

Marks of a False Apostle

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 11:12-15, 20

Code: 47-77

Well, this morning we return to our three-part study of 2 Corinthians 11:7 to 15, a most notable and in part familiar portion of Scripture, under the subject, "Beware of Gullibility." We've been suggesting to you that people's gullibility has caused them to be deprived of their money, sometimes their health and more importantly their eternal souls. Phoney health promises, fake charities, scams and schemes of all kinds succeed at impoverishing people in every way imaginable. And when it comes to religious and spiritual deception, fallen man's gullibility is especially manifest because the most clever, the most adept, the most seductive and the most powerful deceiver is the devil. The devil is far more clever, far more cunning than any human being. And so his schemes are the most seductive and in the end the most damaging. The schemes of Satan are all of those spiritual lies that he promotes through his seducing spirits and human false teachers.

This is something we need to understand. For all of the subtleties of human deception, for all of the clever schemes that men devise that cause people to fall victim and prey and become impoverished, there are a thousand more that the devil has devised far more subtle, far more intelligent, far more clever, far more seductive that draw men's souls into bondage to the issues of hell.

Nowhere, frankly, is gullibility more severe and more common than in the religious area. That is because that's where the most subtle deceiver in the universe plies his trade. And nowhere is gullibility more a problem than in the church. The church which is to be the bastion, the standard, the foundation, the pillar, the ground of the truth, the church which is to be able to draw the plumb line, to set the standard for what is right, what is straight, what is true, the church which is to be the essence of discernment, the church which is to propagate truth in the midst of all the seduction and all the deception, when the church becomes gullible and loses its ability to do that, then all is lost. So again I say, nowhere is gullibility more a problem than in the church because when it occurs in the church then there is no standard against which to measure the rest of deception.

Where you have ignorance in the church or indifference toward doctrine, you have consequent immaturity and consequent shallowness which leads to a lack of discernment which opens the door wide to Satan's deceptive seductions. For Satan to succeed, all that is necessary is that people not understand the truth. And if they have not the truth, then they have no capability to discern the error. And if you couch the error in the right language, if you put it in terms that sound familiar and refer to God and Christ and the Bible etc., the seduction is even more potent.

Now as we have been seeing, this is exactly what was happening in Corinth. In fact, it happened all through Paul's ministry. Everywhere he went Paul's teachers dogged his steps with the singular purpose really of going in where the truth had gone and undoing what the truth had done and bringing in error in its place. And Paul's teachers were everywhere Paul was not long after he left. That was exactly the case in Corinth. He went, he preached, he established the church, he even sent back a couple of letters to direct and correct the church and it was after that the false teachers came in and upset the church and began their seductive satanic efforts.

In the passage in which we are now involved, verses 7 through 15 of 2 Corinthians chapter 11, Paul is doing what is very necessary. He is contrasting true apostles with false apostles. He is contrasting himself as the true man of God, spokesman for the Lord with the false apostles and false teachers who had come into Corinth claiming to be apostles of Christ and messengers of God who were not. And the contrast that he makes is built around three areas, or three categories...humility, truth and love. Those are the three marks of a true apostle, a true prophet, a true teacher, a true preacher...humility, truth and love will mark their lives. They will be humble in the sense that they will be self-effacing. They will be sacrificial. They are marked by truth and they are void of deception and it is truth that they live for not only in what they say but in their own personal lives. It will be truth not only from them but truth in them. And they will be marked by love. That is to say they will be far more concerned with others than they are themselves, and they will be willing and eager to spend themselves for the sake of others because that's the character of love, it gives sacrificially.

True teachers, just mark it out, look at their life, do you see manifest evidence of humility? Do you see manifest truth and manifest love? Those are the things that mark them. Really there couldn't be a better summation of the character of true apostles and true teachers than those three virtues.

Now we remember in verses 7 to 11 how Paul discussed these three marks of his own life, sort of allowing them to come out in the language which he expressed in this section. Let me read it to you. "Or 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 there something wrong with me? Is this sin because I didn't take any money from you when I came? And that was his policy, remember, when he went into a city to preach he refused to take money from the people he was preaching the gospel to, from the people with whom he was planting and founding a church. He would take no money at all, he didn't want to make the gospel chargeable. He didn't want to become a burden to them. And he didn't want to be viewed as just another in the long line of philosophers and orators and teachers who plied their trade in the marketplace and put a price on their heads and took fees from their students. He didn't want to be like that. He wanted to be distinct from the run-of-the-mill teachers who attached their teaching with a fee. And he didn't want to be chargeable to them, he didn't want to make the gospel mercenary, he didn't want people to think he had a mercenary motive, he didn't want to be a burden to the folks to whom he was ministering, so he took no money. That was his standard policy and

that's what he did in Corinth.

So he says, "Have I committed some sin?" Why? Because the false apostles criticized him for this. They wanted him to take money because they wanted to be seen as equal to him and I'll say more about that later. But he didn't and so he attacked that in an effort to intimidate him and kind of force him to have to take money. They said, "Well, he doesn't take money from you because he can't put a price on his teaching because his teaching is worthless." In other words, he's valued it himself by charging nothing because it's worth nothing.

Secondly they said he doesn't want money from you because money means obligation and he doesn't want any obligation with you because he doesn't care about you. They lied, obviously, but it was an effort to intimidate Paul into taking money. He wouldn't do it. So he said to the Corinthians, "It's no sin, is it, if I haven't taken anything?" In fact, verse 8, "I robbed other churches, metaphorically, taking wages from them to serve you. And even when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone. Even at a time when he ran out of resources, apparently he ran short even though he was working with his hands, doing his leather work and tent making to earn his own way. He didn't have enough and at one moment when he didn't have enough, the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need and in everything I kept myself from being a burden on you and will continue to do so.

Mark it down. He wouldn't take money from a church where he was ministering, but he would take money from another church who sent it out of love. And that's what happened. That was his standard policy. This was an evidence of his humility. He worked with his own hands in a common menial job in working with leather and making tents to earn his own way so that he wouldn't be equated with these false apostles who put a price on their teaching, so that he wouldn't be viewed as mercenary, so that he wouldn't put a price tag on the gospel, and so that he wouldn't be a burden to these new churches that were just getting started. He was a man of humility, self-effacing humility, sought nothing for himself.

Secondly, he's characterized by truth. Verse 10 he says, "As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia." I'm not going to change my policy anywhere in Achaia. I'm going to continue to be able to say I haven't received anything from anybody in this region as the truth of Christ is in me. That's the little note that reminds us that he not only preached truth but he lived it. He had integrity. It wasn't just the truth of Christ from him, it was the truth of Christ in him. He had convictions and he lived by those convictions. He was marked out by truth.

And then in verse 11...why? "Because I do not love you?" They accused him of not loving them and that's why he didn't take money because he didn't want a relationship or an obligation. He says, "God knows I do."

The true apostle, marked by humility, truth and love. And that was just a brief review. Let's come to the second section here, the false apostles. And here we're going to see what characterizes false apostles.

Three things...pride, deception, and hate...pride, deception and hate, or abuse...false apostles can be discerned. They can be defined. You can pick them out of a crowd. First of all, by their pride, verse 12, "But what I'm doing I will continue to do." I'm not going to change my policy and he knew that the false apostles were trying to put pressure on them by saying he didn't love the Corinthians by saying he had valued his ministry as nothing and if he wanted to put a value on his ministry, he ought to take some money. And if he really loved them, he'd take money from them. And this was a pressure they wanted to put on him because they wanted him to change his policy and take money because they took money and it didn't look good. But I'm going to do what I've been doing, I'm going to continue to do. Why? "That I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded as just as we are in the matter about which they're boasting."

What does that mean? I am not giving them any opportunity to be regarded as we are. And what does that mean? What is he saying there? Well, we know that these men were proud. We know they were arrogant, self-seeking, greedy men. All false teachers are. Back in chapter 10 verse 12, they were so bold as to class and compare themselves with themselves, they commended themselves, they made themselves the standard. And they boasted beyond measure, verse 13. They over extended themselves, verse 14. Paul wouldn't do any of that. They called themselves the most eminent apostles. They called themselves...that's in chapter 11 verse 5...they called themselves again the most eminent apostles, chapter 12 verse 11 Paul refers to that, the word was "super-apostles."

So here they come into town. We're from Christ. We're from the church in Jerusalem. We are the true apostles. We are the super-apostles. We are the most eminent apostles. We are the measure. We are the standard. And they commended themselves that way...boastful, arrogant people they were.

And Paul addresses their pride by his policy of non-remuneration. "What I am doing I will continue to do." What is that? Not take money. Why? Because it was the objective of Paul's rivals to be elevated to the level of a true apostle as many people thought Paul was, and he really was. They wanted to be up on the level of those who thought Paul was an apostle. They wanted to be considered equal with Paul.

And how were they going to be able to be considered equal with Paul among those who believed that Paul was a true apostle? How could they succeed in being considered equal with Paul if Paul wasn't taking any money? If Paul...if Paul took money, then they could claim...Well, we just operate the way

Paul does, we're on the same level he's on." So they wanted to induce Paul to take money. They wanted money and they wanted to be considered equal with Paul. Because Paul wouldn't take any money, they saw that as sort of maintaining inequality and it put them in a very embarrassing position. Paul's stand, in fact, was an acute embarrassment to them. Here he was preaching the gospel gratuitously, asking nothing, and here they were persisting for money. And, of course, all false teachers do that.

Well Paul wasn't going to be deceived by their vices. He wasn't going to be forced and intimidated and manipulated into taking money and violating his policy. He would...he would do nothing in his own conscious mind, any way he could he would avoid giving them any level of equality, so he would do nothing to remove the very evident inequality apparent between his and their practice with regard to money.

Now, they had an option. If they really wanted to be equal with Paul they could also minister for nothing. Not an option. Their own option was to bring about equality by refusing to take any pay for their services, but that was unthinkable and unacceptable and always is to false teachers because they're in it for money.

If you look at the pride of false teachers in the Scripture you see it in a number of ways. If you go back to Jeremiah 5:31, you don't need to do that, you can write it down if you want to look it up, if you were to go back to Jeremiah 5:31 you would see that false teachers were characterized by authoritarianism. They tend to be domineering, dominating, over-bearing personalities, always right. And if you don't agree with them, you are really in some serious trouble. You will receive their curse. They are authoritarian. They don't want to be questioned. They are right. They come from God. They have the final word. That's typical of false teachers and that's a manifestation of their pride. Whereas the true teacher is always humbling himself under the Word of God and seeing himself as merely a servant of that truth.

Secondly, if you study the Bible you will find that false teachers are identified as to their pride by presumption. They tend to be presumptuous as well as self-willed. And Peter writes about it as well. They tread into sacred things, just bliss-fully making havoc out of truth and things like that for their own ends.

Thirdly, according to Isaiah 29:16, they're idolatrous. That is to say they want to be worshiped. They want to be set up as little gods and have everybody bowing down to them. They want to be the big hero. They love their name in lights.

So you see the pride of the false teachers in their authoritarianism, their presumption, their idolatry. You also see it in their greed, and perhaps that's the dominating thing as you look at false teachers through the Scripture is that they're doing what they're doing to get rich, to get...to extract out of

people the things of life so that they can ingratiate themselves.

So here they are in Corinth, they want to take money and all they can get. Paul doesn't do it. That embarrasses them. He puts them in a very difficult position. Paul's long-standing persistent purpose and goal in ministry was to be unlike false teachers as he could be and so he didn't take money from people he was ministering to. He wanted to continue to do that because it deprived his opponents of the opportunity they longed for because look back at verse 12...they wanted an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the very matter about which we're boasting...which is a matter of money. They wanted to be just like me, and they wanted me to take money so that we would appear to be in the same kind of ministry with the same kind of basic structure. And what Paul hoped was his financial independence would highlight his rivals' financial dependence and cause the Corinthians to rethink their attitude toward him. These parasites demanded full remuneration. They demanded full support. And I'll show you that in a few moments. And they actually were a burden on the church.

Verse 9, Paul says, "I...I...I didn't want to be a burden and I kept myself from being a burden." But they didn't. They laid a heavy, heavy numbing weight on the church. Paul would rather die than be thought of as equal to them. He would not do anything that the false teachers could use to put themselves on his level. They were proud and their pride can be seen in their greed. They had an option. They could have done it for nothing if they were really truth-speakers and they were just in it for the honor of God and they really wanted to be perceived as equal to the apostle. They could have said no to all that remuneration but no way would they do that because they were motivated by money. So you see their pride and their greed and their unwillingness to equivocate at all on that. What they were going to do was try to manipulate and make Paul change, but had no concern for changing themselves. The pride of false teachers is manifest, yes, in their authoritarianism. They're always right and they're never to be questioned. Their pride is manifest in their presumption, they tread into the Kingdom of God willy-nilly, helter-skelter, plying their trade as if there was no God, without regard for Him or His Son or His Spirit or His Word. They are utterly presumptuous. And they mostly are marked by greed, though we could add that they tend to be idolatrous and they want the crowd to worship them if the truth were really known. They're proud.

Just look when you're assessing whether someone is a true or a false teacher. Do you see humility or do you see pride? Do you see a person sacrificing his life to give away the truth with only regard for service to others? Or do you see one who is building an empire, building an estate, becoming rich, one who is parading his...his authority, one who is always right, one who demands that we bow before him, one who wants almost to be worshiped and adored? Those are the questions.

Second, false teachers are marked by deception. And this is the heart and soul of this passage. They're marked by deception, and here is the reason why Paul can't give in, and here is the reason that he can't allow himself to be degraded to their level. He can't do that. He cannot be in any sense compared to them. And the reason is because the truth is at stake. He bluntly exposes the false

apostles, now I mean blunt because he's not willing to sacrifice truth for unity.

Verse 13, "Such men," let me just stop you there for a minute. "Such men" refers to those false apostles, they are referred to several times in this epistle by several names, several pronouns, I should say. In chapter 10 verse 2 they're called "some." Chapter 10 verse 12 they're called "some," or "they." Chapter 11 verse 4, "If one comes and preaches." They're there called "one." They're also called "the most eminent apostles," chapter 11 verse 5, chapter 12 as we saw. It's those men that he's talking about. It's these false teachers. The church in Corinth knew exactly who he was talking about. They knew their names...they knew their names and they knew their addresses. They knew everything there was to know about them. They are the...they are the hucksters, the "many" of chapter 2 verse 17 who peddle the Word of God but not from God, 2:17. They peddle the Word of God, but not from God. They corrupt it, they manipulate it. That's who he's talking about. That's who the "such" are. And everybody in Corinth knew their names, they knew exactly who they were.

And here's how he refers to them...they are not, by the way, brothers, they are false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. Now some have criticized Paul for using rather potent language here. We would agree as to the potency of the language, if those guys were sitting near the front of the church when this letter was read, it would appear to be extremely potent to them, I'm quite confident, and everybody else listening, for it was. Paul is not tolerant. He is not even pleasant when the truth is at stake. When it is a matter of the honor of God, the honor of Christ, the truth of the gospel and Scripture, this is a time for potency in language. This is not a time to equivocate. So he pulls no punches, he says they're false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

Critics...critics today even in the "Christian church," quote/unquote, don't like people who are potent like Paul. Paul would have a hard time today because there's a little, very little conviction and an awful lot of tolerance. But may I suggest to you that the truth is always intolerable to those who are distinguished by error. You just need to know that. The people who make the biggest fuss about the truth are the people who have the most to lose, right? And what do you have to lose when the truth invades? Your precious protected error.

You know, a real true student of Scripture, a real true servant of God wants to hear the truth. You can tell a person, you can tell a person's love for truth by how they respond when they're confronted with it. If it indicts what they believe and what they teach and they fight back in anger, then they're trapped in error and they love error because error serves their purposes and error serves the purpose of deceivers, right? The truth is always intolerable to those who are distinguished by heresy. It's always intolerable to those who are distinguished by error, those who are trying to protect deception. It's always intolerable to the people who tolerate deviation from truth, who embrace that deviation, who want that deviation, who allow for that.

Today it seems like every babbling error is almost sure to be hailed as a messenger of God and Christ by a largely, I think, unregenerate and certainly often discerning Christianity. If you just come along and say you're from God and Christ, you could say anything. And if you bring the truth to bear upon that with any potency, those who are deceivers retaliate with fury. But we're mandated in Scripture to do so, so Paul says such men are false apostles, they claim to...pseudapostolos, probably...Paul probably coined the word, they...they claimed to be equal with Paul. They are actually apostles, in fact he says at the end of verse 13 they disguise themselves as if they're apostles of Jesus Christ. And that puts...they're claiming to be equal with Paul and Peter and James and John and Andrew and Philip and the rest. I mean, they're coming in...you say, "That's pretty brash." Well look, for all the years of redemptive history there have always been false prophets, they claim to be prophets and they weren't. There have been false apostles and they claimed to be apostles when they really aren't. How about this? Jesus in Matthew 24:24 says, "Get ready because there are going to be many false Christs."

The brashness of these deceivers is quite astonishing. They don't mind claiming to be prophets, they don't even mind claiming to be apostles and they don't even mind claiming to be Christ. So don't be surprised by their brashness.

There are those who claim to be Christ, who claim to be Christ's apostles, and these guys had come into the church and said, "We're the true messengers of Jesus Christ, we speak for God. God speaks through us. He's given us His message, He's given us His power. He's given us His abilities and His gifts. You can't question us. We are the invincible apostles of Christ. We speak truth."

They were sort of like Popes...claiming to speak ex cathedra, unquestioned truth. Truthfully they were defined by Jesus in Matthew 7 as false apostles, false prophets and false teachers who came in disguised as prophets but inwardly were ravenous...what?...wolves. They came in to destroy, chew up and devastate the flock.

In Acts chapter 15 there is a warning. It was issued at the Jerusalem Council, a formidable warning. Sent a letter, verse 23, to the elders and the brethren in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, all these various places where believers were in churches. "Since we heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls." It didn't take long, Acts 15, already the false teachers are going out and they're from our number. They came out of the Jerusalem church, claimed to be Jerusalem apostles, claimed to be representatives of Jesus Christ sent by the Jerusalem church, have all the credentials. We gave no instruction, none at all, they've disturbed you with their words, they've unsettled your souls. "It seemed good to us, having become of one mind to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The true apostles are always willing to risk their lives, so we're going to send them to you so you can sort out the truth from the error.

Romans 16, "Such men are slaves not of our Lord Christ." See, what was happening in the church in Rome was dissention, hindrances, contrary teaching, people turning away from the truth and these were men who were slaves not of our Lord Christ. They claimed to be the servants of Christ...the servants of Christ, but he says they're slaves of their own appetites. They do whatever their own lusts and desires tell them to do, and their smooth and flattering speeches they use to deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

I mean, that's the whole game. They come in. They do whatever their lust and desires tell them to do. They're driven by their own passions to fulfill their own desires at the expense of people. They are false apostles but they always make these grandiose claims. They always make these high claims to be spokesmen for God because then you can't question them without somehow being accused of questioning God.

He further calls them deceitful workers in verse 13. They called Paul a deceiver...he alludes to that in chapter 12 verse 16, but they were the real deceivers. Deceitful workers...they are liars. They are those rebellious empty talkers and deceivers of Titus 1:10 who must be silenced because they upset whole families because they speak things that aren't true. They come into the church and they go to work and they claim to be workers in God's Kingdom but they're liars and they're deceivers. They claim their apostleship because it sets a foundation for deception. If the people believe they're actually apostles, then they're hooked. They are wicked deceivers.

I wish I had time to take you through Jeremiah 14, 17, 23 and show you how the prophets of old were such terrible deceivers. They established these formidable titles and on the basis of people believing they had those titles they then began to ply their deception. In Ephesians 5:6 Paul says in the New Testament, "Let no one deceive you with empty words." Don't be partakers of people who do that because you used to be in the darkness but now you're in the light. Walk as children of the light. Don't get sucked back into the darkness of these deceivers.

Colossians writes about that stuff in chapter 2 verse 8. "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, rather than according to Christ." They're all around us. First John 4, "Try every spirit," don't just accept what somebody says is from the Spirit of God, test it, measure it against the Word of God and realize that there are deceivers everywhere. Satan comes with all deception of wickedness, it says in 2 Thessalonians 2:10. And God even accommodates in the end by sending a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false. That's judgment when God even allows people to be deluded.

Notice the verb in verse 13, "disguising themselves." This is a masquerade...this is a masquerade. You don't know who you're talking to, you can't see, you really don't know. It's not obvious, it's not evident, it's not on the surface. That is Satan's subtlety. He comes in a masquerade, hiding behind

lies. Are we surprised? No. Verse 14, "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." Should we be surprised that Satan comes to seduce the church? No. That's him, he claims to be an angel of light.

What does that mean? Darkness is his kingdom, light is God's Kingdom. God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all. Christ is the light of the world. In Him we have the light of life. We are light, walk as children of the light. We have come out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son, the kingdom of light. We are in the light, he is in the darkness. We are children of light. His are children of the darkness, children of the lying darkness, John 8:44. We have nothing in common. But Satan doesn't come as an angel of darkness, he comes pretending to be an angel of light. He comes pretending to come from the Kingdom of God. And so his demons developed seductive doctrines that sound like truth and they're propagated by hypocritical false teachers who claim to represent God and represent Christ. Just as God produces His character in His own children, He is light and His children are light...so Satan produces his character in his children, he is darkness and his children are darkness. But Satan is a disguised individual.

The verb "disguise" appears in 13, 14, 15. Thirteen, disguising themselves as apostles of light...not surprising, Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, therefore it's not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. The whole deal is a disguise, it's all a masquerade, it's all an illusion. Satan is most effective in the church, listen carefully, Satan is most effective in the church when he comes not as an open enemy but as a false friend. He's most effective against the church not when he attacks the church, but when he joins the church...not when he attacks the pulpit, but when he stands in it.

You know, I think about this...Christianity today is so gullible...so gullible. The evangelical world is so gullible. We see...we look at the world and this is what we see...we see abortion, that's always the big issue, we see homosexuality, we see immorality, we see the breakup of the family, we see pornography, we see euthanasia, we see a lot of those kinds of ethical, cultural, moral issues. We see that the Women's Liberation Movement fracturing the fabric of the home and devastating children. We see the external materialism of the culture around us robbing people of the real values of life. And so we all get exercised and upset about what is patently obvious to all of us. I mean, nobody is...nothing is subtle about the attack on unborn babies, is there? I don't think it's very subtle when the Supreme Court passes a law to make it legal...not very subtle. Pornography is not very subtle. You can pick up any magazine and it's all over the place. You can turn on television, it's everywhere. You can drive down the street, you see it all over the place...not subtle.

Homosexuality isn't subtle. Once it was, not subtle now...blatant, flagrant, defiant, in-your-face along with all the other immorality in our culture, it's right there staring you right in the eye all the time. Nothing subtle about this.

So the church in its gullibility gets concerned about all this stuff and it's all sin and you have to have a biblical view about it. I agree with that. But the church gets all concerned about that and say...We've got to defeat this abortion thing, we've got to defeat this homosexual thing, we've got to defeat this deal over here with pornography, we've got to do all this stuff on the cultural level, we've got to win all these great battles out there to save the cultural morality and in order to do that, do you know what we have to do? We have to all get together. Now in order for all of us to get together, we've got to make something not an issue. What's that? Truth. So we win this little obvious battle and we're totally defeated at the same time because we just gave up the only thing we have...the truth. This is the gullibility of the church.

And so we say, "Well, if we're going to win this battle, we can't be quivering about whether...whether the Catholics have a different gospel than we do, we've just got to accept them as brothers and sisters in Christ, we can't worry about that." And as Peter Kreep(?) says in his book Ecumenical Jihad, we've got to realize that Muslims are going to heaven too and Confucianists are going to heaven too, and Buddhists are going to heaven too, and even orthodox Jews who believe in the same God we believe in and they'll find out what they didn't know about Christ once they get there. And even atheists, he says, who are seeking for truth are seeking for God they just don't know that God is truth and so they'll get there too. And if we keep fighting with these people we'll never win the cultural war, so what we need to do is win the cultural war and we just need to all get together and not make these doctrinal things an issue.

And what have we done? We have literally been eaten by the roaring lion, just got swallowed. How gullible are we? We've abandoned truth for the sake of this tolerance thing. Let's not question any...and then we're not allowed, especially in this sort of this television environment thing, we're not allowed to question any of the so-called apostles of Christ who come along with their divine messages for us and who bear all this supposed divine power, we can't question anything they say. So we've taken truth and set it aside, we're going to try to win this big cultural war, try to get everybody on the same page all agreeing and we'll sweep all of these social issues aside and in the process lose the Christian faith.

Let me tell you, it can get lost. It got lost for...it got lost for a thousand years between 500 and 1500, there were just vestiges of a remnant left. I mean, we have to know where the battle is, you can't be that gullible.

So here come Satan's servants. And we look at them and say, "Well, he doesn't have a fork in his hand, he doesn't have a pointed tail. He...he...he's an apostle, he says he's an apostle of Jesus Christ." Well, what do you expect? "He's a worker in the kingdom?" Yeah. "He's a messenger from God." Not only that, verse 15, "He's a servant of righteousness. He wants...he serves righteous purposes. He's concerned about peace in the world. He's concerned about virtue. He's concerned

about doing good and doing right."

Of course, of course, of course...that's the whole deal. If there's any word you can remember out of these verses it's the one in verse 13, 14, 15..."disguised." It's not on the surface. That's why shallow immature, ignorant and indifferent people get seduced.

There's one third mark that distinguishes false apostles and it is hate, or abuse. Remember I told you the true apostle characterized by humility, truth and love, false apostle by pride as evidenced in this passage, particularly from their unwillingness to back off their greed, secondly deception and thirdly hate or abuse. I have to borrow the parallel third point from verse 20. Will you drop down to verse 20? We'll get to this later, I'm just going to give you a brief look at it, but it really makes the point.

It's an amazing verse, really amazing. These Corinthians were so easily seduced. These false teachers came in, he says in verse 20, "You bear with anyone." Anybody who shows up, you just embrace them, you just bear with him, it's all wonderful if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself, if he hits you in the face. Boy, how gullible are you? These false teachers he's referring to, they come in, he said earlier, remember in verse 4, somebody comes, preaches another Jesus, comes in the power of a different spirit, preaches a different gospel and you bear this...you just sit there and take it.

Here comes...here comes another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel and you just take it. Well here come false prophets and you just bear with them. And what do they do? They enslave you, they seduce you into lies. They rob you of your freedom in Christ. And then he says by their false system, they probably had some kind of a works system, which all false religions have, and they seduced them toward this works system, away from the freedom in Christ, and made slaves out of you. And then he says...if he devours you or preys upon you, like a wild animal, chewing you and swallowing you. Could be referring here...it's used, by the way, in Luke 20:47 for the Pharisees who devoured widows' houses, which means they took all their money. Well, if there's anything true of false teachers, they take all their money and often it's widows' money they take. They come, they take away your freedom, they take away all your money. Then take advantage of you. Wow...

In 12:16 that same term is used and it's there, "I took you in by deceit." They take you in. They suck you in. You're caught like fish in a net. They enslave you. They chew you up and swallow you, taking all your resources. They catch you like a fish. And in the middle of it all, they're proud, they're arrogant, lording it over you.

And then they go so far as to hit you in the face. What in the world does that mean? Well, it could mean that they physically abused the Corinthians, it could mean that. But it's more likely used in a metaphoric sense to speak of their humiliation of the Corinthians. To strike someone on the face was a sign of contempt, to smack them across the face...a sign of severe disrespect and contempt. It's so

used in 1 Kings 22:24. They did it to Jesus, remember, they punched Him in the face as a sign of their contempt for Him in Luke 24:64. Acts 23:2 refers to it again. They treat you with contempt. They hate you. They just want to abuse you and use you and take everything you have and just slap you across the face. You mean nothing to them. And you just bear it...you're being had.

Boy, that's false teachers. They...they're characterized as abusers. They don't love people, they don't give themselves away for people. They don't give up anything, they just take people for all they can get. They just suck them dry. Then they enslave them to the system...chew them up and all that they have, take advantage of them every way possible and then just treat them with disrespect and utter contempt.

I always think about the trash bins full of prayer requests that came into that ministry down in the south...just opened the envelopes, took all the money out and threw the prayer requests in the trash bins. That's just contempt. That's false teachers.

So, you need to be discerning and these are the criteria you can use. Well, we have to close this message by going back to verse 15 because there's a line we didn't read, end of verse 15. "Whose end shall be according to their deeds?" Bottom line...they're not getting away with it, right? You often ask the question, you know, "Well, Lord, why don't You stop this stuff? Why can't You bring the church to truth? Why do we have to deal with..." They won't get away with it. God just has a different time table than you and I, right? It's going to happen. And the destiny of the false teachers will be consistent with their deceptive deeds.

There are a number of passages that talk about the demise of these false teachers. Matthew 7:21 to 23 is one of them, "Many say, Lord, Lord...He says, Depart from Me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity, you evil workers." They're going to be judged according to their deeds. They're going to be marked out from judgment based upon a life of deception. This is a stern warning to false teachers, very stern. And there are numerous such stern warnings to false teachers throughout Scripture, this is not by any means the only one. Time doesn't allow us to go over them. But just Deuteronomy 13 is one, "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or wonder and the sign or wonder comes true concerning which he spoke to you saying let us go after other gods whom you have not known, let us serve them...you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul. You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him and keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him and cling to Him."

If the guy does signs, if the guy does wonders, guy does miracles, etc., etc., etc., but he takes you away from the Word of God...don't go. It's a test. Verse 5, "But that prophet shall be put to death because he's counseled rebellion against the Lord your God to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So purge the evil from among you."

God says...Take him out and kill him. That's pretty...God's pretty serious about error, isn't He? Polluting the truth. Now false teachers are going to get their day. They're going to have their judgment. They're going to step into the divine judgment. God's going to render judgment according to their deeds. Now God renders judgment on everybody according to their deeds, by the way, even us. But our deeds are unique because when God looks at my life and my deeds what He sees is the life of Christ, right? Because His righteousness has been imputed to my account, plus He sees the evidences of a transformed life. When God looks at the deeds of the unregenerate, all He sees is sin, sin, sin, sin, sin, particularly false teachers who bear an immense weight of judgment. That's why James 3:1 says, "Stop being so many teachers, theirs is the greater condemnation."

It's interesting, just as a footnote, that in the two centers where Paul spent most of his time...one was Ephesus, one was Corinth...the activity of Satan was manifested. And in both places Paul was troubled with false apostles. He warns...I used that passage last week...in Acts 20, the Ephesian elders had a very similar situation to this. Wherever Paul had success, Satan moved in big time with his lies.

What are the lessons then from all of this? Well, first of all, just the general lesson is false teachers are known by being proud, deceptive and abusive. Just mark that. True teachers demonstrate humility, truth and love.

But let me give you three lessons just to kind of sum up. One, don't be deceived by clever, spiritual-sounding words. Don't be deceived by clever, spiritual-sounding words. It's amazing how hard people will work to make, to sell the deception. Flattering words, deceitful words may mask Satan himself...a different Jesus, a different spirit, a different gospel, even orthodox terms can mask demonic doctrine. Just because they talk about God and Christ and the gospel and the Bible doesn't make it true. In fact, Satan will always do that because that's the deception.

Second, don't overlook the issue of money. Don't overlook the issue of money. That was the big issue in this whole discussion. Look at life style. Look at personal wealth. Look how it is gained and how it is spent. See what the peddler of pop religion does. They often display lavish materialism. Religion is big business...big business.

Three, don't make tolerance into a virtue, it is not a virtue. There can never be any tolerance at all for error, ever, anytime. Paul's enemies were not just differing brothers, they were not just representatives of a different tradition, they were the devil's servants masquerading to achieve a satanic plot to destroy the work of God. And Paul could not exaggerate that danger, he couldn't. Christian love is not to be equated with gullible sentimentality.

In fact, I suppose it could be an axiom that the things about which men are agreed are not the important things. The important things are the things they fight about. Fair enough? The things about which men agree are not the important issues. It's the things they fight about that are the important issues. That's why they fight. And fighting for the truth is the highest calling. We live in a world today where there are denominations and preachers and seminaries and schools that deny Scriptures. Ecumenical councils that mouth Marxist slogans, TV evangelists becoming millionaires many times over at the expense of people, pseudo-Christian cults claiming more adherence than some denominations. This is not a time to be fooled by words. This is not a time to be naive about money. It's not a time to be sentimental about tolerance. And it's no time to be gullible. And you can protect yourself against that by knowing the truth, right?

Father, we thank You for giving us Your Word, for the truth that is so pervasive in it that can be distilled, pulled out, summarized into a doctrinal statement such as we have done in the back of the study Bible where people can look specifically at truth as revealed in Your Scriptures, or they can look verse by verse and see it unfold. It's clear. We just thank You...we thank You. Grow us a congregation of spiritually strong young men. We remember the words of the Apostle John who said, "You have overcome the wicked one because you are strong in the Word." We no longer will be deceived if we're strong in the Word. Then we can fight for the truth and for Your honor because You are inseparable from Your truth, You are the truth. Make us faithful to that. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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