

Contending for the Faith Part 1 - Stealth Attack!

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sermon emphasizes the importance of contending for the faith and being vigilant against the enemy's stealthy attack of deception, which can lead to perverting the grace of God, promoting lawlessness and wantonness, and causing dissatisfaction and boredom with truth.

Duration: 1:06:46

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 11:3

Topics: "Faith", "Spiritual Vigilance", "Contending for the Faith"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the need to contend for the faith as he reflects on the dangers of false teachings that can stealthily infiltrate the church, much like the temptations faced by the Corinthians. He warns against the allure of a different Jesus and gospel that leads believers away from pure devotion to Christ, urging them to recognize and resist the subtle lies that can corrupt their faith. Beach encourages a renewed passion for Jesus as the new year approaches, calling for vigilance against the influences that promote lawlessness and dissatisfaction with God's truth. He draws parallels between historical deceptions and the current state of the church, urging believers to seek genuine devotion and to guard against complacency and discontentment.

Transcript

Father, we're amazed at the beauty and love that we see as our eyes are turned to Calvary, as our eyes are turned to your unbelievable and unspeakable sacrifice that you endured through coming here as a little baby and growing up and suffering all the pain and all the sorrow and all the rejection that our sins deserve. We're amazed, Lord, as we consider you and Jesus our Savior. And, Lord, today we pray that the Holy Spirit would take the Word of God and give us a fresh revelation of the person of Jesus Christ.

We are coming, Lord, in the next few days to a brand new year, and we're amazed, Lord, at how time seems to be moving quicker as we get older than when it did when we were younger. And, Father, our desire today is that as we approach this new year, we would enter into it with a renewed vision of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that 2004 would be characterized by an unprecedented passion and desire in our hearts for you, to love you, to obey your Word, and to be forever, ever in a posture of seeking to do your will in all things. And now, Father, we pray that as we look into your Word today, that you would speak to us and correct us and teach us and encourage us so that we might indeed know the truth and be set free from all

that would seek to destroy us.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen and amen. You can begin by turning your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and we're going to look at the words of Paul, 2 Corinthians chapter 11.

This was the second letter that Paul wrote to Corinth. He's writing it among many reasons, but the major reason that he's writing this letter is because the Corinthians are being tempted to turn their hearts and their minds from the things that Paul taught them. This is going to be entitled, Contending for the Faith, Contending for the Faith.

The Corinthians were being tempted to turn from the gospel that Paul preached to them. They were a lot of things in Corinth that was good for sinful man. There was a lot of excitement in Corinth.

Corinth was like a New York or a Los Angeles, and the gospel was a message that came into Corinth, and the gospel said to the Corinthians, you're all wrong, and God is wanting to bring you out of yourself into a revelation of himself. And the Corinthians embraced this message initially. They received it, but after time, the tempter, the devil, came and started tempting them and putting thoughts into their mind, and they became very, very tempted to turn from the truth that Paul delivered them.

That brings us to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. Paul is writing this 2 Corinthians as an attempt to win back the hearts of the Corinthians from the potentially fatal error that they were heading into. He wanted to win their hearts back.

Now, Paul had no personal agenda. He didn't want their personal allegiance. He didn't want their money.

He didn't want them to somehow support his ministry. He didn't have that in view when he spoke to the Corinthians. Paul was a dead man, meaning Paul had no personal interests or personal ambitions.

When he met Jesus Christ, Saul of Tarsus died, and he became a new man, motivated with new desires and new interests. And when he came to the Corinthians, he didn't want what they had, contrary to many ministers today. He didn't have a personal agenda, contrary to many ministers today, but he stood out as a rare man who, when he met people, the only interest he had was that they, they might fully and entirely understand God's claim on their life through Jesus Christ.

This brings us to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. I wish you would bear with me while I indulge in a little foolishness. Do bear with me.

Now, Paul began this by talking about being foolish. The reason why Paul said he wanted them to bear with him about being foolish was because Paul was going to talk about himself. And Paul considered anyone who talked about themselves to be a fool, because most of the time when people talk about themselves, they're bragging, they're boasting, they're trying to impress someone.

And that's not the way that God wants us to behave as Christians. But nevertheless, Paul was going to talk about himself. And so he said, bear with me as I act like a fool.

Now, he had a reason for this. And the reason was, the Corinthians were listening to fools. They were listening to false teachers and false apostles, and we'll see that, who were fools.

They were bragging about themselves. They were talking about their self. They were taking advantage of the Corinthians.

They were robbing them. They were abusing them. And so Paul said, well, since you've opened up your heart to fools, let me be a fool.

If you won't listen to me as an apostle of Christ, if you won't listen to me as someone who's going to tell you the truth, and I see now that you'd like to listen to fools, well, then maybe I'll act like a fool. Maybe you'll listen to me then. You see where Paul's coming from? He's using, I suppose, a subtle form of wisdom in order to catch them in their own foolishness.

So that's why Paul's saying, let me let me talk and act like a fool. Because that's basically, he's telling these Corinthians, that's who you now have opened your life up to, fools. Does the Lord have to come to us and talk like a fool sometimes because he sees that we're now listening to that which is foolish? For I am zealous for you with a godly eagerness and a divine jealousy.

Are you jealous for your brothers and sisters? Not jealous of what they have. Unfortunately, that's most of the jealousy that we see, isn't it? I'm jealous of what this brother has. I wish I had their car.

I wish I had their home. I wish I had their clothes. I wish I had their paycheck.

I wish I had their education. But Paul here shows the heart of a true servant. He's jealous for the Corinthians with a godly jealousy.

He wanted the Corinthians' affections. He wanted the Corinthians' heart. He wanted the Corinthians' passions to be entirely focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you share that kind of jealousy for your brothers and sisters? Do you find yourself at night, brothers and sisters, overwhelmed and overcome with a godly jealousy for everybody in your life? Do you find yourself mentioning all the people in your life and out of a jealousy for them, a godly jealousy, do you find yourself praying, oh God, take Joe, take Pete, take Tom, take so-and-so, and Lord, turn their hearts' affections entirely to you. Oh God, oh God, I beg you, Lord, take their hearts. No? Well, listen, when you're listening to the truth, that's what happens.

But if you're listening to fools, that won't happen. Now, remember earlier, I made the distinction about when you ask yourself what you believe, don't look in a theology book, but look at your actions. Your actions reveal to you what you actually believe.

Your actions are the product of your beliefs, okay? Now, you see why Paul was so emotional in this letter. Those he loved so much were sitting down at the feet of fools. Now, these fools were claiming, listen, they were claiming to be teachers and preachers and apostles.

But what they were teaching was having an effect on the Corinthians that contradicted their profession. The effect that they were having on the Corinthians was they were turning the Corinthians in their actions and in their heart away from the truth, though I'm sure the Corinthians continued to profess with their mouth the truth. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband to present you a chaste virgin to Christ.

Now there's one of many evidences of the true intention of the Word of God and a true messenger of the Word of God, anyone. It is their heart's intention to take people and bring them into such proximity to the Lord that they become betrothed to one husband, a chaste virgin, spiritually speaking, that their lives would be entirely devoted to God, entirely devoted. Every area of their life would be pleasing to the Lord.

Now, when you sit at the table of fools, this is not what happens in your life. And Paul saw that these Corinthians were being turned away from a growing desire to be a chaste virgin, and they were being enticed to flirt with the world. And most importantly, what hurt Paul the most was these Corinthians were being persuaded by their teachers to turn away from the teaching that Paul had given them as their spiritual father.

But now I am fearful, Paul said, now I'm fearful, lest that even as the serpent beguiled Eve by his cunning, so your minds may be corrupted and seduced from wholehearted and sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For you seem, listen carefully, for you seem readily to endure it if a man comes and preaches another Jesus than the one we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the spirit you once received, or a different gospel from the one you then received and welcomed. You tolerate all that well enough.

Yet I consider myself as in no way inferior to these precious extra super false apostles. What Paul is saying here is this, beloved, these Corinthians were embracing teachings that were coming from men who claimed to be apostles and teachers, but these teachings were in fact bringing to them a different Jesus than the one Paul brought to them. Now mark this down, a different Jesus than the one Paul taught them, a different gospel, and a different spirit.

Now as I read through this book about the rise and fall of Adolf Hitler, I saw that the church, because the church had fallen asleep, had become vulnerable to and received a different Jesus, a different gospel, and a different spirit. Now having said that, let's go to the book of Jude. Jude is toward the end of your New Testament, right after 3rd John, and now let's begin reading in verse 1 and we'll learn something very important for us to take note of.

Jude verse 1, Jude a servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James, to those who are called dearly loved by God the Father and separated and kept for Jesus Christ. Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, my whole concern was to write you in regard to our common salvation, but I found it necessary and was impelled to write you and earnestly appeal to you and exhort you to contend, to contend, to wrestle, to battle.

A word that's used to describe what those who competed in the Olympics, they contended, they wrestled, they exerted all their strength. Now what were they exerting their strength over here? What was it that Jude was telling them to exert their strength? But I found it necessary and impelled to write and earnestly appeal to you and exhort you to contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. Now watch verse 4, for certain men have crept in, now the King James says unaware, this translation says stealthily.

Now I know that my son knows what the word stealth means. What does that mean? Think about it. A stealth fighter is hidden, it's invisible.

Very good. To pass without detection. Now Adolf Hitler succeeded in deceiving a nation and a church.

The method that he used in order to accomplish this was the method that Jude teaches us here. He came in without being detected. He came in and listen, his agenda was hidden to contend for the faith that was handed down.

For certain men have crept in stealthily, gaining entrance secretly, gaining entrance secretly by a side door. One translation, earnestly contending for the faith that was once and for all delivered to us from the

Apostles, from the Lord Jesus Christ, from those he called, from those who wrote the New Testament. And so Paul is warning the Corinthians, hey listen Corinthians, be careful, be alarmed, be alerted, because you have begun to embrace fools.

Those who claim that they know the truth, those who are teaching you what they claim to be the truth, but in fact they're fools. The things they're teaching you are foolish, and the teachings are turning your heart from God, and from the truth, and from Paul who really truly loved them. And now Jude is telling us the same thing.

Earnestly contend for the faith, because certain men have crept in stealthily, not detected by a side door, and they're among you. The influence, the teaching is among you. Now before we go on, let me ask a question.

How many here are regularly falling before the Lord, and with a broken humble heart, searching the Scriptures and praying this prayer, Lord, how has the enemy come into my life stealthily, without me detecting it, and is somehow turning my heart and my mind from pure utter devotion to Jesus Christ? Well my, Phil, I don't even think about these things. Are you doing it, or do you believe that it's only the other one that becomes deceived? It's only the other people, but not me. Are you deceived today? Say, well how am I to know if I'm deceived? Well I know that as a teller, they learn about counterfeit dollar bills not by handling them, but they learn about how to detect counterfeit dollar bills by handling the genuine every day.

And as they become acquainted with the genuine, and all of a sudden a counterfeit bill comes into their hand, they immediately say, hey, something's not right here. Why? How do they have that sensitivity? They can feel it. They can feel it because they know the difference through constant handling.

They know the difference between the genuine and the counterfeit. The only way, dear ones, that you and I will be preserved from the counterfeit, and don't think for a moment that the counterfeit comes with the pitchfork and the horns. The counterfeit comes in subtlety as an angel of light.

The counterfeit comes appearing to be God. The only way you and I will be able to recognize when the enemy comes stealthily, not overtly, not plainly, not blowing a trumpet. He's not going to come knocking at your door, Michael.

He's not going to come knocking at your door and say, hello, my name is the devil, and I'm here to destroy you and your children and your family, and to corrupt your heart and mind, and to turn you from pure devotion to Jesus Christ, and to make you turn and follow something other than God. Now, here's my game plan, and he gives you a syllabus with all of his strategies. You study this, and then next week I'll come.

No, he doesn't do that. He comes stealthily. He comes in a hidden way.

He deceived an entire nation not more than 60 years ago, 70 years ago, and an entire church in the nation. He convinced thousands of his henchmen that it was okay to brutally murder millions of Jews and Christians, not millions of Christians, but lots of Christians. He convinced them.

How come? How did he do it? By introducing into their minds and into their hearts a lie, and they believed the lie. What lie are you believing today? Maybe it's just a little lie. Maybe it's just a little bit.

Young people, what lie are you believing? Just a little lie. It's okay to lie just once in a while, right? It's okay to be dishonest once in a while. How about the truth? It's okay to exaggerate the truth just a little bit.

It's okay to look at pictures that you know are not right. Just a little bit. Adults, what lie are you living? What lie has come in stealthily? You say, well, I'm not sure.

Well, analyze your life. Say, well, I don't know of any conscious lie that I'm believing. Don't try and find out where the lie is by what you believe.

The devil deceives you because he makes you live a lie, not believe a lie. See, what it is is you live a lie, but you believe in the truth. That's what deception is.

He stealthily comes in and makes us live a lie while letting us continue to profess truth. You know what that's called? Hypocrisy. Verse 4, for certain men have crept in stealthily.

I want to impress this upon you as this is what the Lord has impressed upon my spirit for this morning. Stealthily. Gaining entrance unnoticed.

The enemy has gained entrance unnoticed, and he's slowly destroying and robbing and killing and corrupting what God wants. Their doom was predicted long ago. Ungodly persons.

Now, I want you to see the effects, the consequences of believing a lie, of being deceived stealthily. Now, watch. Number one, this false doctrine perverts the grace of God.

Number two, this false doctrine promotes the practice of lawlessness. Number three, wantonness. Now, what does the word wantonness mean? Anyone? Wantonness.

What is wantonness? Right. Okay, very good. Now listen carefully.

Listen carefully. These are the characteristics. These are the fruits.

These are the works of what happens in our lives when stealthily, secretly, the enemy has come in with something of a form of deception. Number one, the grace of God is perverted. Number two, there is a practice of lawlessness.

Number three, there's wantonness. Wantonness is basically this. I want.

I'm not satisfied. I want. I'm not satisfied.

These are exactly the conditions that were present in Germany that made them vulnerable to the most massive deception that some authors believe ever occurred in the history of modern man. He came in stealthily and introduced lies that promoted the perversion of the grace of God, promoted the practice of lawlessness, promoted the excitement of the passion within the heart of wanting. I'm dissatisfied.

I need to embrace something. Listen, I need to embrace something that will make me happy. The economy in Germany at the time after the war was a mess.

The politics was a mess. The political system wasn't working. There was all kinds of mudslinging and all kinds of horrible things going on at the time.

They were trying a democracy at the time and it wasn't working. Everybody was dissatisfied. Everybody was unhappy.

There was no national pride. They were humiliated, having had to surrender in the war. They were devastated.

The morale was low. And instead of recognizing that that was God's greatest hour for them to what? Cry out to Him and acknowledge that He could be the one that could satisfy their every need. No, they became wanton.

They became dissatisfied. They became bored with truth. They became bored with feeding on truth.

Their churches were filled with liberal theologians that got up and waxed elegant on discrediting the Bible, discrediting the miracles in the Bible, mocking those who literally believe the Bible to be true, mocking those who want to obey the Word of God, claiming that it was their fault that Germany fell. Because that's the Christianity of weakness. As soon as Adolf Hitler was elected Chancellor, he began to unveil his true colors.

And the first thing he did was introduce a new version of Christianity. And the cross was no longer to be the sign of that Christianity, but the swastika was. And the swastika represented, listen to this, the swastika represented what the people wanted.

Because they got bored with the truth. And the swastika represented the crest of man's heart to conquer and prosper. The swastika was to replace the cross in every church.

The crest of man. Wantonness. Be careful when a spirit comes to you or a teacher comes to you.

And you begin to get preoccupied with what I want. What I want. What's good for me.

I'm tired. I just want a life. Ever hear someone say, I just want a life? God have mercy on us, Lord.

That's the swastika seducing us. You want a life as a Christian? Be careful. To say, I want a life as a Christian, is to say, I have become dissatisfied with Christ.

I have become dissatisfied with the fact that Christ claims to be all that I need. I have become dissatisfied with the claims of Christ that he is the bread of life. He that eateth me and drinketh me shall never hunger, shall never thirst.

I have become dissatisfied with the truth that Jesus taught at John chapter 4. You see the water in that well? If you drink that, you will thirst again. But if you ask me for living water, I'll give it to you and you will never thirst again. Are you thirsty? You'll never thirst again.

In other words, Jesus is saying, you'll never be looking to find your deepest needs met somewhere other than in me. Germany had forsaken. Norman, a few weeks ago, talked about Jeremiah.

You have committed two evils. You have forsaken the Lord. You've forsaken the true springs of water and you have hewn out for yourselves broken cisterns, broken wells that can't hold water.

Stealthily, he comes in stealthily and begins to work with lies. And the lies produce the actions. Dear brothers and sisters, I want to encourage you in the love of God.

I want to warn you in the love of God. Be guarded, be alerted. In 2004, lawlessness breaks down into wantingness.

Adolf Hitler arose with a false gospel that promised that those who embraced him and his tyranny would get everything they needed. He took advantage of the fact that their hearts were not finding rest in God. Brothers and sisters, when your heart doesn't find rest in God, you can be sure the devil will come and offer you a false rest.

That's what he does. Wantingness. Number two, immorality.

The perversion of the grace of God produces lawlessness. Lawlessness is the absence of keeping the law of God. It's a life that does not keep the moral requirements of the law of God.

Not the religious requirements in the Old Testament. We're free from that. But the moral obligation of the law.

Lawlessness. When the swastika was introduced by Hitler as the new sign of the new Christianity and the cross was no longer accepted, embracing the swastika meant that I had to embrace what was not right, because I would ultimately get what I needed. Are you embracing something that is not right because you're hoping to get something that you want? Cheat that you might prosper.

Engage in immorality that you might get love. That's the spirit of Antichrist. That's the swastika.

That's the deception right there. Lawlessness. That's the perversion of the grace of God, because the grace of God comes, Titus chapter 2, and appears to all men and teaches us to what? Say no to ungodliness.

Say no to worldliness. Say no to lawlessness. Say no.

But the perversion of the grace of God is to embrace a Jesus, to embrace a spirit, and to embrace a gospel that says it's okay. It's okay to be lawless, as long as you're getting something out of it that you feel is good. Adolf Hitler promised the country that they would once again arise as leaders in the world.

They would be esteemed and admired by the whole world. They would get back their dignity. They would get back their prosperity.

They would get back their former glory and their former pride that they had in empires before. He promised them that. He said, I will make you the envy of the whole world.

Just get rid of the cross. And in its place, take the swastika. And you've got it.

God, search our homes. God, search our lives. God, search our activities.

God, search our practices. And God, help us to see if we've embraced the swastika. And so this stealth, hidden entrance into our lives produces a perversion of grace, a practice of lawlessness, a passion to go after what we want, our selfish ambitions, freedom to engage in immorality, resulting in disowning and denying our Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 8, more characteristics of this swastika spirit, because that's what it is. Nevertheless, in like manner, these dreamers, they're dreamers. You know, there's a lot today about dreaming.

In the body of Christ. Dream the biggest dream and go for it. I hear these false teachers encouraging tens of thousands of believers to let your dreams come alive.

Be free to dream. The Bible associates dreamers with those who have embraced swastika. The spirit of swastika.

The spirit of antichrist. These people are dreamers. Brothers and sisters, don't seek to dream dreams.

Seek to know God. Seek to love God. And seek to hide God's Word in your heart.

And God says, I'll take care of your life. I'll take care of what you need to do for me. Don't seek dreams.

Seek God. These dreamers also corrupt the body, scorn and reject authority. Stop right there.

Listen, brothers and sisters, I hope you're making a list here. Whenever we see any evidence of these things erupting in our life, we have to fall before the Lord and beg Him to help us. These scorn and reject authority.

One of the greatest hostilities that Adolf Hitler had, the thing that he hated the most, was when he saw any human being that did not make him, Adolf Hitler, their authority. He hated it. He despised it.

And that is only a picture. That's only a picture of the devil. The devil hates any heart that will not give him its allegiance.

And so what this spirit does is this spirit promotes a scorn and a rejection. Toward the end of the book, after explaining the whole rise of the Adolf Hitler empire, he then deals with several chapters focusing on a man named Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a Christian minister, and who refused to bow to the lies that Adolf Hitler was bringing to the nation and to the church. And the thing about Dietrich Bonhoeffer that made him stick out and that made him become despised and rejected by the apostate church in Germany was that he refused to accept any other authority in his life other than the authority of the Word of God.

He refused and he chided and rebuked and scorned the church for abandoning the authority of God's Word as what they ought to be under and live by for another authority that was invested in a man whose authority was teaching them to go against the Word of God. That's why he was executed. Because he would not bow to the regime of Hitler.

And so the perversion that comes, that was in the Corinthian church that Paul was begging them to turn from, that was here, that Jude was begging them to be aware of, is characterized by an attitude that scorns, mocks, and rejects the authority of God's Word. Now remember, it is not a mere profession, I believe in the authority of God's Word. But it is a lifestyle.

Do my actions and practices support my profession that I believe in the authority of God's Word? Let your actions be the true test of what you believe, not what you say. Revile and scoff at heavenly glories, but when even the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, judiciously argued about the body of Moses, he dared not bring an abusive condemnation against him, but said, the Lord rebuke you. Now watch, but these men revile anything they do not happen to be acquainted with and do not understand.

And whatever they do not understand physically, that which they know by mere instinct, like irrational beasts, but these, they corrupt themselves and are destroyed. Verse 11, Woe to them, for they have run riotously in the way of Cain, and have abandoned themselves for the sake of gain. It offers them following

the error of Balaam, and have perished in the rebellion.

These are hidden reefs, elements of danger in your love feasts, where they bodily feast sumptuously, carousing in your midst, without scruples, providing for themselves. They are clouds without water, swept along by the winds, trees without fruit, at the late autumn gathering time. Twice dead, wild waves of the sea, flinging up the foam of their own shame and disgrace.

Wandering stars, for whom the gloom of eternal darkness has been reserved. Verse number 16, These are murmurers and grumblers, who complain continuously of their lot in life. Murmurers and grumblers, who complain continuously about their lot in life.

Brothers and sisters, beware of the dark cloud of discontentment and unthankfulness. Beware, because it is that type of heart and mind that becomes a foothold for this spirit to come in and seduce you. Those who complain and grumble about their lives are those who have given their hearts over to unthankfulness and discontentment.

Those who have given their hearts over to unthankfulness and discontentment have fallen into the snare of comparing themselves with other people. Comparing what they have with what others have. Comparing their life with other lives.

An entire nation became discontent with their life. And in a decade, they were swallowed up in the greatest error of the century. All springing out of... they were sick and tired and grumbling and complaining about their life.

Stealthily comes in. Who are you comparing your life to right now? What do you wish was different in your life? Has it festered unthankfulness and discontentment? It's not the Holy Spirit. Does this go on for weeks at a time, months at a time? Has the enemy been recognized? Or is he slowly seducing the mind and the heart into movement? Into a belief system that will turn you from following the Word of God? Every wife in here will become discontent with your husband if you compare him with someone else.

Every wife will become discontent. Every husband will become discontent if you compare your wife with someone else. Are you looking at your neighbor's car? Your neighbor's home? Are you looking at the pictures in the magazines? Do they make you wish you had things you don't have? Oh, now, Phil, come on.

Don't get technical. You see how the enemy stealthily comes in? Paul said those who compare themselves one with another are what? Foolish. Unwise.

They're fools. You know the devil will destroy you if your life is nothing but a life of comparing yourself with others. You know the only healthy way to live is compare yourself with Jesus.

Look at Jesus. Look at His Word. And let Him fill your heart with desire for Him.

These are murmurers and grumblers who complain. I'm asking now, I wonder, is there any area in your life that you can identify right now in the presence of God where you're unthankful? You're unthankful. You're discontent.

Beware that you don't start murmuring and complaining and wishing and comparing. And if you get into that whole realm, you will become seduced. And you will turn from the simplicity of Christ and from resting

in a sovereign God who understands and knows where you're at and is asking you to find your joy in Him to a life where you will begin, verse 16, the latter part, once you begin to complain and grumble and murmur and compare yourself to other people, you will begin going after their own desires controlled by their own passions.

Once you start murmuring and complaining and grumbling and once you start becoming unthankful and discontent, then you start following after your own desires and your own passions because you're set now to make your life better. Oh God, the trap. The trap, the trap, the trap.

And yet when the New Testament believers got a hold of the Spirit of Christ, what did they do? Did they become discontent and wish their life was better? No. They sold what they had. Their eyes saw eternal riches and they gladly forsook all things to become vessels in whom the glory of Christ would be seen.

Ah, but if you embrace the Spirit of this world, you won't find yourself doing that at all. You'll resent it. You'll mock those who do it.

Going after their own desires controlled by their passions, their talk is boastful and arrogant. What do you talk about when you're with people? Who do you talk about when you're with people? The Spirit of this world, the Spirit of swastika compels men and women to talk about themselves, boast about their accomplishments. Paul said, God forbid that I should glory.

There's a man who knew the cross, not the swastika. God forbid that I should glory, but you know it's costly to embrace the cross because when you embrace the cross, you'll be an offense. Your life will be an offense.

When you embrace the cross, you're going to have to deny the temptation to outdo your brother. Because when your brother's talking about himself, you're thinking in your mind how you can talk about yourself to impress him like he's trying to impress you. Their talk is boastful and arrogant and they claim to admire men's persons and pay people flattering compliments to gain advantage.

Oh my goodness. This is what the false teachers were doing in the Corinthian church. This Spirit, when it gets a hold of people, it motivates people to engage in conversation, but there's always an ulterior motive.

There's always an ulterior motive. Even if someone warms up to you, it's because they've got an agenda and they think somehow you can further that agenda. It's not a genuine love.

It's not a genuine concern. Flattery. I remember when I worked as a security officer, the higher-up boss would single out certain people that he wanted to represent his cause.

And he was very, very cordial and sweet to them and gave them special privileges and actually told them they could go home early sometimes. He really admired you and paid flattery compliments to you, but if you broke your allegiance to him personally, it was the wrath. You know what I'm talking about, most of you who are in the world.

Such things ought not to be near our hearts and near our homes. We're closing. Verse 17, but you must remember, beloved, the predictions which were made by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They told you beforehand that in the last days there will be scoffers who seek to gratify their own unholy desires, following after their own ungodly passions. It is these who are agitators, setting up distinctions

and causing divisions. Sensual, creatures, carnal, worldly-minded people.

Those who follow their own sinful desires. Empty and devoid of the Holy Spirit and destitute of any higher spiritual life. But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith.

Make progress. Rise like an edifice. Higher and higher and higher.

Praying in the Holy Spirit. Guard and keep yourselves. Guard and keep yourselves in the love of God.

Expect and patiently wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, which will bring you eternal life. Contending for the faith. The book I read closed with a thought, which I will close with.

If instead of one Dietrich Bonhoeffer rising up in the midst of massive deception, there was a thousand, perhaps the history that we now know would be different. And my challenge to you is this. Perhaps if now, today, you rise up as Dietrich Bonhoeffer did and embrace the truth and refuse all of the deceptions that the world is trying to seduce you with and possibly even identify some that have crept in stealthily into your own life and root them out by the power of Jesus Christ, perhaps your history can be different in the future than the direction it's heading in right now.

Shall we bow our hearts? Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the Holy Spirit. We commit this Word into Your hands.

Lord, may You grant to us the grace to receive, to be strengthened in our spirits today, to embrace the cross of Christ, which is a call to come and die. Die to self and sin. The world and the flesh and the devil that we might live by Jesus Christ.

Lord, I pray today You would search the depths of our minds and hearts and our homes. Expose any subtle entrance the enemy has made into our thoughts and hearts which is resulting in a lifestyle that contradicts Your Word. Give us the grace to repent, to acknowledge our sin and the power through the cross of Christ to resist the enemy and embrace the truth.

Please, Lord.

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