

2,26,26 2 Cor. 10:7-11:15 The Deception of the Soulical Man

Some of the principles we'll be looking at this week in 2 Cor. 10, we actually covered in our study of chapter 6, because this part of chapter 10 is a repetition on Paul's part of what he had discussed in that chapter.

So, what I want to do to begin is briefly summarize what we saw a few weeks ago so we'll have the context and then I'll add some clarification.

Let's begin by reading through the part of 2 Cor. 10 that I'm talking about – vs's 7-18;

Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's. For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your harm, I shall not be ashamed—lest I seem to terrify you by letters. “For his letters,” they say, “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present. For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment. But “he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

Now, here's part of the notes from chapter 6 that ties into Paul's instructions in chapter 10 (you'll probably recognize many of the same words Paul used in both places);

I am certain that many Christians we may have thought of as "in the background" at best, will be given greater positions of authority and honor in God's kingdom than many of the most popular or famous Christians of their generation – for two reasons.

1) God is looking more at the disciple's personal commitment to Christ than at the attention he receives from others.

2) Throughout the scripture, the Lord appears to exalt the humble and disregard the those who are highly esteemed among men.

Anyone who is committed to giving to others what God has given them, by giftedness or resources or whatever, no matter how small it may be in the eyes of Man, will be seen as immensely precious and important to the Lord.

(Lk. 21:1-4) ". . . Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

We look at the amount given; God looks at the heart of the one doing the giving. He doesn't measure Christian service the way the world measures it.

This principle even applies to all we've learned over the years about the overcomers; about reigning with Christ.

(Matt. 25:20-23) He who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful

servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

The servant who was faithful with two talents received the same promise as the one who had five talents, "You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things." The offer of the throne was given on the basis of faithfulness, not on the size of the service or ministry.

This is what I mean when I talk about the shock many will experience when they discover that the favor of man was much less important than the favor of God. And any child of God, regardless of how well-known they are here, is *well known* by the One Who sees, and records, every act of kindness for what it is.

So, never make the mistake of comparing yourself with anyone. All the Lord is looking for is faithfulness to what He asks us to do, however insignificant what we are doing may seem to us.

Now, here's one of the direct connections to the principles in chapter 6 which Paul addresses in chapter 10 vs's 12-13;

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us.

When Paul wrote that, he was trying to spare us a great deal of pain through introspection. Each one of us has a definite "limit" to the sphere of influence God has planned for us. To go beyond that "limited sphere" is just as wrong as failing to do anything. The bottom-line is being open to God's will and avoid worrying about how what you are doing compares to what you see others doing.

So, like I said, in both chapter 6 & 10 Paul deals with this same principle of each of us having a "limited", personally defined, "sphere" of responsibility. The Corinthians were much like the church in our generation. They were filled with competition, worldly definitions of success and promotion, and comparing one

with another using human standards as our criteria (in other words, “according to outward appearance”).

And as we saw in both Corinthian letters, Paul is still on the defensive. He reaffirms to them several times that what he writes is a reflection of who he is – he’s not being hypocritical or trying to hide anything.

(2 Cor. 10:7 & 11) Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? . . . Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.

Paul wants them to know that what he writes is a consistent reflection of who he is, no more, no less. I’m not sure what would spring to your mind when you hear that, but it reminded me of pastors who present themselves, *on* stage, significantly different than what you see *off* stage. Whether it’s mannerisms, tone of voice, or just general overall presentation of the person – it’s like you’re encountering two different people.

I’m not talking about men like Tozer who were bold and courageous in front of audiences, but shy and somewhat withdrawn in one-on-one situations. That would be like Paul’s explanation of himself in 1 Cor. 2:3-4; “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.”

Paul never promoted Paul. He didn’t hide his humility, which was sometimes expressed in apparent “weakness”, by pretending to be something he wasn’t. He was bold in Christ but weak in himself. That’s not two different people; it’s simply a specific type of personality in action that God can use just as much as an “in-your-face” John the Baptist if the situation calls for it.

Whether you are an introvert or extrovert; comfortable speaking in public or terrified, doesn’t matter as long as you realize that only that which Christ does through you will accomplish anything of value.

Paul wasn’t trying to be “persuasive” or to “win an argument”; he wasn’t Charlie Kirk or Ray Comfort. Paul was trying to be an open and available vessel of *whatever*

the Holy Spirit wanted to convey to others. Whatever Paul was by personality, personally, Paul willingly placed on the back burner and the indwelling Christ was free to deal with any situation Paul came up against with (quote) “demonstration of the Spirit’s power.”

Paul *knew* that Paul was not the issue; the only thing that mattered was whether Christ was “made visible through his mortal flesh.”

That’s a radical departure from the skinny jeans, tattoos, strategically untucked shirts, and stage lights of the “appeal to the crowd at all costs” Christian celebrities of our time. It was when the Church was the most *unlike* the world that it had its greatest impact *on* the world.

So, from here, Paul shifts from a defensive stance to another in a series of very heart-felt appeals to a church he loved deeply, and was crushed that that love was not returned. Let’s look at chapter 11 vs’s 1-2;

Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Remember, there are no chapter breaks in the original letters as they were written; *this* appeal is not in any way disconnected from his appeal to them at the end of chapter 10.

Paul’s idea of a “chaste virgin” involves two things;

- 1) *Moral purity*: (2 Cor. 6:17-18) Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

- 2) *Light*: (2 Cor. 6:14, 11): What communion has light with darkness? I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you

receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

Paul's emphasis in 2 Cor. 11 is on the second characteristic of those who are "pure" – they walk in light rather than darkness and are not deceived by anything that is false. As we saw in 1 Cor. 13, they "rejoice *only* in the Truth". Paul reinforces this in vs's 13-14;

Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

It still amazes me that considering the number of times the scriptures describe the most effective means of satanic deception; people still try to determine whether something or someone is deceptive by their "outward appearance" and presentation.

If they are moral, compassionate, popular and for all 'appearances' doctrinally aligned, they are accepted. Or as Paul put it, they are "put up with". But both Paul and our Lord make it clear than those who deceive others are "outwardly white washed tombs"; self-transformed into "ministers of righteousness".

The only way to know for sure is by having our spiritual senses exercised unto spiritual discernment. It not the "outward appearance" that is the final criteria, it's what the Spirit of Truth reveals to us about what lies *behind* that "appearance".

(Matt. 7:22-23) Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you.'

(Rev. 3:1) I know your works, that you have a *reputation* that you are alive, but you are dead . . .

Listen to this overview of the ultimate source of all deception;

When God created the universe, He formed a race of super creatures, classified in the Bible as angels. Angels are rational beings with the ability to travel throughout the vast universe God created for them. God made them perfect, without sin, totally acceptable to His absolute righteousness. Because volition is a necessary component of a rational mentality and of capacity for love, God gave the angels free will so they could understand His character and worship Him.

In the beginning, the most exalted of all the angels was the anointed cherub, called Lucifer, the “Son of the Morning” (Isa. 14:12). He was entrusted with responsibilities and was granted privileges beyond those of any other angel.

We do not know how long ago Lucifer fell and became Satan, but in spite of his protracted arrogance, he remains the most talented, attractive, and personable creature to come from the hand of God (Ezek. 28:12; 2 Cor. 11:14). His force of persuasion is as compelling today as when he convinced one-third of all the angels to join his prehistoric revolution against God (Rev. 12:4).

Satan’s fall and his leadership of a myriad of angels in revolt inaugurated the prehistoric warfare; a conflict that continues to this day and that will conclude only with the final judgment at the end of human history.

The power and intelligence of Satan is greater than we can imagine, and as I said, *only* spiritual discernment can see through his deceptions. And according to Heb. 5:13-14, that discernment is only available to those who move from infancy to maturity;

Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food belongs to those who are mature, that is, those who by reason of use have their (spiritual) senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Now, let’s apply all of what we’ve seen practically – to real life.

Think of how you decide the truth or genuineness of something or someone (a person, a church, a book, an organization, or whatever you feel needs some examination). Is this the process you go through?

First, you use your eyes to observe anything that might give you a clue. What's happening around you, what are the people doing- and you use your ears to hear what's being said to see if it matches the Bible. Then you combine all the information you've gathered and your brain goes into action sorting everything out – the good from the bad, the baby from the bathwater, the right from the wrong. Maybe you even take some time to think about all of it, or take a break and then go back and have another look. You want to be thorough and you know that first impressions can be wrong, so you wait awhile, do some more examination and comparison in the scriptures. You might even talk to others and get their opinion to see if they have any insights, anything you might have missed. You do all these things before making a final decision about whether to commit to this.

If that's your process, then you're likely to be deceived. That's the same process an unbeliever uses for literally everything in their lives. It's also the process used by most Christians about all those things mentioned in the beginning – churches, pastors, books, organizations, etc.

If you're thinking – well, if that's not the way we discern, how *do* we do it?

The natural man, the Adamic race, is soul and body. The five senses of the body feed information to the soul which does the thinking and deciding. But anyone who is born again, born into the new race of humanity, is not just soul and body – he's *spirit*, soul and body (in that order). He has an organ that he never had before; the human spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit from which the human spirit receives all spiritual information and discernment.

Paul says it's impossible (not difficult; not unlikely; "*impossible*") to determine spiritual deception using the mind, emotions, and our five senses;

(1 Cor. 2:14) The natural man (literally, the "soulical" or "soul-based" man) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God . . . *nor can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

We are “spirit” beings now and are to live as spiritual beings.

(John 3:6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Flesh is what we were; it’s not what we are now. I realize that learning to live in the Spirit is something that takes time, but without it, Christianity becomes what it is now – a soul-based religious organization of Man.

This is why, in the end times (our times), Christians will be “. . . ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). The only way to be fully protected from deception is if the spirit, not the soul, is doing the examining of whatever has come into our lives. Most believers aren’t even sure what the spirit is, let alone how it functions or why it’s meant to have dominion over the soul. So, it’s unlikely that their “spiritual senses” are going to be trained through practice to mature spiritual discernment.

The reason contemporary churches are what they are has nothing to do with a lack of sincerity or commitment – or any intention to deceive people. They simply don’t understand who we are and why we’re here.

Most of them are really nice people; they are moral, genuine. They’re just living in a Matrix. They belong another world, another humanity, but they don’t know what that means. They can express a perfect “form of godliness-” but not Christ.

In fact, in some ways, most unbelievers are better than most Christians (myself included). Unbelievers are often more compassionate, less arrogant and judgmental, and they sometimes suffer with greater endurance and less complaining. Why is that?

Consider who’s “called” to be Christians;

You see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the

base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. . .

For an unbeliever who is raised right, they may be a much better person by the time they're 30 than many Christians are at 50. But God doesn't measure "better" the way we do. He measures it by progress made based on the starting point.

There has never been, nor ever will be, any place for pride and self-satisfaction in our lives. We are at best products of Grace.

The Corinthians (quote) 'went to church' each week, took communion, talked about who their favorite pastor (or apostles) were, worshipped, listen to messages, etc. But Paul was desperate in his letters to help them understand the difference between soul and spirit, between a Christianity in which everyone is doing the best they can with the resources of the soul versus a Christianity governed by the Spirit.

Here's a quote from Sparks I wanted to share;

Deception is not something out there that is put upon us in spite of ourselves. All deception has its own ground in man. What is that ground? It is the fact that man is a psychical (soulical) being. If you can get to the bottom of that, if you can apprehend that, you will understand the whole thing. The ground of all deception is in the fact that man is a soulical being, and when Satan interfered with man at the beginning and man consented along the line of his own soul-life, Satan made man suitable to his government. It was not that he came and set himself up as man's ruler and subjected man by sheer force to his government or ruling. How did he do it? By breaking that realm in man's being where man was linked with God, and that was in the realm of the human spirit. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit", "that which is born of spirit, is spirit"; and man was in fellowship and communion with God by means of his spirit, not his soul, not his body; these two were under the government of his spirit. The enemy, the Deceiver came to man's soul, and instead of man reacting by his spirit-fellowship with, and knowledge of God, Adam dropped down into his soul, he came out of his spirit and reacted from his soul to determine what to do.

The enemy makes his appeal to Man through the desires and captures the will by deception. You see what happened when Man violated the very organ of his union with God, his spirit.... So, the enemy governs man, and the whole of the race now through the nature of the soul-life. What is the basis of deception? It is just that! How do you get a counterfeit Holy Spirit operating? By reason of relying on your soulical nature for the answers and insight needed to determine the right course to take in any given situation, “. . . (only) those led by the Spirit of God are the mature sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

And as we've seen in several of our studies in John and 1 Corinthians, our entire life is meant to a continual, relational, communion of Spirit-to-spirit communication and fellowship; Holy Spirit to human spirit. Our human spirit then communicates what it has received from the Holy Spirit to our soul, and the result is that we have the needed guidance and insight to stay on the right path and be protected from deception.

The next time you look in the mirror and see only your body, just think about what the scriptures teach us about what we are – we are much more “fearfully and wonderfully made” than we may have realized. And this is nothing compared to what we will be when all three (spirit, soul and body) are perfected and fully empowered by the glory of Christ.

Now, in vs's 5-12, Paul continues his defense of his apostleship from an angle that connects into the issue of deception and false teachers;

For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me

from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast.

In this last vs. (vs. 12) Paul reveals the motive behind all he's writing to the Corinthians; because he loves them, he will expose and "cut off" anyone who attempts to deceive them.

In the verses before this, he reminds them of his ministry to them, his transparency to them, and his willingness to refuse financial support from them to make sure they don't misinterpret the motive of his service to them. Other churches, like those in Macedonia, provided the support he needed, so he knew the Lord would give him all he needed from those willing to help. He could focus on serving the Corinthians without any need for manipulation – his love and motive were pure.

I came across a true story that Ironside wrote, that will give us a real-life illustration of where Paul's heart was when he wrote this section of 2 Cor. 11;

I remember some years ago I was out in Oregon, and there was an old gentleman from Holland, and his fine family of ten sons and one daughter, who attended nearly all our meetings; and this dear man did not have any assurance of salvation. He was doing his very best to please God. I tried to open up the truth of salvation by grace for all who believe. The old man would listen, but he thought it was too easy. I was invited to his home for dinner, and afterward we sat down over an open Bible, and I tried to show him that he could be saved in a moment by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus, but he was so occupied with Calvinism that he could not see the simple truth and rest in Christ as his Savior. After about four hours I was leaving, and just as I was turning away the dear old man-with his long beard, reached in his pocket and offered me a gift of five dollars. I said, "Tell me, are you giving that out of love for Christ, or are you giving it to try to help buy your salvation?" He looked at me a moment or two and he said, "I don't love Christ, I wish I did." I said, "Keep your five dollars. I appreciate your kindness in offering it, but I do not want you to get the idea that there is anything

meritorious about giving money to a servant of Christ.” They told me afterward that he went to his room and cried like a child. Two years later I came back, and I shall never forget the night he came up to me and said, “I love the Lord Jesus; I have trusted Him as my Savior; I know I am His. Will you take the five dollars now?” “Yes, I will, thank you.”

Sometimes we need an addition to theological accuracy to understand in real life what that theology is telling us. Giving may be related to rewards, and obviously, it will be a blessing to whoever is on the receiving end; but it does not contribute to a salvation already freely provided to all of us at the moment we trusted Christ.

You probably noticed Paul’s sarcasm in vs’s 8-9;

I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked (from you), the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you.

Paul had already told the Corinthians in his first letter to them that “. . . he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.” The way Paul put it in 1 Cor. 9:9-12 was;

It is written. . . “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?

Paul had the right to expect financial support *from* them because he “sowed spiritual truths *to* them”. And apparently the saints in Macedonia understood this and supported him. But the Corinthians were so wrapped up in confusion and skepticism about Paul, that going back to basics was the only way Paul could show them why his view of financial support was so different than that of the false teachers who were just using the Corinthians for personal gain.

If support is given in gratitude and love, Paul (and Ironside) gladly receive it. If there's hesitation or distrust involved, then Paul will wait until the *reason* he is offered support is undergirded by both an understanding of *why* the Lord set it up this way (quote) "the workman is worthy of his hire", and also is motivated by gratitude for what the "plowman" has worked to give them by teaching the Word of God to them.

Unless those things are there, Paul will simply instruct them about the way this is supposed to work, and wait until they understand and respond. It would be difficult for the Corinthians to accuse Paul of "robbing" them if he only accepted financial support from them if it came voluntarily, and not as some kind of legal demand. He had the "right" to *require* their support, but instead, he wrote, "If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Cor. 9:12).

Ok, we need to wrap things up, I'll close with something that not only shows the difference between Soulical observation and spiritual sight, but it also ties directly into what I believe, personally, is one of the most important 'spiritual sight' issues of this generation. Nearly every end-times podcaster I listen to is focused on the signs that indicate the coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. They draw heavily from Matt. 24, Rev. 13, etc. But *we* are living in the Church Age. How can we determine at least the approximate coming of Christ for *us*- for His coming in the rapture to take us home *before* the events of Matt. 24?

This sums it up extremely well,

How then do I best know that the coming of the Lord is drawing near? Not best of all by prophetic signs, but by what is going on within the hearts of the Lord's people. That is the best sign of the times, namely, what the Spirit of God is doing *in* the people of God. But maybe you are not interested in that. You would rather know what is happening with Russia, China, Iran and Israel, and how close are we to the great conspiracy of Israel's invasion from the north? Or maybe about the development of a global, digital surveillance system to lay the foundation for the Mark of the Beast. And what about the

revived Roman Empire? I am not diminishing the importance of those things, I'm only saying that there are multitudes of people who are simply engrossed in prophecy as a thing, but whose spiritual life counts for nothing, who have no deep, inward walk with the Lord. But if we keep close to Him Who is the sum of all truth, if we move with Him and learn of Him, we shall better know the course of things. We shall know what is imminent. We shall have in our heart *the whisperings of preparation*.

So, as we approach the final hour of this Age, and the Morning Star rises in the hearts of the overcomers, we will have an inward, *spiritual* sense that the rapture is near.