

Paul continues his defense, not motivated by pride and self promotion, but to free his beloved from the wiles of their false suitors. He has espoused them as a chaste virgin to Christ. What a marvelous thought for us to lay hold upon. The assembly is viewed as engaged to be married. And to one husband, Christ Himself. While not married the espoused certainly are lovingly faithful to each other while awaiting marriage. More than simply faithful, which should go without saying, they fellowship together and go with each other continually getting to know each other better, because they love each other and are delighted to be together. The affections are engaged. Not merely the thought of acquiring a wife or husband. Not merely the need of another's love but the delight in loving another. (This isn't simply a legal arrangement that is in view, although our relationship to Christ is legally binding. We are personally bought with a price, 1Corinthians 6:.. And the Assembly is bought with the Blood of God's own [Son], Acts 20:28.) Looking at it from a human point of view, marriage is to be a life long commitment of mutual love. Other guys are completely out of the picture, posing no temptation to her as she has no interest in any but her beloved. Other women are completely out of the picture, posing no temptation to him as he has no interest in any but his beloved. We see this beautifully presented to us in Song of Songs. Paul is jealous over them, the assembly, not just because they are his converts or he wants them as his congregation, etc. It is with godly jealousy. God is a jealous God, not envious of any other but very possessive. We see this repeatedly expressed in the Old Testament by Jehovah over His people Israel. It is Christ who is the one and only source of blessing, and who is to be the one and only object of our heart's affections and allegiance. Adam was Eve's object of affection and she his. But Satan intervened and beguiled Eve's heart away from her Adam. So he is today, still attempting to divide God's people from Him, and succeeding all to often. He does it through corrupting the mind, the thoughts, introducing half truths or insinuating ideas not in God's word. He appeals to the fleshly thinking of the natural man and it sounds good. Paul refers to this back in chapter 10

*10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Paul was the apostle (sent one) of Christ sent to present Christ to them as Savior, Lord and Head. If they

rejected him they rejected Christ.

John 13:20 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

Those who attacked Paul or sought to undermine him and his ministry were attacking Christ. Their attacks were more subtle than those Paul denounces in Galatians where he strongly condemns anyone who dared to bring a gospel different than he presented, Galatians 1:6-9. The Corinthian opposition instead sought to discredit the presenter (Paul) rather than the word he brought.

So he continues to expose himself, so to speak, to them. He repeatedly labels what he was doing as folly, which it was, if he were actually boasting from his heart. What he tells of himself was the truth and worthy of admiration, but it is not comely to dwell upon self in any company, even family. Haman, the ambitious prime minister of the king in the book of Esther is an example of prideful self occupation. He shared his prideful thoughts and schemes with his wife and family who all signed on to his plan and exulted in anticipation of his seeming success. They perished with him. So did the families of Dathan and Abiram who, in pride, dared usurp a place reserved for God's designated priesthood.

Paul now shows them how they were so tolerant and gullible they might easily receive and accept any teaching anyone brought them. Where was their discretion? Where was their allegiance to their suitor who had bought them, Christ? They might receive another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel? Really? Apparently these were blindly headed that way in their prideful attempt to wrest authority and prestige from Paul.

His next appeal is based upon his love for them and the obvious signs of it before them. He acknowledges he was not an attractive or appealing personage humanly speaking. Yet they had received his gospel message when he originally visited Corinth. What had changed? He had not behaved unseemly among them. He had never taken a penny of support from them, relying completely upon the Lord, who graciously moved the Macedonian Assemblies to minister to him. (There they are those faithful, generous Macedonians again. See chapters 8 & 9. What a wonderful example they are.)

No, he had not taken from them or been any burden and would continue in that mode. Perhaps he is pointing up a contrasting behavior on the part of those competing against him. Apparently they were not shy about receiving wages for their presence and leadership among them. He has already mentioned this in ch 4.

4:1 ¶ *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we*

*have received mercy, we faint not; 2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

As we go over chapters 10-13 we begin to recall and recognize the many references to their condition in the earlier chapters of 2Corinthians that seemed obscure when we read them then. A re-reading of the earlier parts would probably be most helpful at this point in our study His only boast was that he loved them and that his love fully accounts for the behaviors that they detracted and derided as weakness.

What is the simplicity of the Christ? Isn't the gospel of salvation by faith in the shed blood of the only begotten Son of God simplicity itself? No complicated do's and don't's to observe. No sacrifices and rituals to perform. Satan's method is to add all these things to the gospel in order to lure sinners, and believers, away from the truth. The bait of "doing" fatally entraps many a lost soul. Satan presents himself as an angel of light to Eve, and subsequently to others of her descendants. She is taken in with his superior "wisdom." Even though Adam could find no beast to be a suitable companion, his companion Eve listened to Satan disguised in bestial form, though apparently one of dazzling beauty. Likewise his servants present themselves as ministers of righteousness. Who are his servants? What is a minister of righteousness? Might we say anyone, believer or unbeliever, who does Satan's will instead of God's will is acting as Satan's servant? Paul doesn't instruct us to determine if these are believers or not. Some may be so bold as to honestly declare themselves outright as unbelievers. Others may brazenly pose as believers. Others may be dupes or self deceived, believing they are "Christians" going to heaven by their own works. Is it possible for one who is truly a believer, saved from the wrath to come, to be found doing Satan's work? Peter did. The Lord had to say "get thee behind me Satan" to Peter when he tried to divert the Lord from His mission to go to the cross.

*Matthew 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

Of course Peter didn't have the Holy Spirit indwelling him yet and was more vulnerable than we are now. Yet walking in the Spirit is voluntary and any believer can get away from the Lord and do fleshly things as bad as

any unbeliever. Beware that we not become useful to Satan by being ensnared by him. Seek to rescue those who are.

*2Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

Note that Satan's ministers are spoken of a "ministers of righteousness." They are not obviously evil to the causal observer. In fact they will often appear as very upright, religious, godly people. They often substitute law for grace. Who are they? Can you identify any? They may show up in high places in religious circles. Not only in pagan religions and cults such as the Dalai Lama of the Buddhists, Mahatma Ghandhi of the Hindus, but in Christendom. For instance the Pope and every official and minister of the Catholic and Protestant churches is doing Satan's work to the extent they intervene between Christ and His Assembly and displace the Holy Spirit from His rightful place in meetings of the assembly. One only needs scan through radio or television programs on Sunday to hear and see some of these "ministers of righteousness" and their sensational, unscriptural preaching and methods. Believers need to test against the Word of God what anyone says or does in the world and in gatherings of believers, including Trott Brook..

Don't get me wrong. There are true believers, faithful, spiritually gifted brothers and sisters in Christ, His servants preaching and teaching the truth in the media, on the street, in "church" buildings, homes, everywhere. Not so many present Paul's gospel fully for they leave out the truth of the assembly entrusted to Paul. But we should be thankful when any present Christ and Him crucified, salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood of Christ, Jesus as the sinless, eternal Son of God, the resurrection, and other truth basic to Christ. We pray for them, and enjoy and share Christ and Paul's gospel with any we are brought into contact with on an informal basis. But beware of Satan's servants. They are often disguised and sneaky. Don't let them in among the assembly, and don't join with them or those who do.

*Jude 1:3 Beloved, ... it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*