Make - **wk 13 – The Wolves Among Us**

**2 Cor – An ongoing conversation with Paul and a troubled church.**

**Ancient “Las Vegas.” Writing to a church he planted now struggling with division, sin, and shifty leaders.**

**Paul planted the church as an Apostle and spiritual father. Then some came in to tear down his work and character.**

**In chapter ten – he writes as a spiritual father – showing us what it means to be humble, strong, confident, meek, have a life of prayer, be consistent, authentic, and a deep understanding of God’s sovereignty.**

**He mentions those who came in to tear him down. They literally call Paul ugly, a terrible teacher, and a weak leader (10:10-16)**

**This chapter highlights his sarcasm. (As they talk trash about me - let me say this) 2 Corinthians 11:1 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! 2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you… (Can I be brutally honest with you? I have a godly jealousy for you / not of you!)**

**Human jealousy – Jealousy of something. an evil vice of wanting/envying something someone has (person, achievements, advantage = control & manipulation).**

**Godly Jealousy – Jealousy for their heart. It seeks to fiercely protect and encourage one’s well-being. A concern for their holiness, integrity, pursuits, and purity. Personal / passionate.**

**2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.**

**This is a spiritual notion, not physical. Like a father who gives his daughter to a groom on her wedding, I have loved you, protected you, and led you – so that I may give you to Christ.**

**My heart is deeply connected to your well-being and future.**

**That’s my heart for you as a pastor and as a parent. I have a godly jealousy for you - for my kids. I want to be able to say - God here they are... mature / pure / for you.**

**3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (Gen 3:1-5, Satan (Serpent) deceived Eve using half-truths & lies. The same was happening here.)**

**3 … led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

**It wasn’t just Paul that was being attacked – the very gospel and person and character of Jesus was being attacked.**

**Leaders/Pastors/Parents – We must protect the family from Wolves!**

**Protect from what? Protect from people - real people – from wolves!**

**What is a wolf? Matthew 7:15 - “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.**

**These are not simply unbelievers or the lost – but those who come to devour others for their own desires. They look like a sheep or a shepherd – but are there to consume others.**

**Paul’s long goodbye to Ephesus Elders: Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.**

**Wolves – walk among us. Seeking to use, defraud, confuse, and persuade the sheep. We must be watchful.**

**What are we to protect them from? Paul tells us what they do.**

**2 Cor 11:4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different Spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different Gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. (this is a counterfeit test)**

**\*\* Different Jesus proclaimed – What you are taught about Jesus. Fully God from eternity past the eternal one who has become fully man – the Messiah – the promised savior. Not a ghost or a man filled with God. But God of God – Christ fully in the flesh. Anything less is a lie.**

**\*\* Different Spirit received – We received the Holy Spirit at salvation. As opposed to demonic spirits / pagan / occult activity. Supernatural gifts that masquerade as from the HS. They appear powerful and spiritual but are lies. They claim Jesus with signs, but they are a false Spirit.**

**\*\* Different Gospel accepted - (1 Cor 15:1-11)**

**The deity, death, resurrection of Christ for forgiveness of Sins – which must be received by faith. It is not doing justice, good works, penance, purgatory, or rituals. We are saved by grace through faith. Anything added or removed is not the gospel.**

**(after all this he says) …you put up with it readily enough.**

**Sarcasm - meaning, why are you putting up with it? You embrace them, but they are poison! Stop! Put them away!**

**He echoes this in - Galatians 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (anathema – lit. cut off and devoted to God for judgment!)**

**1. We must safeguard our family from false teaching!**

**Paul says to beware - there are false teachers who misuse and distort Scripture, changing who Jesus is and distorting the Bible.**

**The obvious - world religions, cults, the occult, paganism.**

**But not so obvious = it’s creeping into churches – expound.**

**Parents, be involved in what your kids put in their brains. Media/culture friends/classes - lies of the enemy to deceive & lead away.**

**Some false teachers are - great teachers – college professors, actors, great musicians, TV preachers… but don’t buy the lies.**

**2 Cor 11:5 Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. (these super-duper apostles - sarcasm) 6 Even if I am unskilled in speaking, I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things. (Maybe I’m not the greatest speaker - to their standards - but I know what I’m talking about! And, it’s from the heart!)**

**7 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches (sarcastic) by accepting support from them in order to serve you.**

**This is not about – not paying a pastor, Paul said in -**

**1 Cor 9:14 – “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.**

**Paul, while in Corinth, eventually received a living wage from Philippi, though he was not with them. Acts 18:1-5, Phil 14 - weekend ministry (tentmaker) then to dedicated daily to the preaching.**

**This is about a church trying to own and control him w/money. Paul did not want the chains. But now they're paying wolves.**

**9 And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. (upper Greece - Philippi) So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. (Lower Greece – Corinth) 11 And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! (sarcasm- of course I do! God knows it!)**

**2. We must secure our family from the users! - people who use you**

**Paul says – these false teachers only want your money.**

**There is a difference between making a living vs. getting rich.**

**Pastors, leaders, and preachers teaching false hope and a false Jesus to pad their pockets and estates. (1 Peter 5:1-4)**

**\*\* Users - friends, boy/girlfriends, boss, even a church.**

**11:12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, (I will not back down) in order to undermine the claim (“Undermine” - I will try trip them up. Lit. to cut off and remove) of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. (sarcasm – because they don’t!) 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising (masquerading) themselves as apostles of Christ. (They are…)**

**False – they are not preaching words from God – twist the gospel.**

**Deceitful – they intentionally lead people astray – hidden agendas.**

**Disguising – they look like strong spiritual leaders but are fake.**

**14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, (Satan’s servants) also, disguise (masquerade) themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. (they will ultimately get what they deserve)**

**3. We must defend our family from the phony’s!**

**As a pastor, I am to protect you from the fakes, the frauds, the tricksters, the charlatans, the shams, the swindlers, the imposters…**

**Don't be fooled - even wolves can do good things.**

**Satan is referred to three forms by which he tempts us:**

**1. A subtle serpent. 2. A roaring lion. 3. An angel of light**

**Open your eyes! Satan does not usually come with red horns and tail or scary. But, in nice clothes smiling and saying positive things that tickle the ears – and offering gifts.**

**(This verse decribes what is happening in today’s churches) 2 Tim 4:3 - For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.**

**They are "servants of Satan" - v15 - Fake and phony friends and preachers - whose end is to take you down with them.**

**Parents, be aware - of that guy who says he is a follower of Jesus – but is a wolf. He looks and talks good, but…**

**16 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. (I'm no dummy - but if you still think I am, then put up with this fool and listen to me... funny!) 17 What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. (This is coming from my heart – not the Lord) 18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. (They like to boast about their credentials – let me give you mine)**

**This next part is full of sarcasm 19 For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves! (sarcasm - you think you’re so wise – but you listen to these fools) 20 For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, (lords over you) or strikes you in the face. (You love those who abuse you and use you – you embrace those who enslave and lie to you - You listen to & put up with horrible people) 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!**

**I am embarrassed to say I am not strong enough to abuse you.**

**You are stronger than me to put up with that – I can’t.**

**You love those authoritarian controlling super apostles!**

**4. We must shield our family from the controllers!**

**Wolves like to control you - v. 20. Why are you putting up with those who enslave you, exploit, take advantage of you?**

**Unfortunately, people often allow themselves to be enslaved - to a person, boss, boyfriend, coach, beliefs, church… Leaders / Parents – look out!**

**V. 19-20 - Paul could not figure out why they were putting up with it. You shamefully allow it. You won't listen to me - but you listen to that guy?!**

**There are pastors who try to control, manipulate, & guilt you.**

**Paul says, let me tell you what being a leader looks like- are you ready?**

**21b …But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. (They are foolishly bold in their lies - I too will be foolishly bold too) 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. (I am to my core Jewish – from a Judean tribe in Israel – with Jewish blood and descendants – are they? I am more Jewish than they are – sarcasm) 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one (mocking their claims) - I am talking like a madman - with far greater labors, (then he goes in an unexpected direction – here are my credentials… ) far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. (Duet 25:3 – restricts beatings to 39 lashes, least they kill them) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, (crossing raging waters) danger from robbers, (travel risks) danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, (often mobbed and attacked) danger in the wilderness, (wild animals and travel conditions) danger at sea, (storms and near death) danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (To top it off, I worry about churches like you every day!)**

**29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? (I feel beat and weak - but I keep on going) Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? (I battle temptation, but don't let it get the best of me) 30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. (How’s that for a Christian job description? Who’s in?)**

**BTW - He could’ve boasted of his great achievements, education, being a Pharisee among Pharisees, being taught by the greatest Bible teacher of his time, going to the greatest school of his time, his ministry experience, the miracles that followed, his many visions, how he planted more churches, been to more countries, lead more people to Christ – he was possibly one of the greatest minds of that era – prolific writer (1/3 of the NT), hand-picked post-resurrection Apostle - but he didn't boast of these things… instead he boasted in the scars and trials.**

**11:31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. (God knows it’s all true – then he tells of more trials) 32 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, (the city was on lock down just to catch me - that is how dangerous and big I am) 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands. (I barely made it out alive...) 12:1 I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it… (I could tell you more - but I don't know if you're even listening, what's the point...)**

**Next week he continues unpacking his “credentials” with a vision he received and his unanswered prayers.**

**5. We must avert our family from the glory chasers**

**False teachers are self-glory chasers – they like the spotlight.**

**Glory junkies - they want the affirmation, the position, the popularity, the acknowledgment, the parking space, the title; they like the recognition, the badge... look at me! I'm awesome!**

**\*\* You can always tell the countries with dictators – their face is on everything. Same thing in church. Self-promoters.**

**2 Cor 10:17 “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 18 For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.**

**Paul is clear - Jesus gets the glory – it is all about him!**

**Nothing I have gone thru compared to what Jesus did for us.**

**If there is anything good in me - anything done right – it is the Lord. Every gift, every ability. Every achievement – is the Lord.**

**Romans 11:36 - For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.**

**God gets all the credit. We don't need to peddle our accomplishments. Our successes will be read in others’ lives, and we will be rewarded in heaven. God gets the victory here.**

**Paul says - my trials, suffering, victories, accomplishments - Jesus gets the glory. For the Glory of the cross, that's my story.**

**One day my kids will be grown, they will go their own way - and their life will be my story. One day I will be gone – will you be serving the lord for God’s glory? What will your story say?**

**A few walkaways:**

**\*\* Wolves often come as friendly, cuddly sheep**

**Not every “Christian” book or teacher is from Jesus.**

**Not every person who claims Jesus is a representative of Jesus.**

**\*\* You can’t passively let the wolves hang with the sheep**

**Paul was not willing to sacrifice truth for unity.**

**Listen - there are those out there who want to lead you and your family astray - to take them down the path of the enemy.**

**We can’t sit back and watch them get picked off**

**Paul says a good leader/parent does something about it!**

**\*\* Living for and serving Jesus can be hard**

**We see in the trial of Paul - following Jesus is not a cake walk.**

**Doing the right thing can often be harder than you ever imagined.**

**Here is the reality of leading - sometimes - IT'S HARD!**

**Being a good leader / good parent is sometimes hard.**

**If this was a description of what following Jesus meant churches would look different.**

**Living for and serving Jesus can be hard – but it’s filled with purpose – life – hope – joy – and the presence of Jesus.**

**Hebrews 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**