

Grace, mercy and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

[Intro]

Here's a couple questions for you:

How would you react if your child suddenly changed his or her allegiance from you -- the parent -- to a person you knew was only trouble?

Or -- how would you feel if your child was baptized and confirmed a Christian -- and suddenly -- shipped off to join ISIS?

I'm sure you'd be pretty upset. I'm sure you would likely chase, pursue, push the pedal to the metal, or even hunt down that child. And, I'm sure you'd be pretty upset. You would rebuke him or her.

For the Apostle Paul, it was much like that. He fathered the church in Corinth. And now, he was being replaced by a -- fake gospel. He has personally visited Corinth numerous times and the church still doesn't get it. If the church in Corinth thought Paul was upset before, he is now prepared for battle. The troops are on the frontline! He is prepared for war. He is doing this all to reconcile any differences.

Paul cared deeply for the Church in Corinth, but many within the church there were being deceived and led astray. Paul starts off with a firm warning. **"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"** (2 Cor. 11:3). Paul is saying that as Eve was naive, you Corinthians are no different. And all of us here today are no different.

[False Teachers]

So, what is going on at the Church in Corinth? First off, Paul's apostleship is being questioned. There are many who identify themselves as apostles who are teaching a Jesus contrary to Paul. We don't know all of the details, but there were those who wanted to remain under Jewish law, others who argued over who Christ is.

The Christian Church has battled and continues to battle these false teachers. The Church has denounced false teachings. Let me remind you of a few:

- Arianism, which believes Jesus became God.
- Manichaeism, which threw out the Old Testament completely. The Old Testament doesn't matter.
- Antinomianism, which says that Christians are free from the Law -- period. Gospel, yes; law, no.

Even in 2015, the Christian Church is not immune from false teachers.

[Today's False Teachings]

So, what is going on today? Well, just pay attention to your surroundings. We all have to get place to place. I'm sure we have all seen those bumper stickers that proclaim *Coexist* with the many religious symbols. It all sounds well and good. The World says that all religions have the same outcome. And if we say that -- we are offending the one true God. Christianity cannot coexist with any other religion. Then, we have those who believe that religion is something that was just made up by man, or -- religion was created to put certain people down and elevate other people.

[False Teachers v. Paul]

During Paul's time, the devil was working to dishonor Paul. Even during our time, the devil is still attempting to dishonor Paul. There are those who only look to the Gospels and believe that if Jesus didn't explicitly say something, then He must approve of it, while forgetting that the entire Old and New Testaments are entirely divine -- overlooking that Paul was taught by Jesus Christ.

More and more today, the Word of God is being shoved to the side. Even churches that claim to be Christian are pushing the Bible to the side. How can this be possible? But, as the saying goes, there is nothing new under the sun.

So, what is going on at the church in Corinth? Second off, Paul was very concerned for the Church in Corinth. Paul writes to the Corinthians in verse 4: **“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.”** Paul has prepared his battle line. Do you, Corinthians, not get it? There is one true gospel. Anything other than what he has taught them is false – a fake gospel.

He has a similar warning to the Church in Galatia: **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ”** (Gal. 1:6-7).

Paul is quite serious on his zeal for the gospel of Christ. For he was personally called by Jesus to proclaim the one and only true gospel. He is not going to stand for any counterfeit gospel – any fake gospel.

Later on in this text, Paul outright confronts these “super-apostles” who are proclaiming a different gospel. He says that although they are saying that they are Christ's apostles— they are quite the opposite.

Paul strips off their disguise and reveals their true identity—they in fact belong to Satan, not to Christ. Paul's point is that Satan habitually tries to achieve his villainous aims with

the church by craftily assuming a disguise. Even that of a heavenly messenger who embodies all that is upright and true. But while appearing to represent the realm of light - purity and truth -- in reality he represents the domain of darkness -- impurity and falsehood.

[The name “Jesus”]

The super-apostles were talking about Jesus. You see, the name “Jesus” always attracts people. You don’t have to talk about who Jesus is, but just the name “Jesus.” Look at all of the History Channel specials, CNN documentaries, Dateline NBC exclusives on Christ.

We have religions named “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” and “Jehovah’s Witnesses” and they proclaim a different Jesus. Why do people follow those religions? Martin Luther has the answer: “Where the names of God and of Christ are used, everybody follows ... For the devil cannot sell his lies but under this beloved name; therefore he must embellish them with a fine appearance and gloss them over with these holy names: God’s Word, the worship of God, a divine life, and the like.¹”

Likewise, we have Christian denominations that are now proclaiming that the Word of God contains errors and -- in doing so -- are following a different Jesus. Paul warned of this to the Corinthians and the Galatians. He goes into more detail in his letter to Timothy: **“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths”** (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The World has itching ears. These churches have decided to embrace the World to become relevant, instead of preaching on the true Word of God.

When it comes to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions speaks of it this way, “We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teachings and teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone, as it is written, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”, and Saint Paul: “If...an angel from heaven should proclaim to you something contrary,...let that one be accursed!”²

This has been the standard for Christians from the beginning of Christendom. But, this is not what Paul saw in Corinth. And, this is not what Paul would say if he was here today. He would be equally concerned today.

So, how could the Corinthians and Christians today know who is a false teacher versus a true teacher? Jesus answers that question in his Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, **“By**

¹ Martin Luther, *What Luther Says* (Concordia Publishing House: 1959), 394.

² Formula of Concord, *The Book of Concord* (Fortress Press: 2000), 486.

their fruit you will recognize them” (Matt. 7:16). The “fruit” of one who claims to be a “servant of righteousness” will be what comes out of his mouth, his teaching.

For Jesus said, **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits”** (Matt. 7:15-20).

[The Gospel Truth]

Paul’s whole point was to reconcile the church in Corinth and to strengthen ties with them. And by doing so, he would weed out those false teachers, who would only lead them down the wrong path. Out of fatherly love, Paul rebuked the Corinthians so that they would know the true Jesus. For Paul said, **“The truth of Christ is in me”** (v. 10a). And for you, the truth of Christ is in you!

- The truth of Christ is in you – when you were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- The truth of Christ is in you -- when you hear that your sins are forgiven.
- The truth of Christ is in you – when you hear the Word of God proclaimed.
- The truth of Christ is in you -- when you eat Christ’s body and drink Christ’s blood.
- The truth of Christ is in you by the death and resurrection in Jesus Christ!

So, what is the right and true teaching? There is only one gospel truth: **By grace we have been saved through faith** (Eph. 2:8a). All other fake gospels only lead to damnation. The one true gospel is that Jesus Christ accomplished what none of us could ever accomplish. Although, he knew no sin, he took on our sin upon the cross. He died and rose to life and now reigns at God the Father’s right hand as judge, as jury and as defender. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! For you are guaranteed eternal life. The World teaches a false gospel, but we have is the truth in Christ! Amen.

Now, make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Amen!