

The Simplicity In Christ

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2Cor 11:1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me.

2Cor 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.

2Cor 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Enough centuries have now passed that the character of Christ has morphed far beyond what the first church at Jerusalem could have perhaps ever imagined. But, we know from these text verses that the apostle was painfully aware that this metamorphosis of what is declared to be Christ was already taking place, and would undoubtedly become even more unrecognizable as false apostles became more abundant and more daring in their interpretations of religious doctrine. In fact, he warned the church at Galatia: (Gal. 1:6-8) “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 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.” He did this because he was already seeing the perversion of teaching about what Christ was, and what His gospel was.

In this letter to the church at Corinth, Paul has given us a key to use in regard to staying close to the truth about Christ. The key is found in his phrase, “the simplicity that is in Christ.” This is the key, because every time in history when we see false teachers leading people away from the true Christ, the tools used are always relatively complex, or put another way, there is always a kind of intellectual or human devised “twist” to heresy that captivates the carnal mind and turns away from the simple truths of God. So, let’s look at Paul’s fear about the danger, then at the simplicity that is in Christ tonight and let’s use these things as an index for protecting ourselves from wandering afield in regard to the truths that are in Christ.

I. The nature of the apostle’s fear

- There are potentially multiple means by which this corruption can happen
- Human nature is susceptible to corrupting influences from a thousand directions and sources - because erroneous doctrines are adopted by the carnal spirit of who we are, they have the potential to corrupt what we are in our service to Christ
 - > Like viruses and bacteria in the air and on things around us, there is so much that has the power to corrupt in what is called the Christian religion that we are subjected to influences without even knowing it many times
 - > This corruption usually results in people dropping some principle of the Lord, changing the principle to adapt to modern views, or becoming tolerant of error in the church. We have some historical examples among so-called Christian religions:
 - The change from unleavened bread to any kind of bread or crackers in the Lord’s supper
 - The change from wine to grape juice in the Lord’s Supper
 - The change from baptism by immersion to a baptismal ritual that could be done by pouring a bowl of water over somebody’s head, or sprinkling somebody

- The change from believer-only baptism to baptism of infants, baptism of the unconverted, and acceptance of any church's baptism by any method
 - The change from church discipline to no discipline
 - The change from condemning sin to accepting practicing sinners as members in good standing (we are seeing a surge in this as it relates to homosexuality)
 - The change from membership by profession of faith and baptism, or by being recommended from another church of like faith and order to accepting members by statement regardless of past history
 - The change from men only as pastors to women as pastors
- Second part of the apostle's fear: It would be guile (deception) that accomplishes such a corrupting work
 - Examples:
 - > The tweaking of language to convey a different message about Christ than what the real truth is. This is a tactic often used by the devil to deceive those unprepared
 - > The adoption of a "or, it could be..." approach to teaching bible truth (ambivalence about fundamental truths)
 - > Adopting an "evolving religion" philosophy about the truths of Christ (this philosophy declares that as times change, the rules of religion must change to fit the times)

II. If we understand what the simplicity in Christ is, we have a defense against being corrupted

- Simplicity in His personal profile (understanding this simplicity gives us defense against getting notions that Christ the person is something He really is not)
 - > Christ exhibited no presumption, pride, arrogance, or exalted state as emissary from God
 - This is important for us to understand to combat ceremonialism, pomp, and presumption by religionists
 - > There are all kinds of "Christian" religions around today in which the church leaders occupy roles where they presume great distinction, great pomp, and demand reverence from their followers
 - Being called reverend, your worship, my lord, your honor, master, etc., etc.
 - Officiating over religious ceremonies in expensive and unique clothes such as robes, etc.
 - Attitudes of superiority; attitudes of exalted learning and intellectualism
 - > Contrast this with (Mat. 11:39) "...I am meek and lowly in heart."
 - > Or this: Philippians 2:6-8 "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
- Simplicity in His teaching - It is important to think on this facet of Christ when we begin to consider how many so-called Christian teachers use complex doctrines or philosophies to influence a following. Making religious obedience hard and something that the common man has to get guidance from religious leaders about has enabled many deceivers to lead people into corrupted worship and service.
 - > There is something to be said for having good bible colleges, good curriculum, and good bible scholars to teach students who want to learn, but the methods and lessons of the Master Teacher of all times was as simple as it gets

- He taught in the simplest of language using illustrations to fit the audience
 - He spoke the truths of God without exaggeration or double meaning when He was teaching His disciples
 - He spoke the truth when it was not popular or accepted
 - He was devoted to the message of God
 - His rules and guidance to us are simple
 - The way of salvation He taught to sinners was simple
- Simplicity in His pattern of life - We can suspect teachings from so-called Christian teachers when they live a life style that follows a pattern that appeals to, or gets its energy from the world
 - > Paul Crouch, Trinity Broadcasting Network, annual salary of \$409,306. Jan Crouch, \$361, 000. \$5,000,000, 9,500 square-foot house in Newport Beach with nine bathrooms, an elevator, a six-car garage, tennis court and pool with fountain. A TBN-owned, 80-acres estate in Dallas is worth \$10 million; 30 ministry-owned houses in California and scattered across the country at the Crouch's disposal and a \$7 million Canadair jet.
 - > Richard Stearns, president of World Vision, received \$384,772 in annual compensation.
 - > Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse, received \$368,115.
 - > Charles Stanley of In Touch Ministries at \$299,512.
 - > Pat Robertson of CBN at \$306,293.
 - > Billy Graham at \$451,707.
 - > John Hagee, television preacher and pastor of Cornerstone Church, SanAntonio. \$1.3 million from his ministry (GETV) and Cornerstone Church in 2003. San Antonio Express-News, June 2003.
 - As for Christ:
 - > No money
 - > One outfit
 - > No transportation
 - > No house
 - > No sophistication
 - > No convoluted purposes
 - > No ulterior motives - you could tell everything about His motives by His doings
 - > Simple demands
 - These are some of the things that represent the simplicity that is in Christ
 - These are things which we are to guard against being corrupted about
 - Our personal profile should be simple, and we should remember that a sophisticated jet-set Christ is not the Christ of the bible
 - Our teaching about God should be simple like the pattern for teaching laid down by Christ
 - Our pattern of life should be simple as we remind ourselves that our Master's life pattern was that way