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Being Deceived

11: 1-6

Being deceived DIG: What upsets Paul about those false apostles? What is the hallmark of all false religions and cults? How does this relate to 6:14? What evidence of his fatherly love did Paul point out to the Corinthians? How were the Corinthians at risk of spiritual adultery? Playing the fool, how did Paul compare himself to those false apostles?

REFLECT: What are some of the ways that Satan attacks believers. Have you ever faced a temptation that questioned or denied God's Word? If so, what lie was substituted for the truth? Why are the methods of false apostles sometimes successful? Sin rarely reveals itself as evil, from verses 2-4 how can you guard yourself against this Satanic strategy?

Paul was afraid that somehow the minds of the Corinthians had been deceived.

Paul had already established that self-praise was inadmissible and worthless (3:1, 5:12, 10:12), but **he** realized that **his** present situation demanded it if **his** converts at **Corinth** were to be preserved intact for **Messiah**. **His antagonists, the false apostles (to see link click [Af - The Problem of False Apostles](#))**, had indulged in self-praise (5:12, 10:7 and 12-18), and most of **the Corinthians** had been duped by **them**. Consequently, **his** hand was forced (12:11); **he** was pressed to indulge in **foolish boasting** in order to win **the Corinthians'** attention and gain a fair hearing. Reluctantly, **he** decided to employ the methods of **his opponents**; unlike **theirs**, however, **his** motive was not personal gain, but the welfare of **the Corinthians**.²³³ **Paul** further undercut **his rivals' boasting** by the use of irony. **He** does not boast about **his** glorious accomplishments, as **they** had, but recounts a string of humiliating experiences and boldly contends that **he** was a better servant of **Messiah** because of them (11:23). The battle lines therefore were drawn between **Paul, the weak** but true **apostle** authorized by **God**, and **the false apostles** working under Satan.

The **fool's** discourse begins here in 11:1, but **Paul** does not start speaking as a **fool** until 11:21. **Paul** first warns **them** about what **he** is going to do. **He** starts with a plea for

tolerance. **I would like you to bear with me in a little foolishness - please bear with me (11:1)! He** doesn't immediately tell them what this foolishness might be. It was a different kind of **foolishness** than **the folly of the cross** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians An - The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom**); it was **foolish** human vanity that glorifies in **itself**, instead of **ADONAI**. **Foolishness, foolish** and **fools** are key words repeated throughout this section (**11:1, 16-17, 19, 21; 12:6** and **11**). Here in **11:1-6 Paul** gives **three reasons** for this proposed **foolishness** and why **the Corinthians** should be tolerant and at least humor **him**.²³⁴

1. Paul's zeal for the church (11:2-3): Paul puts the matter in the framework of engagement and marriage. He saw **himself** as **the father of the congregation (First Corinthians 4:15)**, and as such, **he** had pledged **them** to **Messiah** - to one **man**, not a slew of husbands. **For I am zealous for you with God's kind of zealousness (11:2a)**. **Moses** told **the second generation** of **the Exodus** that **they** were **not to go after the gods of the pagan peoples around them**. **For ADONAI your God in the midst of you is a jealous God (Deuteronomy 6:14-15a)**. The reason that **idols** are not to be worshiped is that **ADONAI** is a **jealous** or **zealous God**, and **Isra'el's** idolatry is looked upon as spiritual adultery. The Hebrew word *qanna'* combines the two concepts of **jealousy** and **zeal** (not envy or suspicion). So, **zeal**, or **zealousness**, meaning *a passionate devotion to*, would be a better term to use than **jealous**, which has negative, even petty connotations. So, idolatry would cause **God's zeal** to burn like a husband's **zealousness** would burn against an unfaithful wife (**Hosea 2:2-5**). Because **God** and **Isra'el** are viewed as married, **Isra'el** is viewed as **the wife of ADONAI (Deuteronomy 5:1-3, 6:10-15, 7:6-11; Isaiah 54:1-8, 62:4-5; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 2:14-23)**. For that very reason, **the Israelites** should not have worshiped **other gods**. **God** has a right to be **zealous** over what is rightfully **His**. This was the kind of **zealousness Paul** had for the church at **Corinth**.

Among the Jews engagement was the first stage of marriage, and it took place at a very early age. Unlike engagement today, Jewish engagement of the first century was not something that was entered into lightly, nor was it easily broken. The engagement could only be canceled by an official bill of divorce. If an engaged woman had sexual relations with any other man, it was treated as adultery. The engaged couple didn't live together until the marriage ceremony when they entered the wedding canopy, or huppah, and the marriage blessings were recited. Therefore, a year normally passed before the woman moved into her husband's home where they would live together. The responsibility of safeguarding **his** daughter's **virginity** fell to **the father (Deuteronomy 22:13-21)**. So, **Paul** pictured **himself** as **the father of the bride (11:2b)** whose ultimate purpose was to engage the **church of God in Corinth (1:1)** to **her** heavenly **Bridegroom, Yeshua**

Messiah, and present **her** as a **virgin** to her **Husband** at **His appearance** (**Second Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 5:27; First John 3:2-3**).²³⁵



Undivided devotion and purity are the requirements for a continuing relationship with **Messiah**, and **Paul** feared that **the Corinthians** may have already been unfaithful. **And I fear that somehow your minds may have been deceived** (Greek: *phthalein*, frequently applies to moral corruption) **from simple and pure devotion to the Messiah, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent and his craftiness (11:3)**. As the serpent ensnared Eve with lies, so **his** smooth- talking rivals had snaked their way into **the Corinthians'** affections and captured **their** minds. It is not difficult to deceive those who wish to be deceived, and **their** desires already primed **their** own hearts to be disobedient. **The Corinthians'** fondness for error and illusions of grandeur, believing **themselves** to be **kings** who already reigned (**First Corinthians 4:8**), made **them** easy prey for the pompous **opponents** to inject **their** poisonous doctrine.²³⁶

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for always **loving Your** children and wanting the very best for them. Thank **You** for **the Word of God** which guides us into all truth and helps us discern truth from deception. Thank you for **Your Spirit** who lives in believers, and who teaches us to understand **Your Word**. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him . . . But the Helper, the Ruach Ha'Kodesh whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and remind you of everything that I said to you (John 14:23, 26)**.*

2. Paul's preaching of the true Gospel (11:4): The false apostles preached **some other Yeshua** than the one **Paul** preached. **The apostle** warned **the Corinthians** to be on guard if **someone** comes and tells you about **some other Yeshua** than the one he told

them about (see the commentary on [Galatians Aj - No Other Gospel](#)). A counterfeit **Gospel** has always been the hallmark of false religions and cults. Instead of viewing **Messiah** as **the Second Person of the Trinity**, who became a **man** and died an atoning sacrifice for sin, they see **Him** as a prophet, guru, avatar, social or political revolutionary, Michael the archangel, an emanation from **God** - anything but the true **God** in the flesh. While **the false apostles** seemingly identified with **Yeshua**, **the Yeshua** they preached was not the **Yeshua** of Scripture. Not only that, **the false apostles** came in the power of a **different spirit, a demonic spirit**, not **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh** whom **the Corinthians** had **received** salvation from. All false doctrine denies that salvation is by faith alone and adds human works. Incredibly, instead of rejecting that damning heresy, **the Corinthians** accepted it way to easily, thus justifying **Paul’s** fear for **their** purity **(11:4)**.²³⁷

3. Paul’s superior knowledge (11:5-6): **Paul’s** hesitancy to **boast (10:12)** caused **him** to sarcastically claim that **he** didn’t **consider himself in any way inferior to the false apostles (11:5)**. **He** was not acknowledging **them** as equals, but for the sake of argument **he** called on **the Corinthians** to at least grant the obvious reality that **he** wasn’t **inferior** to **them**. However, this statement implies that some at **Corinth** thought **he** *was* **inferior** in some way. **Paul** rejected that assumption with irony and parody and the plain statement of facts. At the conclusion of **his fool’s** speech in **12:11**, **he** will repeat the phrase: **For I am in no way inferior to the false apostles**. No true follower of **Messiah** shouts, “I am number one” like **the imposters** did. It was specifically that attitude that exposed **them** as counterfeits. All followers of **Messiah** are second to **One**, and all are servants of **His** Church, not overlords.²³⁸

As mentioned earlier, **the false apostles** ridiculed **Paul** as being a crude, amateurish, unrefined **speaker (10:10)**. **The apostle** acknowledged that **he** wasn’t interested in the rhetorical and oratorical **skills** that so impressed the Greeks, because **he** wasn’t concerned with technique, but with **the Gospel**. **He** declared: **I may not be a skilled speaker, but I do have the knowledge of the Good News . . . clear and simple (11:5)**. Although **his** communication skills might have been deficient by **their** standards, **the false apostles** claimed to have secret **knowledge** not available to the uninitiated. But **Paul** knew that human eloquence draws people to the preacher, but not the cross; faithful preaching, on the other hand, results spiritual fruit for **the Gospel itself is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16)**.²³⁹

Consequently, **Paul** was unfazed by **his** supposed failing in **speech** because **his knowledge of the Good News** more than made up for it. **Anyhow**, he declared, **I have made this clear to you in every way and in every circumstance (11:6)**. The kind of speech that

characterized **his rivals** was, in fact, a sign of **their foolishness** and the absence of any kind of **knowledge** of **God**. Sophisticated speech that comes from showmen who are puffed-up with pride and interested only in making a splash and grabbing the limelight and honor for themselves. From **Paul's** perspective such methods only served to conceal **their** gaping ignorance of **ADONAI**. **Knowledge of God** refers to spiritual insight that shines from an intimate relationship of **Messiah** crucified. **Paul** was full of **the Spirit of God**, and **his** humble **speech** matched **his** spiritual wisdom and power. And it bore fruit. By it, **he** engaged **the Corinthians** with **Messiah**. **The** flashy **rivals**, however, lead **them** astray with clever eloquence in the same way that **the serpent** deceived **Eve**.²⁴⁰