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Servants of Satan

11:7-15 and 20

Servants of Satan DIG: Why do you think Paul refused support from the Corinthians but accepted it from the Macedonian churches? How was Paul's servant-attitude distorted by the false prophets? Why was Paul's anxiety for the church a proof of his love for them? How do their motives compare to his? What is Paul's conclusion about the false prophets?

REFLECT: What comes to mind when you hear the word "Satan?" Why doesn't he appear with his pitchfork, horns and pointed tail image as mankind's archenemy? When in your life have you experienced that Satan and his servants are real? What is your criteria when you give to different ministries? How can you tell if someone is in ministry just for the money?

For Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light; so it's not surprising that his demons masquerade as servants of righteousness.

Having asserted that **he** was not inferior to **the false prophets**, **Paul** takes up a new and unrelated topic: **his** refusal to accept the financial **support** from **the Corinthians** church that would have allowed **him** to exercise **his** ministry without working even though **the apostle** knew that **he** was permitted financial **support** (see the commentary on **First Corinthians, to see link click Bo - Laying Aside Rights**). **The Corinthians** must have thought that **Paul** didn't **love them**. **The false prophets**, who accepted payment, probably wanted **the apostle** to do likewise, since that would have put **them** on the same footing as **him**. Nonetheless, although under pressure to reverse **his** policy, **Paul** refused to do so.²⁴²

The true servant of God (11:7-12): Paul began with a rhetorical question: **Did I sin in humbling myself so that you could be exalted, in proclaiming God's Good News to you free of charge (11:7)?** It was **Paul's** policy not to accept financial **support** from churches in which **he** was currently ministering. But from **the Corinthians'** point of view, **Paul** had painfully breached social norms in

rejecting **their support** which were usually given to those who taught and lectured in the Greco-Roman culture of the day. It is probably, however, that “**sin**” was **Paul’s** word rather than **theirs**, reflecting **his** deep pain in response to **their** criticism.²⁴³

His words dripping with irony, **Paul** acknowledged that **he** accepted **financial support** from other churches in order to minister to **the Corinthians**. Yes, **he** said: **I “robbed” the other congregations of Macedonia by accepting support from them in order to serve you. Paul** had plied his trade as a tentmaker while in **Corinth (Acts 18:3)**. However, either business became slow or the demands of **his** ministry curtailed the amount of time **he** had to work. In either case, **Paul** was for a time in a terrible financial situation, lacking the basic necessities of life. Yet even then, **when he had needs, he did not burden anyone**. Eventually, **Silas and Timothy** providentially **arrived** with **the support from** the churches in **Macedonia**, allowing him to devote himself to full-time ministry (**Acts 18:5**). Just as **Paul** had kept **himself** from **being a burden to the Corinthians** in the past, **he** would continue to do so on **his** planned upcoming **visit (11:8-9)**. Unlike the proud, lying **false prophets**, who would not dream of lowering **themselves** to do manual labor, **Paul** humbled **himself** to the place of a common worker. True **servants of God** are **free from the love of money (First Timothy 3:3)** and seek nothing but the opportunity to faithfully carry out **their** ministry.²⁴⁴ **Paul** said: **The truthfulness of the Messiah is in me, so that this boast concerning me is not going to be silenced anywhere in Achaia (11:10)**.

The Corinthians undoubtedly interpreted **Paul’s** refusal of **their support** as an indication that **he** didn’t **love them**, or at least, **loved them** less, because **he** had accepted **the support** of other churches. **Why won’t I ever accept your support? Is it that I don’t love you? God knows I do (11:11)!** Therefore, **Paul** needed to affirm **his love** for **them**, and in **12:13** he asked in what way were **they** any worse off **than any of the other churches except that I myself did not burden you financially**, and concluded with a dose of irony: **Forgive me this injustice!** It seems likely that there was a group of wealthy **Corinthians** who offered **Paul** a gift of financial **support** that **he** refused, but **the false prophets** accepted (see [Af](#) - **The Problem of the False Prophets**). **No, I do it - and will go on doing it - in order to cut the ground from under those who want an excuse to boast that they work the same way we do (11:12)**. Understanding this, it then becomes easier to understand the point of contention between **Paul** and the congregation at **Corinth**. In **their** minds, **the** wealthy **Corinthians** had

made **him** an offer of “friendship.” By refusing **it**, **Paul** offended **them**, raising doubts about **his love** for **them** and the church. That opened the window of opportunity for **the false prophets** to call into question **Paul’s** apostleship and compare **him** unfavorably to **themselves**.

As for **Paul**, **he** probably refused this offer, not because **he loved them** less than **his** other converts, but because **he** understood all too well that such “friendship” would have made **him** indebted to certain wealthy **Corinthians**. Since **Paul** was **the apostolic father** of the church, whose duty was to provide for **his children (12:14)**, **he** couldn’t tolerate any arrangement in which **his** allegiance to **God** would be compromised.²⁴⁵

The servants of Satan (13-15 and 20): Throughout **his** letter, **Paul** had alluded to **the false teacher**, who claimed apostolic authority in **Corinth**, referring to **them** indirectly as the **many** who were guilty of **peddling the Word of God (2:17)**; as **some who regard us as living in a worldly way (10:2b)**; as **those other men who tell you how important they are (10:12a NLT)**; and as **those who preach another Yeshua and a different Gospel (11:4)**. But now the time had come to bluntly and directly expose **them**.

The fact is that such men are deceitful workers and false prophets (11:13a). **Paul** called **them** exactly what **they** were. The name **false prophets** (Greek: *pseudo apostoloi*) appears only here in the B’rit Chadashah. Some think that **Paul** coined this word after the analogy of **false Messiah’s and false prophets (Mark 13:22)**, and **false brethren** (Greek: *pseudadelphous*) in **Galatians 2:4**. The term **false prophets** shows that the **Yeshua** whom **they** preached, and the spirit of the gospel **they** offered, were entirely **false**.²⁴⁶

Dramatically and emotionally, **Paul** began to expose **their lies (11:13b)**. Such **deceivers** have plagued **God’s people** from the beginning. **ADONIA** through **Jeremiah** warned of deceitful **false prophets**, saying: **The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds (Jeremiah 14:14, 23:14 and 26 NASB)**. In the Sermon on the Mount, **Yeshua** warned: **Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15)**. In the Olivet discourse, **the Lord** noted that **they** would be especially active in the end times: **For false Messiah’s and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and**

wonders, so as to mislead, if that were possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24). Dear friends, don't trust every spirit. On the contrary, test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets had gone out into the world (First John 4:1).²⁴⁷

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are a **God** of holiness who is always perfectly trustworthy and 100% truthful! **Your** trustworthiness makes **You** such a strong **rock** to run to and such a comfort to go to. Obeying and pleasing **You** is so much more important than pleasing any person. We must listen to **You** over what someone else says. It is important to be in **Your Word** daily, to meditate on it asking for **Your** wisdom so we are not **deceived**. **The world** is cunning and clever, but **You** are eternal, all wise and loving!*

*In today's culture, sin is thrown out the window and **everyone does what is right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25b)**. **Your Word** speaks of the need to tell someone if they are not speaking the truth (**James 5:19**). **You** desire all to be saved. But without repentance there is no need for salvation. **The desires of this world, the cravings of the sinful nature, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (First John 2:16)** blinds the lost from seeing their need of a **Savior**. **They** miss out on being filled with **Your** peace and love when **they** are satisfied by **their** own sinful thoughts. Please help us to be bold with gentleness as we correct **deceitful** ideas and seek to enlighten **people** on to **the straight and narrow path (Matthew 7:13-14)** that leads to eternal joy in heaven. Thank **You** for living in **Your** children who **love You (John 14:23)**, and for helping us to be bold and know how to wisely answer **deceivers**. In your holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Though **they** brazenly posed as equal to **Paul** and **the Twelve**, **the false apostles** were actually **deceitful workers, servants of Satan, masquerading as apostles of the Messiah** to **deceive** the gullible and undiscerning (**11:13c**). The charge is a serious one. For if **the false prophets** were really **servants of Satan**, then **they** were not merely **Paul's** opponents, but also enemies of **Messiah**. **Paul** said as much earlier when **he** expressed **his** fear that **the Corinthians** were being **deceived** from **their** undivided loyalty to **Messiah (11:3)**.²⁴⁸ **Satan and his servants** are most effective in the congregations of **God** when **they** come not as an open enemy, but as a friend; not when **they** persecute the Church, but when **they** join it.



Paul has referred to **Satan's** evil designs in **2:11** and **4:4**. Now **he** ties **his** opponents to **the Serpent** who **deceived Eve** (see **By - Being Deceived**). **There is nothing surprising in that, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light (11:14)**. The present tense of the verb **masquerades** is important. **Satan** does this *again* and *again*. It is **his** practice. **He** makes people think that they are dealing with **an angel of light** when, in fact, they are dealing with **the prince of darkness himself!** How else can **Satan** get **his** deadly **lies** across except by presenting **them** as **God's** words that are being spoken by **God's** angels?²⁴⁹

The narrative in **Genesis 3**, however, does not explicitly mention **Satan as an angel of light**. **Paul** may have been alluding to popular **Jewish tradition**. **In the Apocalypse of Moses, Eve recalls her seduction, saying, "Satan appeared in the form of an angel and sang hymns like the angels. And I bent over the wall and saw him, like an angel" (17:1-2)**. What was important for **Paul** was that the shining stars dazzle and make the ones working in the trenches, like **Paul**, look boring and unspiritual by comparison. But **Satan** is more likely to take the disguise of a shining star with glamorous appeal than a foot soldier. **He** is seductive and insidious.

The greatest weapon **the devil** has in his arsenal to test us . . . is praise and flattery. **The Serpent** offered the promise of special knowledge to **Adam** and **Eve** that supposedly would have allowed **them** to become like **God**. **The Corinthians**, who wanted to become **rich** and reign like **kings (First Corinthians 4:8)**, were particularly susceptible to a false gospel spewed out by the dashing, diamond-studded **apostles** that appealed to **their** innate human pride and desire to be special. Swollen with pride **themselves, they** fooled **the Corinthians** by stroking **their** vanity. And **Paul**, with **his** frank criticism of **their** sins and uncompromising stand against any partnership with idolatry, was far less appealing as **an apostle** when compared to **those** who flattered **them**. But **the false flatterers** were **servants of Satan!**²⁵⁰

So it's not surprising that his demons masquerade as servants of righteousness (11:15a). In 3:9 Paul described his own ministry as a ministry of righteousness. His Gospel proclaims that God made Messiah who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (5:21). The rivals posed were acting like they were participating in that same ministry. But they were frauds. Paul doesn't pinpoint the exact nature of their false teaching, but focuses more on their boasting to an extreme. Ministers of righteousness are those who *live* righteously, not those who claim to be righteous or preach a righteous message. Ministers of righteousness remove the veil of hard-heartedness and lead God's covenant people to be transformed into the image of Messiah (see **Aw - Veiling and Unveiling**). They renounce shameful things and deceitful practices (4:2). They also reject all fleshly boasting and boast only in the Lord (see the commentary on **First Corinthians An - The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom**).

But it is comforting to know that neither Satan nor his servants will get away with their charade forever. John records that Satan will be bound at the start of the Messianic Kingdom (**Revelation 20:1-3**). Satan's ultimate fate will be eternal punishment in the lake of fire. And Satan who had deceived them was hurled into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (**Revelation 20:10**). The Bible reveals an equally fearful judgment awaits all false prophets. In **Matthew 7:7-21-23** the Lord solemnly warned: **Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, only those who do what my Father in heaven wants. On that Day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! Didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we expel demons in your name? Didn't we perform many miracles in your name?' Then I will tell them to their faces, 'I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness! They will meet the end their deeds deserve (11:15b).**²⁵¹

You put up with it if someone makes slaves of you, devours you, takes advantage of you, puffs himself up, slaps you in the face (11:20). This must have been a sad verse for Paul to write, for it reveals just how seriously the Corinthians were seduced. Delivered in a repetitive form and with a driving rhythm, the apostle uses five conditional clauses that detail the ways that the false apostles had abused the church in Corinth. His main point is that the Corinthians had tolerated such abuse, which was the opposite of Paul's normal

policy of leniency (**10:1**).

They willingly tolerated harsh treatment from **the false apostles**. **Makes a slave of you** (Greek: *katadouloo*) is a verb that in **its** only other appearance in the B'rit Chadahah refers to **the Judaizers' enslavement of the Galatians** (see the commentary on **Galatians Ax - False Brothers slipped in to Spy Out our Freedom in Messiah**). The Greek word translated **devours** pictures **the false apostles** preying on **the Corinthians** like predatory animals. It could be a reference to their demands for money. It was used this way in **Mark 12:40** and **Luke 20:47** to describe the greedy Pharisees seizing widows' houses. **The Corinthians** just stood by while the **false apostles took advantage of them (12:16)** and **puffed themselves up in their** pride and arrogance. **Their** mistreatment of **the Corinthians** was, in short, a **slap in the face**, which was (and is) a symbol of extreme disrespect (**First Kings 22:24; Lamentations 3:30; Luke 22:64; John 18:22; Acts 23:2**).

Three valuable lessons can be learned from **Paul's** contrast of **himself** with **the false apostles**. First, believers must not be taken in by smooth, clever, seemingly spiritual speech. It may be satanic lies and deception. Many **false apostles (teachers)** use biblical terms but use them with a radically different meaning. Second, believers must go beyond a teacher's words and examine his or her life. Religion is a big business to **false apostles (teachers)**, but those consumed with accumulating wealth and power are not true **servants of Yeshua Messiah (Matthew 6:24)**. Finally, believers must avoid the temptation to make tolerance a virtue. Toleration is the supreme virtue only to those who lack strong conviction. To discern the true from the false spiritual leaders is vital to the health of the Church. To fail to exercise discernment is to open wide the door to the sheepfold and allow **Satan's** savage wolves to ravage **God's** flock.²⁵²