

Romans 16:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Analysis

For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly—Hoi gar toioutoi tō kyriō hēmōn Christō ou douleousin alla tē heautōn koilia (οἵ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν Χριστῷ οὐ δουλεύουσιν ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐαυτῶν κοιλίᾳ). Tō kyriō ou douleousin (οὐ δουλεύω τῷ κυρίῳ, do not serve the Lord) exposes false motive. Tē koilia (τῇ κοιλίᾳ, the belly) symbolizes fleshly appetites—greed, sensuality, self-interest (Philippians 3:19, 'whose god is their belly'). False teachers use religion for personal gain, not God's glory.

And by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple—Kai dia tēs chrēstologias kai eulogias exapatōsin tas kardias tōn akakōn (καὶ διὰ τῆς χρηστολογίας καὶ εὐλογίας ἐξαπατῶσιν τὰς καρδίας τῶν ἀκάκων). Chrēstologias kai eulogias (χρηστολογία καὶ εὐλογία, good words and blessings) are persuasive rhetoric, smooth talking. Exapatōsin (ἐξαπατάω, deceive/seduce) indicates intentional deception. Tōn akakōn (τῶν ἀκάκος, the simple/innocent) are naive believers, trusting and unguarded. False teachers target the vulnerable—using flattery, charisma, eloquence to manipulate.

Historical Context

Paul's warning echoes OT prophets: false prophets prophesy peace for pay (Micah 3:5, 11), shepherds feed themselves not the flock (Ezekiel 34:2-3), greedy dogs never satisfied (Isaiah 56:11). Jesus warned of false prophets in sheep's clothing

(Matthew 7:15). Peter described false teachers as greedy, exploiting believers with fabricated stories (2 Peter 2:1-3). Church history confirms the pattern: Montanists (2nd century), Gnostics, prosperity preachers, cult leaders—using religious language for personal enrichment. Paul's warning remains urgent: test teachers by fruit, doctrine, and motive (1 John 4:1, 'test the spirits').

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you identify those who 'serve their belly' (tē koilia douleuō) rather than Christ—what are the signs of false teachers?
2. What makes 'good words and fair speeches' (chrēstologia kai eulogia) so effective in deceiving the simple—why is eloquence dangerous?
3. How can believers cultivate discernment to avoid being 'simple' (akakos)—innocent yet not naive, trusting yet not gullible?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	γὰρ	τοιοῦτοι	τῷ	κυρίῳ	ἡμῶν	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστῷ	
G3588	For	they that are such	G3588	Lord	our	Jesus	Christ	
G1063		G5108		G2962	G2257	G2424	G5547	
οὐ	δουλεύουσιν	ἀλλὰ	τῇ	ἐαυτῶν	κοιλίᾳ	καὶ	διὰ	τῆς
not	serve	but	G3588	their own	belly	and	by	G3588
G3756	G1398	G235		G1438	G2836	G2532	G1223	
χρηστολογίας	καὶ	εὐλογίας	ἐξαπατῶσιν	τὰς	καρδίας			
good words	and	fair speeches	deceive	G3588	the hearts			
G5542	G2532	G2129	G1818		G2588			
τῶν	ἀκάκων							
G3588	of the simple							
	G172							

Additional Cross-References

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

Matthew 7:15 (Parallel theme): Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Philippians 3:19 (Parallel theme): Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Micah 3:5 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

2 Peter 2:3 (Word): And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

1 Timothy 6:5 (Parallel theme): Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

2 Thessalonians 2:10 (Parallel theme): And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Jude 1:16 (Word): These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

Proverbs 22:3 (Parallel theme): A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Matthew 24:24 (References Christ): For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

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