

2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Introduction

The apostle Paul was doing something he would not normally do or even want to do. He hoped that the believers in Corinth would be patient with him whilst he did so.

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 Revisited vv 1-6

Paul had been forced to take this personal tone because of his opponents and because of his concern for the church in Corinth. The apostle portrays himself as a proud father who had 'betrothed' his daughter, the church at Corinth, to the Lord Jesus Christ (11:2) but now, it seemed, that the church was on the verge of being deceived and giving her heart to another. Paul's rivals had come to Corinth and caused chaos, preaching a different gospel, focused upon an inferior and unbiblical Christ that would lead not to peace within, but to multiplied anxiety, yet the Corinthian believers seemingly accepted it all without raising any objection.

2. Free of Charge Gospel vv. 7-12

Paul's opponents made great capital out of his refusal to take money from the Corinthians. The apostle's detractors thought that you could judge the worth of a man by the size of the fee he could command.

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 (11:7).

Paul writes of having 'robbed other churches' to 'serve' the Corinthians (11:8).

Having already sent a generous sacrificial gift to support the suffering Christians in Judea, they were now funding Paul in his mission labors in the province of Achaia. In the ancient world, once you received money for your services, you became the client, and the person who funded your work became the patron.

Paul had no wish to let the Corinthians think that they had bought his services and that he was now answerable to them. Far from being ashamed of the fact that he had not taken money from the Christians in Corinth, Paul felt that in the circumstances, this was an honorable course of action, a cause for 'boasting' (2 Cor 11:10).

Paul's critics seemingly were telling the church members in Corinth that they ought to feel insulted that he had not taken their money. They had seemingly alleged that, 'He

can't think much of you.' This is what lies behind Paul's vehement protestation that he loved them far more than they would ever know. Even if they did not recognize the genuineness of his love for them, God did (**2 Cor 11:10-11**). Paul meant to continue as he had. He wanted 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' (**2 Cor 11:12**).

The same warning must be given today. Beware those who charge large fees and have large expenses demands to preach the Gospel.

3. Candid Words vv. 13-15

Paul closes this section using far more vehement and direct language about his detractors than he has done so far. These men were charlatans, 'false apostles' and 'deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ' (**2 Cor 11:13**).

It is terrible to think that someone might reach such a depth of cynicism as to attempt such deception, and equally terrible to think that genuine Christians could be taken in like this but it still goes on.

Paul copied his Master. He was sacrificial, willing to suffer for the sake of the people he loved. The apostles detractors also copied their own master: just as Satan comes in the guise of 'an angel of light' (**2 Cor 11:14**), so 'his servants also transform themselves into servants of righteousness' (**2 Cor 11:15**).

The most dangerous people to the church are not the open enemies of the cross, but those who masquerade as its friends and take millions into hell with them, having convinced them that all is well. A terrible fate awaits such people (**2 Cor 11:15**).

4. Concluding Lessons

Paul was concerned that the church in Corinth had been seduced, led away from 'the simplicity that is in Christ' to a different gospel'. The culprits were the 'false apostles' who had preyed on the church, but the church itself was not entirely without blame. It had allowed itself to be taken in by smooth-talking deceivers.

Discernment is very much needed today and this requires well-taught congregations.

Another thing that stands out in this passage is Paul's freedom from covetousness compared with his opponents. He was moved by the self-emptying love of Christ.

If Christians could learn to be like him, those who sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel Ministry might be less given to disappointment and disillusionment and other believers might support such people appropriately.