In light of the fact that the Corinthians were so easily impressed by human ability and importance, Paul reluctantly begins to defend his apostleship to them. His fear that they were listening to the false apostles was not motivated by ego but out of a concern for their spiritual well-being. He did not want them to believe the corrupted version of the gospel that the false apostles were teaching.

Verses 1-2: Paul has just stated that the self-commendation of these false apostles is worthless since it's God's approval alone that matters (2 Cor. 10:12, 18). Yet Paul feels compelled to begin to defend his own qualifications as an apostle because of his "jealousy" over the Corinthians as the one who led them to Christ. He recognizes the danger that they could be led astray from Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent <u>beguiled</u> *[decieved]* **Eve through his <u>subtilty</u>** *[craftiness; cunning]***"** – Paul compares the danger of the Corinthians following the teaching of these false apostles to Eve's deception by Satan in Gen. 3. What he implies here is stated more explicitly in vs. 13-15. These false apostles are actually working for Satan rather than for Christ, and Paul fears that the Corinthians will accept them and their teaching.
"so your minds should be <u>corrupted</u> *[destroyed; ruined]* **from the <u>simplicity</u>** *[singleness; sincerity]* **that is in Christ"** – Paul fears that the Corinthians understanding of the gospel would be ruined or led astray from the singleness of focusing on Christ alone. These false apostles were mixing works with God's grace, teaching that Christ's work on the cross was not entirely sufficient for salvation.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

"For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached" – "He that cometh" is any of these false apostles or anyone else that would come and preach another version of Jesus that is different from the One that Paul preached to them. "Another Jesus" would be one that teaches another way to salvation besides trusting in Christ's substitutionary death on the cross.
"or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received" – "Another spirit" would be a spirit that is not the Holy Spirit, such as the spirit of Satan. Paul warns us of spirits that will teach doctrines contrary to the faith (**1 Tim. 4:1** *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"*).
"or another gospel, which ye have not accepted" – The mixing of works with grace constitutes "another gospel," something that Paul condemned so strongly that he said it twice in a row (**Gal. 1:8-9** *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"*). This was the issue that caused Paul and Barnabas to have "no small dissension and disputation" with those who insisted that Gentiles keep the Mosaic Law (**Acts 15:1-2** *"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question"*).
"ye might well <u>bear</u> *[endure]* **with *him*"** – This is Paul's fear if someone came to Corinth preaching another Jesus or with another spirit, or preaching another gospel. He was worried that they might "bear" with this person instead of rejecting them and their teaching. Accepting this false gospel would instead be a rejection of the gospel Paul preached since they were contradictory.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. 6 But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things.

"For I <u>suppose</u> *[to reckon; to calculate]* **I was <u>not a whit</u>** *[in no way]* **behind the very chiefest apostles"** – The Corinthians had been swayed by the false apostles' criticisms of Paul and had begun to think of Paul as an inferior preacher of an inferior gospel. The expression "chiefest apostles" might refer to the twelve chosen by Jesus but many commentators believe Paul was making a sarcastic reference to these false apostles who boasted in their supposed apostolic credentials. Since Paul's calling as an apostle was different from the twelve apostles some may have argued that Paul was not a genuine apostle. Paul had already admitted to the Corinthians that his calling was not like the others (***1 Cor. 15:7-9*** *"After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God"*). Despite his unworthiness to be an apostle, Paul declares himself to be in no way inferior these false apostles and possibly even the twelve apostles.
"But though *I be* <u>rude</u> *[unskilled]* **in speech, yet not in knowledge"** – The Greek word for "rude" is *idiṓtēs* and gives us our English word "idiot." Paul acknowledged that he was not well-trained or skilled in the art of public speaking. However, he was well-skilled in the knowledge of the scriptures and of the revelation of the gospel that had given to him by Christ Himself. There are many preachers today that are more style than substance in their preaching but Paul says that he was not this type of preacher. He focused on the knowledge of the scripture.
"but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things" – It was evident to the Corinthians that Paul's priority was to share the knowledge of the gospel of Christ and not to impress people with himself. This is the reason that he first came to Corinth with "fear and trembling" (**1 Cor. 2:1-5** *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"*).

7 Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

"Have I committed an offence in <u>abasing</u> *[humbling]* **myself that ye might be exalted"** – Instead of putting on a show to impress the Corinthians with his ability or importance, Paul instead humbled himself so that they could be exalted through the salvation that comes when the gospel is plainly declared and believed.
"because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?" – Paul did not charge a fee for them to hear the gospel. Jesus instructed his disciples to minister without charge when He sent them out preaching the kingdom (**Matt. 10:8** *"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give"*).

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them*, to do you service. 9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*.

"I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them,* to do you service" – While Paul was at Corinth, he financed his ministry with money and other gifts given to him by churches in other cities.
"And when I was present with you, and <u>wanted</u> *[lacking; to be in need]***, I was <u>chargeable</u>** *[to be a burden]* **to no man"** – Whenever Paul needing something (food, clothing, etc.) he did not want to burden the Corinthians to supply that need.
"for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied" – Paul's daily needs were supplied by what the churches of Macedonia (Philippi and/or Thessalonica) sent to him.
"and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*" – Paul had made the effort to avoid being a burden to the Corinthians and he intended to continue doing so. He states the reason in v. 12.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

"As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia" – Achaia was a Roman province in the southern region of the Grecian peninsula, the area where Corinth was located. Apparently these false apostles had been traveling throughout the province and entrenching themselves in various churches. Paul's boast was that he was setting himself apart from these false apostles by not being a burden to those to whom he ministered. The false apostles wanted the churches to support them.
"Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth" – Why did Paul avoid being a burden? Was it because he didn't love the Corinthians? Actually, his love for the Corinthians was one of the motivations and Paul declares that God was a witness to this fact.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

"But what I do, that I will do" – Paul has no intention of changing his mind about not being a burden to the Corinthians.
"that I may cut off <u>occasion</u> *[opportunity]* **from them which desire occasion"** – These false apostles desired to accept money from the Corinthians for their "services" and Paul wanted to deprive them of the opportunity of collecting it. Since Paul did not charge for ministering to the Corinthians, the false apostles would be compelled to give up their "fee" to maintain their claim of superiority.
"that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we" – The false apostles boasted that they were superior to Paul, but by removing their excuse for taking money he exposed their true motivations and demonstrated that they were not at all superior.

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

"For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, <u>transforming</u> *[changing the outward appearance]* **themselves into the apostles of Christ"** – Paul had hinted in v. 3 what these false apostles were when he compared them to Satan deceiving Eve. Now he plainly describes them as being false in their claims to be apostles that worked to deceive people. He then says that they had put on the appearance of being apostles of Christ but that was not their true nature. These men were quite likely not even saved.
"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" – This should come as no surprise, since their "boss" (Satan himself) often pretends to be an "angel of light." He presents himself as a source of truth when he is actually the source of lies (**John 8:44** *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it"*). Satan approached Eve in the garden as a source of truth but led her astray with lies (Gen. 3:4-5).

15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

"Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" – It is not out of the ordinary for Satan's ministers to use the same tactics as their master. It would be "standard operating procedure" in their deceptive work.
"whose end shall be according to their works" – These false apostles will receive the judgment that their deceptive works deserve.

Verses 16-33: Since the Corinthians have seemingly accepted these false apostles on the basis of their self-boasting, Paul engages in some admittedly foolish self-boasting in order to make a point. If the false apostles boasted in their own selves to prove their apostleship, Paul had even greater reasons for boasting than these false apostles. He lists a variety of reasons, including his bloodline as a Jew and the things that he had suffered for Christ.