



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 11: 7-15

“Paul and the Apostles of Satan.”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and reading verse 7 through verse 15 for our Scripture reading.

For those of you who are here for the first time, this has been a rather lengthy exposition of 2 Corinthians. I think this is about the forty-first study in the epistle that we have taken. And we have considered the three primary themes of the epistle, that is, the first part of the epistle in which the apostle has defended his ministry and expatiated on what it is to engage in Christian ministry, the most significant section in all of the New Testament on Christian ministry by far. And then in chapters 8 and 9, he discoursed with the Corinthians on the subject of Christian stewardship or finances or grace giving as we called it.

And then in chapter 10 through the remainder of the book, in one form or another, the apostle is defending his authority as an apostle. It's evident that there were individuals who had come into Corinth after the apostle preached the gospel there who did not support the apostle in his ministry, did not believe that he had authority as the original apostles, and evidently were individuals who had some connection with Jerusalem, but nevertheless not a connection with the apostles of our Lord, who while in Jerusalem for the most part, were believers in the doctrine of salvation by grace. These

individuals had other views. It’s not absolutely certain what they really did believe but they were mercenary minded.

To some extent, the apostle felt they were individuals who insisted that the believers were under the law that evidently lies in the background of Paul’s earlier chapter on the Law of Moses as over against Christian ministry in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. They were intruders. They had come in the territory of the apostle, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, and had sought to undermine his ministry. It would be nice if we had a definition of them, but we don’t have a definition in this epistle. The Corinthians knew who they were and Paul knew who they were and that satisfied him.

But now in chapter 11, he will speak on the nature of their ministry and the nature of their persons, calling them Apostles of Satan. Well let’s begin reading with verse 7. Paul will talk first about the fact that he gave the gospel and he gave it free of charge, and then he will describe the men who are opposing him in the last few verses of our section. Verse 7 of 2 Corinthians chapter 11,

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

Now obviously, this is ironic. The apostle didn’t rob any churches. He uses a military metaphor that means to pillage. And so when he describes his reception of gifts from the Macedonians, we know the Philippians sent to him more than once, Paul in his letter to Philippi makes reference to that. They were Macedonians. And then there were other churches in Macedonia as well, such as Thessalonica, and the apostle received gifts from them. But in the irony of this passage, he speaks about pillaging other churches, taking wages. This, too, is military metaphor because this is the term that was used for a Roman soldier’s wages. So he describes the gifts that were given to him voluntarily as

being wages from them to serve you, you Corinthians. “And when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone.”

No prayer letters were sent out by Paul; saying that he was in need and his bank balance was very low and he wanted to finish the year in the black and not in the red. But even though that possibility was facing him, he says, “I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept to myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.” In other words, please don’t think that I am mentioning these things so that in the future you will give me money. No, I intend to preach the gospel free of charge.

“As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of man will not be stopped in the region of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do. But what I am doing I will continue to do, 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.”

Now that’s a very difficult clause. It may mean that the apostle refers to their boasting about being apostles and further to their right for support from the Corinthians. And if he were to yield to that, then there would be equality between them that is the apostle would be receiving money, asking for money, demanding money, and they would be demanding money and therefore they would be on an equality. And Paul says I will not permit that to happen. He’s going to continue to do what he has been doing.

“For such men (he writes in verse 13) are false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as Apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their deeds.”

May God bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the faithfulness of the Apostle Paul, for the dedication of this man of God to the principles that glorify our God in heaven. We are grateful for him and for others, such as the prophets, who kept the glory of God before their faces and carried on their ministry not for personal gain but for the glory of God. We admire them Lord and we thank Thee for them and we praise Thee for we know that their faith and constancy and their desire to please Thee sacrificially has come first of all from Thee.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for the teaching of the word of God and for the teaching that has come to us through them that we are sinners, that we do offend a holy and righteous God. That we therefore under divine condemnation naturally born into that state and need deliverance and that through the Lord Jesus Christ and the sacrifice of the son of God, very God of very God, we may have eternal life and deliverance from the bondage to our sin.

We thank thee and praise thee for the freedom that has come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ and we acknowledge Lord that the glory is totally Thine. We thank Thee for the privilege of the preaching of the gospel in our day and we ask that it may be fruitful and profitable. Not simply in Believers Chapel but in any place where Christ has lifted up. O God through the Holy Spirit; accomplish Thy purposes in the gathering into the true church believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee for this country of which we are a part. We pray Thy blessing upon it. We pray Lord for Thy blessing upon all of the activities of those who form part of the faithful community. Bless them in their daily lives and their ministry and their testimony.

We pray especially for those who need physical help. Lord minister to them. For some who are in the hospital, we pray for them and for others who have requested our

prayers, we pray for them. We pray Lord that Thou wilt supply their needs and give them healing, give wisdom and guidance to those who minister to them. We thank Thee for Believers Chapel and its ministry and for its tape ministry and we thank Thee for the outreach of it. And for this man in Poland who has spoken of his desire for publications from the chapel and others, Lord we remember them. We pray that the ministry may be fruitful in their lives and that they may be by Thy grace built up in the gospel of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. For those in Romania and others to whom Dan ministered we pray for them as well.

And we pray for our elders and for our deacons and for the members and friends and the visitors who are here today. Lord we are grateful and thankful for all of the blessings of life. May, as we meet together and sing together and listen to the word, we be strengthened for this week.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today, as we continue the exposition of 2 Corinthians, is “Paul and the Apostles of Satan.” The apostle in this section certainly makes quite plain his method and attitude toward money and support in the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. It’s not surprising that Paul writes what he writes here because in the first epistle when he wrote the Corinthians in the ninth chapter of that epistle, he makes very plain that those who preach the gospel have a right to expect support from those who hear and profit from the ministry of the gospel. In other words, the apostle supported the idea and the principle that those who labor in the things of the Lord, in what he might call carnal things, deserves the support of others who have physical substances, that they might help those who are preaching the word. So he makes that very plain that in the ministry of the word it’s perfectly proper for those who receive blessing to contribute to the help of those who devote themselves to it.

But in Paul’s case, he felt that his situation was rather unusual. For example, in connection with the other apostles, they had voluntarily followed the Lord when the Lord appealed to them and called them to ministry as apostles. They left what they were doing and they followed him. But in Paul’s case, on the Damascus Road, he was, in a sense, he was so met by the Lord there that by compulsion he was brought to the preaching of the gospel. In the 1 Corinthians chapter 9, he makes very plain that since he desired a reward, he wouldn’t have any reward for being an apostle involuntarily and so he determined that he would gain his reward by doing the work that he had to do but doing it free of charge. And so he devoted himself to the preaching of the word of God free of charge.

He writes to the Thessalonians, he reminds them that he ministered the gospel to them free of charge. In Ephesus, he reminded the Ephesian elders these hands, as no doubt he pointed to them; these hands have ministered to me the necessities of life so he did not accept from the Ephesians financial reward. When he was ministering among them he wanted the gospel to be free of charge and in Corinth he says that he ministered the gospel free of charge. So we have no doubt about the apostle’s methodology. He sought to forestall any charges of greed, any charges of mercenary motives in the preaching of the word of God.

Therefore, in Paul’s day, there was no need for any councils on fiscal propriety among evangelicals to be raised up because the apostle so conducted himself that those who were acquainted with what was going on in the evangelical churches of that time knew there was no possibility of any impropriety, at least at that stage and certainly in the life of the apostle.

Now, that’s very plain and we will talk about that in a moment just a little more. But the other thing that the apostle speaks about in this section is perhaps a bit more significant. And that is his attitude toward those who are pervertors of the gospel. And it reaches its climax here. He said something about them already in this epistle back in

chapter 2, verse 17 he says, “We are not like the many peddling the word of God.” That’s a rather interesting statement because he uses the word “many.” “We are not like many peddling the word of God,” making merchandise of the word of God. In other words, organizing seminars and charging for the ministry of the word of God; peddling the word of God. So he says, “We are not like many who peddle the word of God, but as from sincerity as from God we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”

Then in chapter 4 in verses 1 and 2 he says this, “Therefore since we have this ministry as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” No cutting of corners, no trimming of sails, preaching the word of God as it was understood by him from the Scriptures and from the revelation that from time to time he, as the apostle, received from the Lord. So here is his climax.

Now turning to those who are doing just what he sought not to do, the apostle will speak of them as false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. Paul realized that this was a present peril in his day. You remember when he spoke to the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20, verse 29 through verse 31 of that remarkable address to them at Miletus. He says, “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”

Now that was to the elders of the church at Ephesus. Later on from Rome in the Epistle to the Ephesians he writes to the Ephesians and he praises them. He says in the first chapter in the 15th and 16th verses, “For this reason I too having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks to you while making mention of you in my prayers.” So in Paul’s day he

praises the church at Ephesus for their faith and for their love, but at the same time he has warned the elders that men shall come in like wolves not sparing the flock and even from among themselves, from among these Paul praises in the epistle to the Ephesians, men will arise and will be false teachers of the truth.

Now, we know that the progress of false teaching doesn’t always make its progress in a very fast or quick way or sudden way. For example, the Lord Jesus has a word to the church at Ephesus in the second chapter of the Book of Revelation in the letter to Ephesus; which he addressed through John he says, “You have left your first love.” So Paul has warned them. He has praised them for the truth that they have and the love that they show the saints, but he has warned them of what is going to happen and the Lord Jesus pronounces the final judgment of the New Testament upon the church at Ephesus by saying, “you have left your first love.” So thirty or forty years after the apostle, the church at Ephesus is cooling off in its love for the Lord.

When you visit Ephesus today, of course, it’s one of the remarkable ruins of what we know today as the land of Turkey, part of Asia Minor. And you can walk the streets of Ephesus and see the remnants of a remarkable city. It must have been a remarkable city in the apostle’s day; today just ruins. There is really nothing there. There is no church at Ephesus, as the apostle knew it. It’s gone. In other words, the things that are in the word of God as warnings to us often do come to pass.

Now, I remember when I was a young believer, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to have a statement that he made which I have repeated through the years. I have tried not to be a rhetorical kleptomaniac and have taken the glory from him for making this statement through the years, a la Senator Biden [laughter]. He used to love to say, “If you are looking for Satan, be sure and look in the pulpit.” Well I think the apostle would have agreed with that. He would say -- after all he did say, “From among your own selves, men shall arise not sparing the flock.” So we do look in the pulpit. It’s proper to look in the pulpit. We are not being apostolic if we don’t look in the pulpit.

Now, here are men in Paul’s days who actually can come into the city of Corinth where the apostle is the apostle of the Gentiles, has been used as the instrumentality for the creation of a body of believers through the work of the Holy Spirit, and men have come in among them saying that they are apostles of Jesus Christ. They pose as something which they are not and in doing so they deceive those who, through gullibility or inexperience are more ready to give credence to plausible imposters than to remember the sound teaching and the warnings of the man who was God’s instrumentality in bringing them into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It’s not surprising. This is something that happens among us continuously. Men come, make preposterous claims for themselves and in order to gain an enthusiastic and undiscerning following and if you were able to give a history of Evangelical Christianity you could find countless illustrations of this very fact in the twentieth century. It’s remarkable. But nevertheless it is true. It’s true to our particular situation and it’s true of us because of the nature of the beings that we are.

We are living in days in which that peril is something that fazes evangelicalism. We are beset with many perils. But if you are knowledgeable and if you read the things that are happening in evangelicalism you will recognize that one of the significant things that we face today is what might be called accommodation. That is the tendency to accommodate ourselves, evangelicals, to the secular culture of the day, to the principles regarding sex that are predominate in our society, the political theories that are predominate in our society, the economic theories that are prominent in our society, the tendency to accommodate ourselves is there, so much so that thinking evangelicals today are using that very term as warnings directed to evangelicals in our specific time. In other words; to be transformed by the life about us.

George Marsden, who is a very intelligent evangelical Professor of Church History and Religious History at Duke University, commented in a recent article, in fact, in the September issue of the *Reform Journal*, “20th Century intellectual life has the peculiar bias

that the newer an idea is the better it is.” Well, if any one thing has killed that as being a valid observation it has been the fact of the sexual revolution and the consequent terror of the rise of AIDS; for that has thoroughly demonstrated the fact that new ideas concerning sex have certainly brought their destruction and ruin foretold in the word of God, departure from the truth of God, and we are now suffering from our apostasy from moral truth that is found in God’s word.

Accommodation, it’s so easy for us in our society to be influenced by the things that we read, by the media, by our newspapers, and even by our Christian friends who have imbibed the things that the --what we would say in the most sympathetic sense -- the things that our depraved culture propagates as valid observations concerning human life. We see this particularly in the church itself in such simple things as, I don’t think they are simple but they are simple in the light of some other things, as the desire for inclusive language in the retranslating of the word of God. Inclusive language is a term that refers to the desire to avoid the terms Father, Son, and Spirit, for the Trinity and to substitute terms such as “Creator” for Father, “Redeemer” for Son, “Sanctifier” for Holy Spirit, avoiding so we are encouraged to believe the sexism and patriarchalism of the word of God for a more feminist oriented type of reading of the word of God.

I was very much impressed by Professor Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary who would naturally fall into that category by his religious associations but finally reaching the place where he could not do that, said that he could not, as a scholar, as a Christian, engage in that which would be a falsification of the word of God as an historical revelation. But we have this inclusivism present with us and the church is constantly under attack to modify its positions.

Now it wouldn’t be so bad if that was all that was involved, but ultimately what it has turned out to be is an attack on such doctrines, attack on the doctrines of the Trinity. I want to say something about that a little later on. In other words, what originally began as simply a disagreement with the so-called patriarchalism of the word of God. The

doctrine of submission of wife to husband and submission of us to elders of the churches and things like this has now turned out to be an attack on the basic doctrines of the word of God itself. But let’s go on, and we’ll get to that in a moment.

First of all, the apostle sets forth his purpose in ministering without cost in verses 7 through 11. And he opens it up with a bit of irony. You can sense the irony when he says “Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself, that you might be exalted because I preach the gospel of God to you without charge.” He evidently had rankled his adversaries, who were calling themselves apostles, by engaging in the method of preaching the word of God without charge because in those days it was customary, for among the Greeks, for credited rhetoricians or philosophers to regard themselves as professionals and therefore to give their information for charge and each of them charged.

If a speaker refused remuneration, did not demand it, he would at once cause his listeners to suspect him of being a spurious kind of rhetorician, for example. And Antiphon speaking to Socrates, by the way, who Socrates himself used to make no charge for his teaching said that if he considered his conversation to be worth anything he should demand for it no less remuneration than it was worth. And accordingly the one could say Socrates was just, because he deceived nobody through covetousness. He was not wise because he didn’t charge for the things that he taught. So in that kind of society you can see how an individual taking advantage of it and coming in as a Christian professor and philosopher dealing with the things of the word of God might demand from those who were being taught financial remuneration.

So Paul says, “Have I committed a sin in humbling myself, that you might be exalted?” What he means by exalted is maybe a little difficult but perhaps it means that he refused the right of support, that the focus might be on the message and not on any money and further that by the message they might be cause to be exalted, to use the Biblical expression, to be brought through identification with the Lord and his death, burial, and resurrection to be seated at the right hand of the throne of God in Christ. In other words,

the message of the gospel is a message by which we are exalted to this remarkable spiritual position through the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross. So Paul asks, is it a sin that I have come and preached without charge that you might be blessed by the message.

Now, he says in verse 8 and 9 that the Corinthians have been freed from burdens by the way in which he has come. I robbed other churches taking wages from them to serve you. I accepted gifts from Macedonia but not from you for the simple reason that while I was here no charge could every be made -- he’s preaching for money -- 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 I will continue to do so. So the apostle says he is going to continue to do exactly what he has been doing. And he asks them for the adversaries might have suggested that he’s unconcerned about you carrying on a ministry like this indicates that he really doesn’t love you. So he asks, “As the truth in 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 that I do.”

So the apostle then simply says he will not ask for money in order that there would be no question about the message that he is giving. The message that he is giving is not a message that he’s giving for financial reasons to benefit himself, to build himself up, to better his financial statement but it’s that they might be exalted by being brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and saved.

It’s remarkable, I think, and a tribute to what God did in this remarkable man. And the interesting thing is that the apostle has to defend himself. Isn’t that interesting? Here is a man who has devoted his whole time in ministry to the preaching of the gospel. He came to Corinth when there was no church there. Preached and labored, laboring with his own hands to support himself, by God’s grace built up a body of believers there who came to understand something about the forgiveness of sins, came to be a body that

could be called the church at Corinth. And the apostle is a hard working, unappreciated apostle, is a person that they soon forget about in order to receive false apostles who come in and ask for money and preach a gospel that is different from the apostles. What a revelation that is of human nature.

Years ago Dr. Criswell, at the First Baptist Church, told the story of a missionary who came home from Africa after laboring there for many years and he happened to come home on the same boat that brought President Teddy Roosevelt from Africa on one of his hunting safaris. He said when the boat came to dock there was a vast crowd out to see the president; the media, the government, and all of the men that you might expect, and all of the people who were anxious to be there just to see the president.

Well they saw the president and the missionary who had labored in Africa for many years had absolutely no one to meet him at the dock. He secured a modest room in a very modest hotel and that night, he indulged in a little bit of bitterness. He said, “It isn’t fair (to his wife) Mr. Roosevelt comes home from a hunting trip and the whole country is out to meet him. We get home after years of service and nobody is there to greet us.” Well he had a good wife and she had the right answer. She said, “Honey we aren’t home yet.” [Johnson laughs] Which of course is true, our home is not here and all of these inequities that exist in this life will one day be equities.

Now, Paul says that he intends to continue what he is doing in the twelfth verse he says, “But what I am doing I will continue to do 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.” They are boasting about being apostles of Christ. They are boasting about having an insight into spiritual things and they are demanding money for it. But here I am as an apostle, and I am giving you the truth that comes from God and there is an inequity, an inequality because they are asking for money and I am not asking for money and evidently they were rankled by it.

And so what they wanted was for Paul to follow their methodology and by following their methodology then there would be equality among them. And Paul says, “No, these fellows are boasting about things that they shouldn’t be boasting about.” As you will see in a moment, it’s even more serious than that. “But I am not going to yield to what they would like for me to do and that is to ask for money because in that case all of these other things that we have been talking about would not be true.” And so he insists that he’s going to continue to follow what he has been doing. He will preach the gospel and make it free of charge. I cannot help but admire this man. Here is a man who really preaches the gospel for the sake of the gospel and for the glory of God and obedience to the commission that was given to him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, he justifies his attitude toward his adversaries and says some things that some people have called unfortunate. Some Christian ministers have called unfortunate. He says in the thirteenth verse, “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” Paul, wait a minute, you are judging, aren’t you? Can you not hear people saying Paul has an unloving attitude? Why he is calling individuals false apostles. They knew who he was talking about. He didn’t have to name them. These men are false apostles. They are deceitful workers. They disguise themselves as Apostles of Christ. In fact, the Lord Jesus says the same thing in the letter to the Ephesians in Revelation chapter 2, he talks about those who call themselves apostles and are not in the letter to Ephesus. So notice how Paul describes these adversaries. He calls them first of all, false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as the apostles of Christ. And this of course applies to all false apostate claims.

In one of the recent issues of a very popular evangelical journal in the October issue there is an interesting article about a Montana town. “Montana town tense as new cult moves in, Guru Ma and her followers are putting down roots in Montana and the locals are getting nervous.” Listen to the opening paragraph or so. “The Royal Teton

Ranch just north of Yellowstone National Park is now headquarters for Church Universal and Triumphant. That’s CUT. This New Age group is led by Elizabeth Clare Prophet.” Prophet is her last name. I don’t know whether she assumed that or not. Self-proclaimed Pope, “Vicar of Christ,” do you think the pope is jealous? [Laughter] Vicar of Christ, ordained by my Lord and of the Holy Spirit. She’s called Guru Ma. That’s ma like in mother, ma, Guru Ma. And listen, she has an estimated ten thousand to twenty-five thousand followers who believe she’s God’s messenger on earth.

The mystical doctrine of the sect, popularly known by its acronym CUT, is a mixture of eastern and western theologies including elements of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Transcendentalism. Prophet claims that “ascended masters give me dictations about the lost teachings of Jesus” referring to teachings of Christ from his age of twelve to twenty-nine. These “ascended masters” include Jesus Christ, Buddha, Confucius, and Joseph husband of Mary the mother of Jesus. Joseph in another life was also a Frenchman by the name of St. Germaine and the patron of America the place of the reincarnation of the twelve tribes of Israel according to CUT’s teaching. The structures, incidentally, belong to the followers, once belonged to the followers of the Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rashneesh, but now they belong to this group. And up to twenty-five thousand people are believing this.

We are not surprised. People don’t understand anything about the word of God in our day. A person can come and pronounce that he is this or that and gather a following and make some money out of it. It’s the easiest way to make big bucks today that is probably known. There is an interesting, in this particular journal, there is an interesting little note from Canada. “Catholics Affirm Luther’s Faith.” Canadian Lutherans and Catholics have reached an agreement on the meaning of justification by faith. It was Luther’s emphasis on faith as opposed to works that led to the division of Catholics and Protestants. Discussion of related doctrines are still needed according to Bishop Robert Jacobson of the Lutheran Church in Canada.

It’s very interesting to me that people would actually believe that this is really a kind of rapprochement between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics. Look, it’s true; they are agreeing that justification by faith is taught in the New Testament. But to say that justification by faith is taught in the New Testament is a far cry from agreement, because in the Roman Church the benefits of justification by faith are ours only through submission to the sacramental system. So that the waters of baptism remove original sin, daily sin is removed by the sacrifice at the Mass, forgivable sins by the oil of extreme unction, and other sins by the fires of purgatory.

Now, is that agreement? There is no such thing as agreement unless the sacramental system goes as the reformists plainly pointed out. But individuals read this and really believe it and think we are really at one. You see our basic problem, my Christian friend, is our ignorance of the word of God. Our ignorance of the word of God, our ignorance of Christian theology, our ignorance of the history of theology, it’s no wonder that we are subject to all of the things that we find in our society today. They’re called deceitful workers.

Now I think that is very apropos too. In the Christian church today and in the evangelical church we have outwardly pious individuals who are inwardly demonic. They are serving themselves. They are not serving the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s not as Paul says that we are your servants for Jesus’ sake as we proclaim the gospel. It’s not that at all. In this same, well this was from *Christianity Today*, but the same month, there’s a little note about something that appeared in the paper and finally got in *Christianity Today*, but I am going to repeat it because I am not sure that I mentioned it in the morning services. This particular little article says a church court in New Hampshire suspended United Methodist minister Rosemary Denman after determining that she violated a rule that bans practicing homosexuals from the clergy. Denman was suspended from pastoral duties until next June when clergy in the church’s New Hampshire annual conference will vote on her ministerial status. The sentence was the most lenient

possible. Denman could have been defrocked and even expelled from the United Methodist Church but she was not.

Now here’s the interesting thing. She has decided she’s not going to fight it. So she’s decided that she is going to transfer her ministerial credentials to another denomination.

Now to what denomination do you think that she, as a Methodist, who has at least ostensibly made affirmation of the Christian faith, to what denomination do you think that she will transfer her credentials? Well some of you would probably guess. She’s going to transfer her credentials or try to, to the Unitarian Universalist Association; which accepts homosexual clergy.

Now the interesting thing about this is, of course, this indicates that she never believed in the doctrine of the Trinity in the first place. She never believed the Christian doctrine. In other words, she’s exactly what Paul is talking about, a deceitful worker.

Now, our churches are filled with deceitful workers not so obvious as this. But there are many who don’t believe in the doctrine of the Trinity who are in trinitarian churches. There are many who do not accept the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ who are in churches that in their doctrinal creed affirm the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who do not believe in the atonement by what Christ did on Calvary’s Cross, who, nevertheless, not only accept in some of our mainline denominations but have some of the largest churches even though the doctrinal creed that which they swore to uphold is one that teaches atonement only through Christ. What may we say of them? What would Paul say of them? I have no doubt in my mind that he would say they are deceitful workers. They are disguising themselves as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that’s what we face today. One of the things that we face today is the challenge of feminism and its structure.

Now, I do not have time to talk about this but I’d like to do it some time because I think we need some clarification. There are some who are feminists who are Christians.

There are some who are feminists who are not Christians at all. And we need to make some distinctions in our thinking but we don’t have time to do that. But there are many who are under the banner of feminism and within the Christian church who are seeking to destroy the doctrines of the Trinity and other doctrines as well.

The apostle goes on to speak about the unsurprising activity in verses 14 and 15, “It’s no wonder for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” He alludes perhaps to their emphasis on works by saying that they are deceitful workers and then in a minute they disguise themselves as servants of righteousness whose end shall be according to their deeds. Well their counterfeit activity and their master is set forth in verse 14, evil comes in the guise of virtue, teachers of air come as purveyors of truth, propagandas of an anti-gospel or agents ultimately of Christ’s adversary Satan. Just as in the Garden of Eden when he came to Eve and said, “Eve if you eat of the fruit of that tree you will not surely die.” And the counterfeit activity of the individuals is set forth in the final verse.

I’d like to close with just a couple of quotations. R. V. G. Tasker, who was professor of New Testament at London University, made this comment. He said, “It’s a mark of the shallowness of much of the religious thinking in the modern world that Mingus writing in 1912 should feel it necessary to describe verses 13 through 15 as one of the hastiest utterances of Paul’s writings, and to add that many of the best friends of the apostle do not defend this controversial style in this passage.

“It’s possible,” Professor Tasker goes on to say, “to value toleration so much that clear distinctions between right and wrong become impossible.” Today we say it this way; it’s the position of love to not be so critical. Mr. Tasker goes on to say “It’s recorded by Irenaeus, Polycarp the saintly bishop of Smyrna, when accosted by the heretic Marcion with the question, do you recognize me? Replied, I recognize you as the first born of Satan.” Isn’t that a nice greeting? [Laughter] I recognize you as the first born of Satan. Well Tasker went on to say, “The Irenaeus adds, so great was the fear of the apostles and

their disciples lest they should speak a single word of fellowship to those who adulterated the truth.”

I’m thankful for the apostle. I am thankful for his courage. I am thankful that in his day there was someone who recognized that which was white and that which was black and that which was right and that which was wrong and who in addition stood on the side of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the glory of God through the saving ministry of the Lord Jesus.

If you are here today and you’ve never believed in Christ, you are lost. There is no hope for those outside of Christ. There is none other name under heaven given men whereby we must be saved, so Peter said. The Lord Jesus himself said I am the way to truth and the life. No man, no man, be he president, king, or peasant, no man comes to the father except through me. May God help us to face the facts of the divine revelation and salvation only through Christ and may God through the Holy Spirit bring us to the knowledge of ourselves and of how much we need to be saved from our sins. So come to Christ, believe in him, trust in him and enjoy the forgiveness of sins and life eternal. We invite you as an ambassador of Christ to believe in him to life eternal.

Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these solemn words from a man who gave himself wholeheartedly to the doctrines of the prophets and the apostles and of our Lord supremely, Paul of Tarsus. We thank Thee for that which Thou didst do in Thy great servant’s heart. O Lord by Thy grace; enable us in measure at least to follow him in devotion and dedication to him who loved us and gave himself for us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

“Paul and the Apostles of Satan” by S. Lewis Johnson
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