

PROTECTED FROM MASKED DECEIVERS

2 Corinthians 11:1-15

The Fiddler on the Roof reminds us of the old world model of arranged marriages.

Tevye, the father, took very seriously his responsibility to find appropriate husbands for his five daughters. He wants to look out for their welfare.

Paul assumes that fatherly responsibility to care for his spiritual children.

He has promised them to the best possible “spouse”—to Christ Himself.

He wants to protect them from anything that might get in the way of his desire to present them, as a beautiful, spotless bride, to their husband.

He strives to protect them from anyone who would divert them from that goal.

Thus Paul’s defense of his ministry turns to his attempts to protect us from false teachers who want to divert our attention from Christ, our bridegroom.

FEAR OF THE IMPACT OF FALSE TEACHERS 11:1-6

Paul isn’t concerned about the human evaluation of his ministry,
But he *is* concerned that due to popular misconceptions,
his message might be rejected,
while *the false teachers’* message may be accepted.

He wants to protect the Corinthians (and us!) from that error.

Paul’s appeal to them to bear with him 1

He considers this kind of defense foolishness.

He doesn’t want to talk about himself.

He just instructed us that, if we’re going to boast, we should boast about what the Lord has done—NOT what WE have done.

He doesn’t want to “toot his own horn!”

Yet they’re forcing him to talk this way.

They're already accepting others who come with this kind of arguments.

They accept the foolishness of people who brag about their own accomplishments.

They follow those people when they lead them down the wrong path, even when they propose false doctrine.

Paul's jealousy for them 2

His jealousy is not a self-centered jealousy.

This isn't an egotistical defense of his kingdom and his reputation.

It's a jealousy that comes from God.—it reflects the heart of God

It's a jealousy that seeks our welfare.

Paul is acting as the father of the bride.

He has birthed them—He loves them.

He arranges her marriage to the best possible bridegroom.

He brings us to Christ to make us one with Him.

—united, as a bride with her husband.

He wants to present us to Christ as a pure virgin.

As an honorable father, he hopes to present her to the Bridegroom, as a pure virgin, undefiled by the pollution of false doctrine.

He's concerned lest she be seduced by others and led astray.

Notice that the focus of the truth is CHRIST.

Others want to distract our attention from Him.

False teachers want to focus attention on themselves.

Or, perhaps more insidious, they want to focus attention on US.

We come to God, not on the basis of our own efforts,
But on the basis of what *Christ* has done.

It's about HIM; it's not about US!

We're united with *Christ*.

We're HIS bride.

God sees us in *Christ*.

Satan's messengers want to focus our attention on ourselves—on what we have done—or haven't done.

Such false teachers are still around.

They still try to take our attention off of Christ
and focus our attention on what WE have done.

Paul's fear for them 3-4

Paul continues with the image of the marriage commitment.

As a spiritual father, he has promised their hand in marriage to Christ.

But he is afraid that someone will seduce us.

That we will be led astray

That our commitment to Christ be defiled by another attractive lover.

He's afraid Satan will lead us astray

from a sincere and pure commitment to Christ.

Satan is experienced at leading people astray.

He distracted Eve and led her astray. 3

Satan didn't *force* Eve to obey him.

He deceived her, with a cunning deception, and she willingly followed.

He's been leading people astray for thousands of years. 4

Satan introduces **a different concept of JESUS.**

Cults change what God tells us about His Son.

They may proclaim the *name* of Jesus but change his attributes.

Their "Jesus" is NOT the Jesus of the Bible,
the Son of God, that Paul preaches.

Satan offers **a different Spirit** to empower our lives.

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus;
 He leads people to acknowledge Jesus.
 He produces godly fruit in people's lives.
 The spirit that energizes Satan's work is a self-centered
 spirit that tells us we can do it ourselves—by our own
 efforts.

Satan changes the gospel and uses **a different “gospel.”**

“Good news” that really isn't *good* news at all!

The Gospel offers eternal life to those who trust Jesus.
 Satan's “gospel” sounds good—“*You can make it!*”

—it's what people want to hear! —and many buy it!

Satan's message: we must be *good enough* to earn our
 way to God.

We'll *NEVER* make it by that standard!

We'll *never* be good enough!

Paul is concerned because people are so easily “seduced”
 —deceived—by that kind of teaching.

[To establish his “parental” right to speak firmly to them, Paul
 affirms:]

Paul's calling as an apostle 5-6

One of Satan's favorite tactics: [Ironsides:] “If the Devil cannot
 induce people immediately to give up some line of truth, then
 he will attack those whom God has sent forth to defend that
 truth. He tried to make Paul's converts lose confidence in
 their teacher, in his spirituality, in his understanding of the
 truth, in order to discredit his ministry.”

The false teachers attack Paul's credibility, calling into
 question his credentials and his leadership abilities. “*He's
 not fit to lead them!*”

He is NOT inferior to the most eminent apostles.

He's no less an apostle than anyone's favorite apostle.

**Apostolic authority is a matter of divine accreditation;
 NOT human association.**

This may be a reference to the “superiority” some attribute to the 12.

Those who present this view suggest that Paul’s apostleship is less valid than the others.

Later he calls the false teachers they follow “false apostles.”

That’s probably a clue as to whom he means here also.

NIV—identifies these false leaders as “super-apostles”

—perhaps a label the dynamic false teachers attribute to themselves.

We hear a lot these days about “Super-delegates”—people with a disproportionate influence over the political convention.

Paul may refer to some who present themselves as powerful “apostles” with a disproportionate influence over the church.

A movement is afoot in our day to label some prominent church leaders “apostles,” in order to attribute to them the authority to speak for God as His representatives in a unique way.

—to assume the prerogatives God placed on the apostles.

Whenever the church has done that, these “dynamic leaders” eventually focus attention on themselves and their ideas, rather than on Jesus.

Paul’s desire is that we be united to JESUS

—that HE be the focus of our attention—NOT people.

He may not be very impressive in his public speaking skills.

Not only did they attack his credentials, they also belittled his speaking ability—he wasn’t a very impressive speaker—he wasn’t very dynamic.

You wouldn’t invite your friends to hear him speak.

In 1 Cor., Paul affirms that he doesn't *want* to imitate the world's speaking style.

Our message isn't based on human wisdom or powerful speakers.

Our message is based on the "foolishness" of God.

It doesn't make sense to the world's great thinkers and speakers.

Our message is God-given and God-empowered.

Though they may not be impressed by his dynamic speaking ability, that doesn't mean that he doesn't know what he's talking about!

He still speaks for God and faithfully proclaims the truth.

He is NOT unskilled in his understanding of spiritual truth.

Paul is more concerned about communicating the truth of God than about impressing people with his speaking skills.

He demonstrates God's work through him in every way.

He doesn't leave much out: [lit.] "*in every way*," "*in all things*"

It is evident that he is God-taught and God-empowered.

Everything he does demonstrates that God is working through him.

[Paul addresses those who refuse to respect him because of his]

REFUSAL TO ACCEPT FINANCIAL SUPPORT 11:7-15

"If he's really "worth his salt," he'll charge appropriately!"

The false teachers received a healthy reimbursement for their trouble.

Like former presidents who receive hundreds of thousands for the privilege of hearing them talk about themselves.

Like famous preachers who receive thousands for speaking.

Paul came without accepting anything—he must not be worth much. "*You get what you pay for!*"

His question:

Is it a mistake to preach the gospel without charge? 7-9

He humbles himself—offering to preach without charge.

It's worth it to be able to minister to them.

He didn't have to receive money to do it.

He exalts them.

They are of great value to God.

Therefore it's more important to minister to them than to earn pay.

They might misunderstand that grace—thinking “*you get what you pay for!*”

Paul doesn't want to be accused of seeking personal gain, nor be a burden to them,

Therefore, he refuses their financial support.

Some interpret this attitude to mean

Paul doesn't have the same authority others have.

What they don't realize:

the pursuit of financial gain is a mark of *false teachers*.

He “robs” other churches in order to serve them.

He doesn't mean he stole from them.

The people gave to support his ministry in other places.

Other churches are paying the bill, so that no one there can accuse him of doing this for the money.

He refuses to burden them.

His commitment:

To continue preaching the gospel without charge. 10-15

Paul will continue to serve without charging them for his ministry, so no one can accuse him of seeking financial advantage.

His resolve 10, 12

His motivation 11

He isn't motivated by lack of love or lack of concern for them.

He's motivated by his love for them.

His purpose 12-15

He is determined to cut off the impostors –to stop their proud claims.

They want to be accepted as leaders. –to be treated like Paul 12

They are false apostles. 13

They are deceitful workers.

They look like true representatives of God. 13c

They are impostors—they dress up in disguises to mislead people.

They follow their leader. 14-15

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 14

False teachers disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. 15a

They're NOT ministers of righteousness.

They disguise themselves to look like servants of righteousness.

People may be educated and credentialed, dressed up to look spiritual, and stand up to teach God's Word, while still being Satan's messenger.

False teachers face God's judgment. 15b

WHAT PRINCIPLES FOR OUR LIVES DOES PAUL REVEAL?

1. God's people must evaluate what the preacher says on the basis of God's Word, **NOT** on the basis of popular public opinion.

Our preaching shouldn't be based on the latest polls to tell us what people want to hear!

That's what politicians do—that's not what God's messengers ought to do.

There will always be false teachers who present a different gospel.

We must be on our guard, examining teaching in the light of God's Word.

Don't be led astray by impressive, polished speakers who love to lead God's people away from the truth by telling us how great we are, by proclaiming a message of self-help, as if we can somehow do it ourselves.

Our commitment is to Christ; only HE provides the way to God and to eternal life.

"Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but has eternal life."

2. Church goals should not be evaluated based on church growth, but based on the growth of God's glory.

It's not about our numbers, or our reputation;

It's about proclaiming God's Word and doing what pleases Him.

Churches are becoming focused on modern management strategies, on church growth techniques and self-help messages.

Rather than focus on the content of the gospel, we fall into the trap of thinking that our success is based on the preacher's power of persuasion.

"Everyone loves a great preacher!"

So we focus on our natural abilities and boast about our numbers.

Duane Litfin: Paul's "efforts are neither results-driven nor audience -driven, they are obedience-driven."

Paul distanced himself from professional orators and entertainers of his day.

He focuses on our commitment to the bridegroom,
whether people are impressed or not!

3. Our enemy is a deceiver.

**His purpose is to get our eyes off of Jesus.
He wants to seduce God's people away from our
commitment to the bridegroom.**

Unless we understand his deception, we'll be gullible,
predisposed, like Eve, to fall for his tricks.

The Corinthians thought they were sophisticated;

In reality, they were prey for Satan's seductive tricks.

Satan uses people who *look like* ministers of righteousness
to distract us from our commitment to Christ alone.

We must evaluate their message by the truth of God's Word,
NOT by the impressiveness of the package it's wrapped in.