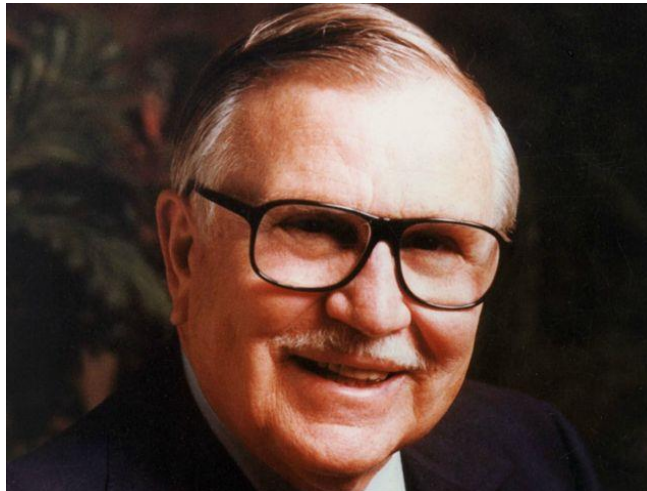
I would like to begin this morning by sharing two quotes with you from two of my favorite Bible commentators. First, Warren Wiersbe



“Satan is crafty. He knows that believers will not immediately accept a lie, so the enemy has to ‘bait the hook’ and make it easy for us to accept what he has to offer. Basically, Satan is an imitator: he copies what God does and then tries to convince us that his offer is better than God’s.

How does he do this? By using counterfeit ministers who pretend to serve God, but who are really the servants of Satan. Satan, thus, has a counterfeit gospel that involves a counterfeit savior and a counterfeit spirit. Unfortunately, the Corinthians had ‘welcomed’ this ‘new gospel,’ and not a true gospel at all. There is only one Gospel; and therefore, there can be only one Savior, the ‘Jesus Christ of Scripture.’” Warren Wiersbe, Bible Commentator

A profound quote and now this one from Dr. J. Vernon McGee:



“[In Corinth] when the Devil saw that persecution would not stop the church, he changed to a different tactic. He joined the church. He began to hurt the church from the inside. He still does that today. He attacks the validity of the Word of God, and he tries to discredit the Gospel. If that doesn’t work, he tries to discredit the man who preaches the Gospel. And that’s what he did in Corinth with the attempt to discredit Paul.” Dr. J. Vernon McGee, Pastor/Theologian

Those two quotes are hard-hitting and they go straight to the epicenter of the issue in Corinth in 56 A.D. **The issue**: The church in Corinth was adrift because they had become untethered from the

moorings of the true Gospel and were instead being led astray by a false gospel. The sad truth for this church was the fact that their problems weren't coming from the pagan culture that surrounded them...but instead, from right within the church itself. And the attack was directed pointedly at the Apostle Paul. Why? Because the false teachers knew if they could decimate Paul's reputation and character, they could destroy the message of the True Gospel with it.

Remember, Corinth is mostly a Gentile, (non-Jewish), community far removed from Israel and Jerusalem. They had not experienced Jesus Christ. All they knew about Jesus Christ and why He came and who He was and what He did was because of the apostle Paul and his team. And if somehow, Paul could be discredited...well...the church would be totally cut off from the source of God's truth.

So as distasteful and repulsive as it was, it was necessary for Paul to defend himself, not out of pride from a wounded ego, but to defend the VERY Gospel of Jesus Christ. AND this is why we have the letter of 2 Corinthians. You see, this second letter is not really a letter that deals with major theological or doctrinal issues like 1 Corinthians; instead, it's a letter that Paul was forced to write to defend his integrity, which was in essence a defense of the Gospel...AND ALL OF THIS so that he could ultimately PROTECT THE CHURCH. Hence the title this morning: **Protecting the Church.**

2 Corinthians 11:1-6

¹ I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. ⁵ Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. ⁶ Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

Today our culture is adrift, and when I say that I mean "Christian culture." It's been said: "Culture – even the Christian culture of the day– comes and goes." Think about. The way we do things in the church...our Christian culture is different today than it was 10 years ago, 25 years ago and certainly 50 years ago. And yet, the eternal truths of Christ are forever...and I might add that they're still enough to satisfy a drifting generation.

Church, might I remind us this morning, humanity was made in the image of God...and God is truth and that truth was personified in His Son, Jesus and because we are image-bearers of God, whether we realize it or not, we desire truth. We want to know the truth. The question is: will THE TRUTH be found...or will a counterfeit be accepted...because there's a race for the souls of humankind...a race that Satan seeks to win...to get to that soul before the true Gospel can get to that soul. And what he loves to do is mix truth with lies and get people to miss the mark and be doomed with him forever.

And so, unfortunately, in Christendom, what we see today is the fruit of the last couple of generations that's been sold endless attempts to make Christ cool and likable, relevant and hyper-emotional; and thus, Christianity today is more about a "feel-good" Jesus that fits the culture, than the Biblical Jesus who calls us to obedience to His commands if we truly love Him.

Chuck Colson said in his book, "*Loving God.*"



“God wants us. He doesn’t want our achievements; He demands our obedience. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of paradox, where through the ugly defeat of a cross, a holy God is utterly glorified. Victory comes through defeat; healing through brokenness; finding self through losing self.” Chuck Colson, *Loving God*

Church family, **that is the truth**...indeed, what Colson said is the essence and kernel of the TRUE GOSPEL. We find ourselves when we lose ourselves in Christ. And yet, this truth was being replaced in Corinth with a counterfeit gospel that was centered on man’s achievements not Christ’s. So, Paul was left with no choice but to address it or the church would crash on the sandbar of the false teacher’s, false gospel, which would ultimately destroy the church. So, Paul begs the church to bear with him in something he really despises doing...defending himself and the ministry...

2 Corinthians 11:1-2

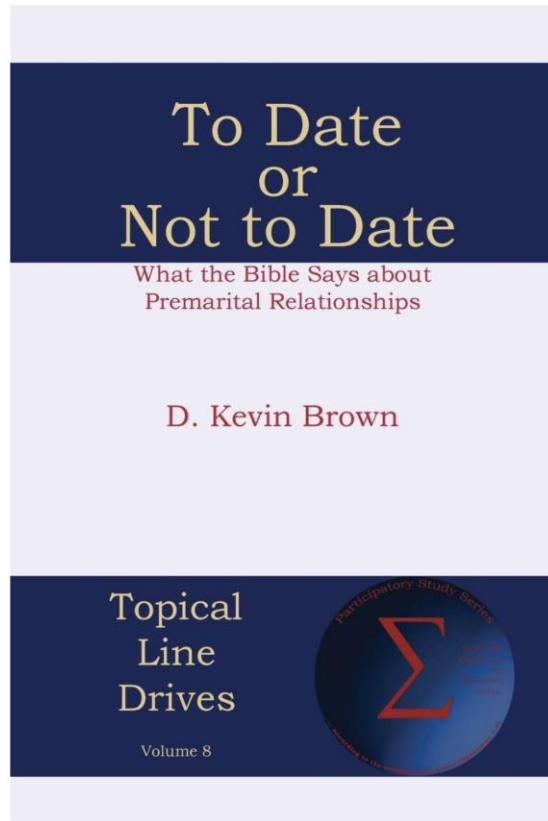
¹ I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Paul saw himself as a father to the Corinthians. We saw that in his first letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 4:14-15

¹⁴ I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Yes, Paul saw himself as a father...and as a father, he saw the church as his daughter whom he had betrothed to the Lord. And did you catch that word “betrothed” in verse 2? In essence, I wrote an entire book about that word.



“To Date or Not to Date-What the Bible Says about Premarital Relationships.” You see, the Bible knows nothing about the modern idea of “dating.” Dating is something that came about in the 1950’s with the prosperity of our country having come out of WWII and then the invention of Drive-in’s and “Happy Days.” Families could afford to buy a car for the kids and these kids would head to the drive-in and modern-idea of dating was born. Again...the problem is...this is a foreign concept in Scripture.

Paul said, “I feel a divine jealousy for you.” That’s straight from Scripture because God is a jealous God...so He accepts nothing less than total devotion. Exodus 20:5 says, “God is a jealous God.” This is why we’re to have no other gods or to make any carved images of other gods. We are to be totally devoted to God. Are you?

You see church family, this is why verse 2 speaks of “one husband” and the idea of betrothal. God is a jealous God and you see, betrothal is a much stronger commitment than our modern-day engagement. Mary, the mother of Jesus was betrothed to Joseph and that could only be broken through a certificate of divorce or death. In fact, unfaithfulness during the season of betrothal by either party could lead to death. Remember when Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, but not by him (he could have legally had her put to death), but he didn’t. That showed his trust in what Mary told him that she had not been unfaithful to him, but she had conceived by way of the Holy Spirit.

Betrothal in the Bible would normally last long enough for the groom to build a house for the bride, or even a wing on his father’s house, until he could afford to build a house of their own. He would also have to pay the father of the bride the “bride’s price.” What is that? It was an amount of either money or equal worth in land or livestock to show the father of the bride that he could support his daughter.

Think of how differently we do things today. A young man pulls up in the driveway of a young lady and he's 16 and he's not paid for the gas in the truck or the insurance and he's ready to go date this girl and they're not even close to be ready for marriage. Solomon says not to "awaken love too soon." We are doing that rampantly in our society and the sexual tension that comes with it is incredible. Verse 2 says: "pure virgin."

2 Corinthians 11:2

²For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

Think of Jesus and the Church. He is jealous for us and we are betrothed to Him and only to Him...we are to place no one or nothing ahead or above him, and one day there will be a wedding in heaven and right now Jesus is preparing a place for us, His bride.

John 14:1-3

¹"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;^[a] believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Paul uses this powerful imagery of a father betrothing his daughter to a husband to describe his love for the church at Corinth. What a deep, heartfelt love! But, even with this deep, heartfelt love...he had a huge fear...verse 3.

2 Corinthians 11:3

³But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Church family, do you want to know what **the single greatest problem in the church** is today? You might say, "Sin." Well, that's arguable...but, I'm going with this as my answer... (the same problem Adam and Eve had): **lack of discernment**. You say discernment about what? Truth and what is sound doctrine. Because you see, doctrine is truth; and truth FOUND IN THE WORD OF GOD is the criteria by which we discern. If you don't know truth, (THE BIBLE) you can't discern, and if you can't discern, you get seduced, and if you get seduced, you then become unfaithful to God and that's what happened in the Garden of Eden. **Turn in your Bibles with me to Genesis chapter 3.**

As you are turning let me tell you this: Satan is always seeking to call into question the sufficiency of God's word. It's never good enough. He always wants to distort it, take away from it or add to it. You see, where we are in this 2nd letter is really the reason why he wrote the letter in the first place. He's afraid. He's afraid they're going to fall into doctrinal error and shipwreck their faith. He was trying to convince the Corinthians that what he had delivered to them was from God, and he did speak the truth, and he did represent the true gospel, and all the miracles he performed and all the lives that were changed were evidences of this truth. Watch in Genesis 3 how Satan seeks to distort the truth.

Genesis 3:1-6

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You^[a] shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God

knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,^[b] she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

I want you to understand something very clearly, I believe Eve believed she was simply clarifying with Satan what God had said and I do not believe she recognized the serious danger she was in. Eve was deceived...and in this deception, she thought she was being given the right information by Satan, and that heretofore, she didn't have COMPLETE information. She took the bait. And that's how Satan does it: he casts the truth as error or incomplete, by creating doubt in the Word of God, and then offers his own error to replace the truth.

Satan was saying, "Surely, you don't understand what God meant. I'll tell you what God meant. Listen to me!" Do you see Satan's ploy: he wanted to wrench Eve out of the hands of God and all he had to do was to get her to question God's instructions (His Word) and accept his substitute. So, the trap is set... Satan says, "Oh no dear, you won't die...you'll be like God." And isn't that what Satan always wanted...to be LIKE GOD, which is the original Gnostic heresy...the idea that: "You will have elevated knowledge and be just like God! And she took the bait AND BANG, the trap closed on her and Adam (I blame Adam, because the roles got reversed...he should have been leading but he wasn't).

You see, Satan led her mind astray (and that's what Satan does...that's why we're to take every thought captive.) Listen, watch out in making a decision when you're confused. Because think about the way this appeared in Eve's mind: "Ah yes...if I do this, I will be like God," after all, wouldn't we all say, "Yeah, that should be our ultimate goal...the goal of our life is to be like Him, right?" So, from her standpoint, it sounded perfectly legitimate; and that's always the way, if you don't follow the Word of God.

So, the false teacher comes, and says, "We'll show you the true knowledge; we'll show you the right way. This the right way. God doesn't really mean that marriage is to be between a man and a woman for life...one man betrothed to one wife...male and female...NO THIS IS WHAT GOD meant...you can do marriage any way you want to...because God is so unkind and so inclusive...after all, love is love and God is love." Do you see how deceptive this is? And the very same thing was happening in Corinth. **Go back to 2 Corinthians 11, verse 4.**

2 Corinthians 11:4

⁴ For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

The false teachers had indeed come in and #1 preached a different Jesus, #2 they did so with a different spirit, #3 that led to a different Gospel. You see, the Jesus they taught was not the Jesus that Paul had preached. It's the same thing we talked about three weeks ago...would the real Jesus please stand up! No, these guys never talked about the real Jesus, because they had invented a different Jesus that they espoused by a "different spirit." And Paul warned Timothy about this while Timothy was in Ephesus.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.

Listen, false doctrine is propagated in the bowels of hades by Satan and his minions...and false doctrine is very powerful, very deceptive and very potent stuff and that's why it's so convincing and so seductive. So, the false teachers came in to Corinth with a #1 different Jesus, #2 a different spirit which #3 led to a different Gospel altogether. What is that gospel? It's this:

Jesus + _____

The Gospel is Jesus + NOTHING! He's enough. Jesus is EVERYTHING! Listen, there's only two religions in the world: the gospel of grace where God came to us through His Son, or every other religion, which you have to work your way to God and earn your way to heaven. Paul has been through this before with the Galatian churches.

Galatians 1:6-7

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Church, I don't want us to miss that last phrase in verse 4? Go back to it.

2 Corinthians 11:4c

...you put up with it readily enough.

Paul was saying, "YOU JUST TAKE ALL OF THIS! WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?" You know maybe somebody had given some little speech about, "Let all of us just be one. Let's have unity for the sake of unity...it doesn't matter if we agree on doctrine, throw the Bible out...let's all just love everybody and it doesn't matter what they believe or what they teach...let's not split hairs here...let's not say anything that could be even remotely controversial. (Because let me tell you church...when you use the Bible in our day and age, I promise you it's going to be controversial, because the culture is totally depraved...and the only place they're going to hear the truth is from us!) I'm all for unity but not at the expense of the truth...doctrine...the Word of God.

Paul says, "Why are you putting up with this stuff...you should throw these guys out! Yet, the church didn't and that's because they were being duped. The false teachers said Paul was inferior to them; and so Paul was forced to address them and he did so with words dripping in sarcasm:

2 Corinthians 11:5-6

⁵ Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. ⁶ Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

Albert Barnes the great Bible scholar said this about Paul:

"Critics profoundly acquainted with the Greek language remark, that while there is great energy of thought and of diction in the writings of Paul; and while he chooses or coins most expressive words; yet, there is at times a lack of flair and elegance of manner, and of the smoothness and beauty which were so much a part of the Grecian culture and the Grecian ear." Albert Barnes, Bible Scholar

It's true, it seems Paul lacked formal skill or training in speaking or in rhetoric. Remember...

2 Corinthians 10:10

¹⁰For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.”

Yes, Paul’s personal appearance was unimpressive. Yes, he lacked aura and persona and charm; and yes, it seems that he was not overly attractive or impressive physically. No...he wasn’t someone that would necessarily draw a crowd with his oratorical skills. But Paul didn’t want to be cute or clever. He wasn’t trying to be culturally relevant. He just wanted to speak to the power of God and point to the cross of Christ. And that’s precisely the point...it wasn’t Paul’s power that was getting the job done, it was God who was doing the work through Paul’s weakness... God exhibited His power through this humble man and that meant God got all the glory and all the credit for what was being accomplished throughout Asia Minor, Macedonia and now Achaia.

Paul was weak and so are we. We’re all weak. We all have struggles...but, the Father loves us and He sent His Son to us and Jesus paid to the Father, the Bride’s Price...that price was His life. And so, Chuck Colson had it right:

“God wants us. He doesn’t want our achievements; He demands our obedience. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of paradox, where through the ugly defeat of a cross, a holy God is utterly glorified. Victory comes through defeat; healing through brokenness; finding self through losing self.” Chuck Colson, Loving God
