

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

# SECOND CORINTHIANS

✝ II CORINTHIANS

*An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blakely*

## Lesson #45

### COMMENTARY ON: 11:12-15

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

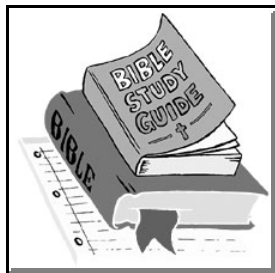
*“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*

#### INTRUSIVE MINISTERS

There are ministers who are not sent by God. In fact, they are sent by the devil himself, and are referred to as his ministers. These are like intruders who do not belong in the church. They come as wolves to devour the flock, doing so with their destructive doctrines and perverted perspectives. They are dangerous because, like the one who sends them, they come to “steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). These imposters can be neither detected nor resisted with the wisdom of men. They are impervious to academics, studies, and other forms of pedagogy. They can only be repelled by the employment of spiritual weaponry that is supplied by the Lord. Corinth had more than their share of these pretenders, and it had caused all manner of corruption within the church. Now Paul alerts the people to their nature, and of their danger.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

*“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven”*



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Epistle of Second Corinthians

### Lesson Number 45



**A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO BUILDING THE FAITH AND ENHANCING THE HOPE OF THOSE WHO ARE WORKING OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.**

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** **AMPLIFIED** or **AMP** = Amplified Bible, (1965), **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ESV**=English Stand Version (2001), **IE** = International English, **ISV** = International Standard Version (1967), **JPS** = Jewish Publicatcion Society (1917), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LIVING** = Living Bible (1971), **MONTGOMERY** = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **MRD** = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **NASB**=New American Standard Bible (1977), **NAU**=New American Standard Bible (1995), **NIB**=New International Bible, **NIV**=New International Version (1984), **NJB**=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS** = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **PNT** = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakj (1985), **Webster**=The Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS** = William's New Testament (1937), **TNK** = JPS Tanakh (1985), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**= Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT**=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

**LEXICON LEGEND:** **FRIEBERG**=Friberg Lexicon, **UBS**=UBS Lexicon, **LOUW-NIDA**=Louw-Nida Lexicon, **LIDDELL SCOTT**=Liddell Scott Lexicon, **THAYER**=Thayer's Greek Lexicon

**AN EPISTLE WRITTEN TO A CHURCH THAT WAS MOVING AWAY FROM ITS CARNALITY, YET LACKED MUCH INSIGHT. HERE IS A STRONG APPEAL TO PERFECT HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.**

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

# INTRUSIVE TEACHERS

“<sup>11:12</sup> But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. <sup>13</sup> For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” (2 Corinthians 11:12-15)

## INTRODUCTION

There are ministers who are not sent by God. In fact, they are sent by the devil himself, and are referred to as his ministers. These are like intruders who do not belong in the church. They come as wolves to devour the flock, doing so with their destructive doctrines and perverted perspectives. They are dangerous because, like the one who sends them, they come to “steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). **These imposters can be neither detected nor resisted with the wisdom of men.** They are impervious to academics, studies, and other forms of pedagogy. They can only

be repelled by the employment of spiritual weaponry that is supplied by the Lord. Corinth had more than their share of these pretenders, and it had caused all manner of corruption within the church. Now Paul alerts the people to their nature, and of their danger.

There is a certain seriousness about the religious environment in which we find ourselves. It is not to be taken lightly. It is not to be preferred because of life-long friendships, and outward appearance, or in order to acceptance by our peers. Wherever we find a religious

surrounding, someone is teaching something, focusing on something, and accenting some facet of life. A certain perspective is being presented, promoted, and cultured. Priorities are being established, and values are being defined. **The focus, preferences, perspectives, and priorities of an assembly are not defined by a creed, set of “by-laws,” or official positions on this or that. It is defined by what is taught – what is declared in the name of the Lord.** The official literature of the “church” does not define its priorities unless it is being declared. It is the message of the church that tells us

*There are ministers that are sent forth by Satan, and we are responsible to detect them – by Given O. Blakely*

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where it is looking, and what it feels to be the fundamental matter. It is found in what is addressed to the minds of the people – what they are being asked to consider.

It was this circumstance that moved Christ to speak so harshly and forthrightly against the Jewish leaders: the scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers. Allow me to refresh your minds concerning our Lord's unmitigated diatribes against them. **This is necessary to see, for the approach will be seen in Paul's comments about the self-proclaimed religious leaders in Corinth.**

- ☛ **OBSURED THE WAY TO GOD.** *"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in"* (Matt 23:13).
- ☛ **EXPLOITED PEOPLE AND SOUGHT TO IMPRESS THEM.** *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a*

*pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation"* (Matt 23:14).

- ☛ **AGGRESSIVE TO BRING MEN TO THEIR WAY OF THINKING.** *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves"* (Matt 23:15).
- ☛ **PRESENTED FALSE VALUES.** *"Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!"* (Matt 23:16).
- ☛ **MAJORED ON MINORS.** *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone"* (Matt 23:23).
- ☛ **MAJORED ON APPEARANCE.** *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess"* (Matt 23:25).
- ☛ **HAD A GOOD CARNAL APPEARANCE.** *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity"* (Matt 23:27-28).
- ☛ **SOUGHT FOR HUMAN RECOGNITION.** *"Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues,*

*and greetings in the markets"* (Luke 11:43).

- ☛ **WERE DEAD TOWARD GOD.** *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them"* (Luke 11:44).
- ☛ **IMPOSED UNDUE BURDENS UPON THE PEOPLE.** *"Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers"* (Luke 11:46).
- ☛ **PROMOTED SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE.** *"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered"* (Luke 11:52).
- ☛ **THEIR TEACHING CORRUPTED MEN'S THINKING.** *"Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. . . . Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"* (Matt 16:6,12).
- ☛ **JESUS TAUGHT THE PEOPLE TO BEWARE OF THESE MEN.** *"And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation"* (Mark 12:38-40).
- ☛ **JESUS EXPOSED THEM TO THE MULTITUDES.** *"Then spake Jesus to the multitude,*

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and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; **but do not ye after their works:** for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi" (Matt 23:1-7).

**THE POINT**

When men become indifferent to what is being taught within the church, they have entered into an area of extreme danger. **God is never indifferent about the teachings to which His people are being subjected.** In fact, as confirmed in our Lord's words to and concerning the scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers, He will not tolerate their insolence.

Thus Paul is dealing with the false teachers in Corinth in a godly manner. After giving them due time to repent, he is now set to oppose them face to face, and to do so with spiritual weaponry.

**HOW CAN MEN TELL?**

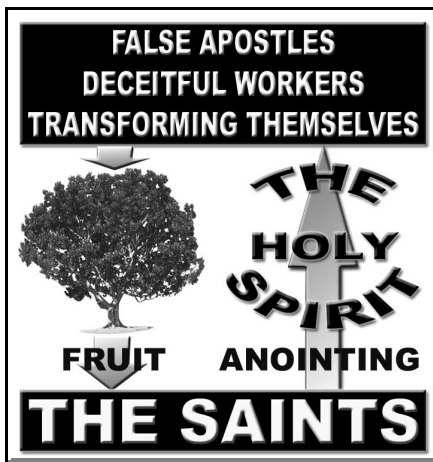
Being able to recognize false teachers and apostles is not an option. It is something that is essential to our survival. Further, this cannot be done by issuing a manual that classifies all of the false teachings that are afoot in the religious world. There may be some small place for this, but it is certainly not a primary one.

There is more to false doctrine than merely saying something that obviously contradicts the Word of God. Even a novice, if possessed of a sound mind, can tell that if God says "Thou shalt surely die," it is wrong to say, "Thou shalt NOT surely die" (Gen 2:17; 3:4). However, as you may recall, through subtlety, Satan deceived Eve – so much so that she could not see what appears very obvious to someone walking in the

light. Satan can lure people into a domain where all thinking becomes corrupt, and people are easily susceptible to delusion. To this very day there are people who are convinced, for example, that it is not possible "fall away," even though Jesus said some would do it (Lk 8:13), and Paul taught that those who did could not be renewed "again to repentance" (Heb 6:6). This confirms that one cannot take a sort of "textbook" approach to false doctrine, as though the deciphering of right from wrong was purely a prerogative of the intellect.

**The Telling Confirmation of Fruit**

There really is no need for confusion in this area. Jesus has plainly stated, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt 7:16-20).



Take Corinth as an example. There was some fruit that was being manifested. It included division, carnality, immorality, inconsideration, a lack of love, confusion, failure to discern Christ's body, a denial of the resurrection, and an opposition to Paul. How is it that these things arose? Were they the expression of "the newness of life" or "the new man?" Were they the manifestation of a renewed mind? Had they resulted from fellowship with Christ, walking in the Spirit, or living by

faith? Indeed not, for such things could not possible flow from the well of newness of life! They were the fruit of a bad tree – a tree that allowed for the unbridled expression of the flesh.

That corrupt tree had been planted by the doctrine of these teachers. If they had said anything about Jesus, it was "another Jesus." If they had set forth the workings of the Spirit, it was "another spirit." If they had taken upon themselves to speak of the gospel, it was "another gospel." That is why these "sour grapes" were growing in Corinth (Ezek 18:2). That is why a harvest of "wild grapes" was being gathered among the Corinthians. As with Israel, noble seed had been planted by Paul, and tender care was taken to ensure proper spiritual growth in Corinth (Isa 5:2,4). Yet, false apostles brought in "the vine of the earth," and had planted it in the assembly. Now they were reaping a corrupt and unacceptable harvest.

The saints of God must come to the point where they can associate "corrupt fruit" with a "corrupt tree." As our blessed Lord affirmed, "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Luke 6:43). Sophists must cease to boast in the past virtues of a movement that is now noted for division, flawed theology, and unacceptable living. Good trees cannot produce corrupt fruit. It is not that they ought not to do so, they cannot do it.

Paul knows this well, and thus he is going to speak forthrightly about those who are the prominent teachers in Corinth. The fruit of their teaching has declared what they really are.

**The Anointing**

There is another way by which false teachers can be detected. In Christ Jesus, we receive an "Anointing" that is designed to acquaint us with the real things of God. This acquaintance enables the child of God to distinguish between the true and the false teacher.

John wrote of the intrusion of false teachers – referring to them as "many antichrists." They were present in his time, and had even come with very impressive credentials. Some of them had

been with the apostles themselves, spending considerable time with them. Of these imposters John wrote, *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us"* (1 John 2:18-19).

**How were the people to identify these intruders?** How could they know they were *"not of"* the apostles, and had separated from them because of their incompatibility with them?

John says the saints can distinguish them because of what they have received from God. *"But ye have an Unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things"* (1 John 2:20). An *"unction"* is an *"anointing,"* and is so translated in most versions of Scripture (NKJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV). Paul alludes to this *"anointing"* in his first letter to the Corinthians. *"Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts"* (2 Cor 1:21-22).

And what will this *"anointing"* do? How will it protect us? John provides the answer. *"But the Anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as It hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him"* (1 John 2:27). Thus, the Holy Spirit so instructs us as to cause us to remain in Christ, not being distracted by the erroneous teachings and emphases of false teachers and spurious apostles.

**Something to Consider**

But there is a catch here. **If people choose to remain aloof from God, living and glorying in the flesh, they cannot be taught by the "Anointing!"** In such a case, the Spirit is *"grieved"* and *"quenched,"* and thus no longer leads and teaches the individual (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19). This is precisely what had happened in Corinth. **They had been diverted from faith in Christ, and thus became vulnerable to the lies of religious men.** The teaching to which they were being subjected had pulled them back into the arena of *"this present evil world,"* from which they had once been delivered (Gal 1:4).

**No aspect of God's great salvation is effectual in the environment of**

**falsehood and hardness of heart.** Such conditions must be corrected before men are *"taught by God"* (John 6:45; 1 Thess 4:9). Where *"the love of the truth"* has not been received, there is no hope of being taught or led by the Spirit of God. We know this is the case, because the Lord has revealed He will send strong delusion to all such people, **constraining them to believe a lie,** that they might be justly condemned (2 Thess 2:10-12).

**CONCLUSION**

These circumstances account for the aggressive words and intentions that are revealed in this text. I acknowledge that it is not currently fashionable to speak as Paul does in this passage. Of course, it was not wholly acceptable during the first century either. **However, this is the way God speaks to a people who have developed a penchant for popular preachers and teachers who lead them into a certain coldness toward the truth.** When a religious people tend to neglect the truth of the Gospel, growing increasingly ignorant of Divine intentions, and thinking more and more like the world, a situation exists that is of monumental proportions. We are thus faced with a religion that is of this world. For that reason it is **not possible** for it to produce a godly people or yield pleasing results to God.

**WHAT I DO, I WILL, DO**

<sup>12a</sup> **But what I do, that I will do** ... "Other versions read, *"But what I do, I will also continue to do,"*<sup>NKJV</sup> *"But what I am doing, I will continue to do,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"And I will keep on doing what I am doing,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"I will go on acting as I do at present,"*<sup>NJB</sup> *"But I will persist in the same line of conduct,"*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *"but I am determined to maintain this boast."*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**When a person has a grasp of the truth of God, and is assured of his acceptance by the Lord, and the commission that has been given to him, it impacts upon the way he speaks and writes.** There is a certain confidence that exudes from such a person, and that confidence is highly offensive to those who are living in



harmony with *"this present evil world."* The world has no difficulty with a

confident politician, athlete, or business man. **However, when confidence is displayed in the area of religion, the charge of arrogance is hurled at its possessor.** This is because the world cannot conceive of a person being well pleasing to God, or knowing that he is doing the right thing. It is as though sin has so defiled the natural man that nothing but fear grips the heart when one is squarely and knowingly faced with the Living God. Therefore, upon hearing the voice of God, Adam was *"afraid"* and *"hid"* himself (Gen 3:10). Following their marvelous deliverance from Egypt and the Egyptians, when Israel heard a thunderous voice from heaven, they cried out to Moses, *"Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with*

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us, lest we die" (Ex 20:19).

As a direct result of the fall, humanity was estranged from any sense of confidence in the presence of the Lord. For that reason, those who live at a distance from the Lord, whether making a claim of being "religious" or not, cannot accept someone displaying confidence and assurance in what they have to say about the Lord, His salvation, or their participation in it. In my judgment, this had very much to do with some in Corinth rejecting Paul. Their acknowledgment that his letters were "weighty and powerful" did not simply imply they were intellectually challenging – although that is certainly true. However, there was a godly confidence that permeated what Paul wrote, so that no allowance was made for

contradicting notions.

**HE WILL CONTINUE**

Confident that his message is the truth, and that it is the appointed "power of God unto salvation," Paul will continue to preach without demanding pay. **That is, he will place his emphasis upon the message rather than his own support,** which it was wholly right for him to receive.

**HE WILL NOT MODIFY HIS BEHAVIOR**

Paul will not modify his behavior because of pressure from his critics. **His conscience carries more weight with him that those pretenders who were sitting in judgment of him.** There are those who put their ear to the ground to determine what the people want, and what they

think of their message. Such people can easily modify their religious behavior, and even their teaching, to accommodate the fickle desires of men.

However, Paul will not do this. He knows, as he confessed, "for if I yet pleased men, I should **not be the servant of Christ**" (Gal 1:10). Admittedly, this has some rather startling implications. In our time, men have grown accustomed to accommodating preachers who embrace the latest popular subjects, take hold of the contemporary fads, and blend in with the culture of the time. **They speak differently, look differently, dress differently, and teach differently in order to please the people.** They appear to be blissfully ignorant of the fact that Christ is not, and **cannot be,** served by such an approach.

**CUTTING OFF THE OCCASION**

" 12b . . . that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion. . . "

As I have stated before, Paul was not averse to receiving wages or support, for he had received such from the churches in Macedonia time and again.

**CUTTING OFF OCCASION**

" . . . that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion . . . " Other versions read, "that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity," <sup>NKJV</sup> "in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity," <sup>NIV</sup> "in order to deny

occasion and incentive]." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Paul's critics were teachers who, in fact, received remuneration, then made out as though Paul was inferior to them because he did not. Thus Paul wrote in First Corinthians, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? **If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ**" (1 Cor 9:11-12). Yet, these false teachers had apparently boasted of their interest in the Corinthians, as false teachers are prone to do. Now Paul is going to show how he will further expose these false teachers.

**Paul knows that "flesh" cannot maintain a consistent spiritual posture – even outwardly. Eventually Cain will raise up against Abel. Korah will assert himself against Moses. Eventually the self-proclaimed prophets of Israel will "devise devices against Jeremiah." There came a time when the scribes, Pharisees, and masses of Jewish people could no longer hide their hatred of Jesus.**

Paul knows that "flesh" cannot maintain a consistent spiritual posture – even outwardly. Eventually Cain will raise up against Abel (Gen 4:8). Korah will assert himself against Moses (Num 16:3). Eventually the self-proclaimed prophets of Israel will "devise devices against Jeremiah" (Jer 18:18). There came a time when the scribes, Pharisees, and masses of Jewish people could no longer hide their hatred of Jesus (Mk

However, when it came to the region of Achaia, he refused to demand support from them, even though he had labored long among them. Now he gives us one of the significant reasons for this action.

opportunity to those for those who want an opportunity," <sup>NRSV</sup> "in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim," <sup>NRSV</sup> and order to cut off the claim of those who like [to find an

14:1; John 7:1,32). Therefore, Paul, through his consistency, will now expose the carnality of those who were deceiving the Corinthians.

One of the traits of the ungodly is that they think everyone is like themselves. The Lord affirmed that the wicked even take this approach toward Himself. *“These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes”* (Psa 50:21). That is how the wicked think.

Paul knows that his critics think eventually he will come to the Corinthians demanding support, just as they did. They could not conceive of him continuing in his present posture, for that contradicted the manner of the flesh – which manner dominated them.

Now, however, Paul will pull the rug out from under them. **Not only will he continue in refusing support from the Corinthians, or others in Achaia, he will at the same time continue teaching, ministering, answering their inquiries, and setting in order the things that are wanting.** As he continues faithfully ministering, and doing so at great personal expense and inconvenience, he is putting the lie to all that has been said against him. By remaining consistent, he is taking one of their arguments away from them, confirming that he is not self-seeking as they are.

**Do you think for one moment that sin will not barge through the open door and gain the mastery over the person? Does sin fall asleep while men linger in unbelief and spiritual inactivity? While they are making up their minds whether or not to do “what is right,” is there anyone naive enough to think that Satan will pass by the opportunity?**

#### SOMETHING TO BE SEEN

There is a certain spiritual tactic that is seen here – **removing opportunities to do evil from our adversaries.** Concerning our chief enemy it is written, *“Neither give place to the devil”* (Eph 4:27), or *“and do not give the devil an opportunity.”*<sup>NASB</sup> Do not provide an open door for him through which he can work wickedness within us or against us. Satan can “fill” a person’s heart – like he did that of Ananias, who then lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). However, he cannot do so unless he is first provided with an open door by the victim. **Loose living, hasty speech, thoughtless deeds, and self-seeking all leave the door to the heart unlocked and standing ajar for the wicked one to enter in.**

God Himself spoke to Cain on this matter **before** he murdered his brother. *“If you do what is right, will you not be*

*accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it”* (Gen 4:7). In view of this circumstance, let us say that an individual chooses **NOT** to do what is right. Do you think for one moment that sin will not barge through the open door and gain the mastery over the person? **Does sin fall asleep while men linger in unbelief and spiritual inactivity?** While they are making up their minds whether or not to do “what is right,” is there anyone naive enough to think that Satan will pass by the opportunity? The people of God cannot afford to be casual in this matter, or simple about what will happen if they choose that course. Just as surely as God honors faith with His presence, strengthening the believer, so the devil eagerly takes hold of the opportunity afforded him by unbelief, disobedience, and dulness of heart.

### THEY WILL BE FOUND OUT

*“<sup>12c</sup> . . . that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.”*

It might be well to refresh our minds concerning the most grievous situation Paul is confronting. It pained him, and it ought also to pain us.

- Some in Corinth, apparently not there when he was among them, were examining whether or not he was a genuine apostle (1 Cor 9:1-3).
- They had derided his appearance,

although they acknowledged the weightiness of his letters (2 Cor 10:10).

- They said there *“is no resurrection of the dead”* (1 Cor 15:12-13).
- The Corinthians were supporting these teachers while refusing to support Paul (1 Cor 9:11-12).
- These teachers were preaching *“another Jesus,” “another Spirit,”* and *“another Gospel”* (2 Cor 11:4).

- They had provoked the Corinthians to love Paul *“less,”* even though *“gladly”* spent, or exhausted himself, for them (2 Cor 12:15).
- The *“false apostles”* were freely supported by the Corinthians, yet boasted themselves as serving gratuitously.
- Under these circumstances, the false teachers cunningly criticized Paul, for not taking wages from the Corinthians, declaring that this was

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an indication of his inferiority.

**WHEREIN THEY GLORY**

“ . . . that wherein they glory . . .

” Other versions read, “to be regarded,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “to be considered,”<sup>NIV</sup> “to be recognized,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “who would like to claim,”<sup>RSV</sup> “in the cause of their pride,”<sup>BBE</sup> “for wherein they boast,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “who would like to claim,”<sup>ESV</sup> “who seek a pretext for being regarded,”<sup>NAB</sup> “who want an opportunity to be regarded,”<sup>NAU</sup> “looking for a chance to be proved,”<sup>NJB</sup> “who are looking for a chance to brag,”<sup>IE</sup> and “getting themselves recognized.”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

For these false teachers, the Corinthians recognition of them was

any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor 9:27). Therefore, in several places, he has distinguished himself from these false teachers by his attitude, purpose, and faithfulness.

Because his critics actually are glorying in the wrong thing, Paul has determined to take a course of action that will help to expose that falseness to the Corinthians.

**THEY MAY BE FOUND**

“ . . . they may be found even as we.” Other versions read, “to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about,”<sup>NIV</sup> “to

had invaded Paul’s work in Corinth were apparently boasting of their love and concern for the people. Yet, behind the scenes they were brutal to the people bringing them “into bondage,” devouring them, taking from them, and exalting themselves (2 Cor 11:20). The effects of their ministry confirmed their interest in themselves, for they had left the church divided, carnal, and at odds with the apostle who had converted them. They did not preach for nothing, and Paul knew they would not ever do so. Like all false teachers, at the core of their being, they were “murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage” (Jude 1:16). They were totally UNLIKE Paul.

**For these false teachers, the Corinthians recognition of them was presented as proof that they were from God. Paul, on the other hand, presented the CONVERSION of the Corinthians themselves as proof that he was sent from God**

In order to expose these teachers, Paul will therefore continue his practice of taking nothing from the churches in Achaia. If these men want to compare themselves with Paul, then let them do likewise. Let them refuse remuneration from the Corinthians, learning how to suffer need, and to “hunger,” “thirst,” and be in “want” (2 Cor 11:9) – yet faithfully continuing to feed and care for the flock of God. If these teachers are really in the same class as Paul, they will be able to do this. Yet, Paul knows that this is an area to which flesh cannot adapt. **It cannot learn contentment in life’s extremities.**

presented as proof that they were from God. **Paul, on the other hand, presented the CONVERSION of the Corinthians themselves as proof that he was sent from God** (1 Cor 9:2; 2 Cor 3:2).

How these false teachers must have glorified in their reception, as though that was the whole cause for their efforts. But this was not the case with Paul. **His labors did not stop when he was not accepted.** He continued on through great trials and contentment in all kinds of adverse circumstances. **He was not laboring to receive glory from men, but to be “accepted” by God** (2 Cor 5:9). Rather than pursuing the approbation of men, he kept under his body, bringing it into subjection. By his own confession, he did this, “test that by

be recognized as our equals in what they boast about,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do,”<sup>RSV</sup> “they may be seen to be the same as we are,”<sup>BBE</sup> “that they may be found like unto us in that wherein they rejoice,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “a chance to be considered my equals in grounds for boasting,”<sup>NJB</sup> “who boast their work is just like ours,”<sup>NLT</sup> “that they are just like us,”<sup>IE</sup> “as being on a level with us in the matters about which they boast,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “to claim that in their boasted [mission] they work on the same terms that we do,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “who profess to be God’s messengers on the same terms as I am.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

This is a difficult expression to enclose in a few words. **The teachers who**

Paul knows the Corinthians are well aware that he has refused support from them. He also knows they are aware these false teachers have **not** refused their support. Now he turns their argument back upon their own heads. They have said Paul’s refusal to receive wages proves he is inferior to them. Thus they have maligned him. He will now show that their covetous manners have actually confirmed what they were. They cannot serve Christ unless they gain temporal benefits.

**FALSE APOSTLES**

<sup>13a</sup> **For such are false apostles . . .**” Other versions read, “For such men are false apostles,”<sup>NASB</sup> “For such

boasters are false apostles,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “These people are counterfeit apostles,”<sup>NJB</sup> “God never sent those men at all,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “For

men of this stamp are sham apostles,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “For such men are false apostles [spurious counterfeits].”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

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**These are men who use religion to advance their own carnal interests.** They are men who have influence over others, and exploit the people for their own advantage. God has never sent such men. He does not put jewels in the snouts of swine, nor distribute pearls by those with ignoble purposes and motives. If the truth ever does come out of the mouth of such men, it is not because they are seeking to glorify God or edify His people.

Sometimes, as with Caiaphas, some vestige of truth tumbles out of their mouth, but it is not because they sought to declare truth. In the very speaking of words of truth, they have other interests in mind. It was said of Caiaphas, *“And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And **this spake he not of himself**: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad”* (John 11:49-52). In the mind of Caiaphas, he saw the death of Jesus as appeasing the Roman empire. **He had no interest in the salvation of God, but was speaking of political matters.** It was his palace that became the scene of a plot to “kill” Jesus (Matt 26:3). It was before him that Jesus was tried, and Caiaphas himself said, *“He is guilty of death”* (Matt 26:57). He also opposed the preaching of Peter and John (Acts 4:6).

Of course, Caiaphas really was a “high priest,” even though it was by ordained procedure and lineage, and he was a bad one. In this he differs from those concerning whom Paul now speaks. They were **not** apostles – not even apostles gone astray like Judas. **Jesus never did chose them, and never did send them out.** Jesus never appeared to them as He did to Paul. He never commissioned them as He did all of the real Apostles.

An “apostle” is one **sent by the Lord** – and these were **not** sent. They were imposters like the false prophets who opposed Jeremiah. The Lord said of them, **“I have not sent these prophets,**

*yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied”* (Jer 23:21). And again, *“For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you”* (Jer 27:15). And again, *“For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD”* (Jer 29:9).

Just as genuine “apostles,” “prophets,” and “teachers” come from God, so spurious, or false “apostles,” “prophets,” and “teachers” are sent forth by the devil, as Paul will affirm. They are not nice people that are merely wrong about a few things.

#### Teachers with Imperfect Knowledge

There are, it is true, some who are wrong about certain details of life in Christ Jesus – like Apollos. It is written that he knew *“only the baptism of John.”* Yet, he was *“instructed in the way of the Lord,”* and *“spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord.”* Recognizing his excellent spirit, and seeing that his understanding was deficient, *“Aquila and Priscilla . . . took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”* Apollos received their teaching, and continued preaching the

made no claim to special knowledge, or to have been sent forth by the Lord to the people. Men like Apollos are not the kind of teachers to which Paul is now referring.

#### Real “False Apostles”

Real “false apostles” are men who claim the Lord has sent them, and that they have a word from God. Saying the wrong thing does **not** necessarily make one a “false apostle.” Affirming that such a message came from God **does** confirm the person is a “false apostle.”

In Jeremiah’s day, there were men who said they had a message from God – yet their message contradicted that of Jeremiah, saying there would be no sword or famine in the land; even though Jeremiah had declared the coming Babylonian captivity in which both would occur. Here is what God said of those men. *“Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they*

**They were not apostles – not even apostles gone astray like Judas. Jesus never did chose them, and never did send them out. Jesus never appeared to them as He did to Paul. He never commissioned them.**

Word, even in the regions of Achaia, in which Corinth was located. The *“brethren, wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come helped them much which had believed through grace.”* He even *“mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ”* (Acts 18:24-28). Apollos was **not** a “false apostle” or “false prophet,” even though in the beginning he needed to know *“the way of God more perfectly.”* He

*say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed”* (Jer 14:14-15). Accentuating the seriousness of what they had done, the Lord further said of these false prophets, *“Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness: yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith*

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the LORD” (Jer 23:32).

Now, these are the kind of men that had entered in among the Corinthian brethren, They were not profiting the people. Instead, a deluge of sin followed in the wake of their teaching: division, rejection of Paul, inconsideration, carnality, fornication, an appeal to the world to settle their disputes, despising the Lord’s table, provoking the Lord to anger, confusion about the resurrection, and forgetting about the poor saints in Jerusalem. And why did these things spring up among the people? **It is because they were caused to err by the teaching certain among them.** Such teachers, like the

false prophets of Jeremiah’s day could “not profit the people at all.” It was simply impossible for God to work through them!

John also wrote of such men, many of whom had actually been with the apostles, yet were never really a part of them. “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that *antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*” (1 John 2:18-19).

Real apostles do not teach doctrines that contradict other real apostles! They do not promote a disdain for others that God has sent out, whose message has been confirmed. Wherever such contradictions are found, someone has delivered a message that is **not** of God. Someone has claimed to have been sent by God, who was **not** actually sent by Him. Teachers of this order are still among the people. It is still true, as John wrote, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). **No child of God is exempt from this sobering responsibility.** It is part and parcel of living by faith!

## DECEITFUL WORKERS

“ 13b . . . **deceitful workers** . . . ”

Other versions read, “workers of deceit,”  
BBE “dishonest workers,” NJB “They have fooled you,” NLT “they are phonies,” LIVING “they are lying about their work,” IE and “dishonest practitioners.” PHILLIPS

As I have already stated, these are *not* men of “an honest and good heart” (Lk 8:15), who, because of their lack of exposure to the truth, need to be taught more perfectly the way of the Lord – like Apollos. **These men are deliberately teaching lies**, and are doing so for personal gain. They are exploiting the people of God.

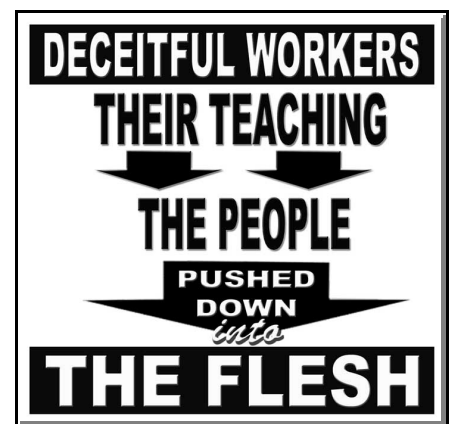
The Lord spoke of such “workers” through the prophets.

- “I have heard what the prophets said, that **prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed**” (Jer 23:25).
- “Thy prophets **have seen vain and foolish things for thee; and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment**” (Lam 2:14).
- “Woe be unto the pastors that **destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore**

thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have **scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them**: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD” (Jer 23:10-2).

- “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel **that do feed themselves!** should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: **but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them**” (Ezek 34:2-4).

“Deceitful workers” come in the name Christ, affirming that He has sent them. Yet, their teaching, because it is wholly spurious, actually pushes those who receive it into the domain of the flesh. **In that domain, there is only one thing that can take place: SIN!** It is not



possible to do righteousness while one is walking or living in the flesh. **The ONLY way sin can erupt in the church is for the people to be lured into the very domain from which they were once delivered.** “Deceitful workers,” in this case, did this through what they taught. Using “good words and fair speeches,” they “deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom 16:18). Their mouths speak “great swelling words” that have an appeal to the “old man,” or the Adamic nature. But they are spiritually lethal in their effects.

“Deceitful workers” are like the scribes and Pharisees – teachers of whom Jesus said, “ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayer” (Matt 23:14). “All” of their works are

done *“to be seen of men”* (Matt 23:5). They jockey for the *“uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogue,”* so they can be seen of men (Matt 23:6). They love to be acknowledged in public places, and to be noted for being teachers (Rabbi) – Matt 23:7.

- John said of them, *“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them”* (1 John 4:5).
- Again, Paul said of them, *“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly: and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”* (Rom 16:18).
- Again, Paul said of them, *“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things”* (Phil 3:19).

*filthy lucre's sake”* (Titus 1:11).

- Peter says of them, *“Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin: beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices: cursed children”* (2 Pet 2:14).
- Again, Peter said of them, *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”* (2 Pet 2:3).
- Jude says of them, *“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of*

*such people in His church.* He has placed no gifts in the body of Christ that are designed to primarily benefit the one possessing the gift. Rather, all of the spiritual gifts – every one of them – are designed to *“for the profit of all”* (1 Cor 12:7).

David said of such deceitful workers, *“Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names”* (Psa 49:11). They are not *“strangers and pilgrims”* in this world (1 Pet 2:11; Heb 13:14), nor do they make any profession of being so. Their home is in this world. Their desires are here. They speak of this world. Their riches are in this world. This is where they belong, and they love it. When they come disguised as religious workers, Christians, apostles, prophets, preachers, teachers, and the likes, there is a certain course that they MUST take. **They must resort to deceit, for there is nothing about the truth itself that will contribute to their cause.** They must pretend to be something that they are not, and to have something they do not possess.

**God has not made provision for such people in His church. He has placed no gifts in the body of Christ that are designed to primarily benefit the one possessing the gift. Rather, all of the spiritual gifts – every one of them – are designed to “for the profit of all”**

In due time – even in this world – many of these *“deceitful workers”* will be exposed, for *“there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested”* (Mk 4:22). Paul said of this, *“Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after”* (1 Tim 5:24). Some choose to refer to this as *“fallen leaders.”* John teaches us to think of their *“fall”* as a revelation that they were not *“of us”* (1 John 2:19). Peter reminded the early church that Judas fell *“that he might go to his own place,”* or *“where he belongs”*<sup>NIV</sup> (Acts 1:25).

I realize that it is quite possible to take this matter too far, imposing our own judgment on those who have stumbled. However, we should at least come away from this consideration with a clear view of these facts.

- Again Paul said of them, *“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness: he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself”* (1 Tim 6:3-5).
- Again Paul said of them, *“Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for*

*darkness for ever”* (Jude 1:12-13).

**“Deceitful workers”** are those who serve their own interests, and have no genuine interest in the flock of God. Among them are *“hirelings,”* who run away when the sheep are in danger, because they *“care not for the sheep”* (John 10:12-13). They exploit the people of God, and use religion to fulfill their own lusts. They do not feed Christ's sheep, but fleece them instead, gaining worldly profit from them. They think nothing of gaining riches by means of *“Christian books,”* or hawking some secret method that will supposedly make the people better.

God has not made provision for

- Nothing can dignify a lie.
- Corrupt fruit always comes from a corrupt tree.
- The truth never moves people into the realm of vanity.

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- There is nothing about the Gospel that feeds the flesh, nourishes lusts, or promotes self.
- There is no such thing as a godly servant who seeks his own benefit above that of the sheep.
- When the church as a whole begins to descend into the quagmire of sin, it has adopted “another Jesus,” “another Spirit,” and “another Gospel.”

- Where there is no spiritual life, the Holy Spirit is not present.
- Where holy and God-sent men are maligned, fleshly motives are at the root of it all.
- A holy work cannot be done by an unholy person.
- The purpose of God cannot be advanced by worldly wisdom and ambitions.

These, and other considerations, are precisely why Paul is speaking with such candor and strength. The situation was very serious – not merely because Paul himself was being traduced (exposed to shame), but because the church was being diverted into the fleshly domain, where sin easily grows, spreads, and becomes dominant. The tragedy is that the dreadful diversion was accomplished by the preaching and teaching of men whose primary interest was their own fame and welfare.

## SELF-TRANSFORMATION

<sup>13c</sup> . . . *transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.*”

It is fundamental to sound theology that what God does cannot be duplicated by any created being or person. Even though Satan, demons, and men, may fabricate something that bears a striking resemblance to the working of the Lord, their invention will be powerless to accomplish any facet of God’s “eternal purpose.”

Whatever is wrought by man bears the traits of fallen man, and cannot possibly stand the test of Divine scrutiny. The acid test of genuineness is the appearing of the Lord, when all things will be made known – even “the counsels of the heart” (1 Cor 4:5). At that time all “wood, hay, and stubble” will appear for what it really is – and the assembled universe of created personalities will behold it. **Until that time, there will not be a speck of purely human innovation in any facet of the work of the Lord.**

When it comes to the Kingdom of God, or the outworking of His “eternal purpose,” the hand of man is **not** upon it. Here, in the purest and most extensive sense, “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things” (Rom 11:36), and “all things are of God” (2 Cor 5:18). As in the building of an “altar of stone,” the “tool” of man is not allowed to be lifted up upon it (Ex 20:25). **That is, salvation (which is the outworking of God’s eternal purpose) has nothing originating with man in it.** It is wholly of the Lord. For some, this will



not become apparent until the present heavens and earth pass away, and Christ appears in all of His glory. Then the chorus will emit from the lips of the redeemed, “and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*” (Rev 7:10). And again, “*Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God!*” (Rev 19:1). From beginning to end, it was the Lord. That is precisely why “the Captain of our salvation” is appropriately called “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (Rev 1:8), and “the first and the last” (Rev 22:13).

There is a sort of spiritual buffer-zone around God’s workings in the earth. Human involvement is only allowed when the God’s “calling” summons men into it. Because “all flesh is grass” (Isa 40:6), it cannot mingle in the outworking

of Divine purpose. That is, purely human wisdom and natural aptitude, and everything that goes with them, are excluded from God’s work. It is not that they ought not to be involved, it is **not possible** for them to be involved. This is not something that is unlawful, but something that is rather impossible.

God did not create positions, then leave it to men to fill them at their own discretion. If there are “apostles and prophets,” it is because the Lord has placed them in the church by calling, empowering, and commissioning them. Strictly speaking, there are no volunteer apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11). These are “gifts” given to the church, **not products of the church** (Eph 4:8-11).

### The Relevance of This

Paul knew these things. He was aware that God’s gifts do not produce or lead to sin. He was conscious of the fact that men who are **really** sent by God do not lead the people of God into erroneous ways of thought and uncomely conduct – things that were found in Corinth. Such things were **not** produced by the Lord Jesus Christ, the truth of the Gospel, or the work of the Holy Spirit. **Therefore, the men the people had chosen to follow could not possibly be from God.**

Therefore, knowing these things, Paul will now account for the presence of these men who have called themselves “apostles” – men sent forth by Jesus. He will **not** be kind in his description of

them, for they are wreaking havoc in the body of Christ, causing *“divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine”* he had delivered to them (Rom 16:17).

### TRANSFORMING THEMSELVES

*“... transforming themselves . . .”* Other versions read, *“disguising themselves,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“masquerading as,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“fashioning themselves,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“making themselves seem like,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“who have fooled you into thinking,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“they try to look like,”*<sup>IE</sup> *“assume the garb of,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“by their own appointment.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

These were like men with masks, for that is what *“masquerading”*<sup>NIV</sup> is. **They tried to make themselves look like something they were not – like an actor on a religious stage.** Whatever semblance they bore to *“apostles”* was nothing more than religious stage make-up. It was the product of their own doing – an effort to emulate, or copy the appearance of, genuine apostles.

I do not know if they employed any kind of fixed methodology in their efforts to appear as authentic *“apostles.”* **It is not uncommon for men today to attempt to fabricate Kingdom workers through fixed methodologies.** There are institutions who claim to be able to train men to be preachers, teachers, leaders, evangelists, and the likes. Some churches employ programs they say are capable of training men to be elders, deacons, and other official workers. **Is this really how God works?** Do we have any example of Him working in this manner?

Some novice might say that Elisha was trained to be a prophet by being with Elijah. Surely some kind of training program or discipling routine was used there. They seem to forget that God had said to Elijah, *“And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room”* (1 Kgs 19:16).

You can imagine someone finding the mantle of Elijah the prophet. It was the mantle that he threw upon Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19). He smote the waters of Jordan with it, and they divided (2 Kgs 2:8). Following Elijah’s translation into heaven, Elisha took that mantle and also

struck the waters of Jordan. They parted for him also (2 Kgs 2:13-14). I can almost see the enterprising religious enthusiast carefully studying that mantel, imagining there was something in its chemical make-up that gave it such great power. Then he would duplicate that as closely as he could, and market it as a means to becoming a powerful prophet.

If that sounds preposterous, how does it differ from bringing a young man into a scholastic surrounding, teaching him how to interpret Scripture (hermeneutics) and prepare a sermon

he may be, it is **not** a servant of Christ.

### INTO APOSTLES OF CHRIST

*“... into the apostles of Christ.”* Other versions read, *“Christ’s apostles,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“apostles (special messengers) of Christ (the Messiah),”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and *“God’s messengers.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**These men made themselves look like Christ’s apostles.** From the view of flesh, it was not a clumsy likeness, for many in Corinth had received them as though they were what they said they were – what they had **made themselves.**

**It is not uncommon for men today to attempt to fabricate Kingdom workers through fixed methodologies. There are institutions who claim to be able to train men to be preachers, teachers, leaders, evangelists, and the likes. Some churches employ programs they say are capable of training men to be elders, deacons, and other official workers. Is this really how God works?**

(homiletics). Also, they would pass this young man through some course that would acquaint him with man’s psychological make-up. There would also be some course to acquaint him with what other scholars had said about the Bible. Of course, a stirring course on the history of their p-articular brotherhood would also be mandatory. Now, having passed all of these courses, he would be ready to go out and preach, teach, and lead the people of God. At least, that is what men would say. **Actually, the transformation was by men, not God!**

The fact that this kind of *“transformation”* has been catechized, formalized, and popularized, does not make it right. It is just as wrong today as it was when Paul wrote this epistle. **Any “change” that is induced by human wisdom and effort cannot possible make a person suitable for Divine employment.** If a professing servant of God cannot truthfully say, *“By the grace of God I am what I am”* (1 Cor 15:10), then whatever

Paul will now show that this is actually Satan’s strategy to seduce the church, which is his consistent target (Rev 12:17). Satan is not seeking to bring down governments, but the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not targeting the destruction of economies. But the body of Christ.

**The fact that great woes come upon governments and regions is only because Satan is targeting the saints who are in those areas.** The flood he spews out of his mouth impacts upon large general areas. Its target, however, is the saints of God – and the church is where these targeted souls are clustered together.

Thus, those who labor for Satan, particularly in this text, do not transform themselves into orators, historians, linguists, politicians, and the likes. They do not come as scientists, entertainers, or astute business men or educators. They come as *“apostles.”*

*There are ministers that are sent forth by Satan, and we are responsible to detect them – by Given O. Blakely*

**NO MARVEL**

<sup>14a</sup> **And no marvel . . .** Other versions read, *“And no wonder,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“And it is not wonderful,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“There is nothing astonishing about this,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“But I am not surprised,”*<sup>NLT</sup> and *“Nor do their tactics surprise me.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Knowing what he does about the

them to marvel. When, for example, Jesus began preaching, the people were *“astonished at His doctrine”* because He did not teach like the scribes (Matt 7:28). When He taught in the synagogues, the people were *“astonished,”* because they could not account for His *“wisdom and mighty words”* (Matt 13:54). When He

When Jesus sent out the seventy, they came back marveling because the demons were subject to them through Jesus’ name (Lk 10:20). But this was not the posture of His servants **after** the day dawned and the Day Star had risen in their hearts (2 Pet 1:19). Only when John was faced with the Babylonian monstrosity that Satan would use to deceive the multitudes was he moved to *“marvel with great amazement”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Rev 17:6). That was only because what he saw was a new Satanic tactic, although today it is old.

The point is that God’s people must be brought to the place where they can make sense out of the things with which they contend. The warfare itself must not be a mystery to them. The Corinthians were deceived because did not know what was happening. Paul saw through it because he **did** know what was happening.

If Satan can reduce the “church” environment to one of intellectual and spiritual simplicity, his work will be easier to accomplish, and his influence will spread more quickly. By “intellectual simplicity,” I am not referring to mere scholastic or academic attainments.

**Rather, I am referring to a certain inability to reason on spiritual things.** In such a case, the truth cannot be handled properly, the presence of Satan cannot be detected, and thus his ministers become invisible. In such a case, the people will marvel that there could be such a thing as *“false apostles”* in the church. They will say such things as, “How could this happen here?” or, “Why couldn’t we see this coming?” or “What did we do that was wrong?” Some, like the Corinthians, might be so spiritually naive that they do not even know anything serious has even happened in their presence.

**I fear that we are living in a time when there is too much marveling, both at the working of the Lord, and the accomplishments of the devil himself.** If this is a true assessment, the church has been swept off its feet by a tidal wave of spiritual stupidity.

**He knew that the saints are involved in tactical warfare – small-scale actions serving a larger purpose. The devil uses certain strategies, ploys, and schemes to lure the saints out the faith – the zone of safety. He uses “wiles,” “devices,” temptations, and “the sleight of men and cunning craftiness,” and “good and fair speeches.**

workings of the Lord, as well as his adversary the devil, Paul is not at all surprised, or taken back, by the self-transformation of these false apostles. He is *“not ignorant”* of Satan’s *“devices”* (2 Cor 2:11). Paul’s knowledge, or perception, extended into the mystery of redemption (Eph 3:4), the nature of inward spiritual warfare (Rom 7:15-25), and the stratagems of the devil (1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11).

**He knew that the saints are involved in tactical warfare – small-scale actions serving a larger purpose.** The devil uses certain strategies, ploys, and schemes to lure the saints out the faith – the zone of safety. He uses *“wiles”* (Eph 6:11), *“devices”* (2 Cor 2:11), temptations (1 Cor 7:5), *“the sleight of men and cunning craftiness”* (Eph 4:14), and *“good words and fair speeches”* (Rom 16:18). Knowing all of this, Paul is not surprised or taken back at what has happened in Corinth.

**WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO CAUSE A PERSON TO MARVEL?**

An individual’s level of spiritual maturity can, in part, be determined by what it takes to surprise them – to cause

raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead, the witnesses were *“astonished with great astonishment”* (Mk 5:42). Once, when Jesus healed a deaf and dumb man, the people were *“beyond measure astonished”* (Mk 7:37). When He told His disciples it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, His disciples *“were astonished out of measure”* (Mk 10:26). Even when Jesus was only twelve years old, the experts in the Law were *“astonished at His understanding and answers”* (Lk 2:47).

Why were these people astonished at the words, teaching, and works of Jesus? **It was because they did not know Him.** His disciples, for example, did not marvel at the revelations and working of the Lord in this way **after** His exaltation and their own reception of the Holy Spirit. It took much more to cause them to marvel when they became more acquainted with Jesus Himself and the nature of His workings.

Equally true, as the disciples became more acquainted with the adversary of their souls, and his working, the less they marveled at what he did.

**SATAN IS TRANSFORMED**

“ 14b . . . for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

Too often self-acclaimed Christian teachers have presented the devil as though he was stupid, ignorant, and deprived of any ability to reason. He is seen more like a wild beast, whose workings are devoid of any discernible purpose or objective. Thus, when people confront the devil, it is depicted as a scary experience – which, indeed, it can be. However, the notion that this is the **only** way Satan makes himself known is itself the result of his diabolical workings. **These erroneous views of the devil have been perpetrated by the devil himself.**

If this was not the case, there would be no need to warn the people about Satan, admonishing them to be “sober” and “vigilant” (1 Pet 5:8). What need is there to warn people of an adversary if he was always evident? It is the fact that he is NOT always evident that requires solemn warnings and exhortations to sobriety, vigilance, and not being ignorant of his devices. Now, Paul will show that at the top of the hierarchy of evil, Satan himself presents himself as a transformed being – someone who **appears** quite differently than he **really** is.

**SATAN HIMSELF IS TRANSFORMED**

“ . . . for Satan himself is transformed . . . ” Other versions read, “for Satan himself transforms himself,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “for even Satan disguises himself,”<sup>NASB</sup> “for Satan himself masquerades,”<sup>NIV</sup> “for even Satan fashioneth himself,”<sup>ASV</sup> “for even Satan himself is able to take the form of,”<sup>BBE</sup> “for Satan himself is changed,”<sup>TNT</sup> “for even the Adversary doth transform himself,”<sup>YLT</sup> “Satan can change himself,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “because Satan himself can make himself look like,”<sup>IE</sup> and “when I consider how Satan himself masquerades.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

**Satan’s primary interest is not in making people his vassals, or slaves.** A modicum (or bare minimum) of thought should confirm this to you. All men are

Satan’s people “*by nature.*” As it is written, even of **our own** past lives, “*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*” (Eph 2:2-3). Is it not written that “*We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (1 John 5:19). The truth of the matter is that until a person is “*delivered from the power of darkness*” (Col 1:13), he is under the dominion of the devil. Everyone who is not in Christ is “*alienated from the life of God*” (Eph 4:18; Col 1:21), “*enemies*” of God (Rom 5:10; Col 1:21), “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph 2:1), and “*having no hope, and without God in the world*” (Eph 2:12).

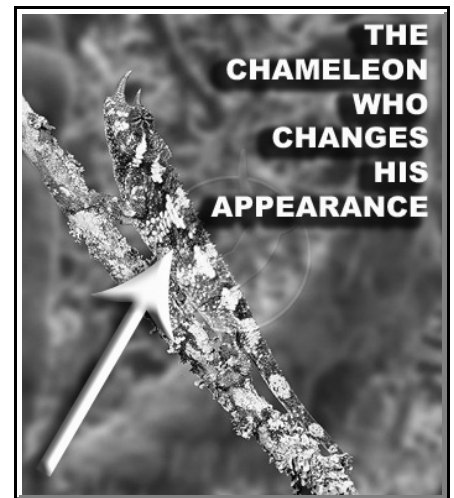
**Forever remove from your mind the imagination that humanity is a mass of individuals over which Jesus and the Devil are contending.** By nature, and apart from Christ, all of humanity is **already** governed by Satan – is “*under the sway of the wicked one.*” He already works in and through them in varying degrees, and in some way, they are already serving his purpose. This by no means obviates Christ’s authority over all men. Nor does it suggest that He cannot deliver whomever He wills from the power of the wicked one. What I am saying is that unless that deliverance takes place, Satan already is working in the person.

**Part of the Delusion**

Those who imagine that Satan is always very obvious, also have been deceived into thinking that those who are under his power are also very visible. Thus they imagine, for example, that a person who is demon-possessed is always violent, fearful, and very conspicuous.

They forget about that possessed woman of Macedonia who had a “*spirit of divination.*” This woman was **not** seized

with violent convulsions, as some that Satan controlled (Mk 9:20). She did not run through the mountains and cut herself, as the Gadarene demoniac (Mk 5:5). The devil did not throw her into the fire and water, as he did the young son of a certain man (Matt 17:15). She was not bowed together like the woman in the synagogue (Lk 13:11), or blind and deaf (Matt 12:22). Instead, this woman brought much gain to certain soothsayers with her prognostications, foretelling this and that. In fact, when she saw Paul and those with him, she cried out, “*These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation*” (Acts 16:17). Was there anything wrong with what she said? Was it something that was obviously wrong? Indeed, what she said was technically absolutely correct. **The wrongness was not in WHAT was said, but WHO said it.** A wicked spirit had said this – one that had been transformed into something **not** quite as offensive as a wild man, or child being cast into the fire and water.



Thus “*Satan himself,*” like an actor on the stage of life, changes himself to appear harmless, and even good. Like a chameleon, he adapts to himself so that he cannot be seen as he really is. A chameleon has independently moving eyeballs, and the unusual ability to change the color of its skin.<sup>MERRIAM-WEBSTER</sup> This strange creature is a depiction of the wicked one, who can move in and out

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among people without them knowing he is there. **He does not appear offensive to those who loathe external offensiveness, but adapts himself to their carnal preferences.**

### INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT

“. . . into an angel of light.” Other versions read, “a messenger of light.”<sup>YLT</sup>

Satan does not **always** appear as “an angel of light,” for some men have no interest in “light” of any sort. He will not come as an intellectual giant to those who love to wallow in ignorance. Nor will he come as a diviner, or necromancer, or soothsayer to those who have a hatred for such offenses.

Rather, Satan can come disguised

cherub, noted for “wisdom by reason of” his “brightness” (Ezek 28:14-16). **It ought not surprise us that he can do so well presenting himself as an illuminator!** Only those who are themselves walking in the light (1 John 1:7) can detect such a crafty one. I will go so far as to say that those who are **content** to remain in a state of spiritual infancy will soon be taken in by the devil. He will come to them in his religious garb, and sweep them off their feet, even as he did to Eve.

There is a very essential lesson to be learned here. **The most powerful form of delusion is religious delusion! The worst of all sin is religious sin!** Those who are drawn into the battle of fighting political corruption have only fallen into the hands of the wicked one. That is

**It was a dreadful thing when “The age of Reason,” or “The Enlightenment,” rose to prominence in the eighteenth century. It was the platform upon which Darwin introduced his subversive “Origin of the Species.” As damaging as that was, it was not half so damaging as when the theologians took up that damnable exaltation of the human intellect, and introduced “higher criticism,” which moved men to critique the Bible as though it was nothing more than an historical document.**

as “an angel of light” – a messenger from God that brings illumination, insight, and further knowledge. This is the way he came to Eve, offering some special insight that, he suggested, God had purposely hidden from her. Similarly, Paul suggested to the Galatians the possibility of a supposed “angel from heaven” that came preaching a gospel that contradicted the real Gospel (Gal 1:8). Of course, there is no holy “angel from heaven” that could possibly preach a contradicting gospel. This angel was really the devil, disguised as an “angel of light” – possessing special insight and understanding.

**Those Satan cannot take as a roaring lion, he will attempt to capture as an “angel of light,”** seemingly docile, scholastic, and bringing helpful food for the mind – religious food. Satan indeed was once the “anointed” and “covering”

precisely why Jesus and His Apostles were never drawn into that arena of battle – and they had to do with governmental despots like Pilate, Herod, and even Nero.

It was a dreadful thing when “The age of Reason,” or “The Enlightenment,” rose to prominence in the eighteenth century. It was the platform upon which Darwin introduced his subversive “Origin of the Species.” As damaging as that was, it was not half so damaging as when the theologians took up that damnable exaltation of the human intellect, and introduced “higher criticism,” which moved men to critique the Bible as though it was nothing more than an historical document.

When global empires like Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Grecians, and the Romans, were

introduced, it heralded an era of great danger and subversion. But it was nothing to compare to the institutionalization and popularizing of Christianity, which took the truth of God away from the people. **Make no mistake about this, religious sin is the worst sin, because it is promoted under the auspices of Satan himself, who has presented himself as an “angel of light.”**

March through the suburbs of the large cities of our land, and be appalled as you are exposed to ghettos, crack houses, night clubs, brothels, violence, and the likes. **But that is not half so bad as touring the religious community and finding dead churches, immoral preachers, spiritually ignorant people, wayward youth, and professing believers that are asleep.** You will find it easier to convert those engulfed in the non-religious citadels of violence and fleshly indulgence than to move one of those dead churches. And why is this so? **Because corrupt religion is like a narcotic that makes its victims insensitive to their surrounding, filling their minds with foolish ideas that “drown men in perdition”** (1 Tim 6:9).

This is precisely why Paul is spending so much time instructing the church. His time was not spent in the market place, promoting honest weights and measures. Nor, indeed, was it spent in the palace of the king, promoting a considerate rule over the people. He knew where Satan was more prominent, and it was **not** in a non-religious world.

### Once Again

Satan operates in his most subtle form when he comes as an “angel of light” – **an informed religious personality.** He will promote thoughts that men will tend to formalize, crystalize, and creedalize. The thoughts, positions, and sayings that are developed from this approach will **upstage** the Word of God, and will become the pillars of religious thought. Under the sway of these expressions truth itself will fall in the street, and the people will drift away from God – all the while maintaining a religious form.

I do not doubt that this approach was used by the devil in the subversion of “the third part” of the angelic hosts, depicted as being part of “the stars of

heaven,” which Satan “drew” with his tail, casting them “down to the earth” (Rev 12:4). These are said to be “the angels that sinned” (2 Pet 2:4), and “the angels which kept not their first estate,

but left their own habitation” (Jude 1:6). It is a sobering thought to consider that if Satan accomplished such a feat among the angels, what will he do among a race that was made “a little **lower** than the

angels.” The church must see that it is absolutely essential to fortify itself against such an adversary. We dare not stroll through life nonchalantly as though there were no serious dangers.

## SATAN'S MINISTERS ARE TRANSFORMED

<sup>15a</sup> **Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness . . .**

Satan does not always come face-to-face with us. While there are times we do contend with the devil himself (1 Cor 5:8-9), we are more often confronted with “his ministers.” Just as surely was there are “ministers of God” (2 Cor 6:4) “ministers of Christ” (1 Cor 4:1), and “ministers of the new testament” (2 Cor 3:6), Satan also has “his ministers.”

### THEREFORE

“Therefore . . .” Other versions read, “then,”<sup>NIV</sup> and “So.”<sup>NRSV</sup>

The idea is that in view of what we know about Satan – that he transforms himself into “an angel of light” – the truth that follows should be very apparent to us. If what is now said does not make sense to a person, or has a strange sound to it, it is because the individual has no understanding of the nature of his adversary. It is not likely that a such a simplistic soul will be able, therefore, to “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11).

### IT IS NO GREAT THING

“ . . . it is no great thing . . .” Other versions read, “ . . . it is not surprising,”<sup>NASB</sup> “It is not surprising,”<sup>NIV</sup> “ . . . it is not strange,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “So it is no surprise,”<sup>ESV</sup> “It is nothing extraordinary,”<sup>NJB</sup> “ . . . it is no wonder,”<sup>NLT</sup> “. . . it isn't any big thing,”<sup>IE</sup> and “It is only to be expected.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Once again, a perception of the facts delivers one from inordinate marveling, which is one of Satan's snares. The presence of religious delusion makes perfect sense in view of the nature of our adversary. As long as the presence of Satan's ministers seems to be a “great

thing,” the soul becomes vulnerable. Such a view betrays a state of spiritual juvenility. If this condition remains, the soul will finally be overcome by the artifices of the devil. In Christ Jesus, ignorance is always lethal, or deadly. That is why “ignorance” is said to alienate us from “the life of God” (Eph 4:18). Here is an expression used to describe our condition before we were in Christ Jesus: “the former lusts of your

them.

### IS HIS MINISTERS ALSO BE TRANSFORMED

“ . . . if his ministers also be transformed . . .” Other versions read, “if his ministers also transform themselves,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “If his servants also disguise themselves,”<sup>NASB</sup> “if his servants masquerade,”<sup>NIV</sup> “if his ministers also fashion themselves,”<sup>ASV</sup> “if his servants

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ignorance” (1 Pet 1:14).

Allow me to get even more to the point. If a person is staggered when they read the fictional book “This Present Darkness,” or the “Left Behind” series, what will they do when they confront the craftiness of Satan himself, or the cunning craftiness of his “ministers?” We are living in a world when men are supposedly moved to be more disciplined in their spiritual lives by reading “The Purpose Driven Life” – all the while, with the Word of God supposedly in their hand. Whole congregations think nothing of adopting the procedures set forth in “The Purpose Driven Church,” as though this was some precious secret let down from heaven. Why is this so? **Because the people have no awareness of the nature of their adversary.** Otherwise they would not rely upon personalities with lesser powers than their adversary to direct

make themselves seem,”<sup>BBE</sup> “his servants can also do it by pretending to be godly ministers,”<sup>NJB</sup> “when the servants of Satan try to look like,”<sup>IE</sup> and “that his agents shall have the appearance.”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

Does Satan really have “ministers” – flesh and blood ministers who traffic among those who wear the name of Jesus? Indeed, he does! **In fact, this is his chief strategy: to corrupt the church from within.**

Whoever is belching lies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is Satan's “minister,” for lies have nothing whatsoever to do with God. Jesus said of the devil, “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Cannot “cannot lie” (Tit 1:2), and Satan “abode not in the truth, for there is no truth in him” (John 8:44).

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But let us get more to the heart of this matter of Satan’s **“ministers.”** **These are men who actually promote Satan’s cause, yet appear to be advancing the purpose of Christ.** They allow a lot of liberty for the flesh, and thus their “ministry” results in division, carnality, ignorance, and forgetting one has been purged from their old sins. They do **not** declare the necessity of holiness (1 Pet 1:15-16), separation from this present evil world (2 cor 6:15-7:1), or setting our affection on things above (Col 3:1-2). Those who follow them do **not** know that God has called them into *“the fellowship*

**a Satan’s ministers, and their fruit confirms that is the case.**

I am not speaking of those who faithfully deliver the Word of God, yet are rejected by the people. I am speaking of *“ministers”* who are **received** by the people, and who tickle their itching ears.

**AS THE MINISTERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*“ . . . as the ministers of righteousness . . . ”* Other versions read, *“servants of righteousness,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“as the servants of uprightness,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“to be godly*

**These are men who actually promote Satan’s cause, yet appear to be advancing the purpose of Christ. They allow a lot of liberty for the flesh, and thus their “ministry” results in division, carnality, ignorance, and forgetting one has been purged from their old sins. They do not declare the necessity of holiness (1 Pet 1:15-16), separation from this present evil world (2 cor 6:15-7:1), or setting our affection on things above**

*of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”*(1 Cor 1:9). They are **not** urged to *“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet 3:18). They are **unaware** of a *“the righteousness which is from God by faith”* (Phil 3:9). They seem **unaware** that their conscience can be *“purged from dead works to serve the living God”* (Heb 9:14). They have **little or no** understanding of the fact that we now have *“the firstfruits of the Spirit,”* and that *“the redemption of our body”* is yet to come (Rom 8:23). They are **not** *“looking for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God”* (Heb 11:10). Rather than being *“strangers and pilgrims”* in this world (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11), and are blissfully at home in it, and cannot see beyond it.

**Are these conditions that Christ’s ministers produce?** Are those who follow the men God sends so described? And, if these are not the results that follow faithful ministers, for whom are those who produce such fruits working? **Even though it may be difficult to receive, such**

*ministers,”*<sup>NLT</sup> and *“ministers for doing right.”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

**Those who imagine that Satan is only standing on the outside of the professing church, attempting to lure people into an obvious cesspool of iniquity, have seriously erred!** Take, for example, the case of a local minister falling into the sin of fornication or adultery – sins God has clearly affirmed will cause one to be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 21:8). This is a class of people of which it is said, *“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Gal 5:21).

How, then, could a “preacher,” standing before the people of God, with Bible in hand, fall into such a snare? Was it because he was lured outside of the church – perhaps into a bar, a nightclub, or something even worse? Indeed, this is not at all the case. First, **while he was in the church,** fulfilling the office of a “preacher” and supposedly engaged in a quest for the souls of men, his thinking

had to be corrupted. He had to adopt *“another Jesus,” “another Spirit,”* and *“another Gospel”* **that allowed him to lust.** He had to embrace a religion that permitted him to remain in the church, supposedly preaching the Word, and yet allow his eyes to roam over the audience in quest of fleshly satisfaction. Peter would call it *“eyes full of adultery”* – and he was talking about their presence in the church (2 Pet 2:14). Some of Satan’s *“ministers”* caught the wayward preacher **because** he was living in the flesh.

There are people who serve Satan, do his bidding, and further his cause – and they do not always appear as witches performing incantations. They do not always come wearing the name “Muslim,” “Mormon,” or “Jehovah’s Witness.” Nor, indeed, do they always come as obvious “Modernists.”

The *“ministers”* of whom Paul now speaks come draped with the cloth of religiosity. They maintain they are of God, have been taught by Him, and have a message from Him.

- ☛ They do **NOT** say to the people, “I will teach you how to be lukewarm” – but that is what their message produces.
- ☛ They do **NOT** preach to the people, “I have come to make you ignorant of God, so that You will not know Him.” However, after years of listening to the man, that is the condition of the people.
- ☛ Such a *“minister”* does **NOT** confess to the people, “I do not know much about the Bible, God, salvation, or the world to come.” However, after a decade under his preaching he has said very little of any of those realities.
- ☛ You will never hear such a *“minister”* say, “I have no real interest in the things that are above, and really see no need for you to obtain such an interest either.” However, those who embrace his teaching end up with no appetite for those things either.
- ☛ Do not expect one of Satan’s ministers to confide in you, “Listen, you do not really need to be holy. I am not holy, and you do not need to be either. It is nice to give it a noble try, but if you are really not holy, God will love you anyway.” However, after the

people have swallowed all that he has taught, that is precisely the conclusion to which they have come. Therefore they do not *“follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Heb 12:14).

- Such a person will never say, “Reading the Bible is good, but it really is not necessary. It is actually better to read the books of men, and to become better acquainted with what men have said about the Bible, rather than to have a working knowledge of the Bible itself.” Yet, those who take the preaching of such a minister seriously arrive at this exact conclusion, and live it out before all.
- These ministers will never say, “Look, it is all right if you leave your first love. No one really stays fervent for Jesus. Eventually it all wears off, and you become like the rest of this dead fold.” However, and mark it well, those who follow these men do, in fact, leave their *“first love,”* thinking less and less about Him, and more and more about themselves.
- Do not be naive enough to think that these ministers will boldly say, “People, the wisdom of God is not enough. We also need the wisdom of this world. In fact, the world can help us to be better people, and do better work for the Lord.” However, those who follow these “ministers” actually do consult more with the world than with the Lord, and depend more upon its ways and wisdom than upon the Captain of their salvation.

Surely you are able to recognize that these are more than philosophical statements. Anyone who is serious about the Lord and dwelling forever with Him has confronted these conditions. How is it that such thoughts could be cultured in a supposedly “Christian” environment? How can people “go to church” regularly, taking in what is taught, and think in such an unacceptable manner? **It is because Satan’s ministers present**

**themselves as “ministers of righteousness.”**

With the help of their father the devil, they are “transformed” into these pretentious *“ministers of righteousness.”* **We know they are not really “ministers of righteousness,” because their followers are not righteous.** That PROVES the point, and nothing more needs to be said to make it more true! Where the church is not noted for being righteous, something is seriously wrong! As it is written, *“If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him”* (1 John 2:29). And again, *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth*

in all of His “sayings” (Rom 3:4).

#### Once More In Love

Permit me to affirm the truth once more *“in love”* (Eph 4:15) – love primarily for God and Christ, then the truth itself, and then the people of God. **Where Satan’s ways are being adopted, his ministers have been at work.** To determine this, we do not need to examine a resume, or have the preacher sit before a tribunal of his peers. We only need to examine the *“fruit of his doings”* (Jer 17:10). What did his message produce? What kind of people did those who received it become? How did they regard the Son, the Word, the things above, and the eternal inheritance?

**We know they are not really “ministers of righteousness,” because their followers are not righteous. That PROVES the point, and nothing more needs to be said to make it more true! Where the church is not noted for being righteous, something is seriously wrong!**

*righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:7-8).

Ah, this is too strong for the Babylonian! He cannot swallow the fact that **DOING** righteousness and **COMMITTING SIN** are the identifying marks of being either *“born of God”* or *“of the devil.”* Is it possible that there is some principle of interpretation that can lead us to any other conclusion? If there is, throw it in the dung-heap, for it cannot possibly be true. God has spoken to this matter, and He will be *“justified”*

Where did those who followed the man and his message end up? Were they holy? Did they possess the love of the truth? Were they willing to forsake all to follow Jesus? Did they have a lively hope? Were they seeking the things that are above?

If the answers to these, and similar, inquiries are negative, then one of Satan’s *“ministers,”* transformed into a *“minister of righteousness,”* has been present among the people. **If men object, saying this cannot be true, then consider the alternative conclusion.** That would mean it is possible to embrace the truth, and yet yield corrupt fruit! Who is willing to defend such an absurd postulate? A good tree CANNOT yield corrupt fruit! That is simply impossible!

### AN END THAT IS ACCORDING TO WORKS

*“<sup>15b</sup> . . . whose end shall be according to their works.”*

As tragic as the presence of Satan’s ministers is, there is a day of reckoning that will once and for all settle

all of the issues they have created. It will be a day when the eternal destiny of men will be determined by *“their works.”*

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While we are in this world, we contend with Satan's unseen hosts (Eph 6:12), and with those who are controlled by them. Like Paul, we would prefer to "turn many to righteousness" (Dan 12:3). Indeed, those who are "of the truth" labor to that end. But, we are not naive. We know that Satan's ministers may very well continue in his employment throughout the entirety of their lives, spewing out damaging doctrines and promoting the cause of iniquity.

However, that is not all we know. We also are keenly aware of the fact that God has "appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). It is of this day that Paul now confidently speaks.

#### WHOSE END

"... whose end . . ." Other versions read, "Their end,"<sup>NIV</sup> "They will come to the end,"<sup>NJB</sup> "in the end,"<sup>NLT</sup> "However, Satan's servants will end up,"<sup>IE</sup> and "Their doom."<sup>ISV</sup>

**Every person and every work has an "end"—an appointed fixed and eternal destiny.** It is not possible to avoid the conclusion of the road on which you are traveling. To get to the preferred end, you must take the preferred road. It is not possible to "end" up in a blessed eternity if the path one takes does not lead there! From another perspective, there are two "ways," or roads, and each has an appointed conclusion.

#### The Broad Way

One is a "broad" way, allowing much latitude for the flesh and its expression. It is easy to enter, and does not require vigilance, fortitude, or faith, for it is very "wide." Jesus said of this way, "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matt 7:13). Those who want the easy road, with few or no inconveniences, must take this road. Those who refuse to crucify the flesh, and choose rather to give it expression, have no alternative but to take this road. It has the only gate through which they can enter. **There is no such thing as a good way that allows for bad deeds and manners.**

#### The Narrow Way

There is another "way," and it is not so easy to enter. Its gate is **not** broad, but is rather narrow and restricting. Jesus said of the entrance gate to this way, "Enter ye in at the strait gate . . . because strait is the gate" (Matt 7:13-14). A "strait gate" is the opposite of a "wide" one. **One who is carrying a lot of baggage cannot even enter into this gate.** A lot of "self" also stops one from entering into this gate. In fact, one has to "forsake all that he hath" to get through this "strait" gate (Lk 14:33).

Jesus also spoke of the "end," or conclusion, of the way to which this "strait gate" leads. The "way," or the "highway" (Isa 35:8), is itself very narrow — like a small single-laned highway. Everyone on this way is going, and no one is coming back. Jesus said of the traveling area itself, "narrow is the way . . . and few there be that find it" (Matt 7:14). At any one time, it is not heavily traveled, and those who are simultaneously on the road must, of necessity journey together. However, the destiny of this "way" is glorious. Jesus said that it "leadeth to life" — i.e. eternal life (Matt 7:14b).

Now, there are really only two destinies, and only one single road leads to each one. **It is not possible to take the wrong road and end up at the right destiny. Conversely, it is not possible to take the right road and conclude at the wrong destiny.**

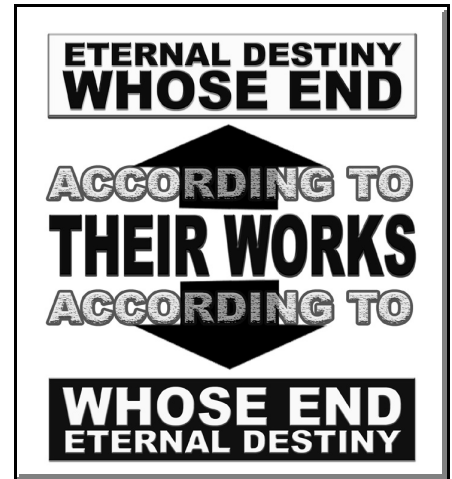
The destinies are "Destruction" and "Life," and there are no alternatives. No additional destinies can be created during time, or along the way. If you are on the narrow road, entered through a strait gate, you will end up with eternal life! If you are on the broad road that is accessed by a wide gate, God will destroy you. **It is really that simple, and no one can afford to fail to take hold of this.**

Now Paul will speak of the conclusion of these "false apostles," who transformed themselves into "the apostles of Christ," and were not really sent forth by him.

#### ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS

"... shall be according to their works." Other versions read, "shall be

according to their deeds,"<sup>NASB</sup> "will be what their actions deserve,"<sup>NIV</sup> "will match their deeds,"<sup>NRSV</sup> "will correspond to their deeds,"<sup>RSV</sup> "will be the reward of their works,"<sup>BBE</sup> "appropriate to what they have done,"<sup>NJB</sup> "they will get every bit of punishment their wicked deeds deserve,"<sup>NLT</sup> "will end up the same way they lived,"<sup>IE</sup> and "but they will get their deserts one day."<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>



In this world, the "works" of these pretenders might have appeared very impressive. They might have started new movements, built mega-churches, and founded religious empires. They may have gained worldly recognition, written many books, and established impressive religious organizations. They may have gained prominence in the political, athletic, or entertainment worlds. Their names might have been included in great history books, and the records of impressive achievements. There may be buildings, organizations, and even lands that bear their name. They may have grown accustomed to the applause of men, and received many public honors.

However, when our text says their "end" will be determined by their "works," it is not speaking of how men regarded their "works." **Their destiny will be determined by what God thought of their works** — and "God is not a man" (Num 23:19). Consequently, He does not think like a man. In fact, He says of man apart from Christ, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My

thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9). **Therefore, the assessment of the works of men will require throwing out all human judgment.** Earthly records will all have been “burned up” when the world went up in flames (2 Pet 3:10-12).

Judgment will be according what

heavenly books will be a most precise and detailed record of what they have done. The determining factor will be whether or not their works were in synch with the eternal and revealed purpose of God. Did they produce the good fruit of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:

**Those are God’s revealed objectives. Do you supposed there is such a thing as a valid “minister” who is at variance with such purposes, or that does not favorably contribute to them? Is it possible that God would put a preacher or teacher in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:18) who**

is written in the heavenly records. It is said of that time, “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, **and the books were opened**” (Dan 7:10). And again, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; **and the books were opened:** and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev 20:12). **These “books” will tell the truth about what men did. Their motivations, intents, and desires will be affixed to their “works”** (1 Cor 4:5). Their “works” will be merged with their character, and considered one and the same.

The judgment tribunal itself will be a kind of hierarchy. Ultimately, the Judge is God Himself. However, He will execute His judgment through the Son, to whom all judgment has been given (John 5:22; Acts 17:31). Also, Jesus will judge through His saints, who have been schooled through His “great salvation” to judge both men and angels (1 Cor 6:2-3).

**At this time, all of Satan’s ministers will be exposed to an assembled universe.** They will be seen for what they really are, and nothing will be hidden. The works that are logged in the

against such there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23). Did their activities contribute to the “perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ?” Did they enable the saints to come into “the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?” Did their teaching bring the people to the point where they were “no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive?” Were their followers noted for “speaking the truth in love,” and growing “up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ?” Was the Head of the body able to work effectively “in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:12-16)?

Those are God’s revealed objectives. **Do you supposed there is such a thing as a valid “minister” who is at variance with such purposes, or that does not favorably contribute to them?** Is it possible that God would put a preacher or teacher in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:18) who had no interest in what He was doing? I would consider a person who thinks such a circumstance is even remotely possible, to have been, like the ostrich, deprived of all wisdom (Job 39:13-17)!

On that day, it will be said of the people of God, who are the “bride” of Christ, “His wife hath **made herself ready**” (Rev 19:7). Do you suppose there will be a single solitary “minister” welcomed into the “house of the Lord” (Psa 23:6) who has **not** contributed to that state of readiness? What of those who had to be **overcome** in order to be “ready” to dwell forever with the Lord? What will be the lot of those preachers and teachers whose doctrines were nothing more than an obstacle en route to glory – teachings that led people to wrong conclusions, made them assess their real situation wrongly, and caused them to leave a place for Satan to work in their lives? **Do you really think mercy is reserved for such people?** Well, whatever you may think, I strongly advise that you do everything within your power to avoid being in those categories!

#### **SAVED BY GRACE; JUDGED ACCORDING TO WORKS**

It is true that we are “saved by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8), and there is absolutely no question about it. **Judgment, however, will not be according to grace, but according to our “works.”** There is no need for any question on this matter, for it has been made abundantly clear.

- ☛ “For **by thy words** thou shalt be justified, and **by thy words** thou shalt be condemned.” (Matt 12:37)
- ☛ “Who will render to every man **according to his deeds.**” (Rom 2:6)
- ☛ “Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be **according to their works.**” (2 Cor 11:15)
- ☛ “And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth **according to every man’s work,** pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” (1 Pet 1:17)
- ☛ “I will give unto every one of you **according to your works.**” (Rev 2:23)
- ☛ “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life:

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and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works.** “(Rev 20:12)

☛ *“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works”* (Rev 20:13)

For some, this is too difficult to process, for it clashes with their perception of God, Christ, salvation, and Divine judgment. However, once the nature of God, Christ, and salvation are comprehended, this makes perfect sense. In salvation, a very real work is done within the “*saved*” one. Such are really “*washed,*” “*justified,*” and “*sanctified*” (1 Cor 6:11). They are really “*made righteous*” (Rom 5:19), not merely by designation, but by constitution. We know this is the case, because it is written, “*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:7-8).

If a person’s “*works*” are unrighteous, it is only because he is unrighteous, for a good tree does not produce corrupt fruit (Luke 6:43). If one’s “*washing*” is not confirmed by clean deeds, then the washing itself is held in question. If being “*made righteous*” does not result in godly living, then what

confirmation is there that one has, in fact, been “*made righteous?*”

The reality of the case will be made fully known on the day of judgment. At that time, the “*book of life*” and “*the books*” of human deeds will be perfectly synchronized. One book will not read “*LIFE,*” while the other books read “*DEAD WORKS.*”

On the day of judgment, grace will not make your character different than it was when you left this world. This world is the place – the ONLY place – for moral change. Now that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, if the laws of God are **not** written upon our

Teachers who had vomited out their contaminated doctrine among the Corinthians will be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ. The books will be opened, and their deeds will be compared with the Divine standard. It will go well with them if they have repented of their evil deeds, and reflected that in their teaching. If this has not taken place, “*the day shall declare it*” (1 Cor 3:13). Then they will enter into the “*end*” of the road they chose to follow. There will be no “*life*” for those who entered the “*wide*” and accommodating gate, and traversed the “*broad*” way. And, there will be no destruction for those who entered the “*strait*” gate, and walked the “*narrow*” way.

**The reality of the case will be made fully known on the day of judgment. At that time, the “book of life” and “the books” of human deeds will be perfectly synchronized. One book will not read “LIFE,” while the other books read “DEAD WORKS.”**

hearts here, there is no other station where this can take place. If a new heart and new spirit are **not** received in this world, they will **not ever** be received. If God is **not** known while we remain in the body, **He will never be known.** One’s works reveal his real condition.

Now, while it is “*called today*” (Heb 3:13), is the time to consider what will be the outcome of your labors. How do you suppose those who embraced your message will turn out? The fruit will tell the story!

## CONCLUSION

This is a sobering text, indeed. Yet, it is very needful. We are living in a day of India rubber theology that bends this way and that way to accommodate the flesh and make it comfortable. **But the Head of the church demands that the flesh be crucified, not coddled!** He gives us the Holy Spirit to lead us in this effort, strengthening us to “*mortify the deeds of the body*” (Rom 8:13-14). Those who are not led in this pursuit are simply **not**

Christ’s – regardless of where they went to school, where they go to church, or what they have said about the relationship to Jesus.

Let the Spirit speak for Himself on this matter. “*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*”

(Rom 8:13-14). If this is not happening, and yet the individual insists he is a Christian, then there is only one answer concerning them. They have embraced “*another Jesus,*” received “*another Spirit,*” and “*believed “another Gospel”*” (2 Cor 11:4). But, woe to the person who preached that “*other*” Jesus! Woe to the one who proclaimed that “*other*” Spirit, or delivered that “*other*” Gospel. It will not go well with them. As it is written,

*“whose end shall be according to their works.”*

**A flawed church is the direct result of embracing flawed preaching and**

**teaching.** In matters of religion, there are no alternatives to truth. It simply is not possible to preach *“another Jesus,”* and the people experience the benefits brought by the genuine Son of God. It is

not possible for *“another Spirit”* to produce the fruit that God accepts. Nor, indeed, can *“another Gospel”* possibly be the means by which the faith that saves *“comes.”*

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/3/2006. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The forty-sixth lesson will cover verses sixteen through thirty-three of the eleventh chapter: **“THE EXPERIENCES OF PAUL.”** While engaged in the work of the Lord, with the blessing of the Lord, and possessing a message of absolute truth, Paul experienced unparalleled measures of opposition and hindrance. This is the manner of the kingdom, and we do well to be able to recognize it. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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