

Day 109, 2 Corinthians 11

by David Servant

David Servant explores the dangers of false teachings and the importance of maintaining pure devotion to Christ amidst distractions.

Scripture: Exodus 20:5, Matthew 23:8, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 2 Corinthians 11:22, Galatians 1:6, Galatians 6:17

Topics: "False Apostles", "Suffering For Christ"

Description

David Servant preaches about the identity of the false apostles in Corinth, who were preaching 'another Jesus' and a 'different gospel,' similar to the Jewish legalists in Galatians. Paul, motivated by love, expressed godly jealousy over the Corinthian believers, warning them against being led astray from devotion to Christ. Believers are cautioned against giving their affections to false or legitimate teachers, arousing God's jealousy, and encouraged to maintain simplicity and purity in devotion to Christ. Paul's perseverance in suffering for Christ's sake serves as an inspiration for believers to sacrificially serve the gospel, keeping Jesus exalted above all.

Transcript

The identity of the false apostles in Corinth becomes more clear in today's reading. They were preaching "another Jesus" and a "different gospel" (11:4). That second phrase, in particular, Paul also used in his letter to the Galatians, where he fought the influence of Jewish legalists who were telling Gentile believers that they needed to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law (Gal. 1:6). The false apostles in Corinth were definitely Jews (11:22). So it seems that perhaps the same problem that had followed Paul elsewhere had tracked him to Corinth.

Paul considered himself "not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles" (11:5), but he found it so difficult to boast about his own apostolic credentials. He felt that he had no choice, however, since the false apostles in Corinth were boasting of their credentials and influencing the impressionable believers. Paul's motives for his boasting were obviously entirely different than theirs. He was motivated by love for the Corinthian believers, while the false apostles were motivated by love for themselves.

Note Paul's expression, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy" (11:2). We generally equate jealousy with selfishness, and for that reason, some have stumbled over God's claim to be "a jealous God" in the Old Testament (Ex. 20:5; Deut. 5:9). God's jealousy is unselfish. He was opposed to Israel's idolatry, not for His sake, but for theirs. It is akin to a parent's jealousy for his child's affection if he sees his child being drawn to those who might lead him astray.

When Paul spoke of his godly jealousy, he may well have meant, "I am motivated to say these things because I understand God's jealousy over you," because he went on to say, "for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (11:2). That is, because the Corinthian believers had submitted to Jesus, marrying Him as it were and becoming part of His bride, He would naturally be jealous over them if they were giving their affections to someone else. Paul was fearful that their misguided affections might result in their being led astray from what is of paramount importance, that is "the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (11:3).

I mention this because it is not only possible for believers to wrongly give their affections to false teachers (as did the Corinthians), arousing God's jealousy, but they may do the same for legitimate teachers and Christian leaders, similarly arousing God's jealousy. This is one reason why Jesus forbade His followers from addressing anyone but God as Teacher, Father or Leader. He said that we only have One who is our Teacher, Father, and Leader (Matt. 23:8-10). How tragic it is when Christians become caught up in pet doctrines or spiritual fads, following the leading of the latest popular TV preacher, and are thus sidetracked from the "simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." Their conversations may be about spiritual things, but they talk about everything other than Jesus. Let's be careful not to make Jesus jealous. And if we are entrusted with a position of leadership in Christ's body, let's be careful, as was Paul, to keep exalting Jesus, and not ourselves, before those whom we serve.

As we read through Paul's list of his sufferings for Christ's sake, it helps us to put our little sufferings in perspective. Paul was not a quitter, that is for sure. His perseverance ought to inspire us to greater devotion and willingness to sacrifice for the gospel's sake.

Paul's list of his sufferings also helps us to realize what an incomplete record we have of his ministry in the book of Acts. Keep in mind that we've read of Paul's ministry from Acts 9 to 20, covering a period of about 20 years, but we've not read of a single instance of him receiving 39 lashes from the Jews. Yet during that time, Paul suffered that punishment five times according to what we just read. That's a total of almost 200 lashes! Every stripe was a testimony of his love for Christ. No wonder Paul could write, "I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).

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