

INTRODUCTION

We all know sometimes people don't always get along together in church. A man was shipwrecked on a deserted island for several years. He was finally rescued and as he was leaving, one of the rescuers asked him about the three grass huts he had built. He said, “The first one is my house, the second is my church.” His rescuer said, “What about that third building?” The man said, “Oh ... that's the church I USED to go to!”

Even though Paul founded the church in Corinth there were several factions, and some of them were vocal critics of Paul. Some of the teachers were contradicting what Paul taught and were making claims that they were the “true apostles” and that Paul didn't qualify as an apostle. Paul was off starting other churches so had some strong words to write about these teachers. That's why I'm calling this message “Straight Talk about Crooked Teachers.” The key insight about these dangerous teachers can be found in verse 13. *The Message* paraphrase it: “They're a sorry bunch—pseudo-apostles, lying preachers, crooked workers—posing as Christ's agents but sham to the core.” (2 Corinthians 11:13 *The Message*) That's definitely straight talk!

Some of the words Paul wrote in this chapter seem a little strange. He begins by confessing he is engaging in a little foolishness. He's going to claim tongue-in-cheek he was a know-it-all and that he even robbed other churches! This might not make sense unless you understand Paul is employing literary irony. Irony is like sarcasm—but it's not quite as biting. So as we read 2 Corinthians 11:1-15, see if you can find the irony.

“I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those ‘super-apostles.’ I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way. Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

I love going to art galleries. As we walk through this word picture gallery today, there are three

interesting pictures of truth the Apostle has painted for us. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, maybe we can save three thousand words by examining these pictures. As we look at each picture, I also want to give you some personal truth to take home with you. The first picture is of:

(1) A JEALOUS FATHER OF THE BRIDE: The Church is a bride promised to Christ

In verse 2 we read, “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”

Every father should be jealous for his children, and especially his daughters. We hear a lot about jealousy being bad, and it does say in 1 Corinthians 13 that “love is not jealous.” But there’s a big difference between being jealous OF someone and being jealous FOR someone. If someone wins an award and you’re miffed because you wish you had won it, that’s being jealous OF them—and that’s sinful. Jealousy has been called the “green eyed monster” and people speak of being green with envy. That’s not love. However, if you truly love someone, you will be jealous FOR them—that means you want to protect them. Paul identifies his as being a “godly jealousy.” In the Old Testament God introduces Himself as being a jealous God. In Exodus 20:5 we read, “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” Paul portrayed himself as a jealous father who is protective of the church he started in Corinth.

One of my favorite pictures of the church is her portrayal as a Bride, and Jesus as the Bridegroom. Following Jewish marriage customs, we are betrothed to Christ, and one day our Bridegroom will surprise us and come to claim us. According to Revelation 19, He will take us to His Father’s House for the marriage celebration. Paul is jealous over this “virgin bride” and he’s upset that these false teachers had come in and were threatening to distract, or detain the bride from her promised Groom.

Let me bring that picture into clearer focus by reframing it with a Texas twist. Paul was the daddy sitting on the porch in a rocking chair with a shotgun across his lap saying to these teachers, “You want to do WHAT with my little girl??? Boy, you better start hightailing back down that road or you’ll be picking buckshot out of your backside for the next few days!” I am not exaggerating the strong feelings Paul had about this.

I like the way Pastor Steve Zeisler describes this passage: “Paul came to Corinth and became their spiritual father, and the church that was born in Corinth was readied as a bride for her husband. Now, since the Lord had not yet returned, they should be waiting patiently, growing in love with their beloved, looking forward to the day when the Bridegroom will come for the bride. But instead, they were being seduced by good-looking, fast-talking, spiritual gigolos who were turning the head of the bride. They were listening to voices that offered other opportunities, seducing them away from the One for whom they were intended.” I don’t have any trouble with this image of a jealous dad because God blessed with me two daughters that I’ve walked down the aisle and given away in marriage. Any father who has given away a daughter in marriage can understand Paul’s strong feelings of protection and concern for his daughter-church.

My older daughter Jenni, has a great sense of humor. She used to tell her dates that since she was

the preacher’s daughter, in order to take her out, they would have to quote scripture to me when they came to pick her up. Of course, she just made that up, because I never asked them to do that. Most of her dates realized she was kidding. However, I’ll never forget one nervous guy who came to pick her up. I answered the door and while we were sitting in living room waiting for Jenni to get ready, he nervously blurted out, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” I didn’t know what he was doing, but when he finished I said, “That’s nice, son, but why did you share that scripture with me?” He mumbled, “Well you daughter said that before I took her out I had to quote a scripture.” Realizing what she had done, I tried to keep a straight face as I said, “Well, you did a good job, so you can take her out—but just remember to treat her like a lady. She has a Bible with her and I’ve told her to tell her dates that they have to get through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John before they can get to her. Understand?” He said, “Yessir, I understand.” We got a good laugh out of that, but all dads who have daughters understand what I’m talking about. Journalist Jim Bishop said, “Watching your daughter being collected by her date feels like handing over a million dollar Stradivarius to a gorilla.”

Take-away truth: I must stay devoted only to Christ!

So what’s the application for each of us in this picture of a jealous father of the bride? Here’s the Take-away Truth: I must stay devoted only to Christ! In verse 3 Paul expresses his fatherly concern with these words, “I’m afraid that you may be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” This passage is a wonderful reminder of the tremendous truth of the forgiveness of sins. When you consider your life and your past, you may have a hard time imagining you’re a beautiful bride—especially if you’re a guy! When you think of the sin and failure in your life, you may feel like anything BUT a beautiful bride, but you really are. Do you remember what kind of people were in the church in Corinth? In his first letter Paul described them as, “adulterers, robbers, drunkards, homosexuals, slanderers and swindlers.” But then he wrote, “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 6:10-11)

So how do a bunch of people like that become what Paul now calls “a pure virgin in Christ?” Simple. Jesus changes ugly sinners into beautiful, forgiven sinners. You and I are in the same situation. We used to be a bunch of dirty rotten sinners, but now, in the eyes of God we are like a pure virgin in Christ! How did the Bride of Christ get to be so beautiful? Jesus Himself gave us a makeover. It says in Ephesians 5 that, like a good husband, Jesus loves the church and gave Himself for her. We’re told that he cleansed the church by the washing of water by the Word.

Jesus cleans us up, and then it’s up to us to stay clean! I’ve noticed through the years of performing hundreds of wedding ceremonies that a bride always takes extreme care to look beautiful on her wedding day. She spends several hours getting her hair done, her makeup applied. She makes sure her dress, shoes, and jewelry are perfect. In the same way, we need to stay ready for our Bridegroom Jesus. We shouldn’t let anyone or anything distract us from our love for Jesus and our anticipation of His return. Remember, we’re the Bride and Christ is going to return for us someday. As the Bride of Christ, each of us must stay devoted to our Bridegroom, Jesus. We must be ready for His return. The second picture is:

(2) A PERSON DECEIVED: As the serpent deceived Eve, we may also be deceived

In verse three Paul paints his second picture. Out of his fatherly love for the church, Paul warns them that he fears they will be tempted by devil and make the same mistake Eve made when she ate the forbidden fruit. He wrote, “I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray.”

Gaze at this picture of Eve in the perfect environment of Eden. Life was good. She never had to worry about Adam talking about how good his mother could cook. She doesn’t have to be worry about Adam comparing her to his former girlfriends. She never said, “Adam, I just don’t have a thing to wear!” Life was good until the serpent deceived Eve. Since Genesis 2 leads straight into the story of the fall in Genesis 3, we often assume it was short period of time between Adam and Eve marrying and when she ate the fruit. But truthfully, we have no idea about how much time elapsed between Genesis 2 and 3. Adam and Eve could have lived in Paradise for thousands of years before they sinned.

The old serpent still uses the same age-old strategy he used with Eve. Notice, he waits until Eve is alone before he whispers in her ear. The devil’s strategy has always been to divide and conquer. Let’s examine in detail the first recorded words from the lips of the liar. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ ... You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.” (Genesis 3:1-5)

(1) Satan QUESTIONS God’s Word

Notice his subtle strategy. His first words were a question, “Did God say?” He’s doing the same thing today. More and more people are asking, “Is the Bible really the Word of God?” “Can the Bible really be trusted?” Anytime someone tries to get you to question the Bible, they are the unwitting instrument of the devil. Wherever God puts a period, the devil always puts a question mark.

(2) Satan CHANGES God’s Word

He asked Eve, “Did God say you couldn’t eat from ANY tree in the Garden?” That’s not what God said at all. God had told them they could freely eat of ANY tree in the Garden, and there was only ONE tree to be avoided. Satan, still attempts to misquote and change God’s Word. Quite often we hear people talk the Bible and even say God said and did things in the Bible that aren’t there at all.

(3) Satan DENIES God’s Word

Notice the progression here. Satan doesn’t call God a liar at first, he just plants a question in Eve’s mind—but then he directly denies God by saying, “You WILL NOT die.” God HAD said that the day they eat of the forbidden fruit they would die. By the way, you may think, “Well they ate of the tree and yet the Bible says Adam and Eve lived for many more years. Was God telling the truth?” God always tells the truth. Death is much more than physical death—death is

separation of a person from God. The day they ate of the tree, they died instantly in their spirit, they died progressively in their souls, and they died eventually in their bodies.

Satan is still calling God a liar by denying His Word. For instance, schools originally founded as training grounds for pastors and believed the Word of God, like Princeton, Harvard, and Yale, are now hotbeds of liberal thought where Bible is relegated to an antiquated book of fables.

(4) Satan REPLACES God’s Word

He said to Eve, “You will be LIKE GOD if you eat of that fruit.” One of Satan’s most effective lies is to whisper in your ear that you don’t need God—you can be your own little God. Satan never asked Eve to worship him, he just placed the thought in her mind that she could worship herself—and today millions of people have swallowed the same lie and are bowing down at the altar of their own mirror.

Take-away truth: I must guard against false teaching

So what’s the personal application from this picture? Here’s the Take-away Truth: I must guard against false teaching. In verse 4, Paul warned about these crooked teachers introducing a “different gospel” that denied the truth about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. These false teachers usually fell in two extreme categories. First, there were the Jewish legalists who taught that Jesus AND keeping the law would get you into heaven. The others were the Greek Gnostics who taught mysterious, esoteric doctrines about Jesus.

Even today, we have remnants of those two extremes. We must guard against any legalistic teaching that says salvation is Jesus PLUS anything. It’s not Jesus PLUS baptism, it’s not Jesus plus communion, it’s not Jesus plus tithing, it’s not Jesus plus good deeds—it’s Jesus alone! On the other hand, we must guard against running off every time we hear about some so-called “movement of God” that makes people feel tingly and get goose bumps on their neck. At some of these so-called “movements of God,” people are slapped on the head and they pass out as if they are slain in the Spirit. There are plenty of false prophets filling the airwaves with claims of raising people from the dead, and other miracles. I think the devil grins when he can convince people they have to experience some kind of giggly feeling for something to be real.

The same serpent who deceived Eve is actively trying to deceive believers today. And in our age of advanced technology, we have even more ways to believe lies. Abraham Lincoln said, “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.” But it seems that Christians are some of the most gullible people around these days. We’re prone to believe anything that someone emails us.

May I say again that Madalyn Murray O’Hair doesn’t have a petition before the FCC to get religious broadcasting removed in America? Please don’t send me that email anymore. And, whether you like it or not, Barack Obama is NOT a Muslim, so stop forwarding that one. And while you’re at it, you CAN’T pop popcorn with a cell phone, there is NO hidden code in Microsoft Windows claiming Bill Gates is the antichrist, and our government does NOT have plans to implant a Mondex microchip in your hand or head. Those are all fictitious email rumors

that deceived Christians are currently promoting. By continually forwarding unconfirmed rumors, I fear Christians are losing credibility with unbelievers. We often appear as a bunch of crazed kooks. Before you forward any suspicious email, you should log onto websites like www.truthorfiction.com, www.urbanlegends.com or www.snopes.com to verify whether they are true or not. So, believers, be on guard against the Father of lies, who will try to deceive you without you even knowing it!

(3) A MASKED MAN: Satan and his servants are masters of disguise

The third picture is of the devil himself. Verse 14 says, “For Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.” Satan isn’t out to get people to believe in him and worship him. He’s happy if people claim he doesn’t even exist. He just wants to keep people away from God. Because of that, he wears a disguise.

Theologian Robert Deffinbaugh says it well: “Satan does not come to us as the arch-enemy of God, the ultimate evildoer. He comes disguised as an angel of light, not as one who promotes evil. He would rather look like Mother Theresa than Charles Manson. If the arch-enemy of God operates by deceit and disguise, why should we expect his underlings to be different from their master? They, too, come to us disguised as servants of righteousness, or as Jesus said, as ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing.’”

Take-away Truth: I must recognize the real teachers of God’s Word

Just as there were false teachers in Paul’s time, they are around today. They don’t wear a badge that says, “Servant of Satan.” They may be wearing three-piece suits or designer clothes. So what’s my response? The Take-away Truth is that I must be able to recognize the real teachers of God. The best way to spot a phony is to recognize the genuine article. When banks train their tellers to spot counterfeit money, they don’t show them counterfeit currency, instead they teach them to be so familiar with a genuine bill, that when a phony comes along, it’s obvious to them. The same is true for false teachers—don’t look for them, just be able to recognize a sincere servant of Jesus Christ. As we know, counterfeit money is a real problem. Some of it looks more genuine than others. I saw a picture of a bill given to a cashier at Wal-Mart that the buyer tried to push as a \$20 bill. It was a \$1 bill and they had taken a Sharpie and just written the number “20” over the “1.” That’s not a very good counterfeit!

Some are much better fakes. In May, federal agents broke up counterfeiting ring in Los Angeles where high-tech color printers were used to create over \$5 million in fake \$100 and \$50 dollar bills. They reported the bills were almost indistinguishable to the naked eye. The one thing the U.S. mint has that counterfeiters can’t copy is the special blend of paper used for our money. The formula for the paper is a closely guarded secret. That’s why cashiers use currency pens to make a mark on a bill—if the mark is light, it’s genuine, if it’s dark, it’s a fake. It’s all in the reaction of the special paper and the chemical in the marker.

Many sensational teachers point to their amazing gifts like healing and prophecy, but the mark of a true servant isn’t according to gifts. Jesus said, “By their FRUIT you will know them.” A true

servant of Jesus always displays the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and self-control.

CONCLUSION

As we walk back through this gallery of truth one more time, take a look at the portraits. Paul is a jealous father wanting the church to stay devoted to Christ. Will you do that? Just as Eve was deceived, so may we be deceived. Will you avoid error and strive to believe only the truth, the whole truth and nothing but God’s truth? Finally, don’t expect to see Satan as some hideous monster, he and his servants may fool you with their masquerade, so stay connected to those who are true servants of Christ.

We must avoid the enemy’s attempt to distract us from the simplicity of having a daily, vital, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Satan lies that it’s too complicated to enjoy, and Jesus says it’s so simple even a child can come to Him.

Paul had written earlier that the only thing he wanted to present to people was “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” So as we depart our art gallery this morning, our eyes are drawn to one more picture. It’s a childish drawing done on construction paper with crayons. It’s a cross with a man dying on it, with these words scribbled beneath it, “I love you.” That’s the one picture we need to remember.

The great Swiss theologian, Karl Barth, is recognized as one of the great minds of the Twentieth Century. His multi-volume commentary of Romans is a masterpiece of scholarly research. He was visiting a seminary once and during a Q & A session he was asked, “What is the greatest theological thought that has ever crossed your mind?” They all expected some complicated answer, but Karl Barth said, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Sometimes the BEST truth is the most simple truth.

OUTLINE

(1) A JEALOUS FATHER OF THE BRIDE: The Church is a bride promised to Christ
“I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”

Take-away truth: I must stay devoted only to Christ!

“Christ’s love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives. *Ephesians 5:26 The Message*”

(2) A PERSON DECEIVED: As the serpent deceived Eve, we may also be deceived
“I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray.”

- (1) Satan questions God’s Word “*DID God say?*”
- (2) Satan changes God’s Word “*ANY tree in the garden?*”
- (3) Satan denies God’s Word “*You WILL NOT die!*”
- (4) Satan replaces God’s Word “*You will be LIKE GOD!*”

Take-away truth: I must guard against false teaching

Jesus said, “Watch out for the doomsday deceivers. Many leaders are going to show up with forged identities claiming, ‘I’m the One,’ or, ‘The end is near.’ Don’t fall for any of that. When you hear of wars and uprisings, keep your head and don’t panic. This is routine history and no sign of the end.” *Luke 21:8-9 The Message*

(3) A MASKED MAN: Satan and his servants are masters of disguise

“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.”

Take-away Truth: I must recognize the real teachers of God’s Word

My dear friends, don’t believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God. There are a lot of lying preachers loose in the world. Here’s how you test for the genuine Spirit of God. Everyone who confesses openly his faith in Jesus Christ—the Son of God, who came as an actual flesh-and-blood person—comes from God and belongs to God. And everyone who refuses to confess faith in Jesus has nothing in common with God. This is the spirit of antichrist that you heard was coming. Well, here it is, sooner than we thought! *1 John 4:1-3 The Message*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes