

2 Corinthians 11

- 1) In the Old Testament, God is jealous of his people when they fall into idolatry (Ex 34:14). In the same way, Paul confesses a “divine jealousy” for the Corinthians (11:2) who have been led astray and are embracing a false gospel (11:1-4). One can embrace a false gospel either by taking away from the true gospel or adding to it. Arians, for instance, believed the gulf between man and God was so great that Jesus must be a created being, denying the doctrine of the trinity. The Jews Paul opposed in Galatians added to the gospel the requirements of the law. Based on what we’ve read, how are the Corinthian Christians adding to or taking away from the true gospel (11:4)?
- 2) In what ways does Paul invert the scale of success and good sense and look like a “fool” by “human standards” (11:16-19)? *Why* does he say he does this? In what ways do our ministries of love make us look foolish or crazy to outsiders? For whom are we willing to suffer and look foolish?
- 3) Paul calls out his opponents, comparing their deception to that of Satan himself (11:3, 13-14). Carson writes about this,

In the Corinthian situation, Paul and his opponents agree on many central things: monotheism, the truth of the Scriptures given to that point, the messiahship of Jesus, and much more. But the things on which they disagree are, for the issue at hand, far more important; and the manner in which each side has labeled its chief opponents serves to identify the side and reveal quite a lot about it. For the intruders, the opponent is Paul; as we learn something of him, their opposition tells us quite a bit about them: what they respect and cherish, what they reject, their values and much more. For Paul, the intruders are the opponents, [and their opposition shows] how strongly he is persuaded of the truth of the gospel, how deeply he is concerned for the spiritual well-being of his converts, how sharply he reprobates false teaching in the church, how much he despises self-promotion and insincere devotion to Christ.

So it is also in the modern world. Endless toleration may reflect an indifference to the truth; but when we oppose something, we equally expose ourselves for what we are and cherish. There is little value in opposing things for no other reason than the love of fighting; but on the other hand to oppose nothing suggests we are blind, foolish, or careless. Christians concerned to spread the gospel effectively and stabilize the church need to follow Paul’s example: identify the opponent precisely, and operate from a base of passionate devotion to the truth of biblically revealed religion and concern for the lives of men and women. [*A Model of Christian Maturity*, 112-113]

We are *for* many things at RCRC: Reformed theology and infant baptism; helping the needy (Cameron, Flower City, Haiti, the D.R.) and spreading the gospel (VBS and the missionaries we support); educating our youth (VBS, Cadets, GEMS, Sunday school); fellowship (koinonia night), etc. What do we *oppose*? Is opposition really necessary in churches which aren’t divided like the one in Corinth?

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Fun German saying: “Sage mir, mit wem du streitest, und ich sage dir, wer du bist—Tell me with whom you are fighting, and I will tell you who you are.” [Carson]