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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 too 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