

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Safeguarding the Inheritance

BACKGROUND: One of the dangers to the Christians in Corinth, who are still infants spiritually, is that they will be led astray by the teachings of false apostles. Paul, therefore, continues his efforts to strengthen his relationship with them. He hopes to remain a positive influence in their lives.

11:1. *Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.* In the awkward position of having to defend his authority as an Apostle, Paul finds it distasteful to seem to be boasting about himself.

11:2. *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.* Exodus 20:5 relates that God is *jealous*. But He covets what is best for the object of His affections rather than for Himself. He wants each of us in His Kingdom—not in Satan’s. Paul feels the same type of jealousy toward the Corinthian Christians. Following the Old Testament pattern which refers to Israel as the bride of God (Is 54:5), Paul refers to the Church as the Bride of Christ. He has promised the church in Corinth to Christ and intends to present her pure and undefiled by false teachings.

11:3. *But 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.* Satan persuaded Eve to follow his lead rather than God’s instructions. The false apostles are trying to persuade the Corinthians that what they teach is superior to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul hopes to prevent a replay of the ancient tragedy which has occurred again and again throughout the ages. Each time someone is led away from the simple truth of salvation through Christ, the Devil rejoices.

What therefore must we do? We must wholly deny him all belief; stop up our ears against him, and regard this seducer with hate. And the more he promises the more must we avoid him. This he did with Eve. For when he had filled her with false promises, it was then he utterly ruined her and brought unending misery upon her. He is an un pitying enemy, and he has set himself implacably to war against us. We do not seek our own salvation as eagerly as he seeks our ruin. Let us turn away from him, and not in word only but in deed. And let us do none of the things that give him pleasure. In this way all we do shall be pleasing to God. CHRYSOSTOM¹

11:4-5. *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. For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.* If someone were to give them a better understanding of Jesus and His Gospel than that which they received from Paul, they would do well to listen. But he taught them nothing less than they would have received from Peter, James or John, who were considered the most eminent Apostles. When Paul’s authority to teach is questioned, he numbers himself with the chief Apostles so that his ministry retains the power it must and does have from God.

11:6. *Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.* Paul was not a dazzling orator and did not pretend to be, but he was highly qualified to teach the Gospel. It had been revealed to him by Christ Himself (Gal 1:12), and the Corinthians had seen ample evidence of Christ working

through him to recognize the legitimacy of his ministry.

11:7-9. Did I commit sin in abasing 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 was lacking to me the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. Though he had the right as an Apostle to be paid for the work he did (1 Cor 9:1-14), he refused any compensation from the Corinthian church. He lived simply, so his trade of tentmaking (Acts 18:3) provided for his meager needs. The Christians in Macedonia supplied what he lacked, a fact he refers to as robbery, because the Macedonians supported him while he ministered to the Corinthians. His practice of not accepting remuneration from those he was ministering to at the time allowed him freedom to correct and chasten his flock when necessary.

11:10-12. 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. Paul plans to continue his style of ministry to give no one reason to doubt his motives and to thwart the pseudo-apostles who try to use the Corinthians for financial gain. He preaches and teaches to bring people to Christ, not for worldly advantage.

11:13-15. For 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. Those who continuously try to demean Paul's authority call themselves apostles. They expect to be paid for their work and claim that fact as a sign of the validity of their ministry. According to their rationale, Paul accepted no compensation because even he did not think his ministry was of value. He writes that these deceivers pretend outwardly to be virtuous in order to mislead, winning followers and then leading them astray.

Satan traditionally works in this manner. He does not appear to his victims in horns and a tail as cartoonists depict him but transforms himself into something that appears righteous in order to gain souls through trickery. His ministers do likewise. Therefore, we must always be on guard.

Deceitful workers pull up what has been planted. They wear the mask of truth because they are well aware that otherwise they would not be well received.
CHRYSOSTOM²

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (a). Why does God allow Satan and his workers to practice such deceit?

11:16-21. I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold—I speak foolishly—I am bold also. The false apostles Paul

alludes to at this point are Judaizers. They claim to have superior authority and are trying to lead the Corinthians back into the bondage of the Mosaic Law in order to have control over their lives. Paul had not tried to dominate those he taught. He writes, with irony, that he is *too weak for that*. The Christians of Corinth were being taken advantage of, financially and otherwise. Integrity with regard to financial matters is crucial:

Nothing exasperates God so much as embezzlement and extortion. Why? Because it is very easy to abstain from this sin. This sin springs not from natural desire that perturbs the mind, but from willful negligence...The passion of desire was implanted in our nature for the procreation of children, and anger for the succor of the injured, but love of money serves no purpose. So if you are made captive by it, you will suffer the vilest punishment.

CHRYSOSTOM³

To steal, cheat, or in any way make the acquisition of money or material goods our primary goal in life is to make money our god. Therefore, the love of money is called the *root of all kinds of evil* (1 Tim 6:10). If we allow a false god to take control of our lives, we open ourselves to unending misery.

Let us make a comparison and see which is the more imperious, the desire of money or of beauty; for that which shall be found to have struck down great men is the more difficult to master. Let us see then what great man the desire of money ever got possession of. Not one; only of exceedingly pitiful and abject persons, Gehazi, Ahab, Judas, the priests of the Jews: but the desire for beauty overcame even the great prophet David.

CHRYSOSTOM⁴

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (b). Since sexual desire is innate and hard to resist, should sexual sins be taken lightly? (c). If love of money is easier to control, why do so many succumb to it?

11:22. *Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.* Paul's detractors assert that they have superior lineage, but there is nothing lacking in his background. Not only is he of Hebrew heritage as they are, but also an "Israelite," the title reserved for those Jews dedicated to God. Under the Blood Covenant, that title now belongs to those who recognize Christ as the awaited Messiah (Rom 9:6-8). The "seed of Abraham" are those who belong to Christ (Gal 3:29), not those who happen to be Jews by accident of birth.

If we, because of our faith in Christ, are deemed children of Abraham, the Jews, therefore, because of their violation of the promise have ceased to be His seed. In that fearful day when men shall be judged, good parents shall avail nothing to wicked children, as the prophet Ezekiel says (Ez 14:14). And good children will avail nothing to evil parents; rather will the goodness of their children increase the guilt of the parents (Lk 11:19).

GREGORY THE GREAT⁵

11:23. *Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.* Paul had battle scars to prove his Apostleship. He had endured all types of affliction and faced danger of imminent death many times. He could have avoided all of this had he forsaken his mission—but he pressed on.

11:24. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Under Mosaic Law, he who was to be punished could be sentenced to no more than forty lashes with a whip so as not to humiliate him (Deut 25:3). It was traditional, therefore, for the judge to impose one less than forty when passing sentence to insure that in his zeal the administrator would not inadvertently deliver more than forty. Paul had received thirty-nine lashes five times from his fellow Jews.

11:25. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; One of the methods of punishment the Roman government employed for non-citizens was to beat them *with rods*. Though a Roman citizen, supposedly protected from that treatment, Paul had endured it three times. He had also been *stoned* (Acts 14:19), the method of punishment traditionally practiced by Jews. In addition, in the course of the long, perilous journeys he undertook to preach the Gospel, he had been shipwrecked three times, once spending *a night and a day* drifting bodily in the sea.

11:26-27. in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. He had the self-discipline and perseverance necessary to do that which was required of him, in spite of personal peril. His missionary journeys were treacherous, without adequate food, clothing and shelter, and he faced the wrath of both Jews and Gentiles. In addition, he fasted regularly for the spiritual strength it provided. Sensing vulnerability—as he had when Christ was hungry (Mt 4:2-3)—the Devil bombarded Paul with trials and tribulations.

Some involved labor, others sorrow, others fear, others pain, others care, others shame, others all these at once; yet he was victorious in all. And as if a single soldier, having the whole world fighting against him, should move through the ranks of his enemies and suffer no harm, so did Paul, showing himself alone among barbarians, among Greeks, on every land, on every sea, abide unconquered. And as a spark that changes into fire the things it touches, so did this man, setting upon all, make things change over to the truth.

CHRYSOSTOM⁶

If we bear Satan's darts nobly, without giving up the struggle, the strength of the weapon is turned against that ancient enemy.

This is the brilliant victory, this is the Church's trophy, thus is the Devil overthrown, when we suffer injury. For when we suffer, he is taken captive; and himself suffers harm, when he would with joy inflict it on us. This is what happened in Paul's case; the more Satan plied him with perils, the more he was defeated.

CHRYSOSTOM⁷

11:28. besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Paul had started on the road to Damascus as a persecutor and had become the persecuted. In addition to the physical and emotional ordeals he endured, He carried the weighty burden of concern for the spiritual condition of the new Christians in the areas to which he had brought the Gospel. Those who sometimes feel weighed down by worry about the spiritual condition of their own families, friends, or communities can perhaps begin to understand the immensity of the responsibility Paul felt.

11:29. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with

indignation? He feels the pains of his spiritual children. When some show weakness, he himself feels weak. When some are led astray, he is outraged.

11:30. *If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.* He allows himself to boast only about those things some may consider signs of weakness: his personal involvement with his spiritual children and the suffering he has endured.

11:31. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.* He rests his case with his acknowledgement that, in the final analysis, God will judge who is speaking and living the Truth and who is not. This is the ultimate consolation for those who have done their best and are content to leave their fate in God's hands.

11:32-33. *In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to apprehend me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.* Paul reminisces about an event which occurred soon after his conversion (Acts 9:23-25), perhaps as an example of the human frailties he had to struggle with daily, in spite of having been chosen by God to do His work. When on his way to Damascus to continue his persecution of Christians—thinking he was doing God's will—he had experienced the very dramatic supernatural intervention of Christ, Who showed him the error of his ways. But later he fled that city and the enemies of the Gospel in a very human, even undignified manner. Those two events seem to have set the pattern for a ministry which brought him both extremes: the agony of every type of hardship imaginable and the blessed joy of being in the presence of God.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: (d). We have addressed the fact that trying to live the Christ-like life God expects of His people will inevitably bring some degree of suffering. But the suffering Paul endured was especially extensive—why?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT COMMENTS

(a). Why does God allow Satan and his followers to practice deceit? God allows Satan to use his wiles against man as part of the sorting process necessary to single out those who belong to His Kingdom. It is not that God needs to know who they are, they need to know who they are--and to be molded in His image. However, He also arms His people with knowledge of His word and all the tools of the Church. He advises that they examine every person and situation in the light of that knowledge to see *whether they are of God* (1 Jn 4:1) and that they pray for guidance and discernment to avoid error. Those who follow this pattern will not be deceived.

(b). Since sexual desire is innate and hard to resist, should sexual sins be taken lightly? Scripture clearly indicates that sexual misconduct among Christians is not to be taken lightly. David's sinful conduct with Bathsheba "displeased the Lord" (2 Sam 11:27). Paul reacted rigorously against the man in Corinth who was involved in a sexual relationship with his stepmother (1 Cor 5:1) and against all sexual immorality in general (1 Cor 6:9). Sexual desire was given to man by God to create loving, nurturing families. This beautiful gift should not be misused.

I say that the desire for beauty is more difficult to master than the love of money, not as

extending forgiveness to those who are conquered by lust, but rather, as preparing them to be watchful. CHRYSOSTOM⁸

God created man in His image, with the ability to control passions and channel them in the right direction, unlike animals.

God did not abolish all desire, only that which is unlawful, for He said:
let every man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband
(1 Cor 7:2). CHRYSOSTOM⁹

(c). If love of money is easier to control than sexual desire, why do so many succumb to it?
Many are brought down by the love of money because they do not understand its dangers.

They stand not so much on their guard against it as against promiscuity and fornication; for if they had thought it equally dangerous, they would not, perhaps, have been made its captives. CHRYSOSTOM¹⁰

Also, money buys the things of the world. Though they are ultimately meaningless, these things nevertheless hold much appeal for those whom Satan has managed to distract from the elements of life that have lasting value.

(d). We have addressed the fact that trying to live the Christ-like life God expects of His people will inevitably bring some degree of suffering. But that which Paul endured was especially extensive—why? Paul had a pivotal, difficult mission to fulfill in bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. He possessed total love for God and dedication to Christ, the factors which qualified him for his task but which also made him vulnerable to intensive attacks by Satan, who wanted to curtail his mission.

The higher anyone ascends in virtue, the harder will this world bear down on him; for the more the love of the heart turns from this present life, the more the opposition of the world mounts up. Hence it is that those who strive after and do that which is good struggle under a burden of afflictions. For though they have turned away from earthly things, they are harassed with increasing tribulations. But, according to the word of the Lord, they shall bring forth fruit in patience, and after their time of tribulation they shall be received into rest above because they have borne their cross in patience.

GREGORY THE GREAT¹¹

Paul picked up the cross he had been given to bear and followed Christ on the road to martyrdom (Mk 8:34). His struggles bore much fruit.

He endured *shipwreck* so he might stop the shipwreck of the world; *a day and a night he passed in the deep*, so he might draw the world up from the depths of error; he was *in weariness* that he might refresh the weary; he endured smiting that he might heal those who had been smitten by the devil; he passed his time in prisons that he might lead forth to the light those who were sitting in prison and in darkness; he was *in deaths often* so he might deliver from grievous deaths; *five times he received forty stripes save one* that he might free those inflicted by the scourge of the devil; he was *beaten with rods* that he might bring them under *the rod and the staff* of Christ (Ps 23:4); he was *stoned*, that he might deliver them from the senseless stones; he was *in the wilderness*, that he might take them out of the wilderness; *in journeying*, to stop their wanderings and open the way that leads to Heaven; he was *in perils in the cities*, so he might show the city which is above; *in hunger and thirst*, to deliver from a more grievous hunger; *in nakedness*, to clothe their

unseemliness with the robe of Christ; set upon by the mob, to extricate them from the besetment of fiends; he burned, that he might quench the burning darts of the devil: *through a window was let down from the wall*, to send up from below those that lay prostrate upon the ground...What all the saints together have suffered in so many bodies, he himself endured in one.

CHRYSOSTOM¹²

Paul's life stands as a reminder of the power of setting a good example. If we patiently endure the hurdles Satan puts in our path and keep our eyes on God and His Kingdom, we demonstrate faith. God blesses our efforts with His grace, and we become stronger. Those witnessing this phenomenon are strengthened in their faith also. In this way, the tribulations Satan hoped would turn us away from God in bitterness and frustration can actually bring all involved closer to Him and turn evil to good. Though we may never find the answers to all our questions in this life, we may be sure that God is in control and will never abandon us.

Some [paths to the Lord] lead over hills and mountains, and others lead down a slope. To this He says: *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain shall be brought low*. Some of the paths are uneven, here they rise up, there they drop down; and they also are dangerous. To this He adds: *And the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain*. This is accomplished spiritually, through the power of the Savior. Before, the way of evangelical belief and living was difficult because worldly pleasures bore heavily on the minds of all men. But God, made man, *has condemned sin in the flesh* (Rom 8:3), and all things have become straight, unimpeded and easy to this end; nor will hill or valley now stand in the way of those who wish to go forward.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA¹³

¹ Toal, "First Sunday of Lent," Vol. Two, p.21.

² Schaff, "Homily XXIV," Vol. XII, p.390.

³ *ibid*, "Homily XXIII," p.389.

⁴ *ibid*.

⁵ Toal, "On the Mystical Church," Vol. One, p.92.

⁶ Schaff, "Homily XXV," p.396.

⁷ *ibid*.

⁸ *ibid*, "Homily XXIII," p.389.

⁹ *ibid*.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p.390.

¹¹ Toal, "Christian Moderation," Vol. One, p.401.

¹² Schaff, "Homily XXV," p.397.

¹³ Toal, "Fourth Sunday of Advent," Vol. One, p.75.