

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Marks of a True Apostle: Truth, Love

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 11:10-11

Code: 47-76

We return in our study of Scripture, this morning, to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. And I take you back to a study we began last week in verses 7 through 15 under the title, "Beware of Gullibility." One of the most pervasive marks of fallenness is gullibility. To put it in the word of P.T. Barnum, "There's a sucker born every minute." And that's...that's another way of defining total depravity...there's a sucker born every minute.

Everyone who is born is highly seduceable. Everyone who is born into this world is highly gullible. Everyone born into this world is highly temptable, easily deceivable because they are alienated from the life of God. They are cut off from the truth. They do not know God, cannot know God, cannot understand the things of God, they are under the territorial occupation of the prince of the power of the air, they are under his plans and programs as orchestrated by his minions, his demons, his fallen angels and they simply bring their craved and fallen gullibility into an environment of seduction. And that seduction basically is the story of their lives. They are beguiled from beginning to end. All humanity is beguiled. All humanity is deceived and deceivable. And all the suckers who have been born into the world, all the seduceable fallen folks, all of us, are incessantly preyed upon by every scheme imaginable.

It's amazing how Satan and his demons concoct the schemes of the cosmos, the system and how depraved men and women assist in the deceptions. And they are everywhere...everywhere, at all levels of human society, whether you're talking about morality, whether you're talking about sociology, whether you're talking about education, whether you're talking about politics, whether you're talking about religion...there is deception everywhere. And as I have pointed out to you, the great conflict on the face of the earth has always been, is and always will be the same...and it is this, God is the source of truth who cannot lie, He has revealed His truth through the Word of God. And on the other hand, you have Satan who is the father of all lies who is perpetrating lie upon lie upon lie ubiquitously across the face of the globe and having great success because of human gullibility. The great battle is between the truth and the lie.

And humanity, even as educated as we are in our society, continues to manifest it...a great degree of gullibility. In fact, I was just reading one illustration of it in an article in the "Wall Street Journal" this week. It is quite an interesting editorial actually in the Journal that says, "Out of a 192 million American adults, the rest being under 18, out of 192 million American adults at least 157 million of them are by one institute or one survey or another diagnosed as somehow deficient mentally." A 157

million out of 192 million of us are nuts, the article said. In fact, the head of the editorial was something like..."Everybody in America is nuts...or nearly everybody." And how can it possibly be that the statistic is about 80 percent of Americans have been clinically defined as possessing some debilitating syndrome...and it went on to define all these myriads of syndromes, all by the National Health Institute, or The Mental Health Organization, or some foundation or some institute and they gave all the statistics and all the statistics added up to 80 percent of Americans.

Now some of the syndromes that some people have...and by the way, once you've been diagnosed as this, there is a cure, for a fee. So you understand why the gullibility is as so serious because it's going to cost you...it not only wrongly assesses your true condition but then it costs you to try to solve a problem that's misdiagnosed to begin with. People line up behind these supposed diagnoses and supposed solutions. The gullibility is just enormous. And if it isn't one lie, it's another.

As I told you last week, it is absolutely true what G.K. Chesterton said, "When people decide they will not believe the truth, they do not believe in nothing, they believe in everything and the gullibility is almost incalculable." One of the signs, again I say, of depravity is gullibility and that's what sets someone up to be seduced in the kingdom of darkness. And we come against that gullibility with the truth of the Word of God and the gospel to save people, to rescue people from satanic deception. This is an ideological war. This is a war about truth and lies and gullibility is of severe implications in our world as we can see all around us. I mean you can see it in the most pagan society in the kinds of religions that they concoct and the kind of patterns of life in which they live, which are so far from the truth. They have been seduced into them by Satan himself.

Now, that's fine for the world and we understand that. What is tragic, however, is the gullibility of the church. Spiritual men have the mind of Christ, Paul says in 1 Corinthians. We have been given not only the mind of Christ but we have been given the mind of God through the revelation that we call Scripture. And as we come to understand the Word of God we reduce our gullibility. It may be that we will be tempted to sin, but it will not be because we were deceived. It may be that we will be seduced by our human impulses and desires into a sin, but it will not be a witless sin of utter and abject folly because we don't comprehend truth. We have the Word of God. We can know the truth. That's why God gave us His Word and He gave it to us to protect us from deception...to protect us from being led astray, protect us from the wolves in sheep's clothing who come and tell us lies and seduce us. Jesus came into a Jewish culture almost all of which had been seduced. Their gullibility had led them into believing in a works/righteousness system which damned them all. And they were led, of course, by the most erudite of all, the philosophers and theologians of their time who were known as the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Religion in itself is no protection if it's the wrong religion, it's just another seduction.

But we know the truth and we believe in the true God, the living God who created the universe. We believe in the God who revealed Himself in Scripture. We believe the God who was incarnate in

Jesus Christ, died on a cross, rose again, ascended to heaven, will return. We believe in the trinity God, the God of Scripture. We believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace through faith alone. We believe in a literal interpretation of Scripture and still the church has demonstrated gullibility, seducability.

Turn with me before we look at 2 Corinthians 11 back to Acts 20. Acts chapter 20, you have in Acts 20 a sampler of Pauline teaching on the church. You could read through the various epistles of Paul, he wrote 13 of them in the New Testament, and you could read through the epistles of Paul and you would basically pull out all of the teaching that is here in Acts 20. This is kind of a sampler. It's kind of a brief summary of much of what he said in his epistles. But it's very interesting because it is a summary, it's very focused. And because it's very concise, it gets right to the issue. And I want to take you immediately to the issue in verse 27 of Acts 20.

Paul says, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God...the whole purpose of God...the whole plan of God," is what he's talking about. "I have told you everything you need to know about the plan of God. I have unfolded to you the truths of the Kingdom, the truths of the promises, the truths of the covenants of God. I have unfolded you all of the saving message, everything you needed to know about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the gospel. I haven't held anything back."

In other words...I've given you a foundation. You are the church. He's talking here to elders, by the way, not to immature believers, but to the elders of the church at Ephesus who met him in a place called Miletus as he's journeying back to Jerusalem. And he meets them there and talks to them. And he says, "I've given you the foundation, I've laid the foundation and it's solid. I haven't held back anything. You have it all." Remember he had spent three full years with them, teaching daily...during the day and at night for three years. And he had literally given them an intense seminary education in those three years. So he said, "I've given all of it to you."

But immediately, notice verse 28, "Be on guard." In spite of this there is still a vulnerability. You are still seduceable. There is still subtleties with which Satan can play on your mind and your understanding. "Be on guard, but less likely for you because you have this solid foundation and more likely for the flock. So while being on guard for yourselves, be especially on guard for the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, or rulers, or leaders. And your job is to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

A high price was paid for the church, the blood of Jesus Christ. The church now belongs to God, purchased by Christ for Him. You are given the responsibility to guard and protect and oversee the church. And the assumption is, I mean, if you have to guard them, you have to guard them from something, what are you going to guard them from? Verse 29, "I know that after my departure, as soon as I'm gone, salvaged wolves will come in from...will come in from among you not sparing the

flock." Immediately when I'm gone, immediately the wolves are going to come and they're going to come in here with one goal in mind, devastate the sheep, destroy the sheep, tear them to shreds, devour them. Satan is going to send liars, that's what wolves are, false teachers, false prophets. Satan is going to send the liars to tear into the church. And...verse 30, this is even more notable..."From among your own selves will men arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them."

Now basically what you have here in this sort of synopsis of life in the church, this sort of sampler on teaching regarding the church is very simple pastoral role laid out. You learn sound doctrine, you become astute in sound doctrine. You cover the plan of God from front to back. And then you take that into the church and you guard your own life against the subtleties of Satan and against sin and all of that that's going to corrupt you and then you guard the flock because as soon as you begin your ministry, you can be certain that from the outside and from the inside the lies will begin. They'll come in every way imaginable. People will come into the church to seduce people and draw away disciples after themselves. They'll do it through books...in our day they'll do it through tapes and radio and television, every possible, conceivable means they will do it.

Verse 31, Paul tells us, "Therefore, be on the alert." That's just part of doing pastoral work is to be on the alert and here's a model, Paul says, "Remembering that night and day for a period of three years I didn't cease to admonish." The word is "warn," noutheteo, I didn't cease to warn each one with tears.

You see, here was...here was a compassionate man who tearfully was warning people about lies. The church seduceable, it is gullible because it is made up of children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. And until they become young men, strong in the faith, they are highly gullible. Not until the Word of God dwells in them, 1 John 2, so they know sound doctrine, are strong in the faith, do they get beyond that gullibility of children. And so Paul tearfully, passionately, with a heart that was literally swept up with emotion in this protective role for three years wept his way through guardianship over that church. Now he's handing it off to the Ephesian elders and you can understand how concerned he is because he wants to make sure that they're as careful in their guardianship as he has been.

And to what does he commend them? Verse 32, here's the key. "I commend you to God," obviously to the sovereign purpose and protection of God, "and to the Word of His grace." That just means the Scripture. The only hope for protection is that God will fulfill His promise to care for His church and that His church would grow strong the Word. "The Word is able to build you up, it's able to bring you all the way to the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Now there you have simply a summation of ministry. Ministry is teaching the foundation of doctrine so that people know the truth, so that they can withstand the error and the lie. That's the way it is in the Christian experience. We have to live in this world and we have to be impervious, as it were, to

the subtleties and nuances and deceptions of Satan in order that we can preserve and proclaim the truth. That's what ministry is. And the pastor is a proclaimer and teacher of truth and a guardian. And part of the role of teaching and leading is, of course, disseminating truth so we understand the full counsel of God and the other part is teaching people discernment so that they can be protected so that the truth can be guarded so their lives can be guarded in order that they might be effective in the evangelistic enterprise which is the reason we're here.

Well, let's go back to our text. The absence of discernment, the absence of discernment is simply a result of an ignorance about Scripture...ignorance about doctrine. If you don't understand the Bible, you can't have discernment because discernment is simply the application of biblical knowledge. And if you don't have discernment what you'll have is immaturity. And where you have immaturity you have gullibility. Who is more gullible than a child? As parents we have to protect our children. We have to protect our children from...we teach our children...don't talk to strangers, don't go so far away from home, etc., etc., etc. We have to care for them and watch everything they do, everything they eat, every friend they make, every acquaintance. We have to protect them from devices and instruments and tools and things around the house that can cause them great bodily harm. We have to protect them from ideas that can corrupt their souls. We are in the guardianship business as parents, and the same is true of the church. The only way we can be discerning is to understand Scripture. If we're discerning then that means we're applying Scripture to the seductions of the enemy and we're understanding what they really are. But where you don't have discernment you have immaturity. Where you have immaturity you have gullibility. Where you have gullibility you have effective seduction and you have tragedy in the lives of people.

Such was the case in Corinth. You know that. That's exactly what Satan was doing in Corinth. He sent in false teachers, they brought a bunch of lies. They started to seduce the Corinthian believers. Some of them bought into the seduction and they started down a path demonstrating gullibility even after they had been taught for three years by Paul...or for two years by Paul, in Corinth it was nearly two years. Even after all of that exposure to the counsel of God they were still a church that had children, spiritual children in it. Some had come to Christ later on and hadn't really gotten that foundation solidly laid down and they were, no doubt, the immature ones who were a part of that defection. It's also true that someone could be around the church for a long time but if they're sinful in their life, they never really do take in the Word of God even though they hear it with their ears and they too remain immature and gullible.

So Paul is addressing this issue in Corinth. And thankfully, for all of us for all time, it's here in print so we can also apply it. Paul in chapters 11 and 12 compares himself with these false apostles. And he wants the Corinthians to see the difference between him and them. That was very important to him. The world was full of, and still is, false apostles. It was then, it is now, it always will be and, in fact, the closer we get to the return of Christ, the more of them there will be, right? Read the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 24, false apostles, false Christs will increase and increase and increase closer as

we come to the return of Jesus Christ. So they're always going to be around and more of them as time goes on.

So Paul here wants to defend himself as a true apostle against the false. And he wants to establish some criteria. And he does it in a most interesting way. When it really comes down to what he's saying in verses 7 to 15, he is saying the contrast is basically made on three fronts. There are three areas that you need to look at to determine a true apostle from a false one. First is humility, second is truth and third is love.

And, folks, I tell you, if you ever want to evaluate whether a man is a true representative of God, whether he's a true preacher of Christ, whether he's a true servant of the gospel, you need only look at these three areas. Is there manifest sacrificial selfless humility? Is there truth running top to bottom in what he is and what he says? And is his life characterized by sacrificial giving love toward others? Those are the notable distinguishing marks of a true apostle. And where you have a false apostle, you will see self-centeredness and pride, you will see equivocation or ignorance, or compromise on the truth, and you will see abuse and the use of people for their own personal ends. Herein then the criteria are defined.

Now let's go back to verse 7 to 11 and finish that up this morning, we only have a little time left. In verses 7 to 11 Paul defines the true apostle, and he does it in a simple way by referring to a certain issue between himself and the Corinthians and that was the matter of not receiving money from them. You remember that it was his policy, and I told you it last time, it was his policy that when he was planting a church he took no money from the people in that city and that place.

Why? Well, he didn't want to make the gospel chargeable. He didn't want the gospel to come with a price and then be accused of selling the gospel. Secondly, he didn't want to be a burden to those people. He didn't want to put some economic burden on them if they perhaps would have difficulty meeting. And thirdly, he would take no money because he wanted to be distinguished from false teachers who were mercenary to the core. And it was just standard stuff. All the philosophers and teachers, religious teachers, logicians or guys into rhetoric and oratory, all the popular public speakers who stood in the marketplaces and plied their professional public speaking trait took money. In fact, you remember I told you last time that usually their fame was equated with their fee. The more they charged the more astute they were, or the more astute they were the more they charged. In other words, they sort of put a price on their...on their head and by that price were therefore valued. The greater philosophers charged a greater fee...the lesser, a lesser fee. It was standard stuff for those public speakers to make their living by their speaking.

And while Paul certainly had a right to do that, as any servant of the Lord does, he makes clear of that in 1 Corinthians 9, when he went into a new area he used to do that because he didn't just want to be another public speaker charging a fee as if he was one of the many. And so, he didn't charge in

order to eliminate a hindrance to the gospel, in order to prevent from being a burden, and in order to distinguish himself from the mercenary motives of false teachers. He willingly humbled himself.

Now further, he humbled himself to a very common level. He humbled himself to the place of a common worker. He was a leather worker. He made tents. He sewed things together. He stitched leather together, a very menial non-intellectual task, a very humble, very simple task. He spoke in plain speech, in fact they said he was an unskilled speaker, his speech was contemptible. False teachers literally assaulted Paul on the basis of his weakness as an orator. There was nothing compelling about his persona, that there was nothing...nothing about him that made you attractive to him as a man, as a leader, he had none of the charm and charisma. And as a speaker he was contemptible and he was an amateur. And the very fact that he didn't charge for it, they twisted and perverted to say...Well, the reason he doesn't charge for it is because it isn't worth anything and so he's valued his own speaking...if he was worth anything he'd charge you for it...but he is an unskilled speaker and so he doesn't charge and he knows it.

So they twisted even that against him. But he was willing to take on a common menial job of working with labor and making tents in order not to allow for any criticism of his motives, so no one could say he was in it for the money, so no person to whom he was presenting the gospel would say, "Well, yeah, you get a fee when I do this." So no one would feel that he was a burden to them.

Sure there were some side effects and the false teachers picked up on it and said, "Well sure, he doesn't charge anything because he's worthless...and he doesn't charge anything, secondly, they said, because he doesn't love you and he doesn't want any gifts from you. And if you started to give him anything, with those gifts came obligation and he doesn't want any obligation with you, he doesn't want any relationship with you." They actually said, "It's evidence that he doesn't love you that he doesn't accept gifts from you." We'll see that when we get down to verse 11.

But that didn't bother Paul, really. His custom was to take no money from the churches he was planting and founding. He would receive gifts of money from other churches that were already planted, already established that would send him gifts, as we noted. He received some, it tells us, in this very passage, but not from the church in which he was ministering.

So he had decided that he was going to take this position and he was going to stick with it. And the false teachers finding it very hard to find some place, some Achilles' heel to accuse him decided to tack...to attack him on the basis that he didn't take any money. They attacked him, as I said, one, because that would be the value of his preaching, he was worthless so that's why he didn't charge; two, he didn't want any gifts from the Corinthians because that would obligate him to them and he really didn't love them and he didn't want any obligation, he didn't want any strings. That's what's behind this passage.

Now he demonstrates his humility, let's look at verses 7 to 9 and review what we saw last time. "Did I commit a sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? Is it sin that I did?" That's pretty obvious that that's not the case. "I robbed other churches...metaphorically...taking wages from them to serve you." In other words, other churches supported me so I didn't have to charge you. "And when I was present with you and was in need," even at a time when he was there and in need, he said, "I was not a burden to anyone for when the brethren...that would be Timothy and Silas...came from Macedonia, they being...they fully supplied my need." They brought an offering from the church at Philippi and perhaps from Thessalonica. "And in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you and will continue to do so."

He is resolute about this. He would gladly work as a leather worker and a tent maker to support himself and anybody ministering with him. He wanted to trust God. He wanted to shut the mouths of the critics who would accuse him of mercenary motives. He wanted to be completely different than all the other speakers and teachers and religious leaders all over the place who charged a fee. And I remind you, always, always, always true and godly teachers are free from the love of money. They seek nothing but to be faithful to the Lord. They seek nothing but to be faithful to His Word. They seek nothing but to serve His flock. They will receive gifts, as Paul received gifts. They don't seek them. They don't ask for them. They don't beg for them. They don't plead for them. They don't charge for their services. They are free from those things. In fact, in order to be an elder, according to 1 Timothy 3, you have to be free from the love of money. According to 1 Peter 5:3 you had to be free from filthy lucre, from the desire for money. Selfless humility was a crucial witness to Paul's validity to an apostle and distinguished him clearly from the false teachers.

Furthermore, if I can just add a note to this, it was his deprivation, it was his weakness, it was the fact that he was so sacrificial and humble and had so little that he considered to be the measure of his greatness...the measure of his greatness. Follow this thought. If, in fact, he was no great speaker, if in fact he never used clever words of human wisdom, as he says in 1 Corinthians, if in fact he did not come with great oratorical ability, if in fact he spoke simple straightforward messages of the cross, if in fact he had no impressive persona and was not a remarkable person at all, if in fact all of that is true and everywhere he went churches were founded and hundreds and hundreds of souls were turned from darkness to light and the power of God was expressed, then the conclusion is it couldn't have been him. True? It must have been...whom?...God and therein was the badge of his authenticity. If he is the great orator and if he is the great polished speaker and if he is the magnetic and charming and charismatic leader and if he is the guy who draws the crowds, then he is the guy who gets the credit. And that's why Paul relished his infirmities. That's why he gloried in his suffering. That's why in chapter 12 he says, "I will rather boast about my weaknesses than the power of Christ," in other words, there is only one way to define Paul, whatever is going on around that man is not him. That was all you could say. And that's exactly what he wanted. That's fulfilling his desire

in chapter 10 verse 17, if you're going to boast you're going to boast in the Lord. There's only one possible commentary on the life of Paul that makes sense and that is that God was in him powerful, right? And that was fine with him, gladly humbling himself.

In fact, I'll give you a little sneak preview, later on in chapter 11, one of the great portions, look down in verse 23, here he compares himself with the false apostles again and in verse 23 he says, "Are they servants of Christ? I more so." Oh really, Paul, you're more of a servant than they are? On the basis of what? Does he say...I have a greater education? I have a finer education under Gamaliel, the great Jewish teacher, I have met Jesus on the Damascus Road, etc...I know theology, what does he say? "I am far more a servant of Christ than they are because I've had far more labors, far more imprisonments, I've been beaten more times, I've been whipped more times, etc., etc., etc., etc." The point being this, if there's any question about where the power comes from in my life, just look at my life. If the power of God wasn't in me, I couldn't survive this. If the power of God wasn't in me, I'd have bailed out long ago, right? And if I'm not a skilled speaker and I don't have clever words, then you explain what's going on.

You see, the true servant of God is always glad to be regarded as somewhat...somewhat a mystery because people say, "How could that come from him?" And that's the veracity of his true character coming forth. That's the real story that it's not him. It's God in him. Paul was humble and glad to be humble and the humbler the better and the more abase the better. And when he's talking about himself he says the most remarkable things, he says, "I am the foremost of all sinners," 1 Timothy 1:15. The foremost of all sinners.

He calls himself a wretched man in Romans 7. He calls himself a nobody in 2 Corinthians. All the better cause then there's no explanation for his life except a divine one. The Corinthians should have known that. If he was everything that the false apostles said he was, and still so powerful, it must have been God. And he says...I'm not going to change anything, I'm not going to change anything, I'm going to continue to operate in weakness, I'm going to continue not to take anything, I'm going to continue to work with my hands to support myself and everybody around me and I will receive gifts from other churches but not from you because I do not want to be caught up in the same measurements that everybody else gets measured by.

Well secondly, let's get to the main deal this morning. Secondly, the true apostle of Christ, the true preacher is marked by truth not just humility, the truth. Verse 10, and here again this is by way of implication. "As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine," what he means by this boasting is this...this affirmation that I will not receive any money from you, "this boasting of mine will not stop in the regions of Achaia." Paul says...I'm not changing anything, I don't care what you say I'm not changing anything with regard to my policy.

But he starts it out with this statement, "As the truth of Christ is in me..." My, what a statement. My what a statement. I suppose there are a lot of preachers who could say the truth of Christ is in my mouth. There are a lot of preachers who could say the truth of Christ is in my head. But Paul means to say when he says the truth of Christ is in me is that he operates from the inside out with absolute integrity. Literally the Greek says, "By virtue of the truth Christ is placed in me." It wasn't just that he proclaimed truth, he lived it. It was his driving motive. He was devoted to the truth not just in his voice, not just in his mind, but in his heart. That's what integrity is, folks. A lot of people know the truth in their head, talk the truth in their mouth but don't have the truth in their heart and it shows up. Paul was a man who had the truth on the inside and it started on the inside and came from the inside out. It was his mission in life to proclaim the truth of Christ but it was his life to live it. He was convinced that he had to be on the inside what he preached on the outside.

You know, if you go back in this epistle to chapter 4 verse 2 he says, "We've renounced the things hidden because of shame. We've renounced hypocrisy," he means, hiding things in your life, you know, you're one thing with your voice and you're something else. Or one thing with your behavior on the outside and something else on the inside. We've renounced that stuff, that hidden shame. We're not walking in craftiness or deceit. We're not adulterating the Word of God. "But by the manifestation of truth, commending not only our message but ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Paul is saying...I not only preach the truth but I do everything I can to live the truth. I've renounced hypocrisy. I live the truth. It's part of the fabric of my life.

Chapter 6 verse 7, he defines his ministry here in verse 5 as beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors sleeplessness, hunger. In verse 6 he says, "My life is lived in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the Word of truth." The man lived the truth. He lived it. You can look as close as you want to get, you can peel back everything you want to peel back, you can look as tightly and closely and intimately at the life of the Apostle Paul and what you would see is exactly what you heard when he spoke. It was him.

Chapter 7 verse 14, it goes even to the practical issues of life. "If in anything I've boasted to him about you," talking about Titus, "If I've told you anything about Titus, anything I've reported about Titus, I was not put to shame, I'm not ashamed of what I told you about Titus, but as we spoke all things to you in truth so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth." What I told you about Titus was true and what I told Titus about you was the truth, I speak the truth. He spoke the truth when it came to Scripture. He spoke the truth when it came to life situations. The man spoke truth. That's integrity because it was in him from the inside out.

Oh the Corinthians may have regarded Paul's policy as evidence of his weakness that he didn't take any money because he wasn't worth listening to. But it was just a way for him to show his weakness

but as weak as he was he was a man of integrity, he was a man of integrity.

Now just a little note, going back to our text. He says in verse 10, "This boasting of mine about my policy, I'm not changing it, it's not going to be stopped in the regions of Achaia." This is interesting. Achaia is the southern part of Greece, the northern part being called Macedonia and then the little Peloponnesus peninsula there on the south called Achaia with the little canal now cut through so that those two sections of Greece today are separated. But in the southern region of Achaia he indicates here in the regions of Achaia which would lead us to believe that there was more than the church at Corinth established in Achaia. And we do know from Romans 16:1 that there was also a church at Cenchrea and Phoebe, you remember, was a servant of that church.

So, there were other churches there. We don't know how many, at least that one. But back in 2 Corinthians 1:1, you wouldn't remember all the way back, that's been years ago, it says, "To all the saints who are throughout Achaia." Now this indicates to us that there were Christians all around Achaia, all through that area the gospel had gone, people had been converted and church...at least those two churches were planted and there were believers in a lot of other areas. It also indicates to us that the influence of the false apostles was probably stretching all around Achaia also and he didn't want them to find anything in his life that they could use against him and mercenary motives would have been something they would have used. And so he is very careful to say...I'm not changing this policy anywhere throughout the regions of Achaia...indicating that their influence had spread through Achaia and at least one other church existed in Cenchrea and perhaps more than that.

Paul was true to his convictions. The man was a man of absolute integrity. And, beloved, that's how you mark out a true preacher, a true apostle, a true servant of Christ, they are demonstrating selfless humility, they seek not to become rich at your expense. They are truthful to the core. You can look at their message, you can listen to their message, you can look at their life, you can look at their home, you can go as intimately as you want into who they are and you will see the truth. That's integrity...that's integrity, an unwavering devotion to truth in doctrine, personal life as well.

Now that brings me to the third characteristic, and again it just flows out of a narrative here in verse 11, and I've got to give you a little background, but I'll read the verse. "Why? Because I do not love you? God knows," and the translators added "I do."

Now what is he saying here? What does this mean? Remember what I told you? The fact that Paul was a tent maker could be embarrassing. I mean, if you're around town and you meet one of your friends and your friend says, "Well, I understand you're following this new teacher." Well yeah I am, his name is Paul and he's a remarkable man, he's a man of God, he speaks the truth of God. "Really. How much does he charge?" Oh he's free. "Oh? Free? How does he support himself?" Oh, he's a leather worker. "What? That's embarrassing, that's slaves work. He doesn't belong among the elite philosophers, he doesn't belong among those who are known by their rhetoric and their oratory,

he's...what?...he makes tents? He works with his hands? He's not an intellectual."

It could be a little embarrassing to have to say that you have a free teacher who made tents, worked with leather...beneath the dignity of a great philosopher, of a great orator...beneath the dignity of an apostle of Jesus Christ...they might say. And worse, the false teachers had spun it to mean that...Well, he doesn't want any money from you because that means strings...and by refusing your money and your sustenance he shows his disdain for you, he is not interested in any obligations to you, he doesn't want any connection with you. He doesn't want any strings between you and him because he really doesn't love you. He's not interested in you and your life.

That's the spin they put on it. So Paul answers, "Why? Because I do not love you?" And he refers to that accusation. "Because I do not love you? Do you really believe? What more evidence do you need? I mean, go back and remember in chapter 1, I told you about all my suffering and all my affliction and in chapter 2 I reminded you of the letter I wrote with affliction and anguish and tears. And in chapter 4 I told you about my afflictions and that I was being crushed, or afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, dying, as it were, every day on the brink of my own death, living with death every day being beaten, imprisoned." In chapter 6 and now in chapter 11 he's going to go over more of it in chapter 12, and you mean to tell me that that doesn't demonstrate love?

Over in chapter 12 look at verse 15. Why did he do this? "I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. I'll be glad to give my life away for you, I'll die for you to get you the gospel. Now if I love you the more doing that, am I to be loved the less?" It was absolutely unbelievable that he could love them so much and so sacrificially, asking nothing from them and giving himself away for their sake and somehow they could be gullible enough to believe that it was an indication he didn't love them. That's the subtlety of Satan's deception.

He doesn't know where to turn. He could have said...Well, do you remember...remember the times that I came to you after the riot? Remember the suffering? Do you remember the plots? You remember my life was on the line? Do you remember how many nights...night and day I taught you the Word of God? Do you remember how many all nights I taught you the Word? Do you remember when I was there when you were suffering? Do you remember when I was there when your child died?

I mean you could go over this and over this and over...he doesn't do that. They already have that information. "Is this what I get for loving you the more? Less love?" He has only one court of appeal in verse 11, Because I don't love you he's left with nothing but this, "God knows." I have nowhere to turn. God knows. I mean, you ultimately rest in that when you're falsely accused. When the false teachers come against you as they would against Paul or any other true teacher and say...Well, he doesn't really love you, he's unloving, he's not a loving person...which is a common criticism you get

today of true teachers because they're definitive, because they're clear, because they're doctrinal, because they sort out truth from error they deemed as unloving.

How do you answer that question? Paul had nowhere else to go, he just said, "God knows...God knows." Later on in chapter 11, look at verse 31. Sometimes you have nowhere to appeal but there, "And the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever knows that I am not lying."

There's something kind of sad about that, isn't there? I mean, it's like you don't have enough information, all I can say is God knows...and that's the highest court. God knows. What more can I say? God knows my heart.

Repeatedly through this epistle he says that he ministers in the sight of God, in the sight of Jesus Christ. He appeals to heaven. God knows I love you. It's like Peter, Peter was trying to convince Jesus that he loved Him and finally in frustration he said, "You know all things, you know I love You." The English commentator Philip Hughes has a great paragraph on this, this is what he writes, "There were no depths to which these intruders were unwilling to descend in order to alienate the Apostle from his dearly beloved children in the gospel. Hence Paul's question, 'Why? Because I do not love you?' and his protestation, 'God knows,' it is a real cry from the heart. Words and explanations and justifications are out of place when the relationship of love involved is that between a father and his children. Before God both he and they need no persuasion that this accusation is a cruel and damnable falsehood. No man on earth had a warmer and more devoted heart than the Apostle Paul. Love was the impulse of his whole life and ministry as Christ's Apostle. And so he leaves this shocking and monstrous insinuation that he has no love for them to the judgment of God who knows and will vindicate the truth. And in so doing, he also leaves it to their consciences," end quote.

Well in a marvelous narrative passage in those few verses Paul teaches us the character of a true apostle. He is marked by a relentless humility, a relentless and uncompromising devotion to truth from the depths of his soul right on out and he is marked by a sacrificial love to the degree that he'll give himself away for others. So when you're trying to assess whether one is a true man of God, that's where you look...humility, truth and love. Now next week, the sad counterpart...the proud, lying, abusive false teachers and how they're defined for us in this great text. Let's pray together.

Father, what a wonderful morning this has been. How our hearts rejoice in the truths that we have celebrated in song and in prayer and in Scripture reading and now in the Word. What a great, great day. And, O Lord, it's not yet done, we have yet to look forward to tonight in our study of Romans 8, a baptismal service and more praise to You. Thank You for all You're doing. And, our Father, we thank You for the truth and we ask, O God, that You would set the truth strongly in our hearts that it may be our protection from gullibility so that we cannot be easily deceived, but can be spiritual young men, strong in the Word, who have overcome the wicked one...as 1 John 2 identifies them. We want that strength so that we can then be the protectors of the children who are tossed to and fro until they can

grow to maturity. Keep Your church strong and raise up many humble, truthful, loving shepherds. For Your honor we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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