

Well, we're in a section of 2 Corinthians, that isn't often preached on... And in the rare times it does get ventured into, sometimes the focus is just on one verse (usually V14 – Satan disguising himself as an angel of light)... (That sounds very interesting and super-spiritual – but it's actually a very practical and demonstratable thing in the church today, and we'll see that when we get to it.)

But chapters 11 & 12 of this letter, aren't the most pleasurable bits of it to read. There are 2 key words that keep coming up in these 2 chapters, and they're not the nicest of words/topics, and they're not the most religious of words /theological topics we like to discuss...: Fool/Foolish/Foolishness (8) & Boast/Boasting/Boasted/Boastful (15)... And the argument that Paul is going to make in these 2 chapters, is not to boast in ourselves – that's foolishness, and he actually **does** a bit of boasting, to demonstrate the foolishness...

And that's what we're going to be looking at more, next week... But **this** week, we're just going to be looking at the start of Chapter 11, where Paul explains his motivation for 'playing-the-fool' a bit, to get his point across...

And he **is** playing-the-fool a bit.

**11** I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! <sup>2</sup> For I feel a divine jealousy for you....

What's he going on about there??? A divine jealousy??? (Godly) Isn't jealousy a bad thing? And isn't jealousy always

a bad thing??? No, it's not... Sometimes it is right to be jealous, and sometimes it's **Godly** to be jealous...

Exodus 20:4–5 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God....

Exodus 34:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

Deuteronomy 4:23–24 (ESV)

<sup>23</sup> Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. <sup>24</sup> For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Deuteronomy 5:8–9 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> " You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>9</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God....

## Deuteronomy 6:14–15 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— <sup>15</sup> for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

## Joshua 24:19–20 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. <sup>20</sup> If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.”

Are you sensing a bit of a pattern here??? Don't follow after other false gods, because the One True God, is jealous – we must reserve our worship for YHWH, and YHWH alone...  
Lord = Adonai LORD = YHWH

*A couple of times, I've had an opportunity to share the Gospel with a Hindu... And the thing with Hinduism, something I learned (early on), is the need to let them know that our God is a jealous God, and that to become a Christian, they have to forsake all other Gods... Because as Hindus, they worship a multitude of gods... And when they hear the Gospel, “Oh yes, I'll become a Christian – I'll worship Jesus,,, and they put Jesus up on their mantlepiece, along with every other god that they worship...*

But our God is a jealous god. We worship YHWH, and Him alone... Now, I've heard anti-Christians describe God as some kind of egotistical megalomaniac, because he wants to be the only god...

Well, the thing is, He **is** the only god... Every other (so-called) god, is the demonic, trying to seduce people away, from the only true God... And so, God's jealousy, is about "truth", and His jealousy, is actually about protection for His people...

Let me explain the difference between good jealousy/Godly and bad jealousy:

- What could I be jealous of? Let's try this:

*I love operating machinery, and I reckon the ultimate machine to master, would be a helicopter... But I'm not going to bother spending all that money, to get a helicopter licence, because I know I could never afford one... But when I see someone who is obscenely rich, and they have their own private helicopter and their own private jet,, I could find myself harbouring a bit of jealousy there – but I think "Jealousy" is the wrong word. I think the word for that, would be "envy" ...*

- *But if another man started making a move on my wife, and he wanted to gain her affections for himself, it would be right for me to be jealous... He has no right to try and take her affections – She is **my** wife, and I am **her** husband...*

Do you see the difference there... Envy, is when I want something that somebody else has... And envy is bad...

But Godly jealousy, is when somebody is trying to steal something, which is rightfully and morally mine...

And what we're seeing here (Chapter 11), is the responsibility of Godly leaders in the church, to have a divine jealousy, to guard the flock (on God's behalf), from being seduced by false teaching, into the worship of a false image of God.

....

There's no doubt about it,, One of the worst sins that the people of Israel were condemned for (over and over again), was idolatry...

Now, there seems to be a current understanding of "modern idolatry", that defines an idol as anything (other than God) that gives us satisfaction / pleasure (sport, work, holidays)... And one well known preacher (I've heard), takes this to the extreme, such that even good things, he considers to be idols, if we enjoy them, rather than enjoying God...

Now, I 'get' the point he's making, but he's quite wrong... It completely misses the seriousness of idolatry, and what idolatry actually is, as demonstrated in the Old Testament... In his zeal, to try and make idolatry a relevant topic for his western, city-based listeners, he's actually made up a new definition of idolatry...

But we don't need to do that. Idolatry, is the worship of a false image of God, and there's plenty of that in the church today...

I believe idolatry (in the true sense of the word) is rampant in the western church of today... Not because we get:

- enjoyment from Our families
- satisfaction from our jobs
- feel a sense of accomplishment from Preaching
- get fulfillment from serving

Idolatry is rampant because many people today (even though they call themselves 'Christian') worship a false image of God.

The Lord our God Yahweh reveals himself in the scriptures. But instead of worshipping God (as God reveals Himself), many people decide to make up their own image of God. Their God might be:

- more fashionable;
- less dictatorial;
- less exclusive;
- more 'woke'

They make up a god, in the image that they think God should be, and that's the god they worship...

For some:

- He's a God who makes them rich
- he's a God who cares about their particular social causes
- he's more like a grand father figure than like a father – He gives all the love but none of the discipline ;
- and for others, He's a God who doesn't require a reckoning for sin
- and would never send anyone to hell

And so the gospel gets changed. It's no longer:

- a gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sin;
- a message of discipleship and following Jesus in obedience and love...

It becomes more of a social gospel or more of a self-centred ego-building gospel...

And in such churches:

- the Bible is often replaced with psychology;
- preaching is more like motivational speaking; and
- worship becomes more about me, and more about my enjoyment of a concert, than yielding my entire life to the hands of the Lord (which is what true worship is)...

And so today's reading, is about Paul taking on the false teachers, who were leading that Corinthian church, into idolatry...

And Paul uses the same language that gets used in the Old Testament, to combat idolatry... He talks about a divine jealousy (Godly jealousy)... And he uses the husband/wife relationship, which God uses to describe His relationship with Israel...

**I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ**

You know, when Paul preached the Gospel, he preached the pure, unadulterated Gospel... And they believed it. And they

gave their hearts to Jesus. The church is the bride of Christ... Pure; Holy... And when Jesus returns, that's the way the church will be presented to Him... Now, for you big, tough men, that's an image you're going to have to get over – you're going to be a bride one day – you're a bride now – a bride in waiting...

But Paul says, <sup>3</sup> **But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

What does Christ expect of his bride, while we await His return??? When we hear so many different messages; when there's so many different denominations of Christians, who (apparently) believe different things.

How can we know that **we're** on the right track, and how can we know that **we've** got it right??? Well it's simple really what God is looking for is **a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

I buried my uncle this week, so I've thought a little bit about 'death' and 'dying'... And do you know how I want to be remembered??? I hope that I will be remembered as a man who had **a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** That's enough. If that's all my eulogy says, that's enough...

And that was the path that Paul had given the Corinthian church to follow. But when Paul left, the false teachers came

into town, and they preached a different Gospel, and the “Jesus” they proclaimed, was not the Jesus that Paul had taught them about...

And it seems like they just went along with it... And they just let it happen...

<sup>4</sup> For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

I can read this, and it’s like, “This sort of stuff was happening in the early church? (mere decades after Jesus rose from the dead)? It seems like he’s talking about the church of today...

A different Gospel gets proclaimed, and “Oh, let’s just let sleeping dogs lie, hey... Let’s not make an issue of it... We don’t want to make a fuss. Let’s all just get along...”

Or someone in a church brings in a strange new teaching about Jesus... In some denominations, there are church leaders, who don’t believe that Jesus rose from the dead... “Oh, that’s just what they personally believe – that’s not what all of us believe”... But the point is, the church just puts up with it...

A different Jesus; a different Gospel... Do you know what that equals?? Idolatry...

Now, there's something important here... Many of the people, who made up the church in Corinth had converted from paganism... Alright, they knew what the worship of idols was – they used to do it... But when Paul preached the gospel to them, they turned from their pagan idols, to worship Jesus Christ... And they knew they could never go back to the paganism they once practiced...

But Satan is more cunning than that... He made them think that they were still worshipping Jesus. He was cunning, like when he deceived Eve...

How did Satan manage to get Eve to disobey God??? He did it, by getting her to believe, that she could be more godly – more like God, if she would eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil...

Let's see how Satan twisted it...

First of all, he misrepresented the word of God: He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"

And top marks to Eve – she corrected the way that Satan was twisting what God had said.

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

Alright, so we can eat from all the other trees – just not the one in the middle...

But then Satan follows it up with an untruth, and a half-truth:

<sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

And rather than talking to God about it (Remember He used to walk in the garden, and talk to them), she just accepted it (readily enough)

<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

And Paul says to that Corinthian church, that's what you're like...

And you know what? In churches where I've seen a false gospel, or a false Christ being proclaimed, that's pretty much the way it's come into the church...

- Firstly, the word of god is misrepresented, and usually makes it look more legalistic and restrictive – the Law of God gets presented in a bad light...
- And then a new message gets proclaimed – this will make you more Godly;

- This will make you more wise

The bait of Satan, is:

- Practicalities; Appearances; and Enlightenment
  - Eve saw it was good for food (practicalities)
  - The fruit looked really good (appearances)
  - And she believed it would make her wise (enlightenment)

And a lot of false gospels and a false view of Jesus, often takes a very similar line:

- This is a gospel that works – it’s practical – You can’t expect people to believe what they used to believe;
- Often the ones who bring the false teaching in, appear to be godly (very nice sorts of people). (and we’ll come to that shortly)
- And often, those who have taken the bait and swallowed the hook, believe they have been enlightened... They know what you don’t know, and if only you could see sense, you’d believe it too...

...

Righto:

So, the critical thing that Paul is pointing out, is the truth of the Gospel message, isn’t dependent upon the eloquence / convincing arguments / power / control, of the person delivering the message...

In fact, Paul admits to them, hey, “I’m not very skilled at speaking”... and he compares himself to the false apostles, and he refers to them as “super apostles”. They must’ve been

very impressive sorts of people. They probably were very eloquent and skilled at speaking. They probably **did** have plenty of convincing arguments. They probably **did** come across as very powerful sorts of people. But that's not what counts.

You see that's not what's important. What's important is what is true. – It's not about how well it gets communicated – It's about how true it is. And this is something that Paul was able to say “I'm not really very good at speaking, but I know stuff. I have knowledge, and I'm telling you the truth.”

I hope (and I pray) that I teach well. I hope and I pray, that I will be able to present the gospel, in a way that you can understand it... But my **greatest** prayer, is that the message that I preach, will be true, because that's what counts...

Moving on ...

I don't know if you've ever noticed this: This might be a new thing for you to consider...

When a person invests in a ministry (financially / time and commitment), in a way, it tends to give them a greater ownership of that ministry... Well actually, I'm not really sure what comes first (chicken/egg). Maybe they commit because they have ownership, or maybe they have ownership because they've committed – it could be either...

But this greater connection / ownership of a ministry, well, there can be good and bad... Sometimes we become fixated on the things we like about this ministry, because we're supporting it, and we are blinded to its faults and fallacies...

# And I think that's what's happening in this church in Corinth...

When Paul preached in Corinth, he never took a cent from them... He was being supported by other churches (including Macedonia). But when the false apostles came in, they were very happy to take their money, and so the Corinthian church invested into them... And it seems like this became 'a bit of a thing' – They were invested in the false teachers, but they weren't invested in Paul, and so, somehow that gave the false teachers more credibility in their eyes...

Righto:

So, I said we'd come back to talk about "appearances"...

When Satan deceived Eve, the fruit appeared lovely... And do you know what a false teacher looks like??? A false teacher – Somebody who proclaims a false gospel, looks very much like a very godly preacher...

Yep, that's right. We can't tell them by their appearances... They may seem:

- Very nice;
- Very loving
- Entertaining, and good communicators;
- Charismatic personality;

Everything you're looking for in a preacher... Except for the truth...

And Paul says:

**<sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.**

What do they look like??? They look like godly leaders...

And this is where we come to V14, which is probably the best known verse in this passage:

**<sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.**

There's been times, when I've addressed this in various churches... Where false teachers, have introduced strange teachings into churches... And I've spoken to the leaders of those churches, and their response??? These are very nice people... You've got the wrong idea – they're not servants of Satan... They are really nice people...

Satan (an evil angel), can pretend to be a good angel... And do you know who the most dangerous false teachers are??? Nice people, who teach a lie... They look like servants of God, but the truth is missing...

*Satan knows all about traps... What's the best way to catch a mouse??? Well, I don't put poison on a mouse trap... Peanut paste usually does the trick...*

But what's the fate of these false teachers? **Their end will correspond to their deeds.**

Do all false teachers, know that they're false teachers???

Well, probably not, but they should... If what I teach, doesn't line up with the Scriptures, then I'm teaching a lie, and if I'm teaching a lie, then I'm a false teacher... (Pretty simple really)...

Why would a Godly man or woman ever proclaim a gospel that is **not** the truth???

The greatest motivation for preaching the truth, is love... If I love the people whom I'm preaching to,, If I love you, who are listening to this today, I can proclaim to you, nothing other than the Gospel truth – even if you don't like what I'm teaching, I've got to tell you this, because I love you...

If I truly love, I cannot proclaim any other Jesus, than the true Jesus, who loves you and I, both...

Why did Paul continue to proclaim the truth? V10&11, it's because he loved them... Why, even when they rejected him, did he continue to preach the truth? – Why is he correcting them and their theology now???

Because he loves them...

And that's the way it should be in the church today...

Many of God's children in the church of today, are being seduced into a worship of a false image of God... It is the responsibility of Godly leaders in the church, to have a divine jealousy, to guard the flock (on God's behalf), from being seduced by false teaching, into the worship of a false image of God.

Who will be those Godly leaders??? Who will have a Godly jealousy, to guard God's flock???

And who will support them??? Love isn't love, unless it embraces truth, and exposes every false image of Christ...

And let's be loyal to the real Jesus... Let's be disciples of the real Jesus, and follow Him with our whole hearts...

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,  
We want to know the real You.  
Lord, we thank you for the Gospel,  
As it's recorded in the Scriptures...

Lord, we accept it.  
We believe it.  
We delight in You.  
We delight in Your word.

Oh Lord, guard our hearts and our mind.  
Give us wisdom and discernment,  
To help us to recognise any false teaching...

Lord, we repent of any false image we've ever had of You.  
And we direct our worship to You, and You alone...

Lord, give us boldness,  
Give us a divine jealousy,  
That we could not bear to have a false gospel,  
Or a false Jesus proclaimed in Your church...

Lord, help us to love our brother enough,  
To embrace truth, and to reject a lie...

Praise be to You, Lord Jesus Christ...

Amen.