

2 Corinthians 11:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

Analysis

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. Paul's verdict on the 'super-apostles' is devastating: pseudapostoloi (ψευδαπόστολοι, 'false apostles'), ergatai dolioi (ἐργάται δόλιοι, 'deceitful/fraudulent workers'). These are not merely mistaken but actively deceptive—dolioi implies craftiness, treachery, bait-and-switch tactics.

The participle metaschēmatizomenoi (μετασχηματιζόμενοι, 'transforming/disguising themselves') describes ongoing masquerade. They **transform themselves into apostles of Christ**—wearing apostolic costume, using Christian vocabulary, claiming divine authority, yet serving Satan. This is identity theft on a spiritual scale. They are not what they appear to be.

The contrast with genuine apostles is stark: true apostles are sent by Christ (Gal 1:1), preach Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:2), display Christ-like character (2 Cor 6:4-10), and refuse to peddle God's word for profit (2:17). False apostles are self-appointed, preach themselves, display worldly credentials, and exploit the flock financially (11:20). The disguise is sophisticated but the fruit exposes them.

Historical Context

False apostles were an early church problem (Rev 2:2; 1 John 4:1). These itinerant teachers claimed apostolic authority—possibly connection to Jerusalem apostles or eyewitness status. Their credentials, eloquence, and Jewish background gave them

credibility, making their false teaching more dangerous than obvious heresy. Churches needed discernment to distinguish true from counterfeit.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What are the marks of false apostles today—how do we distinguish genuine from counterfeit Christian teachers and leaders?
2. In what ways do false teachers 'transform themselves' to look authentic—what disguises should we watch for?
3. How can we develop discernment to see past impressive credentials, eloquence, and Christian vocabulary to detect false teaching?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	γὰρ	τοιούτοι	ψευδαπόστολοι	ἐργάται	δόλιοι
G3588	For	such	are false apostles	workers	deceitful
G1063		G5108	G5570	G2040	G1386
μετασχηματιζόμενοι	εἰς	ἀποστόλους	Χριστοῦ		
transforming themselves	into	the apostles	of Christ		
G3345	G1519	G652	G5547		

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 2:2 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Galatians 1:7 (References Christ): Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Philippians 3:2 (Parallel theme): Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

1 John 4:1 (Parallel theme): Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Galatians 2:4 (References Christ): And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

Acts 20:30 (Parallel theme): Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Revelation 19:20 (Parallel theme): And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Colossians 2:8 (References Christ): Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Colossians 2:4 (Parallel theme): And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;