Deceitful Workers

2 Corinthians 11: 1-21a

Each One Reach One: The Cost and Rewards

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This last couple of months I've spent quite a bit of time looking for vehicles. I was helping my daughter try and find a car and then in December my '87 Toyota Four-Runner locked up—end of the road—very tragic really. (Laughter) So I've been trying to find a different vehicle. It's not exactly my favorite thing but you don't have to be out there too long before you realize there are people in the car business that operate with the highest level of integrity and those who don't. And I suppose that's true of any business. But it gets a bit overwhelming and you find yourself asking the question, "How do I figure out who I can trust and who I can't trust?" Now when you're talking about integrity you're not talking about somebody that's perfect. You know it's not like these people are omniscient. There could be things that are wrong with the car and they don't know that, but in their hearts they really are trying to be honest and operate with integrity and do the best job that they can. That's really different from someone who is deceitful. They know something's wrong but they're trying to hide it and they're just trying to make a deal. You kind of get that sense that, "This isn't right." Well if you take that confusion, that feeling, that desire to figure out, "Who can I trust, and who do I not trust?" and just move it over into the spiritual world, you have something very similar. One of the common complaints we hear from people is, "The world is full of religion and it's full of lots of different churches and a lot of churches call themselves Christian churches and a lot of churches are waving the Bible, but how do you really know who's telling the truth and who isn't? And who is operating with integrity and who's not? I mean what are the things that you should look for or how do we navigate through this difficult challenge?" Well if you have a Bible, turn with me to 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10, and I think Paul will help us with that.

It seems like it's been a long time since we were in 2 Corinthians. If you're new with us, we started working our way through 2 Corinthians in September. We took a break for the holidays and the campaign and now we just need to finish up the last few chapters. But I found myself struggling this week to kind of get back in the groove of 2 Corinthians and the train of thought and really what it's all about. We talked in December that there's a pretty dramatic tone change moving into Chapter 10. Paul has a very difficult assignment. He's writing one letter to the Corinthian church and, in an ancient culture where you didn't have phones and cell phones and e-mail and all that, you basically wrote a letter and then it was hand-delivered. And so you kind of had to say what you needed to say in that letter. So he's got to address the Corinthian believers that are very loyal to him; he's got to address the false teachers who have now mixed into the life of the church and he's got to address the Corinthians who are persuaded by the false teachers. He's got to do it all in the same letter so that's quite a complex challenge. And it appears in Chapter 10, as he's getting to the end of this letter, the tone really changes and he becomes much more sober—much more direct—as he's going for the false teachers in trying to expose who they really are.

In Chapter 10 we talked about the difference between religion and really the life of Christ that Paul is talking about. Religion is all about *external*; the life of Christ is about *internal*. And we talked about why religion makes sense—why it's so popular with people—and then how it's different from really the life in Christ that Paul promotes. That discussion really flows on into Chapter 11. We pick it up then in verse 1:

> **I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me.** (*NASB, 2 Corinthians 11:1)

Now he's going to say that twice in our text today. What he means by that is: Several times in the Corinthian letter Paul has talked about how foolish it is to brag on yourself. The spiritually elite—the false teachers—were very good at bragging on themselves and Paul says that's foolish. You know, at the end of the day, it's really God that's the judge and that's the one opinion that matters. But the situation has kind of backed Paul into a corner. Paul wants them to understand, "There's that which is true and that which is untrue." He wants to expose the false teachers but the Corinthians are having trouble sorting it out. So part of the argument is he wants them to notice the difference between how he has conducted himself and how they have conducted themselves. And so to do that he has to, in essence, brag on himself. So he's saying, "I don't really like doing this; it seems kind of foolish but I don't know what else to do." So that's what he's trying to say in verse 1.

Verse 2:

> **For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.**

In verse two Paul is talking about his motive—why he's going to do what he's about to do. He's talking about...**a godly jealousy**. It's interesting to think about that. We tend to think of jealousy as a vice; it's always a bad thing. Human jealousy is a bad thing. Human jealousy is really love that is enslaved to fear and it's always destructive to relationships. But godly jealousy is a love that's motivated by a desire to protect what is right or what is good—and there's a place for that. It's important for us to understand that we should have a jealousy to protect things that are right and good.

Let's see if I can give you an illustration out of my marriage. If I'm struggling with human jealousy, it's coming from my insecurities and therefore it's a love that is enslaved to fear. So every time Patty talks to another guy or has any other life or relationship outside of me, then I'm jealous and it's tapping into my insecurities and my fear and that causes me to clutch and cling. That will almost always destroy a relationship and it's motivated by stuff that's not good. That's very different than if Patty and I share a love relationship and I'm aware of a man who is pursuing her in order to pursue her romantically. I should be jealous for what we have. I wouldn't tolerate that. I would seek to stop that, because I'm jealous for what we have. I'm jealous for what is right and good and pure and that godly jealousy should cause me to respond in some way.

So there is a jealousy that is good and it's right and it's noble. Paul is saying that he is jealous for the Corinthian believers—for the Corinthian church—and he uses the imagery of a father and a daughter. In the Hebrew culture they had what was called a betrothal. It's similar to engagement but also very different. Once a couple was betrothed then that was so binding that the only way to get out of that was either death or divorce. But it would be a period of time before the marriage was ultimately consummated. During that betrothal period it was necessary for the bride to demonstrate that she was sexually faithful to her husband. That was part of the point of that time period. So the responsibility of the father was to do everything in his power to make sure that she kept herself pure so that he could present her to the husband—to the groom—on the wedding day. And that was a great privilege for a father to accomplish that and present his daughter as a virgin to her husband. Well that's what Paul is using as an imagery or a metaphor. He's saying that his responsibility—having been the one that gave birth to the Corinthian church—he's the father; they're the daughter.

They have been betrothed to the husband, who is Christ. But until that marriage is consummated—referring to the return of Christ—it's his responsibility to do everything in his power to keep the bride pure. And so that's what is motivating him. He doesn't want them contaminated or committing spiritual adultery because of these false teachers. So what's the problem?

Verse 3:

> **But I am afraid, that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.**

It's interesting that the enemy has not changed strategies in thousands of years. What he did in Genesis, Chapter 3, as the serpent, is the same thing he's trying to do to us today and that is to deceive us in order to lure us away from that which is true. Now the challenge of deception is when you are being deceived, you don't know you're being deceived. In other words you think that it's true, but it's not true. That's the very essence of deception; that's a part of what makes it a challenge. It's interesting too that Paul talks about the battle for the mind. It's really important to realize as Christians that ultimately the battle is for our mind. We tend to think of it on the behavioral level and that's really a mistake. One of the distinctions of religion is religion focuses on the outside; so religion focuses on the behavior. But the life of Christ really focuses on the mind and what is true. And if you think rightly, then you will live rightly. But it's really a war for the mind. That is where the battle is won or lost and that's why the enemy is out to deceive. Now the concern is that we would...**be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ**. So we could say that what defines the truth—what defines the Bride of Christ as God intended her—would be simplicity and a pure devotion to Christ because Paul's concern is that's what they're going to be led away from—into something that's not true and not right. So those would be two things to think about in trying to sort out and discern between that which is true and right and that which is not. The word **simplicity** doesn't just mean "simple". It carries the idea of everything being *open and honest*. It's a word that was used to describe a blanket that was laid on a table. There weren't any folds; there weren't any pockets; there weren't any creases. In other words there was no place to hide; it was just all open and visible. It's really a very vivid word to describe what the true church of Jesus Christ should be about: It's simple; it's open; it's honest. That's really different from a religion that seems to be very confusing. There seems to be a lot of secrecy; there seems to be certain things that you don't learn until you're *part of the club*. There's kind of this public image and then there's more the real image. All of that starts to raise concerns, so Paul is saying that the message should be open and simple and clear.

There's a group of guys—most of you are aware of this—other senior pastors in town that I meet with once a month and we've been together a long time. We love each other. We'll do anything in our power to help one another…even though we have areas of disagreement. At the core—the fundamentals of the faith—we're in one hundred percent agreement. But once we get out into some of the secondary doctrines, we don't agree on everything. We have a couple of Presbyterians; we have a Bible church; we have an Evangelical Free church; we have a Christian church and we have a couple of charismatic churches, so there are definitely some differences. But when we talk with one another, first of all we're very clear that we are united on the fundamentals. There's no confusion there; there's no doubt about that. We're in this together; we understand that. But, even when you move to the secondary issues where there's not agreement, there's no sense in which something is secret, in which something is hidden—where you can't really get at the truth. Everything is supported from the Scriptures; everything's out in the open. It's just a case where there are certain areas where we disagree. That's really different than when you get into a

conversation with someone and you just can't get clarity. It feels like the conversation is going around in circles and you have to work and work and you can't figure out what they're trying to say and it feels like there's something hidden.

As a matter of fact, go back to car shopping. You've had the feeling when you're on a car lot and you get the sense that they're not answering my question and they're kind of trying to change the subject and there's just something in the pit of your stomach that says something is not right here. I'm just not comfortable with this conversation. It's the same kind of a conversation you can have in the religious world where you just get this sense that something's not right here. My question is not being answered. Something's not clear; this is all really confusing. If you enter into a discussion with someone in the religious world and you just get the feeling that they're not answering your question or maybe they're saying you shouldn't even ask the question or you're going around and around in circles or they're changing the subject. You've seen the commercial on television where the dishonest car salesman is trying to sell a car and the buyer keeps saying, "Show me the CARFAX; Show me the CARFAX." Well that's sometimes how it feels in the religious world. It feels like I'm not getting a straight answer here and you have to work and work and work to kind of dig down to some of these secret beliefs.

In the first century there was probably the very beginnings of what would be called *Gnosticism* and one of the big tenets of Gnosticism is they had secret knowledge and, if you had secret knowledge, then you were somehow more spiritual. Maybe that's a part of what Paul is referring to is that these false teachers who had this secret information and secret knowledge is what made them better and that's what made them elite. One of the things you really want to notice when you're having these discussions is: If people start referring to something other than the Scriptures, a red flag needs to go up. When they start referring to a prophet, when they start referring to another book, when they start to refer to a founder, when they start to refer to the traditions of the church, all of a sudden a red flag should go up that this doesn't sound like the simplicity of the gospel. It sounds like it's something else.

The second thing that he talks about is the ...**purity of devotion to Christ**. In other words, at the end of the day, it's about Jesus and it's about a love relationship with Jesus. That's what matters and that should be the mission of the true church of Jesus Christ. It might have a different label over the door. It might have some areas of differences but, at the end of the day, it's about cultivating a love relationship with Jesus Christ. That's really different than someone that seems to be highly committed to a denomination, highly committed to a group, highly committed to some group that somehow has it all right and everybody else is wrong. You know whenever you start to feel that way, there should again be a red flag that says, "Something's wrong here." I don't think there's any church; I don't think there's any denomination that has it all right. I mean that would be a very arrogant thing to think. I think we're all working together to ultimately figure out what's true. The fundamentals of the faith I think we're confident in, but I think we're all trying to figure out beyond that, in these secondary areas, what's right and what's not right. But these groups that feel that they're right and everybody else is wrong and they often go back to a prophet, they go back to a founder, and the group just feels very isolated and closed, and suddenly you get the sense, "This isn't really about a love relationship with Jesus. This is about the group. This is about the denomination. This is about the movement. All of that starts to feel really different, and should be a warning sign."

From my standpoint as a preacher here's how I would think about it: If I was to leave Lincoln Berean, I wouldn't limit myself to another Berean church. I mean ultimately my loyalty is not to the Berean Fellowship; it's to Jesus Christ. My doctrinal statement is really not the doctrinal statement of the Berean church; it's the Bible. And any time I feel like the Bible is out of step with the doctrinal statement of the Berean Fellowship, the Bible has to win out. That's the way it has to work. So I could easily walk down the street and I could preach at Faith Bible, or Evangelical Free church, or New Covenant—any of those I would be very at home in, because my loyalty is to Christ and to the Scriptures and that would be the same in any of those churches.

From your standpoint think of it this way: If you were to move to Kansas City, if you limit yourself that there's only one denomination, there's only one type of church, there's only one movement, there's only one group that I would be a part of and I wouldn't even consider any other group, I would say that's a red flag. Something's wrong with that. It appears as if your commitment or your loyalty is more to a denomination, to a movement, to a group, than it is to the Body of Christ. At the end of the day the labels come off. There's the true Church of Jesus Christ, and there's the counterfeit. And we're all together, as the true Church of Jesus Christ, in devotion to Christ and commitment to the Scriptures, so it's really important to understand it that way. So I think that's what he means by the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

One of the things I find interesting, as I have these conversations a lot, are people that are totally committed to a denomination but when you talk to them they don't know what the denomination believes; they can't define the beliefs; they have no idea how to defend the beliefs and you'd have to say, "You know this is someone who isn't really committed to Christ." This isn't someone who is really devoted to Christ and the Scriptures. They just apparently are devoted to this particular movement or denomination and there's something very wrong about that. Those would be some of the things to watch for.

He says in verse 4:

> **For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.**

Now Paul is getting sarcastic here. As a matter of fact he does that quite a bit in this text. When he says, "*You have done this beautifully*," he is saying that you have allowed this. You are a beautiful example of someone who is so open-minded and so tolerant that you have allowed a different Jesus, a different spirit and a different gospel. It's interesting that he doesn't say a different Christ—but a different Jesus—clearly referring to His humanity. The false teachers would not have denied the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. That would have immediately disqualified them. But they are adding to the finished work of Jesus on the Cross and to do that they have to redefine Jesus. These false teachers were Jewish legalists and they were trying to bring back a lot of the covenant law that, "Yes, it's good that Jesus died on the cross but you also have to do this and this and this and this." And on the basis of doing those things and performing this way, you become part of the spiritually elite, which is how they viewed themselves. So they had to redefine Jesus and who He was, which created a different spirit—small "*s"*. If they had *the* Spirit of God, it would be capital "*S"*, but once they have received a different gospel, then it creates a different spirit, and it's a human spirit. We've seen this all throughout both 1 and 2 Corinthians. It's the spirit of arrogance; it's the spirit of pride; it's the spirit of elitism. It's the spirit that says somehow they are a *cut above* everybody else and Paul has been wrestling with that through both of his letters. A different gospel

is understanding that these people affirm the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. They celebrated Christmas. They celebrated Easter—or they would if they were alive today. And so it seems like we all believe the same thing. And yet they have added to the finished work of Jesus on the Cross certain religious requirements, certain rules, certain rituals, certain requirements that—if you're really going to be spiritual—it's what Jesus did on the cross *plus* these things. And the tendency for a lot of people is, "Hey, better safe than sorry…You know we might as well believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus *and these things*, because better safe than sorry." But Paul would say in Galatians, "That's not safe and you should be sorry," because ultimately what he says is, "As soon as you add one thing to the finished work of Jesus on the Cross, it ceases to be a gospel of grace." He says in Galatians that you have nullified grace and now it becomes a salvation of works and Paul is very clear in Galatians that—if it is a salvation of works—you have to be perfect or you are doomed. So it's not an insignificant thing that people are adding rules and regulations and rituals to the finished work of Jesus on the Cross. At that point it's a different gospel.

I think the best way to understand what Paul is saying is to work it backwards. A different gospel creates a different spirit, which means you have to redefine Jesus. A different gospel creates a spirit of arrogance and elitism instead of brokenness and humility and you have to redefine Jesus in order somehow to make that gospel work. And that's what the Corinthians are doing.

Verse 5:

> **For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.** *(It could be translated "super-apostles"),* **for even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.**
>
> (vs. 5-6)

There's a lot of discussion about who ...**the most eminent apostles** are. It could be a kind of sarcastic title that the false teachers were putting on the twelve, but probably more likely it is Paul's reference to the spiritual elite who have set themselves up as the super-apostles, as the most eminent apostles, as the *best of the best*. And so what he's saying here is that he is not inferior to them. Even though he may not be able to compete with them in their showiness, in their production, in their speech, he knows what's true, and that's the emphasis he's made with them over and over again. You remember we talked about this in Chapter 10—that one of the big virtues or values in the Greek-Roman culture was rhetoric and, if you had the ability to speak well, that was highly prized. As a matter of fact you would have been a first century celebrity if you were very good in your ability to persuade and move a crowd. It wasn't so much *what* you said; it was *how* you said it and as long as you said it very well and could sway a crowd, then you were valued. That was a virtue in the first century world. These religious leaders prized themselves in their ability to speak, in their ability with rhetoric and their ability to move and persuade the masses—and they were obviously very convincing. They said that Paul had contemptible speech—we talked about this in Chapter 10. In other words they said he couldn't do it. He wasn't any good. He wasn't a *cut above* like the rest. Paul is saying, "Okay, I don't play that game and I may not speak like they do but I know what's true and, at the end of the day, that's what matters." It's a really important message for us to hear because religion focuses on the external. Religion is really good at being impressive. They have impressive buildings; they have impressive titles; they have impressive clothing; they have impressive movements. It all seems very impressive and people in our culture tend to say, "Well it must be God—it's really impressive!" It's not at all uncommon for preachers to wave the Bible and make claims that simply aren't true. Oftentimes we refer to them as the *prosperity*

preachers. There are a lot of preachers in the world today that have nothing to say but they say it really well and they move the masses. And people think, "That's got to be true; I mean he's waving a Bible!" We need to be more discerning than that. Religion is very impressive and it often appeals to us and says what we want to hear but that doesn't make it true and that's what Paul is trying to convince them of.

Verse 7:

> **Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows that I do!** (Vs. 7-11)

This surfaced in the first letter—1 Corinthians, Chapter 9. In the first century, just like today, religion was big business and teachers would move into town; they would set up shop and they could make a significant amount of money by preaching and proclaiming whatever their movement was. Paul, when he came to Corinth, in order not to adulterate the gospel, in order for people not to be able to say, "He's just in it for the money," Paul chose to be a tent-maker. Paul chose to make his own way so that they couldn't say, "You're just in it for the money," so that Paul could separate himself from the false teachers. Now we know from both letters that the false teachers have set themselves up as kings. They are the elite. They are the prosperity preachers of the first century. And so Paul is really distinguishing himself and his motives from them and obviously this has been very effective because the false teachers have worked really hard to somehow spin this and come around to Paul and discredit him. So they've tried to put forth this message that, if he was a true apostle, then he'd be getting paid for this. If he isn't getting paid for it, then obviously he's not the *real deal*. He must be a fake. But Paul is saying in this text, "I'm not going to budge—nice try!" But obviously the false teachers feel like they have been discredited. They're on the ropes and they're trying really hard to get Paul to take money so that this particular criticism will go away.

We do know from the book of Acts that, partway through the ministry, Paul received money from some of the other churches in order that he could dedicate himself full-time to the preaching of the gospel. Apparently the false teachers had said, "Well, you know he doesn't ask for money here because he's robbed those churches." So Paul is getting a little sarcastic back, saying, "Yeah, I robbed all those churches so I could come here and preach the gospel." But, at the end of the day, he's saying, "I'm not going to do it differently. I love you. I've tried to present the gospel in a way that would not be offensive." And he has no plans to change how he operates.

Verse 12:

> **But what I am doing, I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.** (Vs. 12-13)

I think at this point in the letter, Paul is finally taking off the gloves. He's really not beating around the bush anymore. He's calling it what it is. He says that they are false apostles; they are deceitful workers; they are disguising themselves as apostles. When you start talking about deceit, you're talking about someone who is intentionally misrepresenting the truth, somebody who is trying to hide something, somebody that's trying to misrepresent something in order to convince or move or persuade somebody else. When you're talking about a disguise, you're talking about somebody that's intentional about disguising something, covering something up, masking something. I mentioned before, a lot of movements kind of have this public message, but it's very intentional—they're trying to hide or mask or disguise something deeper—and you don't find out these deeper truths until you're *in the club*. And they actually sit around and talk about the best way to promote themselves and, "What do we talk about and what do we hide?" That's really different than the integrity of the gospel, where there's nothing to hide, and everything is open and honest and laid on the table. So they are deceitful workers. They are disguising themselves as apostles of Christ but that shouldn't surprise us.

Verse 14:

> **And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end will be according to their deeds.** (Vs. 14-15)

Paul says, "Of course they are disguising themselves. It's because that's what Satan does. Satan is raising up an army whose mission is to confuse and deceive people." It's very important to understand that Satan is real and he is as determined to deceive us today as he was even in The Garden. That's Paul's concern because he doesn't do that by being open and overt and honest. He does that by sneaking around, by deceiving, by disguising. In our culture Satan is portrayed as somebody that has horns and a tail and a pitchfork and he's all very laughable. And you'd have to think he's the one himself who's behind that imagery, because that isn't really the concern. The concern is about one who ...**disguises himself as an angel of light**. Jesus is the Light. Satan seeks to present himself as an angel of light. The only thing this could be talking about in this context is counterfeit religion—that his strategy is to promote something that looks like, smells like, tastes like the real thing, but it's not. It's counterfeit...but it is so similar that it's easy to be deceived into thinking this is true. This is one of the problems in the religious world: Everybody uses the same language. They throw out the same terms. They talk about the same things and it sounds like we're all in agreement. But they're defining the terms differently and, if you pursue this, you realize that there is often a counterfeit that is brought up next to that which is real and it's the plan of the enemy to present something that looks so right and looks so real and so convincing, as he ...**disguises himself as an angel of light.**

Now we live in a culture filled with political correctness and part of political correctness is this whole idea of *pluralism*: All religions are equally true; they are equally valid and no one religion should ever critique the other. You can see how that plays into the hand of the enemy. There's no doubt he is the promoter of such political correctness, because as the counterfeit is put up next to the real, the voice of the culture says they're all the same and it puts us at risk of embracing something that isn't true that ultimately leads to destruction. I think the message for us is that we have to be very careful; we have to be very discerning. There could be two cars on the car lot that look identical but one of them has huge problems and one of them doesn't; that kind of the message, we have to be really diligent we don't get the wrong vehicle. Verse 16:

Again I say, let no think me foolish but if you do receive me even as foolish so that I also may boast a little what I am saying I am not saying as the Lord would but as in the foolishness in this confidence of boasting. Since many boast according to the flesh I will boast also.

So what he said before he really doesn't want to do this but he has to separate out the difference between himself and his team versus the false teachers and next week he is going to unpack that in full. It says

Since many boast accordingly to the flesh I will boast also. For you being so wise {he's being sarcastic there obviously} **you tolerate the foolish gladly, for you tolerate it if enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face, to my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison.**

Paul's again very sarcastic when he says "you know you've been so open minded, you've been so wise that you've actually received these false teachers who have enslaved you, have taken advantage of you, who have mistreated you, apparently even physically abused you but under the umbrella of being open and wise you just let it all happen and then again Paul being sarcastic says "wow, we were really weak, we didn't do any of those things to you." And then next week he is going to unpack what his life has looked like. The false teachers have set themselves up as kings; they were the prosperity preachers of the first century. They are the best of the best, they are the elite. They have taken advantage of the Corinthians, they have enslaved the Corinthians, they have taken the Corinthians money in order that they themselves might live like kings, and Paul says you've allowed them to do that and next week Paul is going to say "ok this is how I've lived my life."

For this morning let's just kind of summarize where we've been and what the message is. I think it's very important to walk away with the realization that Satan is alive and well and that he is an enemy of the true and he disguises himself as an angel of light. In other words, he's going to put forth a counterfeit that looks like, smells like, tastes like the real deal. This isn't easy to say, this is right and this is wrong, this is true, this is false. That's the whole point of a counterfeit, he's very good at it so we have to be a discerning people; we have to understand that just because a building says "church" doesn't make it so. Just because it says it's a "Christian church" doesn't make it so, just because a preachers waving a Bible doesn't make it true. We have to be a discerning people. Those that are representing the truth and there's many wonderful churches in town that do, should reflect a simplicity of the message, you don't get the feeling there is anything secret, there's anything hidden, there aren't any back room doctrines, there isn't this kind of this public message and then once you are finally in the club you find out some other things. It should just feel like it's all open, it's honest, it's defended from the scripture. When people start talking about books other than the Bible, when they start talking about prophets, when they start talking about founders, all of those things… traditions of the church, the red flags need to go up, that this seems like it's something other. And there should be a pure devotion to Christ, at the end of the day it's not the denomination, it's not the group, it's not the movement. All the labels come off. At the end of the day, there is one bride of Christ and in every denomination that's teaching the truth that should be what ultimately matters and you get this sense that this is about Jesus, it isn't about any other group or denomination. So to understand that there is the real and there is the counterfeit. The counterfeit

is going to enslave, the counterfeit is going to take advantage of. The counterfeit is going to lead to heartache and destruction. That which is true should lead to life, should lead to joy, it should have the humility and brokenness of Christ and ultimately leads down the path of the life that Jesus promised, the life that is full and it's real and it's characterized by the very spirit of Jesus Himself.

Our Father we are thankful this morning that You are truth. Lord that you are God of integrity. Lord, your plan was that through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to make it possible that sinful men and women could have an intimate relationship with you. But Lord, Satan understands that plan and works really hard to put forth a counterfeit that in many ways seems to be right and yet the end is destruction. Lord I pray that we would be a discerning people, that we would not be led astray. Lord, within this community there are many, many, many wonderful Bible teaching true churches and Lord we celebrate them, we encourage them, we understand that we are in this together as the bride of Christ. Lord, we also acknowledge within this community there are many that are counterfeit, that will lead people astray, so Lord we pray that you give us discerning minds. In Jesus name. Amen.

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January 30/31, 2010

Study Questions
Deceitful Workers

2 Corinthians 11:1-21a

Each One Reach One: The Cost and Rewards

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. What is the difference between someone who is deceitful and someone who is simply wrong or mistaken about something?

2. What do you think of when you think of the word disguise? Is a disguise simply a mistake or intentional deception?

3. Have you ever been deceived? How did it happen? What was the result? What did you learn?

Bible Study

1. Take a few minutes to review what you learned in 2 Corinthians 10. What are the marks of religion?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 11:1-6. What is the difference between human jealousy and godly jealousy?

3. What is Paul's concern for the Corinthian church? How does he view them?

4. How does the enemy lead us astray? How do we prevent this?

5. Compare Galatians 1:6-9, 5:3-5 to 2 Corinthians 11:4. What constitutes a "different Gospel?"

6. Explain what is meant by the "simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

7. Read 2 Corinthians 11:7-11. Why do you suppose the false teachers made such an issue out of the fact that Paul did not accept money from the Corinthians?

8. Read 2 Corinthians 11:12-15. Paul writes that the false teachers are "false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves…" What would be some of the marks of someone who is being deceitful or disguising themselves? How does this differ from someone with whom you simply disagree? Where does this deceit come from according to Paul?

9. Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-21a. What is the result of the Corinthians tolerating such false teaching? False teaching is destructive and leads to bondage and arrogance. Have you ever experienced the consequences of religious deception?

Application

1. What are three practical steps you can take to keep your minds from being led astray?

2. Based on this text, list 5 ways to identify false teachers.

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