

2 Cor 11:1-15 - Stay devoted to Christ

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Main point – Stay totally devoted to Christ, holding to the truth about him and loving his people.

If we're a Christian, and we really love someone who's a new Christian, we'll really want them to stick with Jesus.-----**(SLIDE)**

About 15 years ago, at my last church, God used several people, including me, to help lead a young man called Larry, to trust Jesus and start following Jesus as Lord.

I invested time, teaching and care into sharing the Gospel with him, then discipling him after Jesus became his Lord and Saviour.

I invested years into encouraging him in following Jesus.

And when you do that, you really come to care about them deeply.

You really want what's best for the person, as I longed and prayed that for Larry.

I was passionate and committed to seeing him stay devoted to Jesus.----

And that's what Paul wants for the Corinthians, who he shared the Gospel with and taught for over 18 months.

He wants to see them sticking with, staying totally devoted to Jesus.

And it's vital that that is true of us too – we need to stay devoted to Jesus, in what we believe and the way we love.-----

Even in helping each other stay devoted to Christ too.

And to do this, we need the encouragement of God's word.-----

We're still in this series through 2 Cor, and after today we'll take a break from it for our Meet Jesus Sundays, then finish it, in September.**(SLIDE)**

We're in the final section of the letter, chapters 10-13.

As Colin said last week, the apostle Paul is now speaking openly about the false "super-apostles", and today he takes them head-on.

Last week in ch10 we heard how these new teachers who've come to the church, are boasting-in themselves and thinking how much more impressive they are than Paul.

And remember Paul said his ministry had the approval of God, and displayed the power of God – seen in the Corinthians being saved and transformed by the Gospel.-----

Now in **11v1** Paul says, I wish you'd put up with a little foolishness from me.

This section has been called 'The Fool's Speech', and likely comes in response to Paul being called a 'fool' and inferior.

But as he said back in ch5 v13, he really is in his right mind.

And this whole section is filled with irony and words said, 'tongue in cheek' – with sarcastic humour.

We might say he writes with tears in his eyes and his tongue in his cheek.-----

My first of two main points today is, Paul's Passion and Pure devotion to Christ(SLIDE)

We see Paul's passion for Christ and the Corinthians right from the start, **v2**.

Here Paul describes himself as a match-maker, Jesus' match-maker.

But it's not like a match-maker today, who knows a potentially suitable guy and girl, and encourages them to meet up, hoping it works out.

He's even more invested than that.

In a culture of arranged marriages, Paul is like the father of the bride.

And as the bride's father he's introduced his daughter to her future husband, and he's totally invested and committed to this relationship.

'I have promised you in marriage to one husband' he says.

Remember the Bible describes Christ's people, the church, as his bride (**Eph 5.25;SLIDE**, and Rev 19.7-8; cf. Israel and God – Isaiah 54.5ff).

And **Ephesians 5.25** says that Christ died for his bride the church.

He gave himself up for her...and to present her to himself in splendour, without stain or wrinkle or any blemish, but holy and blameless.----

Christ sacrificed his life so that all who trust him can be washed clean of our sin, and stand before God blameless.-----

And that's amazingly wonderful! ☺ We are the bride of Christ.

He is our husband – not in any sexual sense – but still in a really intimate, relational, and committed, faithful and loving sense.-----

So Paul casts himself as the father of the bride who has committed himself to getting his daughter to her wedding without running off with someone else – and it is not going well.

It's a bit like Julia Roberts and Richard Gere in **Runaway Bride(SLIDE)**.

She'd left 3 grooms at the altar when she, Maggie, met Ike.

And she leaves him at the altar too, before eventually marrying him.

Sorry to spoil it, but you've had 25 yrs to watch the movie 😊

But in a much more serious way that could have never-ending consequences, the Corinthians have been beguiled and lured by a slick suitor.

And Paul is desperately trying to talk some sense into them.-----

Paul loves them and God loves them – how could they possibly be wooed away by someone else?-----

Still thinking about **v2,(SLIDE)** often these days, we use the word '**jealous**' as interchangeable with 'envious'.

So I'm jealous of what they have and I don't have. I want it.

But just like google will tell you, jealousy can describe a fear of losing something you have.

When Paul says, 'I'm jealous for you with a godly jealousy', it's not envy, and it's not a selfish preciousness.

It's him being passionate to protect the people he loves.

The Lord God was jealous for his honour and for his people Israel, not wanting them to run after idols (**SLIDE-Deut 4.23-24 & Zech 8.2**).

I wouldn't want my wife to run off with another man – such jealousy is motivated by love.

And Paul's jealousy for his spiritual children is driven by love, and seeks their good.

It's him wanting them to stay a pure virgin ready to meet the groom on the day Christ comes again.

It's Paul wanting them to stay devoted to Jesus, not run off with some other partner - someone preaching a different Jesus; or an idolatrous love of money or self.-----

In **v3-4** we see what Paul is fearful of and worried about.

Worried the Christians in Corinth will be deceived like Eve was, by Satan.

We read about that in **Gen 3.(SLIDE)**

They're in danger of being like Eve.

As their minds are seduced and corrupted from a sincere, single-minded, pure devotion to Christ.-

People have come and preached a different Jesus, a different Gospel.

Paul's already said that he preached Jesus as the Son of God – **1.19,(SLIDE)**.

And Jesus as Lord – **4.5**.

And in **1v22** that they have received the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of his promises and salvation.-

In some way the false teachers were undermining Jesus' saving work.-----

Look at how Paul described them in **v13-15**

False or pseudo-apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

He is saying that Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light, is working through them".

These false teachers are servants of Satan!

It's the first time in the letter he's called them out so bluntly.

They're only masquerading as apostles.

They claim to be servants of righteousness, but actually they serve Satan, and want to lead people astray, like Satan did to Eve.

They're likely claiming to teach the ways of righteousness, maybe by a return to obeying the law of Moses.

But ch **3v9(SLIDE)** says through Christ we're part of the new covenant and it brings righteousness.

And **5.21**, through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and our faith in him, he takes our sin and we get his righteousness.

The apostolic truth is that we get righteousness by relying on Christ crucified.----

Whereas if the Corinthians listen to these false teachers they will miss out on righteousness n' being right with God, and end up facing judgement, like the false teachers.-----

Putting the pieces together it seems the super-apostles' teaching was part Christian, part Jewish and part Greek philosophy.

They may have been saying you get forgiveness by Jesus plus your performance. And you only gain the full Spirit through Jesus plus law keeping.

It's a different gospel!

In **v4** Paul is flabbergasted that they happily put up with this teaching and these teachers.-----

And it's ironic that he asks them to bear with him, the one who brought about their relationship with Christ, their husband, in the first place?

These super-apostles whom the Corinthians have welcomed are destroying Paul's authority.

Shredding his reputation.

More than that, they are endangering the eternal well-being of many.

The church as a whole is not yet in outright apostasy.

But there is real danger of many being seduced by these Satanic impostors.----

And Paul is passionate about seeing the Corinthians stay devoted to Christ.

This is a warning to all of us.

We need to keep a pure devotion to Christ.

And that means staying **devoted to the truth about Christ.(SLIDE)**

So when we hear what people say, what youtube preachers or podcasters say, or our own thoughts, we need to compare it to the apostolic word in the New Testament.

We need to be careful about new ideas.

We need to read and know God's word, and pray for discernment.

False teachers, can look & sound good; godly, mature and deep.

But they often speak ½ truths and deceive people.-----

Today Satan still masquerades his work, and false teachers still masquerade as Christian leaders. There's still people saying that you have to be good enough for God, pushing Pharisaical legalism.

Or maybe you hear people say, or Satan whisper, 'You can never be good enough for God – he'll never accept you after what you did'.-----

But turning from sin and trusting Christ truly makes us right with God.

Then there's other people saying sin is not that bad.

There's lots of leaders calling evil good – whether they are denying Jesus' miracles, denying he's the only way to God, denying that God determines us what is moral, denying that God will send unbelievers to hell.-----

There's other people promoting pride, self-reliance, and material success, as good things.

There's people saying, come to Jesus and he'll heal your illness now, or make you wealthy now.

But that's a different Jesus.-----

There's people who think Jesus is okay with you sleeping with your girlfriend or boyfriend, okay with you getting drunk, okay with you abusing your spouse or being a bully.

But that's a different Jesus.

There's people saying God wants you to be happy so just do it; forgetting that our deep and enduring happiness n' joy, is only found in him and living his way.-----

All of these are lies taught by disguised false teachers and deceived people.-----

A different Jesus and a different Gospel.

We must Be careful!-----

This is especially a warning for all preachers, ministers, missionaries, Bible teachers:

we must point people to a righteousness that comes through the cross of Christ.

We need to help people stay devoted to Christ.-----

But what the apostle says relates to all of us.

Please help the people you lead, those in your growth group, those around you, your brothers and sisters, to be careful.-----

I and we need to speak the truth, sometimes even defend the truth.

Out of a love for Jesus and a love for people.

Though I wonder if Paul's example embarrasses us?-----

His zeal for their devotion to Christ, his passion for their purity,

Do we feel that for anyone?-----

Or does Paul's passion rebuke us?-----

Yes, we're not apostles, but do we care deeply for the spiritual wellbeing of our brothers and sisters?-----

If you're a leader of a growth group, teaching in youth group or Sunday School; pray for a passion to help your people, your friends, stay devoted to Christ.-----

And if you are on the receiving end of someone speaking truth in love to you, you'd be silly to just to defend yourself and not hear them out

As Gary Millar puts it, if you want to be an idiot, ignore the people who love you most.

Don't listen to them, and just run off to anyone or anything that interests you.

But if you don't want to be an idiot, you'll listen to those who love you, and have shown it over time, and in teaching you about Jesus.-----

Pure devotion to Christ means holding to the truth about Christ.-----

My second point from the passage is,(SLIDE) Paul's love and our love.

Paul declares in **v5** that he feels in no way inferior to the so-called "super-apostles".

Yet the fact this is happening at all, is pretty pathetic.

The church in Corinth had extended exposure to the greatest church-planter and theologian the world has ever seen, and they didn't rate him.

They should have seen from his visits that he was the real deal.

They should have seen it in Paul's previous letters.

But no, many in the church preferred these "super-apostles".

As Colin mentioned last week, Paul hasn't had the public speaking training these preachers have had, as he admits in **v6**.-----

It's said that the travelling Greek preachers boasted in certain things, like their knowledge, and they elevated themselves.

They also had beautiful, muscly, hairless bodies – like some body builder who also has a great mind, great charisma and professional training in public speaking. 😊

Maybe like this guy on Tik Tok,(**SLIDE**) who wants people to join 'the church of pump'. 😊

These preachers take pride in their outward appearance (5.12)

Whereas one early Christian text said of Paul that he was 'small, bald-headed,(**SLIDE**) had crooked legs, eyebrows that joined and a long and slightly hooked nose.

Not especially attractive by the world's standards.

On top of this in 10v10 some were saying his preaching was pathetic.

Maybe his speaking was unimpressive, maybe he stuttered or had a soft voice – who knows.

1 Cor 2(SLIDE v1-4) says he clearly lacked confidence in himself.

So Paul is such a contrast to the showy, proud, boastful, self-righteous, self-indulgent superiority of the false apostles, who lack humility, a servant heart and any real love.

But remember as we heard last week, God uses and approves of the ordinary and unimpressive.

And Oh how God has used this man.-----

His words demolished strongholds remember, and saved lives for eternity.

And Oh how God can use us too – believe it!!-----

But as Paul asserts in **v6**, he has knowledge, and he has taught them in everything.

And he always sought to build them up. (**10v8,SLIDE**)

His teaching was always for their good.

Even to people who'd rejected him and questioned his motives, he always sought to love them.----

In **vv7-12** the apostle speaks about loving them by **not taking money from them.(SLIDE)**

While the super apostles elevate themselves, Paul sought to elevate the believers.

He has shown humility and been like Jesus in this.

Yet his generosity has been judged and his motives questioned.

Paul had preached the Gospel free of charge in Corinth.

So v7 is said with real irony and tongue in cheek, for hasn't sinned in not taking money from them.-----

Now as we heard in chapters 8-9, it is right for people whose work is teaching God's word to receive a living from it.

Paul had said that to the Corinthians in **1Cor 9.14(SLIDE)**

Which is especially true for the local ongoing preacher in the church.

But Paul when Paul was doing evangelism on mission he never asked his hearers for money.

Our missionaries don't ask the people they proclaim Jesus to for money.

In our Meet Jesus Sundays, we won't be talking about the offering and asking guests give.

Paul was happy to receive money to help him take the Gospel to other places.

Just like the Macedonians, gave generously to provide for Paul while he preached in Corinth and beyond.

But especially in Corinth Paul never wanted to accept their money for his own needs, because of the context.

Because the travelling preachers are wanting to be paid, doing it for the money, and Paul wants to distinguish himself from them.

He wants to present a Christ-like model of generosity and humble service, and avoid being grouped in with those predators – v12.

Who are greedy n' money hungry.(**v20 -SLIDE**)

On top of this the super apostles likely boast that they are quality preachers who are worthy of being paid.

And Paul's message isn't even worth paying to hear.-----

Paul wants to separate himself from them.---(& 2.17; 4.2; 7.2-4; 12.13-18)

But what's the biggest reason Paul has not taken money from the Corinthians?

V11 – Because I love you, God knows I do!.

And that's kept him from wanting to burden them in any way, v9.-----

Paul's love meant he wanted to give and not take.

What about for us, and our love?-----

If we are staying devoted to Christ we will love like Paul loved.(SLIDE)

We will love as Jesus has loved us. (1Jn 3.16;4.11)

And if we love, it will also mean we want to give and not take.

Give of our money to Gospel workers, to the needy, where we're able.

We will give of our time and energy, keep giving in service of the Lord and his people, as we're able.-----

Paul loved the Corinthians by ministering to them, without expecting material gain from them.

It's a giving love, a sacrificing, willing-to-bear-the-cost love.----

Are you loving anyone in your church family in such giving?-----

Bible teacher **Paul Tripp** helpfully says,

LOVE IS willing self-sacrifice for the good of another that does not require reciprocation or the other being deserving.

LOVE IS being willing to have your life complicated by the needs and struggles of others without impatience or anger.

LOVE IS the willingness to have less free time, less sleep, and a busier schedule in order to be faithful to what God has called you to be and to do, as a spouse, parent, neighbor, fellow believer. What does that look like for you?-----

And remember **LOVE IS** daily admitting to yourself, the other person, and God, that you are unable to be driven by a cross-shaped love without God's protecting, providing, forgiving, rescuing, and delivering grace.-----

Is there anyone in your church family to whom you could say, "I love you, God knows I do!" Or consider the person who may have no one to say that to them?-----

Finally, how will we love those we hope visit Bundy over the coming weeks on our Meet Jesus Sundays?-----

Let's welcome visitors, move towards n' talk to people we don't know, even if you don't know if they're a visitor.

Maybe you could plan to invite someone out for lunch, home for lunch (or to SNAC).

Will you really engage with and seek to be equipped by our growth groups Discipleship for Everyone course, so you can be ready and willing to meet 1-1 with a new Christian?

Could you give up an hour a week or fortnight to meet someone 1-1?

Love makes us givers not takers.-----

Being devoted to Christ is seen in being devoted to the truth about him, and in loving others.-----

Brothers and sisters, Don't fall away from your pure devotion to Christ.-----

Let's pray.