



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N52 December 31, 2023

FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

“Darkness in Light Clothing”

2 Corinthians 11:12-15

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Authority of the Bible

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17



How can believers identify those who masquerade as servants of Christ?

Because “All Scripture is God-breathed,” it is *authoritative* and a *reliable guide* for “teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” However, its authority and usefulness is undermined by incorrect interpretations – the goal of interpretation being to recognize the biblical author’s intended meaning expressed in the words of his text. When Scripture is misunderstood, its misinterpretation is neither authoritative nor useful. Wrong interpretations speak with the voice of the biblical author, and are more often than not divisive. This is evident in the body of Christ. The church is divided, its unity fractured, by disparate interpretations of Scripture.

Different gospels are being preached today even as they were in Paul’s day – albeit today based on different interpretations of Scripture. The apostle rebuked the Galatians in no uncertain terms when he wrote to them: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!” (1:6-8). Evidently, some were teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised, become Jewish proselytes, and live according to the law of Moses in order to be justified and sanctified.

It was a problem addressed by the Jerusalem Council c. A.D. 49 (Ac 15) following Paul’s first missionary journey (Ac 13-14). At that meeting, “some of the *believers* who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses’” (15:5). Fortunately, after hearing from Barnabas and Paul, James announced the council’s verdict: “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled ani-

mals and from blood. For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath” (15:19-21). In other words, Gentiles don’t have to become Jews and obey the law of Moses in order to become Christians.

One might think that the council’s decision would settle the matter for good, but apparently it did not. Paul and Silas visit Corinth on Paul’s second missionary journey and plant a church there c. A.D. 51 (Ac 18:1-22). About five years later c. 56 A.D., Paul writes 2 Corinthians. By that time, individuals, whom he calls “super-apostles” and “false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ” (2Co 1:5, 13), have invaded the church and are wreaking havoc on the congregation, leading people away from “sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (11:3) – something Paul says the Corinthians were willing to put up with “easily enough” (v 4). About these pseudo-apostles, one commentator writes: “From the various hints provided in chs. 1-13 it emerges that Paul’s opponents were Jewish Christians who were proud both of their Jewish credentials and that they were servants of Christ.” If they bore commendatory letters from Jerusalem (3:1-3), “they would have had a natural affinity with the Cephas party, which had already formed in Corinth, and which would have favoured [*sic*] the Jewish form of Christianity associated with Peter . . . The opponents of Paul were Judaizers, a name coined to describe Christian Jews who sought to impose upon Gentile converts the obligation of the law and to make them submit to circumcision. However, there are no indications in 2 Corinthians that Paul’s opponents in Corinth were trying to impose these things” (Kruse, 47).

Rather than put up with “easily enough” those who preach a different Jesus, a different gospel, or a different spirit than the one Paul preached, as expressed in the Scriptures, Christians must examine interpretations of the biblical text to make sure that what is preached is accurate, thereby preserving the authority and usefulness of Scripture.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 2 Corinthians 11:12-15

12 And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. 13 For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Read in another translation

12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may eliminate any opportunity for those who want a chance to be regarded as our equals in the things they boast about. 13 For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will correspond to their actions. (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "what I am doing" in v. 12.
- Box "in order to" indicating *purpose* in v. 12.
- Circle "masquerading" in v. 13, "masquerades" in v. 14, and "masquerade" in v. 15.
- Bracket "angel of light" in v. 14.
- Circle "his servants" in v. 15.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Read 2 Corinthians 11:4. Explain what Paul's opponents in Corinth are doing.
2. Read 11:3. Explain the *effect* his opponents' actions are having on the church.
3. Read 11:4 again. The Corinthian Christians were *tolerant* to a fault. How so?
4. Read 11:5. Paul uses *irony* when he calls his opponents "super-apostles." How so?
5. Paul says he will keep on doing what he is doing. *What* is he doing?
6. Explain *why* Paul is going to continue doing *what* he is doing (note "in order to").
7. Identify the "false apostles" (v. 13) to whom Paul refers (see v. 5).
8. It comes as no surprise that Paul's opponents are deceivers. Why not?
9. Satan masquerades as "an angel of light." *What* hides behind his mask?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about how Christians can recognize those who present themselves as ministers of Christ who are actually ministers of Satan.

Commentary On The Text

Paul planted the church in Corinth on his second missionary journey c. A.D. 51. Subsequently he wrote four letters to the believers there, two of which are included in the New Testament—1 Corinthians, written from Ephesus c. spring, A.D. 56, which was actually his second letter to them, and 2 Corinthians, written from Macedonia c. fall, A.D. 56, which was actually his fourth letter to them. The harsh tone of chapters 10-13 is quite different from that of the rest of the letter. “Some think that when Paul had just completed writing the first nine chapters, a report came to him that a strong and vocal minority was still causing trouble at Corinth. So before sending off the letter he added the last four chapters to address this troublemaking group” (*The NIV Study Bible*, 1961). In chapter 11, Paul *ironically* calls these troublemaking opponents of his “super-apostles,” suggesting that they were not apostles at all. In the same chapter, he goes on to castigate them, calling them “false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ” (v. 13).

Apparently, they were up to two kinds of no good. On the one hand, according to verse 3—in one way or another not specified by the apostle—they were leading the Corinthians “astray from [their] sincere and pure devotion to Christ” through the cunning use of deception comparable to that the serpent used in the garden. And on the other hand, they were maligning Paul’s apostleship. He did not fit their expectations for an apostle. One commentator writes: “They expected an apostle to be personally impressive, have a commanding presence and good speaking ability (10:10). He will be authoritative in his dealings with those under him (11:20-21). His claim to be an apostle will rest upon visions and revelations of God experienced by him (12:1), and will be supported by the performance of apostolic signs (12:11-13). He will act as a spokesman of Christ and be known as such because of the manifestations of power in his ministry (13:2-4). And on the more formal side, the apostle of Christ will have proper Jewish connections (11:21-22) and bear letters of recommendation (3:1), most likely from the Jewish leadership of the mother church in Jerusalem” (Collin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, TNTC, 51). None of which Paul possessed in their view.

One other thing—an apostle will accept support from a church, something Paul refused to do. Paul’s opponents apparently argued that his refusal indicated that he did not love the Corinthians, but desired to shame them, something he vehemently denied (v. 11). Apparently, unlike his opponents, Paul was committed

to preaching the gospel free of charge, so as to not be a burden to his initial hearers (vv. 7-9). Once a church was established, however, he willingly accepted support after leaving for the spread of the gospel elsewhere—thus transforming his *supporters* into his *partners* in ministry. Refusing support offended the Corinthians. They considered it demeaning for him to work, the very thing that enabled him to preach the gospel without charge, and embarrassing as well. Laborers were held in low regard by the leisured class in the ancient world (see David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC, 476-79). What’s more, “To receive aid from the relatively poverty stricken Macedonians (8:2) and to turn it down from the relatively well off Corinthians also would have insulted them” (Garland, 478). But Paul refused to be socially obligated to them. The same commentator explains: “Accepting gifts in the ancient world placed one under a social obligation to show gratitude. A social quid pro quo dictated relationships. Anyone who received a gift or benefit was obligated to respond in kind . . . Consequently, ‘Paul tried to distance himself from a burdensome web of social obligations that would hinder his apostleship, smack of favoritism, and introduce among his communities volatile strife over honor and ambitious claim to authority’” (Garland, 481, 482).

That said, Paul calls a spade and spade in verses 12-15. He explains why he refuses to accept support from the Corinthians, namely, to distinguish himself from his opponents who likely *extracted* support from them, and to put his opponents in their place as money grubbing deceivers, whom he rightly calls, “false apostles [cf. “super-apostles” in v. 5], deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.” Whether they were masquerading as Christians, too, is difficult to say. If they were Christians they were certainly misguided, blinded perhaps by their inflated view of themselves, who were unwittingly serving Satan rather than Christ.

Still we have ministers who exchange sugarcoated lies for the unvarnished truth. One commentator writes: “In our own day, when people value toleration so highly and practice it so widely, even in the church, we need to learn from Paul’s example of ‘calling a spade a spade.’ The welfare of those under Paul’s ministry required him to identify his critics for who they really were. We will serve our own generation faithfully if we do the same. We should point out teachers who lead others into error, and warn people about them, if we want to keep the naive from harm (cf. 3 John 9-10)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 2 Corinthians,” 2023 ed., 156, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/2corinthians.pdf).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 12 *what I am doing* “If it is a sin to preach the gospel free of charge, accepting no stipend (11:7), then it is one of which Paul is proud, and he will continue to boast about it . . . His boast is that he proclaims the gospel free of charge (1Cor 9:15-18), and their complaints will not cause him to modify his firm policy” (David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC, 479). “Paul restates the assertion he made in v. 9b, but in slightly different terms; *And what I do I will continue to do, i.e. refrain from placing any financial burdens upon the Corinthians*” (Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, TNTC, 189).

v. 12 *in order to* Paul explains his refusal to relent and accept remuneration from the Corinthians. “Like wandering preachers of the day (see note on v. 8), the intruders at Corinth had apparently received some remuneration for their instruction. Regarding themselves as in some sense apostles, they probably felt fully within their rights in accepting or even demanding appropriate wages; this validated their apostleship. But Paul’s stance was an acute embarrassment to them, for they could not boast as he did about preaching a message gratuitously. This, then, was Paul’s motive for persisting in his longstanding policy – to deprive his opponents of the opportunity they longed for so they might boast that they were working at Corinth on precisely the same terms he had been. He hoped his financial independence would highlight his rivals’ financial dependence and cause the Corinthians to rethink their attitude toward him” (Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, 388).

v. 13 *masquerading . . .* Cf. “disguising” (ESV, NET, et al.); “transforming” (NKJV). “Essentially they are deceivers, passing themselves off as apostles of Christ when they were not, and for that reason they deserved the epithet *false apostles*” (Kruse, 190). “They are frauds. Paul does not pinpoint the particulars of their false theology but focuses more on their boasting beyond measure. It is their demeanor and behavior that reveals them to be minister of Satan rather than of righteousness” (Garland, 486). “They were self-servers who were the true sons of their father Satan, the consummate hypocrite. They may have been genuine believers. Indeed they appear to have been. Nevertheless in their conduct they were following the example of Satan. They perverted the thinking of, and misdirected the

affections of, the Corinthians” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 2 Corinthians,” 2023 ed., 156, plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/2corinthians.pdf).

v. 14 *angel of light* “Paul may be thinking here of Genesis 3 and the deceitfulness of the serpent who ‘enlightened’ Eve. Alternatively there are stories in Jewish pseudepigraphical works in which the devil or Satan appears as an angel to deceive Eve (*Life of Adam and Eve* 9:1-11:3; *Apocalypse of Moses* 17:1) and the apostle could be using these as an illustration” (Kruse, 190). “Though in reality he is the prince of darkness (cf. Col 1:12-13 and notes)” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on 2Co 11:14).

v. 15 *his servants* I.e., servants of “Satan,” namely, “false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ” (v. 13). “God will judge them according to their works (5:10) and not according to appearances that so easily fool humans. When God puts his refining fire to their work, it will burnup in a puff of smoke (1 Cor 3:12-15)” (Garland, 486).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

The welfare of fellow believers requires that we point out false teachers, who lead others into error, and warn our brothers and sisters to avoid them.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Thanksgiving through the years has offered lots of life-stage conversations with relatives. For a while, it was pregnancy, childbirth, and labor followed by seasons of preschool discipline, elementary extracurriculars and the dreaded teenage drivers with car insurance. This year our conversation surrounded bifocal contacts. It was a sad realization of where we are on the timeline of life, but time does march on. My cousin’s wife shared how she was challenged in removing her contacts and mentioned a TikTok hack of holding your eyelids a certain way while looking at your nose and then squinting while you hop on one foot, or some kind of nonsense like that. We had a hearty laugh as we all said, “TikTok’s not real!” Social media is flooded with false messages that our kids are exposed to daily. Our kids are growing up in a world that just slightly bends the truth and offers “proof” with an edited or altered video. If they are doing this type of truth manipulation with how to remove contacts, what do you think the influencers of this world are doing with the biblical message? It’s a masquerade party on the world wide web, and if we don’t teach our kids how to filter out the false messages by holding them against the plumbline of God’s Word, we’re doing a great disservice. Help your child understand truth by measuring what you hear against God’s Word. As you open the Bible and read and discuss it, plant seeds that will help your kids grow in righteousness. For the love of all things holy, help them understand that everything on the internet isn’t real. We’re praying for you!

| What Does The Bible Say? | What Do You Think? | What Do You Do? |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Read 2 Corinthians 11:12-15</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are “such people?” (See 2 Corinthians 11:4,12) 2. What does Satan masquerade as? 3. What do Satan’s servants masquerade as? | <p>What do you think the end that Paul mentions in verse 15 is referring to?</p> | <p>We can judge all things as true by what the Bible says. Based on stories from the Bible, make up a game of True/False to play as a family.</p> |

CORE COMPETENCY: Authority of the Bible

I believe the Bible is God’s book that tells me what to believe and do.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.


Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

_____ I completed my Bible Study

_____ I memorized this week’s verse

_____ I brought my Bible to church

_____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) from 1986 to 1998 and Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church (Arlington, TX) from 1998 to 2022. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org