

2 Corinthians

“Winning Through Weakness”

III. Main Teaching: 1:15-13:10

D. 10:1-13:10 Winning Through Weakness

2 Corinth. 11:1-15

“If I were the Devil”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 1-3 Jealous FOR you

III. Vs. 4-15 A true Pastor’s heart

I. Intro.

In human warfare one of the most successful attacks against a nation or country is infiltration. We can affectively arm against the threats from the outside by counter measures but how can we effectively defeat an enemy we believe is one of us and on our side? You can drive around any city in America and see multiple Churches and come to the conclusion that we are a “Christian Nation” but is the number of buildings in any given city an accurate determination of the state of the Church in the nation? In 1964 Paul Harvey originally published an article called “*If I were the devil*” years later in 1999 it was altered by others to include undated events. Here is what Paul Harvey originally wrote in 1964 48 years ago:

“If I were the devil, if I were the prince of darkness I would want to engulf the whole earth in darkness. I’d have a third of its real estate and four-fifths of its population, but I would not happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree. So I should set about however necessary, to take over the United States. I would begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve, “Do as you please.” To the young I would whisper “The Bible is a myth.” I would convince them that “man created God”, instead of the other way around. I would confide that “what is bad is good and what is good is square.” In the ears of the young married I would whisper that work is debasing, that cocktail parties are good for you. I would

caution them not to be “extreme” in religion, in patriotism, in moral conduct. And to the old I would teach to pray – to say after me- “Our father which are in Washington.” Then I’d get organized. I’d educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting so that anything else would appear dull, uninteresting. I’d threaten TV with dirtier movies, or vice-versa. I’d infiltrate unions and urge more loafing, less work. Idle hands usually work for me. I’d peddle narcotics to whom I could, I’d sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction, I’d tranquilize the rest with pills. If I were the devil, I would encourage the schools to refine young intellects, but to neglect to discipline emotions; let those run wild. I’d designate an atheist to front for me before the highest courts and I’d get preachers to say, “She’s right.” With flattery and promise of power I would get the courts to vote against God and in favor of pornography. Thus I would evict God from the courthouse, then from the schoolhouse, then from the House of Congress. Then in his own churches I’d substitute psychology for religion and deify science. If I were Satan I’d make the symbol of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle. If I were the devil I’d take from those who have and give to those who wanted until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious. Then my police state would force everybody back to work. Then I would separate families, putting children in uniform, women in coal mines and objectors in slave-labor camps. If I were Satan I’d just keep doing what I’m doing and the whole world would go to hell as sure as the Devil.”

Reading Paul Harvey’s article 48 years later is pretty eye opening as it seems Satan has done just this by adopting the method, “*If you can’t beat them, join them!*” The satanic process of infiltration is gradual and evasive slowly deviating from the gospel. Here in the 11th chapter Paul writes about a strange tactic to counteract this threat to the church at Corinth.

II. Vs. 1-3 Jealous FOR you

Vs. 1-3 Rather remarkable is that Paul mentions in reference to a tactic against satan infiltration into God’s church is “**Jealousy**”. It is important to define the meaning of this world as it relates to the context in which Paul is using it when compared with our normal comprehension of the word. **God’s jealousy is NOT a human jealousy OF people but rather a holy jealousy FOR people!** God, like parents, is fearful that his people would set their affections on some alien thing or some other master that would destroy them.

- a. **Jealousy in the world**: False jealousy is **always selfish**; it is concerned about our feelings. It **is possessive**; it wants to control another person. It is dominating, cruel and tyrannical. It usurps the rights of others and insists on its own way. It imposes upon someone else whether they like it or not. Jealousy is one of the most destructive forces in the world today.
- b. **Godly jealousy**: Arises from a deep passion for the welfare of another. It always manifests in tenderness and thoughtfulness about someone else. In Paul's day it was the responsibility of the father of the bride to make sure that that his daughter was a virgin on her wedding day. So Paul uses this as a spiritual analogy that it was his responsibility to ensure the Corinthian believers remained spiritual untainted from the false teachers who were trying to take them away from the simplicity they had in Christ. Eve was not seduced to take a peek, puff or a pop she was seduced by the lie of the potential to become more spiritual. So to these Corinthian saints as the false teachers were saying that there was a deeper truth, a greater knowledge a further experience they could have if they followed them. This is a rather startling analogy to use for these Corinthians as in 1 Corinthians 6:11 a Paul tells us that they had come out of immorality.

But now Paul sees a threat to this transformation as he says in verse 3, *“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* Literally this reads, *“from the simplicity and purity which is in Christ.”* Paul wasn't willing to stand by and allow false teachers to come in a steal the simplicity that they had in Christ. Religion always wants to come in and make

things more complicated than simple trusting in Jesus. When Christianity becomes complex it is a sign that it has departed from the simplicity in Christ to religion. Thomas 'a Kempis said, *“By two wings man is lifted from the things of earth -- simplicity and purity.”* Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said: *“The fact is, that as we get further away from God life becomes more complicated and involved.”* Paul was jealous for them to maintain the simplicity of the relationship that they had in Christ. Karl Barth, that great theologian who wrote a study of the book of Romans which revolutionized theology a few decades ago, was once asked, *“What is the greatest theological thought that has ever crossed your mind?”* His answer was: *“Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”* Here in Corinth the believers were being exposed to teachers who were causing them to move away from the simplicity of knowing Jesus.

III. Vs. 4-15 A true Pastor’s heart

Vs. 4-6 Notice how Paul puts it in verse 4 *“If you, without question, take all the false teaching these so called teachers are feeding you, how much more should you be listening to me? I have taught you the truth. You submitted to them, now submit to me.”*

Paul uses gentle sarcasm appearing to agree with something some had said about him, but in an attitude that conveyed that he didn’t agree. Paul acknowledges that he wasn’t a trained professional speaker but he wasn’t going after *“style points”* he was after content. There are far too many today occupying pulpits that captivate their listeners with the way their words sound instead of transforming their lives by the power behind their words.

The amazing thing is to consider Paul’s words in light of history as we have had 2 thousand years of examining the truth of what Paul wrote and there has not been one

word that people have been able to add on to or subtract from! Even more amazing as Paul didn't dodge the tough questions in life.

Vs. 7-12 In a further use of sarcasm Paul deals with the charge that he did not love the Corinthians enough to even let them support him. He had taught them the principle that he who preaches the gospel has a right to live by the gospel. It was Paul who taught them Deuteronomy 25:4 "*Do not muzzle the ox that treads the corn*". Yet when he came to Corinth he would not accept any support from them and apparently his tent making business didn't do all that well at times as he could barely make it as the churches in Macedonia stepped up to the plate and helped so he wouldn't be a burdened to them. But instead of being humbled by Paul's working and the poor Macedonian's help the false teachers used this to support their view that Paul wasn't anointed, didn't graduate from the right school. But Paul tells, them the real reason he did this in verses 7-8 is that he wanted to demonstrate to these wealthy Corinthian's that "*the Gospel of God is free of charge*". "*God does not ask anything back from you; He offers it freely in Christ*", Paul says.

Vs. 13-15 Paul goes on to say that he had no intention change his practice of not accepting payment from those that he was reaching with the truth as he didn't want to be like parasite false teachers that weren't teaching the truth instead they were just living off the people. Paul exposes these false teachers calling them phonies and impostors, masquerading as apostles of Christ but they were not sent by Christ and they're not teaching what Jesus taught. Paul says that these people are like their invisible master, Satan. The devil doesn't come into human lives and say, "*Good morning, I'm the devil*."

I've come to ruin your life. I want to trip you up and destroy all your relationships and fill you with hatred and violence and I'm going to start today." If he did you'd shut the door. Instead he puts on a disguise and says, *"Hey, I'm your friend. I've come to help you. I want to introduce you to something so wonderful, so exciting, so fulfilling that you can't afford to miss it."* In C.S. Lewis's 1942 classic *"The Screwtape Letters"* Screwtape gives council to Wormwood saying, *"Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one ----the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without turnings, without mile stones, without signposts."* To many people today have enough of Christianity to prick and sting their conscience, but enough to make them forsake their sin or bend their wills in submission to God's will and say "NO" to the thing wrong. D.A. Carson writes: *"We like to be told how special we are, how wise, how blessed....We like to have our Christianity shaped less by the cross than by triumphalism or rules or charismatic leaders or subjective experiences."*