

2 Corinthians Class 12 Transcript

Welcome back to FI Online. This is class number 12 in our series on the book of 2 Corinthians. Hope you've been enjoying the series.

We had no questions turned in last week for class 11 so we'll just begin this evening by asking God's blessing upon this class. If you'll bow your heads and join me.

[Prayer]

[1:14]

Last time we began—or at least finished up—as we came to the beginning of **chapter 10**, and we went through the first six verses. As we mentioned, **chapter 10** begins with a little bit different tone than what we've had up to this point because Paul knows he's dealing with some significant issues in the congregation, where there are at least some individuals who are still fighting against him, still trying to undermine him as the apostle that Jesus Christ sent to the Corinthian Church.

So Paul has to address that. And, as we go forward in this chapter, we're going to see that he addresses it very powerfully, and yet, in a sense, not with a spirit of anger or retaliation, in that sense, but simply to be able to help people focus on what matters. And that, essentially, is what he's been saying as we have begun through this chapter. He's told them that they need to stop and consider, in the proper way, what's really going on and who really is the servant of Jesus Christ.

So, again, he talks about there, in **verse 5**, *bringing all our thoughts into captivity*. Not being swept back and forth by just simply emotion or the situation we find ourself in, but being able to bring them *into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ*.

And, as he says here [**verse 6**], we must also be *ready to punish disobedience when our obedience is fulfilled*. There is a time when God will give us the responsibility of addressing that which is disobedient—those who are—and the need to be able to address that properly. Now, of course, when you see that, Paul is also recognizing there is, in a sense, a difference between those individuals who disobey willfully and those individuals who disobey because they didn't know any better. So, we're going to see that as we go forward.

So, Paul begins here in **verse 7**, saying to the brethren in Corinth: *Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's*.

So, if an individual comes along and claims that he is a servant of Jesus Christ—all right, I don't have to attack him. I don't have to somehow turn against him. Now remember, that's what's been happening to Paul. Those individuals there have been trying to undermine Paul. So he's saying: "I don't really need to undermine them. I simply need you to consider that I claim to be a servant of Jesus Christ too."

[4:04]

Now he starts here by talking about: *you look at...the outward appearance*. There are probably a few scriptures that come to our mind. The first one that comes to my mind is **1 Samuel 16 verse 7**, where God was speaking to Samuel about who should be anointed as the king following King Saul. And, of course, David at that point was a young man—not very impressive—a youth who had come from tending the sheep.

And yet, God spoke to Samuel and He said: [**1 Samuel 16 verse 7**] *[But] the Lord said to Samuel, "Do*

not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him (referring to the first son of Jesse). For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

We have to keep that in mind as we’re looking at individuals who have various responsibilities. It’s easy to be distracted by their physical aspects—their height, their weight, their age—those things which may look to us as somewhat limiting. But, God sees people in a different way. He sees the heart. Now, not only does that tell us that God sees this, it also reminds us that we **don’t**. And therefore, we need to be careful about the kind of judgments we make. We don’t have the ability to see what God sees. So, there’s a matter of faith and trust in God on these issues.

A second scripture that comes to mind is **Luke 16** and **verse 15**, where Christ spoke to the people and said: *“You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*

So, again, in addressing the Pharisees, He had said: “You go through the motions. These are things which people look up to. And, oh, here’s a person who prays so much, who stands on the street corner and makes his prayers,” as He described in one place the hypocrite who blows a trumpet when he brings his offering. Okay. Some of those things may be highly respected among men. But that isn’t what God sees. He sees the heart. And He is unimpressed by those physical things.

[6:21]

A third one is **John chapter 7 [verse 24]**. In **John [Matthew] chapter 7 [verse 1]** we often have been reminded that at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus Christ says: “Don’t *judge* lest you be *judged*.” But he doesn’t stop there. He goes on to say: [**John 7:24**] *Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*”

Every one of us, as Christians, has a duty to *judge*. Not so much judging each other, but we do have to judge situations. We judge actions, and we judge by a certain standard, a standard of righteousness—what is *righteous judgment*.

I’m reminded of a situation a number of years ago where an individual had written an article. It was published in a magazine. I believe it was *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Now this particular individual I had known in the past. They had been a part of the Church. They had eventually left. But they wrote an article that was published about the location of the temple. And they had theorized that instead of the temple in Jerusalem being on top of the Temple Mount, where it’s almost universally agreed that it was, instead, this person proposed that it was further down the hill in the city of David.

Now, I don’t think the person was right. I don’t think there’s any evidence of that, and so on. But, *Biblical Archaeology Review* is a professional journal that invites professionals to respond. So, evidently, the authors went to the leading expert in Jerusalem about the temple and its location, and they invited him to respond to this paper. And I thought: well, this should be interesting; we’ll see what this expert has to say. But instead of responding to what the paper said, the expert spent all his time attacking the man who wrote the original work. It was a waste of time to read what he had to say. He really never addressed the issues the man brought up. Now I think they could’ve successfully been addressed. That wasn’t a problem. But, instead of taking the time to address the issues, this expert, as he was called, spent his time attacking somebody who disagreed with him.

I think Paul’s example here is a great one for us. Paul was being attacked by these individuals. And yet, he doesn’t turn around and attack them. He asks people to judge righteously, to look at the situation, to

not be distracted by the outward appearance. And apparently, part of that has to do with Paul's personal outward appearance. The critics were apparently trying to say that they were more qualified than Paul was to be the teacher, to be the leader of the brethren in Corinth. And their tactic was to undermine the character of Paul and therefore to negate whatever he had to say.

Paul is basically saying: "Okay, you want to make a judgment. You want to see whether I really should be viewed as Jesus Christ's apostle, the one sent to Corinth, or if these others—who maybe have some wonderful characteristics about them—are the ones that you should follow."

So Paul says: "Okay. If you want to compare credentials, let's do that. But, make sure you're judging by the right standard, not just some external thing that really doesn't matter. They're convinced they're the true servants of Jesus Christ. Okay, I don't have to attack them for that. But I happen to believe that I'm a true servant of Jesus Christ. So, it's not fair for you to accept **their** statement that **they** are the servants and reject mine. We're both saying we're the servants of Jesus Christ. So, you can't judge on the basis of what someone says. You have to go further than that."

[10:17]

So he goes on [2 Corinthians 10] **verse 8** he says: *(And) even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord (Jesus Christ) gave us for edification (building up) [and] not for your destruction, I (will) not be ashamed (or, I won't be embarrassed.)* —

So, Paul is saying: "Okay. If I need to emphasize things—I need to talk about the fact that Jesus Christ gave me, as an apostle, certain authority—I can assert that. I can bring that forward, and I will be true. But," he said, "and I'm not embarrassed about that. I'm not embarrassed about saying, 'I have authority and responsibility.'"

But Paul is basically saying—this is from *Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

... the facts themselves spoke eloquently in his favor. Everyone knew that the result of his service at Corinth had been the upbuilding of the Corinthian Church in faith and in harmony. While the presence of these false apostles had produced friction and division.

So, Paul is saying: "If you're going to judge, okay. I'm not afraid of your looking at me and making judgments as long as your standard is the right standard, because I'm really trying to live that way. So think about it. When I came to the area and I've dealt with you, what have I done? I've tried to produce harmony. I've tried to build you up. I've tried to encourage growth. I've done all of those things. These individuals have come on the scene, and what's happened since they showed up? You have division; you have upset; you have people choosing sides." You have people rejecting Paul. "So," Paul says, "look at the results and begin to make your judgments."

He goes on to say: [**verse 9**] *lest I seem to terrify you (with) letters.*

Now, probably Paul is quoting or paraphrasing one of the accusations that've been made against him. The accusers had placed Paul in a very difficult spot. If he wrote a strong letter to them, they would say: "Well see, he's just trying to make you fear him. He is trying to intimidate you into submission." But, if he was not so bold in writing, then they would say: "Well, he's weak. He doesn't have the strength to do this."

In the next verse he's actually going to repeat their accusation. And again, basically, he says: "When I arrive on the scene, you'll be able to judge whether the accusations are correct or if I am exactly as I have presented myself in my letters to you."

He goes on to say: **verse 10** “*For his letters,*” they say, “*are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.*”

Oh, what a thing to say! Here’s this individual who’s been serving them, who brought the truth of God to them, who encouraged and helped them over a period—remember when he was first in Corinth—of 18 months, and he’s written to them a couple of times now. This is our second epistle that we have a record of. He’s very carefully cared for them. He’s tried to encourage them. And yet, they say: “Oh, yes. His letters sound so powerful, but when he is here, his bodily presence is weak, and he is certainly not an effective speaker.”

[13:44]

Well, okay, what did Paul look like? We don’t know. There are no representations of Paul that we could look at and say: this is what he looked like. Various sources have tried to come up with something. It’s certainly possible that Paul was kind of self-conscious in some ways. He talks about a problem that he had with his eyes. And, apparently, it was something that when you saw him, you could see this was a man who had some trouble with his eyes. We don’t know exactly what that means. Maybe he squinted badly. Maybe there was some kind of inflammation. We really don’t know. We know that he told the Galatians that: “if you could’ve taken out your eyes and given them to me, you would have.” [**Galatians 4:15**] So obviously, it was something they saw and recognized. And so Paul may have been a bit self-conscious about it.

From every indication, he looked like a typical Jew of his day. As we read through the book of **Acts**, there are several times when Paul was taken by different groups who were upset because they immediately recognized him as a Jew. So, he probably looked much like the Jews of his day. Speculation has been that he was probably kind of small and wiry, and so on.

There is an account given about 200 A.D. in a book called *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*. But, as you read through it you think: “Okay, what does that mean?” I mean, it’s over 100 years after his death, someone tried to describe him. And it isn’t a very flattering description. So, we really wouldn’t put much emphasis on it. But what’s the point? The point is that making fun of someone—ridiculing because of some physical aspect of their presence—is really a pretty shallow way to attack someone. It’s certainly not something that reveals the spiritual character of an individual.

So, they say *his bodily presence is weak*. Maybe he was small; maybe he was unimpressive. They said *his speech was contemptible*. Well, Paul certainly acknowledges that he doesn’t see himself as an eloquent speaker. Now, when I read through some of the things that he wrote and the accounts that Luke gives in the book of Acts—for example, his address to the Areopagus in Athens [**17:18-34**]—I certainly get the impression that Paul had the ability to be quite eloquent. But he doesn’t claim that for himself. He doesn’t claim that: “I have this wonderful speaking ability.” But he said: “What I brought you is the truth. And that matters.” So these others, perhaps, are they better speakers? More classically trained? More able to impress? I suppose so. That’s a possibility.

[16:30]

I remember at one point, a few years ago, another elder and I went to hear a public presentation by a well-known speaker, a fellow named Zig Ziglar. And, as we watched this presentation—it was a very large auditorium. I think there were, oh, probably, seven or 8000 people who were there. There was a stage in the center, and Mr. Ziglar was there on the stage, and he would, of course, walk around and talk to all the different sides of the auditorium as people were there. And I remember, in one particular case,

he went over to the edge, and he knelt down on the edge of the stage and spoke like he was speaking to one particular person there. Well, okay. The elder and I didn't say anything to each other about it. We just listened. On the way home we began to talk about it, and both of us had the same impression: it was all show. Just a show put on to impress people. But, the sincerity of it just didn't seem to be there at all.

There was another speaker who also told this very moving story about how his son—young son, almost a baby—got really sick at home. And his wife called him at work and said: "I'm really worried." And how he was just so busy with his work. And he said: "Well, he'll be all right. That's all right. We'll take care of it when I get home." And he put it off, and put it off, and he ended up with his son going to the emergency room and almost dying. And oh, he was so sorry for what he had done. And he realized: "Oh, I really put the wrong priority here. I really should've gone and taken care of my family."

But as I listened to his story, I remembered that I read the same story in *Reader's Digest* by a different person. And as I listened to it, I couldn't help but think: "This is all an act. This is all phony." He was very eloquent. Oh, there were people sitting there in the audience with tears in their eyes. But it was all an act. It wasn't true. I realized that it was a very eloquent speaker, but the genuineness wasn't there.

I wonder if it wasn't something similar in Corinth—that these people were classically trained; they knew how to reach an audience. But the genuineness was not there.

Paul says: *Let such a person consider this, [2 Corinthians 10] (verse 11) that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.*

"I want you to know that I'm very genuine, that what I write to you is what I am. It's the way I will be when I come."

[19:11]

[Verse 12] *For (he goes on to say) we dare not class ourselves —*

There's a little bit of sarcasm there.

—we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

These individuals had evidently come to the Corinthian Church, and they had presented themselves as being very well-educated, super knowledgeable about Scripture and what God expects, and so on. And they had presented themselves in this way. They were constantly showing how well-educated and how important, how well-informed, how eloquent they could be. Paul said: "I wouldn't want to compare myself with those folks."

And again, many of us could say the same thing. There are many theologians out there who have amazing degrees. Sometimes we will talk about a translation and say: "Oh, well, this isn't a very good translation." And then, when you look at it, you think: "Well, wait a minute. The person who did this translation spent years of their lives learning this language and came up with this translation." Now it may not be the best translation, but, how much time have I spent learning that language so that I can stand back and say: "Oh, no, that's a bad translation"? No, I really haven't put in as much time as they have. I need to be a little careful with that. But, at the same time, we also recognize that there are well-educated, impressive theologians with multiple doctorates who don't understand the truth of God. And, you and I do. Isn't that amazing? We can't compare ourselves there.

If you and I were asked to come before a group of well-educated people and present the truth, well, we

might be able to do it in terms that you and I understand. We would go no further with that educated group than Paul did with the Areopagus in Athens. Wonderful presentation—didn't go anywhere.

So, the ability to do all of these things—we try to *compare ourselves* with those with their degrees and their education, and we really can't compare. But, Paul says: "I don't need to compare myself with them. I'm not here to impress them. In fact, I'm not here to impress anyone. I'm here to serve Jesus Christ." That's what Paul is saying.

What's the problem that these people have? They measured *themselves by themselves*; they compared *themselves among themselves*. Now we've all seen examples of that. We see it in our society. We see it perhaps when maybe you see a Little League baseball team that wins an important baseball game. And they're jumping around saying: "We're number one! We're number one!" And yet, we know very well: "No, you're really not number one." We get really excited, but when we compare ourselves there: "Well, okay, we may have won a game, but we're really not all that great." We have trouble remembering that sometimes.

People compare themselves to one another. And when you're comparing in that way, you can make some bad judgments. We can all do that. And we can do it in the Church too. We can begin to compare ourselves among ourselves and feel like we're doing fine, when, in fact, it's not true.

When you look at the first-century world—where the Pharisees were very influential in Judea and especially Jerusalem—they compared themselves to each other. And when they compared themselves to the common population, they were **so** much more righteous. They fasted more. They prayed. I mean, remember, the Pharisees fasted twice a week. That's pretty impressive. They prayed daily. They stood around giving long prayers. They even, some of them, stopped in the street to pray when it was time to pray and everyone could watch them. But, it was all a show. It was all empty. They *compared themselves among themselves*. It's not a wise decision. They weren't righteous before God. So it's important for us to understand.

[23:30]

He says: "Those who do so"—he uses the phrase here at the end of **verse 12**: —*are not wise*.

One of the commentaries describes that as:

Failing to employ one's capacity for understanding and thus arrive at insight.

When you begin to compare yourself with others, you come to wrong conclusions about yourself. And, that can be a fatal error. It's very important that we not do that.

So Paul says: [**verse 13**] *We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you.*

So he describes *the sphere* in which we are to operate, under the guidance of Jesus Christ and God the Father. And he says: "This is where we're supposed to work. We're not supposed to go out there and do the same things where the world is concerned. Oh, we give a witness, yes. That's a part of what our responsibility is. We give a witness to the world wherever God gives us that opportunity to do so. But our special care and teaching is within a much narrower sphere of those that God has called—working with right now." So he said: "We work there."

So, he's going to say: "These individuals who may be very impressive to the world—okay, that's fine. That isn't where we're concerned about carrying out the work that we've been given. We're not going to

boast outside of that area that God has given us responsibility for. There's no sense in doing that. But within the limits of what God has given us to do, okay, let's look at that. Let's examine what we've done there. And, by the way, that *sphere includes* all of you," Paul says, "all of you. There's nobody outside of that. We're dealing with God's people."

He goes on to say: **verse 14** *For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ;*

So Paul is basically saying: "Okay, there are those who are saying, 'Well, Paul is making all these pronouncements. Who is he? Why does he have the right to tell us here in Corinth how we should live? This little Jew from Cilicia [**Acts 21:39**], why does he tell us in Corinth—noble Corinth, prosperous Corinth—how we should live? We know how we should live. We don't need him coming and telling us.' "

And, Paul's response is: "Okay. God sent me to you to bring the gospel, and through that bringing of the gospel, to raise up a congregation. So, if God sent me there with the message, is it logical that He didn't give me any authority there? That He just said: 'Go, proclaim the message, and we'll let somebody else have authority'? Isn't it logical that when God sends someone there, that He gives them the ability, the authority to do what needs to be done?"

Now, he goes on to say—the metaphor here in the Greek is that of using a measuring rod as a standard. The accusers seem to be saying that Paul's trying to use his limited measuring rod as a Jew from Cilicia as a standard for them, when they are beyond that level. No, that's his point: "This actually extends all the way to you. It reaches you too." They're saying: "Oh, we've grown more than that. Paul is at a certain level, but we're beyond that." And Paul is saying: "No, actually, this is the measuring rod we should be using."

[27:15]

He goes on: **verse 15** *not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, —*

"Okay, we're not going to other places. We're not—" And Paul, again, will basically say that he's not going to *build on another man's foundation* [**Romans 15:20**]. We saw that in 1 Corinthians. "I don't do that. I go where God's given me the responsibility. And I don't take credit for what other people have done." We saw that, again, back at the beginning of 1 Corinthians, where Paul talks about the work of Peter [and] the work of Apollos. And he credits them with doing a very good job.

So, he says: [**2 Corinthians 10:15**] *(We don't go) beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere,*

What's he saying? Well, in a sense, it's like when we first come in contact with the truth of God. We probably tend to view others who are believers—and perhaps those in the ministry—as, you know: we appreciate them; we're grateful that they have brought the truth, but we may not necessarily recognize how much God has used them in various ways. And as time goes by—and we come to get to know them—our respect grows. And that is, in a sense, what Paul is saying. That: "Alright, I've been there. These individuals who are coming in—who are accusing me, who are undermining me—they've made their claims about greatness." He says: "Alright. What have they accomplished apart from the foundation that I was able to lay there? What have they accomplished on their own? What has God produced in the Church through them?"

That's a very important thing to consider, because down through the ages—and even in our own age today—there are those individuals who come along who claim that they're right, and the Church doesn't

yet understand what they have. That they're right, even if the Church disagrees with them. Well, okay, what does this produce? Has God blessed them because they're taking a different tack—they're going in a different direction? Has God blessed that? And I think you'll find that, no, as a matter of fact God really hasn't done that.

We've had people who get very excited about some kind of a different calendar to calculate Holy Days. Alright, has there ever been an individual or group that has left over a "calendar" thing and God has blessed them, and they have prospered, while God has turned His back on us? No, they never have. And it's not going to happen either. But, there are always those individuals that—it's sad—but there are individuals who just desperately want to be thought of as so knowledgeable, as knowing more than the rest of us know. Okay. I'm sorry that attitude is there.

But Paul has said: "Alright, those individuals are making their claims. They're making their *boast*. What has God done? Has He produced growth through them? Has He made people more Christian, more Christ-like? Okay, look at that. Look at the evidence." And Paul basically says: "I hope that as you consider the right standard, that you will recognize that, as a matter of fact, God has been working through us. And those who are making these wonderful claims? No. Not really."

[30:55]

Verse 16 to preach the gospel—

[Verse 15] ...*greatly enlarged by you in our sphere* (what is our sphere), **16** to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.

Paul is eager to move on. He wants to go on and preach the gospel in other areas. And that possibility should be exciting to the Corinthians. But, in a sense, he's also telling them: "I really don't feel comfortable going on to another area when you're still troubled. We need to have the stability and the peace here. And, for that matter, I need your support to be able to go on to another area. And if you don't think God's working with me with you, how could you support me going somewhere else and believe that God's backing what I'm doing?"

[Verse 17] *But* — (He goes on to say, and he quotes this passage:) **17** *But "he who glories, let him glory in the Lord."*

Proverbs 27 and **verse 2** says this: *Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*

It's a very wise proverb that tells us: if you have to praise yourself, then there's probably something wrong. There's probably something empty going on here, instead of what really God is backing. We shouldn't have to praise ourselves.

Now this is different than, let's say for example, a speaker who might say: "Well, here's what I've studied. Here are my credentials. Here's why I'm presenting this particular talk to you and why I hope you'll listen to what I have to say." That's very different than an individual coming along and praising himself for his accomplishments. Paul doesn't do that. He says: "If you want to judge, then judge on the right basis."

[2 Corinthians 10] verse 18 *For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.*

It is God's backing that matters. Anything else doesn't really produce the right result.

So we move from there to **chapter 11**, and again, the theme is continuing.

Paul says here in **verse 1** *Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.*

The term here is “a little foolishness.” He said: “Let me engage in a little foolishness here. And, I know that you’ll do that because you have been so far.” He doesn’t normally assert his credentials. He doesn’t do that most of the time. But his accusers in Corinth have made an issue of that. They’ve put themselves forward as superior to Paul. So he feels that, at least briefly, he has no choice but to show that, as a matter of fact, his credentials for teaching the truth are very solid as well. He goes on to say: “I don’t want to do this, but please bear with me, and I appreciate your patience in bearing with me.”

[33:43]

He says: [**verse 2**] *For I— (as he describes his own motives) I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Now, again, there’s a great deal of depth in what Paul is saying here. But he says: “I want you to know what my attitude toward you is. I’m *jealous for you with a godly jealousy.*”

Now, again, remember we talked about earlier [**2 Corinthians 7:10**], about a *godly sorrow* and a “worldly sorrow.” Well, there is a “worldly jealousy,” and there is a *godly jealousy*. A “worldly jealousy” is selfish. It focuses upon itself. It wants what it wants. *Jealousy* is probably a term that we think of in negative ways. But, Paul is telling us here that the *jealousy* which he has is—could also be translated as “zealousness toward God”—is not the sense of a selfishness that Paul has. Paul is not saying: “I look at the Corinthian congregation, and I think, ‘Those are **my** people.’” No, they’re Jesus Christ’s people. And he knows that.

And, so he describes the relationship that he wants the Church to have with Jesus Christ as “a betrothal.” We’ll talk about that in just a moment. But this concept of *jealousy* here—the word is *zēlō*, which is the root for our word “zealous.” And that, in essence, is what it means: to be deeply committed to something. But understand, even in the Old Testament, God says He is a *jealous God* [**Exodus 20:5**]. What does He mean? He’s not talking about selfish. But He’s saying *jealous* in the sense of “an expectation of an exclusive relationship.”

When we are married, for example, we are expecting of our mate, and of ourselves, an exclusive relationship between the two. When we marry, we exclude others from that very special relationship. That’s a decision that we make. If we are not ready to exclude others, then we really shouldn’t marry in the first place. But, *jealousy*, in that sense, is like a husband or a wife who expects an exclusive relationship with their mate. God expects an exclusive relationship with His people. So Paul is building upon that here as he says: “*I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.* But don’t misunderstand me,” he’s saying. “It’s not a matter that I think you belong to me. It’s a matter of you belong to Jesus Christ.”

And he uses this phrase here of, *I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* We recognize, ultimately, as the book of **Revelation [21:2, 9]** tells us, that the Church is *the bride* of Christ. And, Paul is, in a sense, using the same metaphor to talk about our relationship with Jesus Christ right now. And it’s really a very powerful relationship.

[36:51]

The custom of betrothal—as it was common in Judaism—came into the Greek and the Roman world as well, and it gained a certain popularity there. But it differs significantly from what we call “engagement.” We say a couple is “engaged.” We’ve had recently a couple of our students here at Foundation Institute who, as the year is moving forward, have been counseling and have become engaged. They’re looking

forward to a marriage.

But this “betrothal” is a different relationship. We really don’t have anything quite like it in our culture today. But it is really important to understand. Where engagements are concerned, yes, there is a commitment between the two members of the couple. But there’s no legal standing to it. There’s nothing that carries any legal weight to it. And, as a matter of fact, a survey a number of years ago showed that about 45 percent of all wedding engagements are broken before the wedding actually takes place. So, an engagement is important. We don’t minimize it. It’s a wonderful time. But, it doesn’t carry any legal weight with it. Betrothal, on the other hand, does.

So I want to read a section here—this comes from the *Jewish Encyclopedia*—to explain the Jewish perspective on betrothal. It says:

The term “betrothal” in Jewish law must not be understood in its modern sense; that is, the agreement of a man and a woman to marry, by which the parties are not, however, definitely bound, but which may be broken or dissolved without a formal divorce. Betrothal or engagement such as this is not known in the Bible...Several biblical passages refer to the negotiations requisite for the arranging of a marriage...

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* mentions **Genesis 24**, **The Song of Songs** in **chapter 8**, **Judges chapter 14 verses 2** through **7**. All of those show negotiation for a betrothal. It goes on to say:

(These negotiations and arranging for a marriage) which were conducted by members of the two families involved, or their deputies, and required usually the consent of the prospective bride; —

In other words, in most cases, it was not a matter that the father or some other person could come along and **force** his daughter to marry someone. That did happen, but in the normal custom that was not the way it took place.

—but when the agreement had been entered into, it was definite and binding upon both groom and bride, who were considered as man and wife in all legal and religious aspects, except that of actual cohabitation.

The root word ... must be taken (as) to contract an actual, though incomplete, marriage. In two of the passages in which it occurs, the betrothed woman is directly designated as a “wife” (**2 Samuel 3 verse 14**, (where it refers to here) “my wife, whom I have betrothed”, and **Deuteronomy 22:24**, where the betrothed is designated as “the wife of his neighbor.” In strict accordance with this sense, the rabbinical law declares that the betrothal is equivalent to an actual marriage and only to be dissolved by a formal divorce.

[40:30]

Now, again, that’s the Jewish custom. But that was the one that was extant in the first century. We have the biblical example of Joseph and Mary, who were *betrothed*, but were not living together. And again, when you think of that account, when it became obvious that Mary was pregnant, Joseph, not understanding yet—though he did, very quickly—but not understanding, thought about how he could *put her away* [**Matthew 1:19**], how he could divorce her in a way that didn’t put her in a worse situation than she was already in.

So they were betrothed. It appears that there was actually a betrothal ceremony where the couple pledged, and it was simply a matter of time, as they got ready for the marriage, before the full marriage took place. But it was much more than an engagement. It was seen that way by everyone.

Now again, think of what that means for us. Paul says: “*I have (past tense) betrothed you to Jesus Christ as a chaste virgin.*” It tells us: we’re not simply “engaged” to marry Jesus Christ; the legal commitment was made. Both parties—we and Jesus Christ—willingly entered into this relationship of “betrothal.” We’re not yet fully married in the sense that when Jesus Christ returns, we become the bride of Christ fully. But we are in a legal arrangement. We have both made a legal, binding commitment. It’s not something that can be broken. There must be a formal divorce if we leave that relationship.

So we’re in a binding relationship with Jesus Christ, which includes both privileges and responsibilities. It is a relationship that will be superseded by marriage when Jesus Christ returns. But right now, we’re *betrothed*. And he says he wants us to be presented, ultimately at that marriage, as clean and pure—a *chaste virgin*, it says here. We’re going to see that it’s not a reference to physicality, to human sexuality. It’s a reference to being spiritually pure, to spiritually not being compromised in some way.

So he says in **verse 3**—we’ve all read this many times, but it’s very important: *But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* (Paul is talking here to the brethren.)

One of the commentaries says:

The danger was not moral corruption, but intellectual deception leading to spiritual apostasy.

This was the danger. It really should be sobering to us to realize that the apostle Paul wrote these words to Church people, to converted Christians. This is not written to the world. The world is already deceived. That’s not really even an issue here. Paul is concerned that converted Church people can still be deceived by the power of Satan. That’s chilling! That should, for all of us, make us especially vigilant to recognize we have a very crafty enemy.

[43:54]

I think when we stop to consider it—and I don’t know that I really find it necessarily all that helpful to sit around and consider all of Satan’s ways of getting to us. But one of the things that I think we note—historically and even where the modern history of the Church is concerned—is that many times the events that led to some of the most horrible breakdowns were things that took place in the background, far in the past. That our enemy is a very shrewd enemy, and he begins to act long before you and I may begin to recognize it. Therefore, it’s very important that we not begin to allow a little bit of compromise in our spiritual lives. It can’t be there.

It says he’s very crafty. And it talks about how, again, that *your minds may be corrupted*. Corruption means “decay.” It’s something that takes place over a period of time. It’s not: one day, one way, and the next day, a different way. It’s a corruption. It’s a decay. It’s a **rot** that begins to set in. It takes place over a period of time. It’s gradual.

Now he refers to here, *the simplicity that is in Christ*. What does he mean by that? It’s not really as we would use the word *simplicity*. Now, again, I’m not implying that the way of Christianity is a complex and difficult way. But the word that is used here has more the sense of “single-hearted loyalty.” That our dedication to Jesus Christ is wholehearted. It’s genuine. There’s no ulterior motive to it. It’s that kind of a pure motivation, a singleness of purpose, that we have in our lives. We are devoted to being the sons and daughters of God, to being the bride of Jesus Christ, to being the *chaste virgin* ready for that marriage when Jesus Christ returns. That’s our **singular** purpose in life.

When a woman, a young woman, was betrothed, she spent the next year—or however long it was—in

the betrothal period, preparing for the marriage. She didn't spend her time doing all kinds of other things. Nor did the groom. He likewise spent his time in preparing a home, preparing his business, preparing so that he was ready to enter into that full marriage relationship. **That** should be what we derive from this. We as Christians are betrothed to Jesus Christ. So, the **central focus** of our lives must be preparing for that eternal relationship that goes on beyond.

[46:40]

So, Paul says: "I'm very concerned about you. I'm concerned because I know the enemy is amazingly crafty." Now, God doesn't abandon us. He doesn't blind us to what's going on. But we have a responsibility to be vigilant.

He goes on to say [**verse 4**]—he puts it this way, which, again, remember we're talking to Church people. We're not talking to the world as a whole.

4 *For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!*

Now Paul is very concerned. He said: "I'm concerned that you're going to be willing to compromise with these things. That if someone comes along and brings these very dangerous teachings, you may put up with it. You may kind of be willing to listen, to consider."

Now, it's interesting—we'll see this when we go through the book of **Galatians**, which we hope to do in a future FI Online—but, we'll notice that there are a couple different words here.

First of all, he talks about "the one" who *preaches another Jesus*. The Greek word there is *allon*, which means "an additional one." Okay. In other words, "the one"—the preaching that goes on here—is: they preach a "Jesus" who is different from "the one"—additional one—to kind of what you've been hearing. It denies Jesus Christ's identity as being unique to Him: "Oh, we can all be like this." And it fails to honor Jesus Christ properly. [Note: Jesus Christ is "the true One"; the "additional one" is a false, heretical, deceptive "Jesus."]

But, it also goes on to talk about *a different spirit*. And the word that's used there is not *allon*, "an additional" spirit; it's *heteron*, which means "a different type" of spirit. Now, again, there are people who've been swept up in this. There are people who are attracted to this kind of thing.

When we learned the truth, we received *one Spirit*, the Spirit of God, and that Spirit doesn't do strange things to us. We will—we did, as we went through **1 Corinthians**, we talked about **chapter 12**, that dealt with some of the special *gifts* that God's Spirit makes available to His people. We talked about, in **chapter 14**, the gift of *tongues*, and what was important. And if you remember, as we went through that, Paul makes the point that being able to speak with God's inspiration is much more important than having a miraculous gift of *tongues*.

[49:29]

So, Paul makes the emphasis of what's important. But, for some people: "Oh, to be able to do some special thing that others can't do." It's a different spirit. We need to recognize a different spirit. It isn't the Spirit of God. Oh, it may be a pleasurable spirit. It may be wonderful. Many of those people who are involved in Pentecostalism have received a different spirit, and they like that spirit. They think it's fun. They appreciate it. It's not God's Spirit. We need to be careful!

And he talks about a *different gospel*. A message that's not the same. Oh, if someone came along to you, as a Church member, and told you: "Oh, the gospel you believe is completely wrong. Actually, what God promises is either you go to heaven or hell," I don't think most of you would believe that. I certainly wouldn't accept it. So, this *different gospel* affecting Church people—because Paul is concerned it will—must be more subtle than that. It must appeal and sound like the gospel, but there are things about it that are different. Things about it that are not the same as what you've heard. Paul says: "I'm afraid you would listen to those things."

Now he goes on to say: **verse 5** *For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.*

Now, *eminent apostles* is not a title the 12 original apostles took to themselves. It may be that Paul is using a title that some others have given to them and not the one that they themselves would use. His point here is that—Paul is saying: "I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ, just as they are. And my apostleship is no less than theirs."

Now, again, it wasn't the 12 who were attacking Paul. They didn't have a problem with him being an apostle. **Galatians [2:9]** tells us that Peter and James extended *the right hand of fellowship* to Paul and fully acknowledged his apostleship. They weren't in competition. But evidently there are those who are coming along and saying: "Well, we come from Judea where the apostles are, and this Paul is not the same as they are." Paul's saying: "No, *I'm not inferior to them.*"

Even though (verse 6) I am untrained in speech (I don't claim to be a great, eloquent speaker.), yet I am not (untrained) in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.

He's saying: "Okay, I may not be the most effective speaker. And those who are with you, they may be really effective speakers." I don't know if you've listened to some of those who proclaim a false gospel, but some of them are very effective speakers. Those who heard Billy Graham would certainly say he was very effective. He brought thousands of people to an emotional state. Paul is saying: "That's not my strength. No, I'm not a great speaker. But, I'm not inferior in knowledge. I know the truth."

[52:40]

And, again, he makes this statement: *But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.*

So, he says: "I have adequate knowledge. I'm able to give you the truth of God. I'm not deficient in knowledge, even if I'm not good at expressing it. But beyond that, I've been there among you. I've lived among you. I've worked with you. I've been in your homes. We've had socials. We've had meals together. We've shared Passovers together. We have been together. You know what kind of a person I am. Doesn't that mean something? These individuals who come along with their eloquence and their great, impressive presentations—okay. Have I somehow held back the truth from you? What kind of a person was I?"

I think that's an important point to remember. The truth is important. And we must never compromise with it or shirk in any way our duty of teaching it. But ultimately, character has to be a part of our teaching too. If we're going to live as the servants of God, character matters. What we do matters. It isn't just what people say. Sometimes people make a big issue: "Well, this isn't really a doctrinal issue." Okay. What matters is teaching truth, as well as how we live that truth. We must live it, or it's just words; it's just so many sounds.

He goes on to say: **verse 7** *Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?*

I like the *International Standard Version* translation of this. It says: *Did I commit a sin when I humbled myself by proclaiming to you the gospel of God free of charge, so that you could be exalted?*

Paul is saying: “I didn’t want to put any stumbling block in front of anybody. If I came there and I took your money, there would be individuals who questioned whether I was really genuine. So I was there, and I didn’t take a thing from you. I didn’t take a penny. I came there. I gave you the truth of God. I demonstrated it in my life. Did I somehow do something sinful? Did I do something against you?”

Now there may be some indication that these individuals who are criticizing Paul may themselves have been taking the tithes and offerings and expecting people to support them, where Paul didn’t do that.

[55:20]

He says in **verse 8**: *I robbed other churches, —*

It doesn’t literally mean *robbed*, in one sense. But, Paul’s using a graphic word: “I took from them.”

—taking wages from them (in order) to minister to you.

So Paul’s saying: “Okay, did I do something terrible to you? I actually took the funds from other people who are faithful Church members. And I used the funds that they gave to serve you. Is there something wrong with that?”

Now the people who gave didn’t resent that. They were quite helpful. They were quite supportive. They were glad that they were able to support Paul. The Philippians—we know, at least twice—sent contributions to Paul while he was in Corinth. As we said, it appears that Paul’s policy was that he did not receive tithes and offerings from the people he was serving at that time. I don’t know that we can prove that in any way. It just seems to be a policy that he followed.

We also know that Paul spent three years in Ephesus. Is it logical that he didn’t receive any support from the Ephesian brethren for three years? Probably not. He probably did receive some in those cases. But, at least his general policy seems to have been: “I don’t want to take a chance on this.”

So he says: **verse 9** (he says) *[And] when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia (That’s where Philippi is.) supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. (I’m not now going to be a burden to any of you.)*

[Verse 10] *As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia.*

We often think of boasting as a form of arrogance and pride. And that’s probably what the word means in English. The term that Paul uses has more the sense of “somebody who speaks with confidence and assurance because they’re confident about what they’re saying.” That’s really the sense of what Paul is saying.

And he says: **[verse 11]** (But) *Why? (Why did I do this?) Because I don’t love you? (Well,) God knows.*

Sometimes when we’re accused of different things, we can’t prove what our motives were. We say: “Look at me. Look at my example. Judge by what I did.” But ultimately, God’s the Judge, and He knows.

And he goes on to say: **verse 12** *But what I do, I will also continue to do (I’m going to keep doing it this way.), that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.*

Summarizing it, Paul basically says: "I am not going to conduct myself in a way that gives **any** opportunity for someone to be critical or for someone to imply that my motives are not pure. I'm going to continue to live just as I have."

Now this leads us to a very important section. But, again, we're out of time for this class, so we hope that you will join us again for class number 13 as we continue in **2 Corinthians 11 verse 13**.

And remember, you do have one hour after the end of the classes to be able to send in any questions you might have.

Thanks for joining us again. We look forward to seeing you next time.

[58:45]