***Session 11:***

***Sometimes “the Truth” is hard to swallow!***

**Why do people try to color over the truth to make it easier to accept…for themselves as well as others?**

**2 Corinthians 11:1-6, *“****I hope you will put up with me in a little foolishness. Yes, please put up with me! 2I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. 3But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.5I do not think I am in the least inferior to those “super-apostles.” 6I may indeed be untrained as a speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.”*

**All through this passage…section of scripture, Paul speaks of things that are very distasteful to him (not easy for him to say):**

1. **He has to stress his own authority**
2. **He boasts about himself…but to help them remember who he is and who he is speaking for.**
3. **He has to keep comparing himself with those who are seeking to seduce the Corinthian Church.**

**Paul absolutely hates the thought of someone coming in to the body of believers and stirring up trouble….**

 **But…Paul apologizes for having to come on so strong!**

**Paul begins this section using a picture from Jewish marriage customs. The idea of Israel as the bride of God is common in the Old Testament.**

 ***Isaiah 54:5, “Your maker is your husband.”***

***Isaiah 62:5, “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”***

**It was natural for Paul to use the metaphor of marriage and to think of the Corinthian Church as the bride of Christ.**

**Jewish wedding—there are two people that are called the friends of the bridegroom, one representing the bridegroom and the other representing the bride.**

 **They had many duties:**

* ***They acted as liaisons between the bride and the bridegroom.***
* ***They carried the invitations to the guests***
* ***Important: They had the responsibility of guaranteeing the chastity of the bride.***

**This last one is what Paul’s thought is here.**

In the marriage of Jesus Christ and Corinthian Church he is the friend of the bridegroom. It is his responsibility to guarantee the chastity of the bride, and he will do all he can to keep the Corinthian Church pure and a fit bride for Jesus Christ.

**As Eve was seduced by Satan, Paul feels that those speaking any other gospel to the Corinthian Church other than what Paul preached was contrary and far from God’s truth.**

**There were those in Corinth who were preaching their own version of Christianity and insisting that it was superior to Paul’s.**

 **They regarded themselves as special people….super apostles.**

**Paul draws the contrast between these false apostles and himself.**

* ***Paul…. “I am untrained in speaking.”***
* ***“I have had no technical training”….(we call this a layman)***
* ***What these so-called professional speakers….with “floweredly” words were saying might be entertaining…but it is all show…and no truth.***

**Paul closed by saying that these speakers…who seduce the minds of the Corinthians, might have all the resources and education as well as oratory skills to master the minds of people…but they do not know the real Christ..**

**They seduce, abuse, and misuse the (immature) little children of God.**

***2 Corinthians 11:7-15, “****Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. 9And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. 10As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. 11Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 12And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. 13For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”*

**Paul meets a charge that has been leveled at him.**

**#1. Paul had refused to accept any support from them whatsoever.**

 **Believe it or not….this was a slap in the face to a Corinthian!**

**Paul had accepted gifts from the Church at Philippi (Philippians 4:10-18)**

**#2…Paul never accepted the gift from the place where he was preaching….**

**Why?**

***Paul wanted to be utterly independent and under no obligation when he was preaching the gospel in front and eye to eye with the hearer of the Word.***

***It is difficult to accept a man’ bounty and then condemn him or preach against him….or his ways.***

***If the churches wanted to send something after he left, that was up to them. The Church at Philippi had done that.***

**With that in mind, it would not have been wise to accept or receive support from the Church at Corinth and at the same time maintain the independence which the situation demanded. He was not inconsistent….He used Godly wisdom.**

**Why were the Corinthians so annoyed about his refusal?**

* **For the Greek…or one under Greek teaching, it was beneath a free man’s dignity to work with his hands. The dignity of honest toil was forgotten.**
* **In the Greek world, teachers were supposed to make money out of teaching. There never was an age in which a man who could talk could make so much money…**
* **Every town was entitled to grant complete exemption from all civic burdens and taxes to a certain number of teachers of rhetoric and literature.**

**Paul’s independence was something that the Corinthians could not understand.**

**The false apostles took support and they claimed that the fact that they took it was a proof that they really were apostles.**

**They claimed that Paul’s refusal to accept anything was proof that his teaching was not worth anything.**

**Where do you think the thought… “Nothing in life is free” came from?**

**“If it is free…watch out, it will not be worth anything…or it will cost you a lot more in the end.”**

***However, in their heart of hearts…they were afraid that people would see through them, and they wanted to drag Paul down to their own level….where Paul’ independence would no longer form a contrast to their greed.***

**Paul accused them of masquerading as Christians…just as Satan masqueraded as one of the angels who sang praises to God….but in the end was out for himself.**

**Their Christianity is a superficial dress in which there is no reality.**

**A Church in Uganda drew up the following four tests by which a man may examine himself and test the reality of his Christianity:**

1. **Do you know salvation through the Cross of Christ?**
2. **Are you growing in the power of the Holy Spirit, in prayer, in meditation and the knowledge of God?**
3. **Is there a great desire to spread the Kingdom of God by example, and by preaching and teaching?**
4. **Are you bringing others to Christ by individual searching, by visiting, and by public witness?**

**We can’t test the conscience of others….but we can test our own Christianity….lest our faith also could not be a reality…but a masquerade.**

**The Credentials of an Apostle….**

**2 Corinthians 11:16-33, “***I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. 17In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. 18Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. 19You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! 20In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. 21To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that! Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. 22Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. 23Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? 30If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. 32In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. 33But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.*

**Paul is forced to produce his credentials as an apostle.**

**Paul thinks this is folly…and when he is compared with other people, Paul thinks this is pure madness.**

*Nevertheless, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the true gospel that he preaches, he feels it has to be done.*

**These opponents were Jewish teachers who claimed to have a gospel and an authority far beyond his.**

**Paul…quickly states that the Corinthians are enduring seduction and abuse at these “so-called” apostles hands.**

1. **They reduce the Corinthians to abject slavery.**

*Trying to persuade them to submit to circumcision and the thousand and one petty rules and regulations of the Jewish law…and to abandon the glorious liberty of the gospel of grace.*

1. **They devour them….**

*They taught the Corinthians that it was exceptional meritorious to support a rabbi and that he who did so made sure of a place in the heavenly academy.*

1. **They behaved arrogantly.**

*They lorded it over the Corinthians. They demanded a respect greater than that given to parents.*

1. **They struck them on the face (insulting behavior).**

The false teachers made three (3) claims in which Paul claims that he can at least equal…if not surpass:

1. **Claim to be Hebrews….spoke their ancient Hebrew language in its Aramaic form…not like some of the Jews who had been scattered and was speaking Greek and other foreign tongues.**

**Paul stated… “No, I too am one who has never forgotten the purity of his ancestral tongue.”**

1. **Claim to be Israelites….a “member of God’s chosen people.”**

**Claiming that Paul had given up being one of God’s chosen people…and had slipped out into God-forsaken territories.**

**Paul says, “No, I am as pure an Israelite as any man. My lineage is the lineage of the people of God.”**

1. **Claim to be descendants of Abraham…meaning they were Abraham’s direct descendants and therefore heirs to the great promise that God had made to him (Genesis 12:1-3). Paul…. “No, I am of as pure descent as any man” (Philippians 3:5, 6).**

**Then…the quencher…the one that he claimed made him the true apostle:**

 **The catalog of his sufferings for Christ.**

1. **Beaten three (3) times with rods. (Roman punishment)…rods of birch wood. Paul should not have been punished this way…but was.**
2. **Five (5) times he received the 39 stripes (scourged)…Jewish punishment, Deut. 25:1-3. Normal scourging 40 stripes…. “40 less one…is for the one doing the scourging to not overdo….less the scourger is punished. 1/3 of the stripes in front; 2/3 in the back.**
3. **Danger of travels. Robbers, thieves…and people that would cut your throat for a shekel.**
4. **The anxieties for all the churches. All your trials you go through…I go through.**

**Paul says, “You can’t beat me into submission…because when I am weak I am strong.”**

**Questions to consider:**

**If you were persecuted as Paul was persecuted, would you continue to pursue preaching or teaching about Jesus?**

**How do you know you would?**

**Are there events in your life that have happened to help you know you would stand for truth even though it is not the “political correct” or the “cultural” thing to do?**

**Do you feel in your lifetime that you will have to stand up to the elite, the ones making the rules, the ones who have the legal right to say, “he or she is wrong and he/she will have to pay for his/her stand?**

**Do you believe you are in the majority or the minority in your stand for truth…Biblical truth?**

**What does Paul mean when he states, “when I am weak I am strong?”**

