

Distinguishing False Teachers from True

Small Group Follow-up Study for 2 Corinthians 11:5-15

RE-READ

[5] Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. [6] Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things.

[7] Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? [8] I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. [9] And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. [10] As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. [11] And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

[12] And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. [13] For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. [14] And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. [15] So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

RECAP

Right from the beginning, Paul sets himself up against another group of teachers whom he calls the “super-apostles.” These are teachers who had crept into the Corinthian church and were teaching another Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel (cf. verse 4). By the time we get to verse 13, Paul is no longer holding his punches. They are “false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” But, since they appeared, at first glance, to be apostles of Christ, how could the Corinthians know that they were being duped? Similarly, how can we tell the difference between false teachers and true ones when both wear nice suits and preach from an open Bible? In our text, Paul provides us with three helpful categories for us to think through when it comes to the teachers we choose to regard.

1. False teachers are more concerned with style than they are substance.
2. False teachers, more often than not, are in it for the money rather than the mission.
3. False teachers prove, in the end, to be servants of Satan rather than Christ.

RESPOND

1. What caught your attention from Sunday's sermon? What are you still thinking about/mulling over?
2. How did Paul reflect the cross of Christ in his speaking—not just in what he said, but in how he said it? How did Paul reflect the cross of Christ in his refusal to accept the Corinthians' support?
3. Why were the Corinthians so easily duped by the false apostles?
4. Can you think of occasions when you have been aware of people preaching a different Jesus, or different gospel, or displaying a different spirit? What alerted you to the differences?
5. Discuss the relevance and application of 1 Thessalonians 5:21 in the light of our text.
6. FBI agents are trained to recognize counterfeit money by becoming so intensely familiar with real currency that a fraud is immediately recognizable. By the same token, we must be knowledgeable about our faith in God so that we will not be led astray by false teaching. How familiar are you with the basic tenets of Christianity? What would you say that the essentials of the faith are? Are there areas about which you would like to know more? What are they?
7. Given our discussion, what sort of things should we be praying for ourselves and for our church?