

12. Super false apostles

6/2/2005

As you all know, I have been serving as the senior chaplain of Pima County Sheriff's Department past nine months, I am learning more about the life of police officer. It is not glorious as the TV cop movie series portray. They don't end up in gunfight every day. They don't solve the crime within one hour or two at the maximum. They are not sharp marksmen who can shoot a bad guys from 200 yards with their handguns in a split second like in the movies. They are ordinary people who have good hearts to help others. By the end of their shifts, they'd like to go home to their families in one piece without getting shot at, stabbed at, or even spit at.

They have mountains of paperwork to do, reports to do, have to follow bureaucrats' rules and regulations, have to concern about getting sued by criminals for police brutality – which is, in most case, nothing but a garbage story. They have to make everything correct at the crime scene from the beginning. Otherwise some slick conscious-sold attorneys who make \$300 per hour would have that criminals go scott free by technicality. The divorce rate of police officers is 85% and suicide rate is a way above any occupations. With average salary of \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year, we expect them to be supermen. Because the majority of people don't understand what they go through every day, it is no wonder why they become very closed community people.

The self-proclaimed so-called apostles in the city of Corinth wanted to have the title of 'apostle' like Paul. But they are the wolves in sheep clothing in reality. This time apostle Paul decided to settle the score with these super duper false apostles and the ignorant followers of the Corinth church once and for all. You will notice a lot of sarcasms in Paul's voice. The Corinthians deserved it.

A. PAUL - GOD'S APOSTLE

2 Corinthians 11:1-4 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 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. 4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!

Paul does not call his defense of his apostleship folly because it is stupid or nonsense. He calls it folly because he does it reluctantly, knowing his time and effort could be spent on far better things.

In Paul's day, it was the responsibility of the father to ensure that his daughter was a virgin on her wedding day. If she wasn't, he would be put to shame. As the spiritual father of the church at Corinth, it was Paul's responsibility to make sure they retained their purity, that they weren't seduced by those who sought to lure them away from the simplicity of the Gospel.

Remember also that engagement wasn't taken lightly in Paul's culture. If someone was unfaithful during the engagement period, it was considered adultery, and an engagement could only be broken by divorce.

Anytime we give our hearts to something other than God, we are committing “spiritual adultery” during the period of our engagement with Jesus.

Human jealousy is a sin. But the Lord said, “*I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,*” in Exodus 20:5. God’s jealousy is love in action. God is not jealous of us. He is jealous for us.

Paul picks up the same theme in Galatians 1.

Galatians 1:6-9 I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from Him who called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel-- 7 not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to change the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! 9 As we have said before, I now say again: if anyone preaches to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!

If there’s a single issue in the New Testament that seems to be fighting ground, it’s over the issue of the deity of Jesus.

I asked you to underline three things:

False teachers proclaim another Jesus and a different gospel. ‘Another’ here means “another of a similar kind.” A false teacher may try to copy the truth by mentioning the name of Jesus or throwing in a few truth from the Bible.

‘Different’, on the other hand, means “another of an opposite kind.” And false teaching opposes the Gospel of salvation, usually by adding works. Paul says “*you may well put up with it*” with a touch of sarcasm – indicating that the Corinthians were tolerant of the heresy being spread among them.

The modern day Christians would say, “These Corinthian Christians are dumb. We wouldn’t do that.” But the fact is that the majority of converts to Mormons are not non-believers. They were Southern Baptist people. How about the people who flock around the false teachers of the Faith Movement? They are the same kind as these Corinthians. Immature and easily swayed by the charisma of false teachers. The same song second verse.

B. FROM GOD, NOT MAN-MADE

2 Corinthians 11:5-9 For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the false apostles. 6 Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. 7 Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.

Paul is speaking sarcastically of the false apostles who claimed to be superior to Paul. In Paul’s day, the ability to speak in a polished, sophisticated, entertaining way was a popular. But Paul was either unable or unwilling to preach in this way. It didn’t matter to Paul, because he wasn’t concerned about meeting people’s standards with a “polished” or “entertaining” style, but he was concerned with faithfully preaching the Gospel.

Asked to quote Psalm 23, the famous Shakespearean actor articulated each and every phrase perfectly. Then the host of the party asked his pastor, who was also in attendance, to quote the same psalm. The pastor lacked the rhythmic cadence, the powerful voice, and the smooth speech. All he had was a tear rolling down his cheek.

"I know the psalm," said the actor. "But this man knows the Shepherd." Paul knew the Shepherd. Paul knew Jesus. But these false teachers didn't.

The "super apostles" were exceedingly wealthy from the exorbitant speaking fees they charged. These teachers were telling the Corinthians that Paul's words weren't worth hearing because he didn't charge a speaking fee.

The other churches Paul "robbed" were in the region of Macedonia, including the Philippian church. Paul thanked them for their generous supports in Philippians 4:14-18.

C. SATAN, THE DISGUISED ANGEL OF LIGHT

2 Corinthians 11:10-15 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! 12 But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. 13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Paul, as a true apostle was more interested in the integrity of the message than in his own financial gain.

Paul's desire was to expose these false apostles as frauds. If it took biting sarcasm or embarrassing the Corinthian Christians to expose them, Paul would use them.

He may have been upset by the popularity of the false teachers in Corinth, but he wasn't surprised. He knew where they came from:

Satan – the archenemy of Christ – is behind every false teacher. He disguises himself and his followers as something good and right, but their "end will be according to their works". They'll fall victim to their own lies and will perish without Christ.

It is so easy for all people, including Christians, to be taken in by image and outward appearances. Many will only recognize evil if it openly declares itself as evil. If Satan were to appear before a human audience as an angel of light, they would be strongly tempted to worship him.

In early 1990's, there was a New York Times Best Seller book for a long time. People were reading this book like there is no tomorrow as the foolish people read former President Hilary Clinton's book "Living History" and her husband's book "My Life".

It is called "Embraced by the Light" by Betty J. Eadie. It is a pure New Age propaganda. Guess who shows up in her book? Satan as an angel of light.

It is generally said that Satan has three forms under which he tempts men: 1. The subtle serpent. 2. The roaring lion. 3. The angel of light. He often, as the angel of light, persuades men to do things under the name of religion.

D. PAUL'S LITERAL PHYSICAL CREDENTIALS

1) Fools and boasting

2 Corinthians 11:16-21 I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little. 17 What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. 18 Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. 19 For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! 20 For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. 21 To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold--I speak foolishly--I am bold also.

Paul was concerned about the Corinthians. The Corinthians lacked the discernment to see through these false teachers.

The bondage Paul speaks of may indicate that these false apostles were legalists, trying to put people under the bondage of the Law.

Sadly, many people are more comfortable with authoritarian "super apostles" than with the freedom they may have in Jesus.

2) Try to top this!

2 Corinthians 11:22-31 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Not only was he of the Israelites, he was of the Hebrews. Paul grew up in Tarsus of Cilicia according to Acts 21:39, but this apparently means his parents were Judean Jews who moved to Tarsus either before or after Paul was born.

Paul knows very well that his blood ancestry does not make him an apostle or a servant of Jesus. But many of the false apostles either said or implied that it was important.

'Minister' comes from the Greek word 'diakonos', which describes 'a humble servant, a menial worker'. The false apostles had inflated the idea of minister to make it a title of exaltation and privilege. Paul has no problem with the title 'minister', but he has a big problem with the understanding of the title promoted by the false apostles and received by the Corinthian Christians.

Unlike the false apostles who were lording over the Corinthians, Paul puts himself right on their level.

When we've been weakened, we understand someone who is in a time of weakness. When we've suffered like Paul, our faith moves out of the realm of the theological and into the arena of the practical. It becomes real.

2 Corinthians 11:32-33 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

It illustrates with power the contrast between Saul of Tarsus and Paul the Apostle. Saul of Tarsus traveled to Damascus full of man's power and authority, directed against God's people. Paul the Apostle left Damascus humbly in a basket! Is there anything more descriptive of weakness than being let down in a basket over a wall?

The parents of apostle Paul originally named him 'Saul' after the first king of Israel who was head and shoulder taller than anyone else in Israel and he was a good looking. Saul had everything to be a king from the human point of view.

After the dramatic conversion on the way to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus became 'Paul' which means 'Small' or 'Little' to be the servant of God Most High and used by Him mightily. Truly Paul stands tall.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Probe into the doctrinal statement of the organization.

Does it proclaim the deity of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God and second member of the Trinity? And does it offer salvation as the free gift of God, purchased by Christ Himself on the cross and available only through grace, not works? Does it uphold belief in Christ's death and bodily resurrection? These are the basic facts of the Christian faith. If anything is missing, it's heresy. Stay far from it.

2) Examine the private lives of Leadership.

Are the leaders accountable to anyone? Do they have servant's hearts? Are they free from sexual and moral impurity? If not, stay far from it.