



**Dr. Jimmy Stewart | July 20, 2025**

*Sermon | Godly Self-Denial*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 11:1-15 (NLT)

**Spotlight:** The local church is strongest in the broken world when its leaders and members walk in humble, truth-filled self-denial for the name and glory of Christ Jesus and the protection and proclamation of His Gospel.

**Secondary Scripture:** Luke 9:24

**Summary:** In this passage, Paul passionately defends the integrity of his ministry and calls out the deception of false apostles who preach a distorted Gospel. He is not concerned with personal reputation or comfort—his only aim is to guard the church from being led astray. He speaks of his "divine jealousy" for the local church in Corinth, comparing their spiritual vulnerability to Eve's deception in the garden. Paul models godly self-denial, rejecting recognition, wealth and applause to proclaim the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In a broken world filled with self-promotion, self-centeredness and self-preservation, Paul demonstrates that the church must be led by those who choose to deny self for the sake of Christ. His life points us to the greater example of Jesus, who "emptied Himself" for our salvation. The local church is greater than the broken world when it embraces the humility, sacrifice, and truth-centered passion of Godly self-denial.

## **I. Pure and Undivided Devotion (vv. 1–4)**

### **2 Corinthians 11:1-4**

1 I hope you will put up with a little more of my foolishness. Please bear with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. 3 But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. 4 You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of Gospel than the one you believed.

- Paul's protective love for the church mirrors God's desire for undivided devotion.
- The danger of a “different Jesus,” a “different Spirit” and a “different Gospel.”
- Pure motives in Gospel Ministry.
- *Illustration:* A concerned shepherd watching for wolves—not out of paranoia, but love.

## II. Gospel Ministry Denies Self (vv. 5–11)

### 2 Corinthians 11:5-11

5 But I don't consider myself inferior in any way to these “super apostles” who teach such things. 6 I may be unskilled as a speaker, but I'm not lacking in knowledge. We have made this clear to you in every possible way.

7 Was I wrong when I humbled myself and honored you by preaching God's Good News to you without expecting anything in return? 8 I “robbed” other churches by accepting their contributions so I could serve you at no cost. 9 And when I was with you and didn't have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be. 10 As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one in all of Greece will ever stop me from boasting about this. 11 Why? Because I don't love you? God knows that I do.

- Paul refuses compensation and status to preserve Gospel integrity.
- He is accused of being less than the “super-apostles,” yet he serves more truly.
- *Illustration:* A missionary who sells all and lives simply to reach a remote people group.

## III. False Ministry Exalts Self (vv. 10–15)

### 2 Corinthians 11:12-15

12 But I will continue doing what I have always done. This will undercut those who are looking for an opportunity to boast that their work is just like ours. 13 These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

- False teachers disguise themselves as servants of righteousness but preach a Gospel that appeals to the flesh.
- Satan masquerades as an angel of light—deception often looks spiritual.
- *Illustration:* Counterfeit currency—looks close to real but has no value; only expert testing exposes it.

### ***Life Application Sermon Questions:***

1. What does it mean to have a “godly jealousy” for others’ spiritual well-being? How should we lovingly guard those we disciple or lead from spiritual deception?
2. Where in your life are you tempted to prioritize recognition, comfort or applause over Gospel truth? What spiritual practices help you die to self daily and live to Christ consistently?
3. How can the local church today be deceived by “another Gospel” that is attractive but empty? What safeguards can your church put in place to remain Gospel-centered?
4. Paul modeled Gospel sacrifice. What is one tangible way you can practice godly self-denial this week? In your time, in your finances, in your service—where can you say no to self for the sake of Christ?
5. How can we distinguish between true and false spiritual leaders today? What qualities does Paul highlight in godly leaders and how can we look for those in ourselves and others?
6. Ask the Spirit to reveal areas of pride or self-centeredness that may hinder your witness.
7. Identify one way you can help protect someone you love from spiritual deception.
8. Make a deliberate sacrifice this week (time, money, comfort) for the sake of the Gospel.
9. Affirm a humble, faithful leader in your church whose quiet, self-denying work often goes unnoticed.