

2 Corinthians 11:1-15

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians chapter 11, starting in verse 1. If you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God? Again, I want to go ahead and assure you, everything that's been announced, questions, let's reserve until after service.

Don't dwell on those questions right now, okay? We can handle them following service. Let's look at the word and let's focus on the word of God. Paul says, I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness, but indeed you are bearing with me, for I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, for I betrothed you to one husband so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

But I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge. In fact, in every way, we have made this evident to you in all things.

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you.

[1 : 25] And when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone. For when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need. And in everything, I kept myself from being a burden to you and will continue to do so.

As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you. God knows I do.

But what I am doing, I will continue to do so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an apostle of light, or an angel of light.

Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

[2 : 25] Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we're thankful for the opportunity we have of gathering together. Thank you, Lord God, that we come to the place where we can read the word of God.

We pray that it would speak to our hearts and minds as we have heard it and we have read it with one another. Lord, now we pray by the power of your presence that you would make its application ring within our being.

Lord, that it would dwell in our hearts, that it would move beyond our minds, that it would move our bodies for your glory and honor. And we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. We continue to make our way through the book of 2 Corinthians. We see in particular that Paul is admonishing the church to walk in faithfulness.

He is admonishing the church to live out an authentic faith, that is, to live it out accurately and rightly in a society that may reject it, deny it, and twist it. They have been a church which has contorted the message, they have twisted the message, and they have strayed away from the message.

[3 : 30] That has been corrected with the coming of the letter of 1 Corinthians and the repentance of the church. Now we come to a point where Paul wants the church to live out an authentic message.

We know from Paul's writing here that part of his desire for the authenticity of the church was that the church would be the doorway that would lead to the spreading of the gospel to the regions beyond themselves.

That is, he didn't want the church to be healthy just so there could be a healthy church. He wanted the church to be healthy so that a healthy church could sprout other healthy churches. Right? He wanted to move beyond Corinth and he wanted to move to other regions of places where Christ had not been named.

Churches that are healthy are churches that are springboards not only of evangelism but also of discipleship. They are to be churches which are the ones sounding forth the clarion call of the gospel message so that those who have not heard of Jesus Christ will have the opportunity.

And how could they fail to be such when we read early in the book of 2 Corinthians that the believers are a fragrant aroma of Christ unto God, that they are the captives of Christ living among man and declaring his worthiness and his praise.

[4 : 41] Paul wanted there to be a healthy church. Well with this desire of there being a healthy church that was living out their faith in an authentic fashion was also this challenge which came upon him and it is the challenge which we see this morning.

It is a desire to protect the flock. I want you to see this morning Paul's desire to protect the flock and why that was necessary. We come to the portion that if you read the headings in your scripture you will find that Paul is defending his apostleship.

Paul is defending his position as being a true messenger and proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he is defending it to a church which he really had no need to defend it to because it is a church which he dwelt among for a number of months.

As a matter of fact it was about 18 months that Paul was in the city of Corinth not only leading people to Christ but also raising up pastors and elders and deacons and leadership within the body so that the church was healthy when he left it behind.

It was Paul that was writing to this church with a deep concern for them. Here we get into a portion of scripture in which Paul will be very clear and very transparent. We don't see this very often in Paul.

[5 : 57] Paul does not refer to himself very much. As a matter of fact the longer he walks with Christ the less he sees of worthiness within himself. But here in this moment of transparency Paul pulls back the curtains.

He reveals the struggles that he's had. He reveals the realities of what he has faced not just in this passage but in what follows it. We see also that he bears the daily concern of all the churches.

And we see that this concern is founded upon the reality and the desire to protect the flock. There are three grand reasons in our passage this morning while Paul had a desire to protect the flock and we also ought to have such a desire.

That is the flock is worth guarding and we ought to have that same desire not only to lead people to Christ but to maintain their health once they have accepted Christ.

And it is a desire which should rest upon every believer. Number one we see the responsibility of the burden. The responsibility of the burden.

[7 : 05] Paul is here writing to a church which knew him well. He is writing to a church which he has spent some time with. He is writing to a church which he said he was one of the spiritual fathers of but if you go back to 1 Corinthians you will notice that he did not baptize many of them.

He says there in that passage that Apollos watered, Paul planted, that Cephas or Peter was there as well. There were a number of people pouring into this church body but surely as Paul would say if there was a spiritual father of the church it was Paul.

Paul spent his time there. We can go back and look in the book of Acts and see the reality of his ministry. Paul invested his energies there. He did it. He tells us free of charge and before you're too careful say see pastor I told you pastors are supposed to preach for free.

He doesn't say he preached for free. Keep reading the passage. He said he took his wages from another church. Right? He was still vocational in ministry but he knew the reality that even the believers in this wealthy city were not spiritually mature enough to support them yet.

So we have the believers from other churches that are supporting him. Much like when we send our resources that God blesses us with to support other pastors who are serving in other areas that the saints may not be mature enough to support them yet.

[8 : 29] We are not there to say that pastor ought to labor for free. We are there to say we can come beside him so that he may labor freely. That he may have the freedom to raise up and to bear the concern of protecting the flock and he doesn't want to overburden them.

But we see here the responsibility of this burden. Paul says I wish that you would bear with me for a little foolishness. Now that seems kind of strange. Paul says I'm going to step outside of my normal mode of operation here.

I'm going to be a little bit different. I'm going to boast a little bit. I'm going to brag just a little bit about what God has called me to do. But he says in verse 2 for I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.

We need to understand my friend jealousy is not necessarily a bad thing. He said I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.

It is what you are jealous of which can be sinful. We know that the Lord our God is a jealous God. He is a consuming fire. The Bible tells us that is he has a deep devotion and concern for those who are his people and he wants nothing at all to lead them astray.

[9 : 45] You want your spouse to be jealous for you. Husbands you ought to be jealous over your wife. Not of your wife but you ought to have such a desire and a love for your bride that you ought to be so jealous over her that you don't want anyone leading her astray.

That you ought to guard her and protect her and cherish her and honor her. Will we fall short in that? Sure we will but that it is a good jealousy. Wives you ought to be jealous over your husbands.

You ought to ensure that you have a concern for him that he is walking in faithfulness for you because these are commitments and devotions we have made. Paul says I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.

Why? He says because I betrothed you to one husband. Paul says I'm the one who introduced you to your groom. Right? I'm the one who introduced you to the one who loves you so.

I'm the one who brought you there and I put you before him and I betrothed you. The wedding hasn't happened yet but you engaged to him and he said and now I have a concern. I want to make sure he says that you are a pure virgin.

[10:51] He said I've given you to Christ and I want to make sure that when Christ comes on that consummation day of the wedding that beautiful day when you're wed together with him that he sees his bride and all of its splendor and all of its glory and all of its purity he says I've given you not that I'm jealous because you're cheating on me I'm jealous that you may be cheating on the one who loves you so.

I have such a concern for you here I'm concerned about the reality that I introduced you to the one who is the lover of your souls and I want to ensure that you're walking in faithfulness to him see Paul says I carry this burden friend listen to me the work doesn't stop when an individual accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior that is if we lead them to the place of salvation we cannot leave them at that moment of salvation the great commission is not to go and lead people in a sinner's prayer the great commission is to go and make disciples of the nations right it is to bear the concern and the burden for those that we've had the opportunity to introduce to the lover of their souls it is to be those who walk beside and labor beside friend listen to me I know that winning souls to Jesus Christ is a glorious thing but discipleship is messy and you know it's messy and that's why not so many people do it discipleship is not easy because in discipleship you walk with people who aren't doing right in discipleship you walk with people who stumble in discipleship you walk with people who falter in discipleship you walk with people that are like you and all of a sudden you begin to see that there are none of us that are perfect we can lead them to the savior in rejoicing but we don't want to leave them there we need to walk with them on the road of discipleship and carry the burden friend listen to me if God blesses you with the opportunity to tell someone of the savior you are the spiritual father or the spiritual mother of that individual and friend the burden of responsibility falls upon you you say oh that's not mine yes it is yes it is because if you have been the one that God gives you the opportunity opportunity to share with an individual then walk beside them don't abandon them there walk beside them in concern and love and don't leave them you know why we see so many people falling away from the savior is because they're like that seed that was planted and it took off real quick but it has no roots they need someone to tend it to let the roots grow deep to trim it back every now and then you need to prune them back just a little bit every now and then let them develop some roots so that when the trials come and they will and when the struggles come and they will and when the temptations come and they will and you know it because you've been through it ensure them that the savior is still good then

Paul says oh I'm godly over you with a jealous godly jealousy he said I have a jealousy for you because God has given me the opportunity he says but what I am doing I will continue to do Paul says this responsibility is mine I will continue to do it so that I may cut off opportunity see unfortunately what happens so often is that we are used of the lord to proclaim the savior and then we leave them there and we don't take that responsibility and ensure that they're walking in faithfulness and righteousness and correctness oh I'm thankful for those that the lord put around me my spiritual father in christ is no longer with us he has went on to glory my spiritual mother I don't talk to her quite often as I should some of you know who she is but when I do talk to her the very first thing she does is she gets in my face and she asks me my business why because she says I'm your spiritual mother I have that responsibility responsibility and she talks to me and calls me to account of things that just about no one else

I always said that there's two ladies in my life that can really hold me accountable number one is my wife and number two is my spiritual mother and they both will hold me to account and they have that responsibility we need to praise God for those realities and we need to praise God for the responsibilities and the burdens to bear them it is ours Paul says that I'm going to do it because I ought to do it number two we see the reason for concern is there a reason to be concerned what does Paul say he says I want you to be pure but look at verse three but I am afraid he says I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ this reference to being the bride of Christ has reminded Paul here of the first bride he goes all the way back to the garden all the way back to Eve he says but I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness that you too will be led astray now friend if we could live in a perfect world we say oh well if I didn't have all these struggles if I didn't have all these trials it would be easy to follow the Savior oh if everything was perfect you don't have to go very far in the Bible to see even in perfection man falls right go all way back to the book tree of the knowledge of good and evil there in the middle of a land of perfection there is no sin there is no thorns there are no thistles there is no sweat of the brow there is no pain in child bearing all of these things are introduced after the fall even in the midst of perfection and fellowshiping with the

Lord God in the cool of the day and seeing him as a man does talking with him face to face even then we see that man is led astray and so here we begin to see that there are reasons for concern it can happen now right when we look and see how tainted and misconstrued the world is if it could happen in a garden of paradise how much more so in a wilderness of sin and we see this understanding and we see the reality he says here that this battle this desire to protect may not be so much externally too often when we see each other and when we talk to each other we are only concerned about the externals that is how we look on the outside and if we're honest and we don't try to be fully transparent with one another we're pretty good about putting together the outside right we can look pretty good on the outside and we can hold it all together at least for a moment but the reason discipleship is so important and the reason this responsibility is so urgent is because he says that this battle starts place first in the mind that your minds will be led astray it is a battlefield of the mind that your mind will be led astray led astray from what look at what he says from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ you know at the very core of its being the gospel message is a gospel message of simplicity and purity but ever since its introduction into the world man has tried to add to it has tried to twist it has tried to manipulate it has tried to make things that are not so simple not so pure they've tried to make it harder because we understand that as soon as the gospel message was introduced man began to say well that's good but we need to do this and then this and then this and then this and when you get to all the and then's then you end up with the law and you end up with what was but we see here that it is the simplicity and the purity of devotion now simplicity does not mean easy devotion to Christ is not easy it is a trial it is a struggle but it is simple that is that's the only call that man has to love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself that's pretty simple now the fleshing out of that simple command can be very difficult it can be very very difficult but it is the simplicity and the purity of the gospel that is first construed there see there's reason for concern

[19 : 26] Paul says that they are being introduced to another Jesus to another gospel to another spirit to another teaching they says that even if these people come and they preach another Jesus or they preach a different spirit or they preach a different gospel see when you begin to add to you may use the same name but it's not the same person you may use the same wording but it's not the same gospel Paul says there's reason for concern here and the reason is man has by nature a tendency to be led astray you say wait a minute I'm not gullible nor am I foolish no but by nature you have a tendency to be led astray you say no no no no no pastor I'm really good by nature you have this thing called a sin nature and by nature we have inherited that sin nature and if Adam and Eve could be led astray so too could we so here we have a reason for concern with this responsibility of the burden and this reason of the concern we finally come to the last point and that is the reality of the enemy do we really need to protect the flock or is it enough to proclaim the

Savior is it enough to proclaim the Savior see this is why just so you understand I've tried to preach through the scriptures this is why I believe it's important that we spend time in the Old Testament that we spend time in the New Testament you say well all I need to know is the gospel well the gospel if in case you have missed it is fitted in the middle of the rest of scripture and the Bible tells us that all scripture is profitable all scripture is good and if we cannot rightly understand the gospel until we understand the Old Testament this is the reason that I made the commitment as a pastor so many years ago not because it's easy because friend listen to me it's not the reason I made this commitment is because my own tendencies were to preach through the writings of Paul oh I love the writings of Paul you know why I love the writings of Paul because it doesn't matter which book of Paul you open up Paul divides it up so neatly for you the outlines almost jumps off the pages I love the writings of Paul the first half of every Pauline epistle deals with doctrine and theology the last half of every Pauline epistle deals with application and practice so it's easy to preach through Paul at least for me because I can see it because there it is here's the so what here's the theology and then it's okay this is what you do I love preaching through

Paul so for the first few years of the ministry that's where I was at I camped out in Paul I love except for the book of Romans that's a little deeper I left that for a lot of years later but I was so excited preaching through Paul and God says well you're preaching through one small portion of scripture he said oh no there are more writings of Paul in the New Testament no my friend John wrote more verses in the New Testament than any other author and when I realized that I was overlooking the bulk of the New Testament then I realized I was overlooking the bulk of all of scripture so God led me to the reality I said well I'm going to preach through the Old Testament I'm going to start preaching through the Bible and it was a crazy idea I thought well I'll just start in Genesis 1 and I'll start preaching through scripture and I was so glad that after about three or four years after that the Lord saw fit to move me in churches I thought I'd be free from that concern I'm just being honest with you right you give me a moment I was like glory hallelujah I didn't have to get to the book of Psalm of Solomon right the Song of Solomon I didn't have to get into the book of Ecclesiastes I didn't have to get I said the

Lord led me and delivered me from that reality because once you say it from the pulpit people don't forget it right so I was pastoring and I got to the easy stuff and God says now I'm going to move you churches and then when I came here the Lord said I want you to do it again so I started back here Genesis 1 1 my first Sunday night as pastor not my call to sermon I understand not my call to preach first Sunday night as pastor I went in Genesis 1 1 and now we are all the way in to 2nd Kings right and 2nd Kings I just beyond is hard it is hard everybody's killing everybody there nobody's doing right it's just hard right and so I'm like I wish in the flesh I had said I wasn't going to do that but I know that it's there and so it has a purpose and we need to read it and we need to understand it because we know the reality friend we're doing this because there is an enemy present and we need to understand what all the scripture teaches us we need to understand what everything is there for we need to have the fullness of the word of

God and we need to have a full plate this is how I live out my burden of responsibility this is how I live it out and try to walk in faithfulness do I fall short absolutely are there better expositors of the word of God absolutely are there people who go a little deeper into it absolutely but I'm trying to stay in my lane and go as the Lord has wired me but look at what he says here he says we need to do this because there's an enemy that is present we need to do this because this reality that we cannot understand the gospel apart from the Old Testament because we have to go back to the book of Genesis we have to go back every problem of man is introduced in the first 11 chapters of Genesis do you understand that Genesis 1 to Genesis 11 introduce every problem of man so if you don't ever read them you don't really know what's wrong every problem of man is in the first 11 chapters of the Bible Genesis chapter 12 is the answer it is the beginning of the answer to God's it is the beginning of God's answer to man's problem so the first 11 chapters this is how we're messed up chapter 12 this is how God is going to answer our mess ups right it is not anything that takes him by surprise and we see that all the way to the end of the scripture we see it all the way to the book of

[25 : 30] Revelation we see the answer to man's problem so we need to know what's wrong before we can know how to answer it and God does that to us he's very clear he divides that up for us but we need to understand it when we open up the Old Testament what we see is there's an enemy we see him running around we see him doing everything right we see him as a serpent we see him as as battling we see him as as people who are leading the wicked astray we see all these strange characters and then all of a sudden he kind of gets lost a little bit but let's not lose the reality of the enemy because it says there as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness I'm afraid that you will be led astray too he says now you need to understand some of us say well if I was in the garden and a snake started talking then I would run away well if you were in the garden and everything was perfect and the animals weren't eating one another and the snake started talking it might not have been that strange I've never been in a garden where the lion and the lamb lay down together everything was vegetarian and snakes had legs and could talk I'd never been there so I don't know what I would have done but it was a place of perfection and they were caught off guard so what we need to understand is the enemy may not come to you as a talking serpent but that does not mean the enemy is not among you we need to see the reality of the enemy

Paul says that they're going to deceive your mind and he says in verse 12 but what I am doing I will continue to do so that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the manner about which they are boasting stay with me look at what it says for such men are false apostles deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ here he's talking about those who came in after him again teaching and preaching things that deviated from the simplicity and purity of the gospel message but just in case we wonder who they are look at what he says no wonder for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light therefore it is not surprising if his servants so Paul very clear here says what these are Satan's servants also disguised themselves as servants of righteousness Paul very clearly here says that the danger that is facing the flock is not necessarily an external battle but it is the welcoming of the flock of false teachers into introduction of people coming in and teaching false doctrine now this is where the burden of responsibility falls upon the spiritual mature

Paul makes no bones about it he said these who are proclaiming another Jesus a different spirit a different gospel these are the servants of Satan just like the Lord God Almighty has his servants who are laboring for the kingdom so too does Satan have his servants who are laboring among the kingdom and they are there to cause people to deviate and to fall away if possible they will be led astray now surely and admittedly there are some individuals think Apollos in the book of Acts who was also contributed to the church at Corinth there are some men like Apollos who are preaching Jesus that just need somebody else to come beside them and disciple them and teach them a little bit more right by the way who taught Apollos there was some tent makers right it wasn't Paul it wasn't it was some tent makers who came beside Apollos and said let us teach you a little further about the Holy Spirit right so Apollos took the knowledge and he went proclaimed the Jesus of the gospel and he was on fire and people were coming to Christ he just needed someone to walk beside him there are always be

Apollos is among us but friend there will also always be the servants of Satan who disguise themselves as apostles of righteousness this is why friend listen to me and it's not always easy to say but as a pastor in a day where information is readily available and there are a lot more eloquent speakers a lot more flamboyant speakers a lot more personality speakers than we have ever had in any other time of history I get very jealous over who the flock is listening to and what the flock is reading I just confess there have been times either in goodwill or I go ahead and say it even in this church if I see a book that I do not think is doctrinally accurate if it's in goodwill I'll buy it if it's in this church I'll get it and I throw it away because deception starts in the mind and the labor of the faithful can easily be diminished by the labor of the wicked what we listen to really matters I'm not telling you that I have it all together I'm not but I can assure you if there is every moment where I begin to deviate from the scriptural teaching of the word of God then I pray and hope that you will call a meeting and you will vote me out as your pastor for your own sakes and for mine the reason I encourage the very first thing that I do when I came here as pastors encourage you to start reading your Bible start reading your

Bible start reading your Bible start reading your Bible why because I want you to know the word of God better deeper than you ever have so that if I'm wrong you can call me out on it because it absolutely matters that's where the battle is fought in your mind if a serpent walked up to you talking I would be there to take a knife and cut its head off some of you say you only I wouldn't be there I'd run away we take care of the serpents that talk but sometimes there are those who are so smooth and so personal so sincere if we're not careful we too will be led astray and we will be deceived in our minds and it is the responsibility of the spiritual mature to protect the flock this is why it is our responsibility to walk in faithfulness with one another to careful one another to love one another Paul says it's one thing that stood out to me this morning and I'm wrapping up

[32 : 24] Paul makes this great admonition he said that I commit sin and humbly myself so that you may be exalted Paul said I will humble myself in order to exalt others in a day of self-exaltation may we be those spiritually mature individuals who will humble ourselves to the point that we will devote ourselves to others so that they may be exalted and they may be lifted up and they may understand the reality of the gospel message for the glory of the king it's not for our glory but it's all for his let's pray Lord I thank you so much for this day thank you for your faithfulness and goodness towards us I thank you oh God that you have provided in the clarity of your word all that is sufficient all that is needed that we may know you so Lord may we guard that Lord in guarding that may we grow closer to you may we grow in concern for others and may we be those who would devote ourselves to others for the glory of the king and not for the glory of man and we ask it all in Jesus name amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen

amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen