

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *To Christ*

Paul, the beloved apostle who died daily (1 Corinthians 15.31) to fulfill the work of Christ that was entrusted to him (Acts 20.24), had one passion and that was Christ (Philippians 1.21). Whenever he saw brethren moving away from Christ, it must have been a torment to his soul (Philippians 3.18). He often exhorted and encouraged as if he was a father and a mother to those whom he served by the grace of God (1 Thessalonians 2.7-12). In serving, Paul led many to the Lord to be saved by grace through faith and then, in obedience to the Lord's own command (Matthew 6.33), led them to seek after Christ and His kingdom. Paul's heart was fixed on the celestial kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4.18 cv). When he exhorted, it was so that the brethren would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls or invites His people into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2.12).

The only way into the kingdom is through Christ, and Paul's life was an example of one seeking the kingdom by seeking to know Christ, to gain Christ, and to be found in Christ. In his passion for his Lord, Paul pressed on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (see Philippians 3.7-14). This was Paul's personal walk, but he often encouraged the brethren to walk following his example, as well as that of others who followed the same pattern (Philippians 3.17).

Now, when he heard of the spiritual condition of the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote them letters in which he poured out his heart of concern. In his second epistle, he wrote an exhortation that is the topic of this article.

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity {of devotion} to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11.2-3 NASB)

This is not only a word to a people who lived 2,000 years ago but to a people today. It is a word to us who believe on Jesus, and we must heed this word. The Lord's people are faced with a most serious danger that can be traced back to the garden of Eden nearly 6,000 years ago. We too can be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Sadly, many in our day are being led astray.

To understand what is meant by this word, first let us consider Daniel, the prophet, who saw the coming kingdom as he was given vision of the Son of Man coming and being presented dominion, glory, and a kingdom.

"I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *To CHRIST*

given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and {men of every} language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7.13-14 NASB)

What a tremendous vision! Daniel was given insight into the end times, after which he was told: **“But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase”** (Daniel 12.4 NASB). God sealed the revelation given to Daniel until the end, at which time it would be revealed to a people, yet future. Daniel was told that the wise shall understand (Daniel 12.10 NKJ).

Dear brethren, we are at the end, closer than most Christians realize, and Daniel’s vision has been opened up to those who have an ear to hear what the spirit is saying.

Daniel was told that a day would come when many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase. Who can deny that we are in these days? Thousands upon thousands of people are traveling freely back and forth across this world. Knowledge in the last century figuratively exploded, and technology grew in step with knowledge.

When technology began to flourish worldwide, during the last century in particular, it was presented as the answer to many challenges of life. Many said that life would get easier for man. He would have more time on his hands as technology would assist him to do more things that in the past took much manual labor and time. In essence, the standard of living for many people would improve. In fact, with technology, the standard of living for most people living in the modernized countries has improved. However, when we look at the modern, technologically sophisticated nations of the world, we do not see people with more leisure time but a people who are busier than ever. It takes more effort and resources to maintain a high standard of living. Consequently, people are truly going back and forth in a state of near frenzy. In essence, things have become more complex, not less complex, with technology.

The spirit of the world.

What is driving this frenzy? I propose that it is what Paul called *the spirit of the world [kosmos]* (1 Corinthians 2.12). Unfortunately, much of Christendom seems to be governed more by this spirit than by the spirit of God, and it has become as complex (and confused) as the world. As the world runs to and fro in an ever-quickenning pace, so does much of the Christian world run to and fro in an almost endless frenzy of doing things “for God.” Many of the world’s techniques, strategies, programs, methodologies, etc. have been adopted by so much of the visible “church” in our day that it is difficult to discern the line of demarcation between that which has the name of Christ on it and that which lies in the power of evil.

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

This spirit can be seen in many Christians whose lives seem to be just as frantic and complex as the lives of those who are of the world. The spirit of the world is dictating the lives of the ones who are to be *in* the world but *not of* the world (John 17.11, 14). Many seem to want all that the world can offer, and they want it *now*, in this life. It is as if Christians have been transported back in time to the garden of Eden when the serpent deceived Eve, and they have believed the lie. “You can have it all, *now!* Go for it!”

The father of lies, the ruler and god of this world (John 14.30; 2 Corinthians 4.4), was slithering amongst the beauty of the garden to bring ruin upon man and God’s restored earth. The serpent of old approached Eve on that fateful day, not for a friendly conversation to help man but to destroy man and rob him of his right to have dominion over this earth as God intended it to be (i.e., in glory).

Let them.

To understand what was at stake in the garden, we need to understand the purpose in the creation of man and how man was to fulfill this purpose.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1.26-27 NASB)

God made man in His image to rule over His creation. But notice that God said to let *them* rule, and then it is recorded that He made *them* male and female. In other words, the male and the female make up *them* that are to rule. The male was not meant to rule alone. He had to have a helpmate if he was to rule over this earth. To state it another way, God set the principle that man cannot rule without a helpmate. There must be a man and a woman. Creation must have a father and a mother, for our God and Creator is both.

God first formed the man, then gave him one command and said that man needed a helper.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” (Genesis 2.16-18 NASB)

It was not good for man to be alone, for he needed a helper to rule, and this helper had to be bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. She was called *woman* because she came out of Adam’s body (Genesis 2.21-24).

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

Surely, the serpent was observing all that was transpiring on the earth, and it knew what it had to do. In fact, it knew what it had been created to do, that is, to deceive man and continually challenge God's plan for man. I know this goes against the grain of traditional teaching, but it was the Lord God who made the serpent craftier than any beast of the field. In other words, He created the serpent for a particular purpose, and it began to fulfill that purpose in the garden and has continued to our day as well.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Genesis 3.1-7 NASB)

The serpent's deception was to get Eve's eyes off Adam and for her to break God's command so that she could not rule with him. If he could deceive her in this way, then Adam could not rule as God had intended. Adam must have known this truth as well, so that when Eve partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he too partook in the hope that either he could redeem her and himself, or God Himself would redeem them both. At any rate, love of his body demanded Adam to go along with his helpmate. If he had not, then he would have broken the much higher law of love (compare Genesis 2.18-25 with Ephesians 5.22-33). I call this body love.

In reading the account, notice that when Eve looked, she looked at the tree, not so much at the fruit. She looked at the outward appearance of it and liked what she saw. The seed of sin was beginning to take root in her when she looked upon the tree in a lustful way. Her heart became set on that which she saw with her eyes. She ate the fruit because she liked the tree. In reading the account, it is easy to see the birth of the spirit of the world.

John the apostle wrote: **For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world** (1 John 2.16 NASB). James wrote: **But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accom-**

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

plished, it brings forth death (James 1.14-15 NASB). This pretty much sums up what happened in the garden on that fateful day.

It is interesting that the serpent is described as crafty; however, it is not very original, for it tried *unsuccessfully* to tempt the Lord Jesus in the same way that it *successfully* tempted Eve.

The devil's temptation of the Lord.

As we know, after His baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days; and when they had ended, He became hungry (Luke 4.1-2). It was at the time of His greatest physical vulnerability that the devil appeared to Jesus.

And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You to guard You,' and, 'On their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'" And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. (Luke 4.3-13 NASB)

The devil's strategy is seen with a little more clarity in this temptation. It tried to tempt Jesus into taking the kingdoms of this world without the cross. In some respects, the devil made a legitimate offer to give Jesus the kingdoms, for the devil is the ruler of the kingdoms of the world; a disqualified ruler, defeated at Calvary, but waiting for its final overthrow in the day of the Lord. However, if Christ had accepted the offer, then He would have come under the devil's rule. In essence, the devil said: "You can have it all *now*. You don't have to do it God's way. You can do it without God and without the cross." This also was at the heart of the temptation of Eve: "You can rule without God. You don't have to wait for God to bring you into the place of ruling. You can have it all *now*." This is the same lie that the devil feeds to God's people today: "You don't need the cross. You can have all that the world offers *now* and *without* the cross."

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *To Christ*

Thus, within the devil's temptation, we see the same pattern in the garden, as given by John, and as presented through the Lord's temptation. The following chart compares the three sets of Scriptures.

Genesis 3.1-7	1 John 2.16	Luke 4.3-13
Tree was good for food.	... Lust of the flesh ...	Jesus was hungry and was offered bread to satisfy His flesh,
I want it!	Go for it, Now!	<i>but</i> He did not eat!
Tree was a delight to the eyes.	... Lust of the eyes ...	Jesus saw with His eyes all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,
I want it!	Go for it, Now!	<i>but</i> He did not take them!
Tree was desirable to make one wise.	... Boastful pride of life ...	Jesus had the authority and power to command angels,
I want it!	Go for it, Now!	<i>but</i> He did not command them.

Thank God, Jesus was not tempted to fall for the lie. His time had not come, and He would not be moved to disobedience to His Father's will.

Fallen man's response to the temptation is: *"I want it. Go for it now."* The response of the last Adam, the second Man, is: *"I will not eat now. I will not take them now. I will not command them now."*

Man's response embodies the spirit of the world and shows why the world in which we live is so complex today. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was at the heart of the temptation of Eve and stood in stark contrast to the tree of life. Partaking of the tree of knowledge without the tree of life only leads to ruin and confusion.

Why has the world become so complex? It is because the tree of knowledge is almost fully grown and is now a massive tree that is filling the whole earth. The world needs the tree of life. Of course, this is meant in a metaphorical way. It needs the Son of God.

Knowledge has increased until it has reached the heavens, just like the tower of Babel did in the days following the flood (Genesis 11.3-9). *Babel* stands for confusion. Confusion is the state to which the world is headed as this tree

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

continues its growth. The spirit of the world is reaching full maturity throughout the world, and it is only a matter of time until it will be judged.

Now, this leads us to Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians.

The Corinthian assembly was having a difficult time. Instead of being spiritual, they were fleshly, carnal and, in many respects, no different than the natural man in Adam. They were caught up in spiritual gifts that were mixed with their carnality instead of being caught up with Christ, joined in heart with Him. They did not have a very good testimony, and they were listening to and yoking themselves with the wrong people.

Others had come into the church as apostles and began casting doubts on Paul's apostleship, but many of them were false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11.4-13). Apparently, these deceivers were from the camp of the Jews who continually hounded Paul (2 Corinthians 11.22-23; 1 Thessalonians 2.14-16). Surely, these things cut into the heart of the one who had poured out his life so that others might live. Paul cried out: **I protest, brethren, by the boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily** (1 Corinthians 15.31 NASB). We see this again in the second letter to the Corinthians as Paul poured out his heart of love for them.

Jealous for you.

I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity {of devotion} to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11.1-3 NASB)

It was as if Paul could not contain himself. This passionate brother had such a heart of love for those whom he had taught that he was willing to appear foolish to them. He would have done anything to win their hearts fully for the Lord. Paul was not trying to create a great institution, or ministry with the Lord's name on it, or a great following of Paul. No; he was concerned solely for their relationship with Christ. Contrast this with the many ministries that have been founded by men in our day. It seems that many ministries are more concerned with emphasizing things and collecting money.

Paul was jealous for them as God was jealous for them: **"I am jealous over you with God's own jealousy"** (2 Corinthians 11.2 WNT).

The Greek word for *jealous* is *zelos*, which means "zeal," such as the zeal of a husband for his wife. The word *zelos* comes from *zeo*, which means "to be hot." Thus, Paul was saying that he was hot with zeal for the Corinthians just as the

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

Lord, as their husband, was hot for them. This is one of the most passionate statements a person can make in relation to others.

We see a similar cry in the epistle of James.

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4.4-8 NASB)

James wrote to the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, which refers to the lost tribes of Israel. James must have heard of the way they were living and wrote them this very strong exhortation. We could say that they were still living like Jews of the flesh and not like the one new man in Christ *in spirit*. We know that in the sight of God the nation of Israel had become a harlot, having wed herself to the world around her instead of being separated unto God as His wife. They were friends with the world; and for this reason, the Jewish people according to the flesh were cast aside as God’s nation.

Without saying it directly, James exhorted them that they were living according to the spirit of the world and not according to the spirit of God. They were still joined or wed to the world from which they were called out. A friend of the world (world system) is an enemy of God. This was the general condition of Israel when the Lord came the first time. But the ones to whom James wrote were of the new nation in Christ (1 Peter 2.9), and they needed to start living accordingly. It was not as if they, as Christians, had come out of the world system and had fallen back into the world. No; after their conversion, they had continued living as Jews who never came out of the world rather than Jews who had come out of the world unto Christ. They were saved and yet living by an old life.

In light of this bad situation, James invoked the jealousy of God just like Paul did: **He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us.**

The Greek word for *jealous* used in this verse is *epipotheo*, which means “to yearn, to dote upon, i.e. intensely crave possession.”

God intensely craves His people. His love is not like our natural love. His love is a love that is jealous for His people. God has revived our spirit that was dead to Him and has given us His spirit by which to live. Our spirit and the Holy Spirit within us are to be one, and as such, God desires our spirit to be holy and undefiled so that we can have unbroken communion and fellowship with Him. God jealously desires

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

our spirit that dwells within us so that we can have a reverent love relationship with Him. But there is a danger; our spirits can become defiled by the spirit of the world. Paul gave a warning to the Corinthians regarding this danger.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7.1 NASB)

In the verses preceding this verse, Paul exhorted them about being yoked to unbelievers and quoted God's promise to dwell in and among His people and His call to "come out from among them (those of the world) and be separated unto God" (see 2 Corinthians 6.11-18).

The spirit of God is jealous for our spirit that we do not become defiled through the spirit of the world. **Be holy, for I am holy!** (1 Peter 1.16 NKJ). Because of their defilement, James exhorted the brethren to humble themselves before God, resist the devil (the chief of the spirit of the world), and draw near to God so that He would draw near to them. *Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* They were living a double life.

The double mind is a double soul (*dipsuchos*). It means that our soul is vacillating between two different realms as represented by the spirit of the world and the spirit of God. We are made of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5.23). Our spirit must remain undefiled to have unbroken fellowship with God through His spirit. Our soul must submit to the spirit in order to live by the spirit. Thus, our soul must choose which realm in which to abide. If our soul is to be saved in *this* day so that we will be counted worthy to reign with Christ in *His* day, we must make a choice (see Matthew 16.24-26).

Dear brethren, are we any different today? Has the spirit of the world overtaken us? Are we living with a double soul? Do we choose the spirit of God or the spirit of the world? Let us heed this exhortation.

Betrothed to Christ.

Now, returning to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we see the heart of this jealousy. It is the heart of a husband for his wife, which speaks of a love relationship.

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. (2 Corinthians 11.2 NASB)

To the believers in Rome, Paul wrote: **Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God** (Romans 7.4 NKJ). To the believers in Ephesus, Paul unveiled some of the greatest truths regarding Christ and His ecclesia (church) by

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *To Christ*

comparing the two to a husband and wife. It was a great mystery, but Paul opened the door to behold this mystery.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also {does} the church, because we are members of His body. (Ephesians 5.25-30 NASB)

So, Paul's loving heart was to betroth the brethren to **Another**, the One who was raised from the dead. Those who have conquered (overcome) and are clothed in the fine linen, the righteous acts of the saints (Revelation 2-3; 19.8), will be presented to Christ as a pure virgin, the bride of the Lamb. Paul was continually exercised that the brethren would see this on-high calling and walk in a manner worthy of it, for those who do not will be excluded from this glorious destiny in the next eon. They will be disqualified from the first or *out*-resurrection.

Paul never took his eyes off the glory that is coming for those who are in Christ. He saw ahead to that glorious day when Christ will have His bride in all her glory. She will be bone of His bones. It is just like the beautiful picture of Eve being fashioned from a rib taken from Adam's body and God presenting Eve to Adam as his bride. In her unfallen state, she was the most beautiful bride. There was no shame, no spot, no wrinkle, and no blemish. She stood in glory before Adam. **And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed** (Genesis 2.25 NASB). This is as it will be in the day of Christ. Betrothed to Christ! Clothed in His righteousness and glory! No shame!

As the serpent deceived Eve.

In his godly jealousy, Paul was quite alarmed over the spiritual condition of the believers assembled in Corinth, and he expressed his fear for them in the light of Eve's deception in the garden. They were in danger of being deceived in a like manner, which would have led to the same result. They were in grave danger of falling into the very thing from which they were delivered in Christ—the spirit of the world (1 Corinthians 2.12; see 2 Peter 2.18-22). They were looking at things outwardly, that is, from the world's view (2 Corinthians 10.7).

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds [thoughts] should be led astray [corrupted, ruined] from the simplicity and purity {of devotion} [singleness] to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11.3 NASB)

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

Paul saw the real danger, and it was the same danger that Eve faced in the garden—to be deceived by the serpent of old. Just as Eve was deceived, so can Christians be deceived. This deception has one purpose, and that is in reference to who will rule this earth in the age to come (Hebrews 2.5).

Paul was afraid that their minds would be led astray from Christ. Within our minds, we have thoughts. The Greek word for *minds* in this verse means “thoughts.” What happened to Eve? The serpent got her to take her eyes off Adam, and he spoke to her to plant a thought in her mind.

And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’ ... And the serpent said to the woman, “You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3.1b, 4, 5 NASB)

The first words out of the serpent’s mouth were lies, for he misquoted God’s command to Adam (Genesis 2.16). Nevertheless, the first woman looked at the serpent and the tree instead of the one to whom she was married. She listened to the serpent and accepted the thoughts.

Paul feared that the Corinthians were listening to the lies of men who said they were apostles, but they were not. They were looking at the outward appearance and presentation of these men. Undoubtedly, they looked good, and they presented themselves quite well. We could say that they were impressive, but so are many things of the world.

Paul saw through these lies, for his eyes were fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12.1-2). He knew that if the Corinthians listened to the wrong voices, being open to the wrong spirit, they too ran the risk of being deceived just like Eve; and they would fall short of the very purpose for which they were created and subsequently saved. Consequently, they would take their eyes off the last Adam and be disqualified for the prize.

Christ must have a bride to rule.

Adam is a type of Christ (Romans 5.14). Just as Adam could not rule without Eve, his wife, so Christ cannot rule without His wife. The Lamb must have and will have a bride. But the question is who will be found worthy in that day to be taken to His side as His bride? This is why Paul was so concerned for their spiritual walk. If they took their minds off Christ, they could be disqualified from entering *the reign of the heavens* as part of the bride of the Lamb in the oncoming eon, reserved for all found worthy to attain to the first resurrection.

Eve was betrothed to one husband, the husband given her by the Lord. We too are betrothed to one Husband. We have been given to Christ. It is as if Paul presented the brethren to Christ every place that he preached. He led them to the One to

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

whom they are to be wed in the day of Christ (Philippians 1.6, 10; 2.16). However, as Eve turned from her husband and listened to the serpent, so can we. We can turn away from the One to whom we are betrothed and become defiled, no longer a chaste virgin. In a sense, Eve lost her chastity when she listened to the serpent and not to her husband. The result was disaster not only for her but also for Adam and Adam's entire race. It led to the corruption or ruin of mankind. The order that had been restored in six days was again brought to a process of disorder that has progressed for another six days (6,000 years).

Paul was concerned that their thoughts would be led astray (corrupted, ruined). As God's apostle to teach the brethren, Paul knew that if they did not listen to him but rather listened to the false apostles who were accusing him, then they would be led away from the truth. This was a most serious situation.

In the Greek, *led astray* can mean "to shrivel or wither, i.e. to spoil." When the spirit of the world captivates our thoughts, our very soul, from which come our thoughts, will shrivel and rot just as bad food rots. Previously in his second letter, Paul pleaded with the Corinthians, for some were accusing Paul of walking according to the flesh (carnality). Paul protested.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.... (2 Corinthians 10.3-5 NASB)

Paul would not accept the thoughts of the enemy. He took every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. He brought everything to Christ. This was how he fought the battle, and it is how we are to fight in these last days of great deception. We need the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2.16).

Paul had presented them to Christ, not to the world. He had presented them to one Husband that one day they might be presented as a chaste virgin to Him. They could not be wed to Christ and to the world. They were in danger of mixing their thoughts with those of the false apostles and those of Paul, the true apostle. They were in danger of receiving a different spirit (2 Corinthians 11.4). We could say that they were living in two worlds and that they were double-souled. Although Paul did not make this direct claim, another way of stating this is that they had become complex and confused. Is this not what happens when one is doubled-souled? Things of life are no longer easy but more and more difficult. A double-souled person is tossed around like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind, unstable in his ways (James 1.6-8 NKJ). Is this not the condition of the world today? Is this not the fruit of the spirit of the world? Of course, it is!

Thank God; whenever he exposed a problem, Paul always gave the solution.

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *To Christ*

Folded together in cleanliness.

Paul's solution was Christ, and in this case, it was how one is to relate to Christ in thought.

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds [thoughts] should be led astray [corrupted, ruined] from the simplicity and purity {of devotion} [singleness] to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11.3 NASB)

What did Paul mean by this phrase? The various Greek words from which the word *simplicity* is derived give the meaning of singleness, such as being “folded together” or “braided together (twine or braid).” *Purity of devotion* may not be in the original Greek text; therefore, it is not found in some translations. However, *purity* means “cleanliness.” Also, some translations use *in Christ* and others use *to Christ*; however, contextually the word *to* conveys the proper meaning.

Another translation words this verse: **But I am afraid that, as the serpent in his craftiness deceived Eve, so your thoughts may be perverted from their simplicity and their fidelity to Christ (WNT).**

Since his emphasis was on thoughts, Paul was saying that their thoughts had to be braided together or folded together so that they formed a singleness toward Christ. Paul was calling the Corinthians back to Christ that their minds and their thoughts would be fully, singly devoted to Christ; their thoughts would be taken captive to the obedience of Christ; as those who were spiritual, they would have the mind of Christ. Simply, they would stop listening to the false voices and wrong spirits and listen to Christ. It was a call for them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7.1).

If they did not heed his warning, they were in grave danger of being perverted from their simplicity. Their thoughts would be like rotten food. The spirit of the world would pervert their minds.

Remaining within the context, this phrase refers to our attitude toward Christ, and this attitude is reflected in our thoughts. Are our thoughts single toward Christ, or have they been led astray to other things, that is, things of the world? Do we have a single-hearted loyalty to Christ, or do we have a divided loyalty? Are our thoughts toward Christ clean and pure, or are they defiled with the spirit of the world? Does the spirit of God, or the spirit of the world occupy our life?

If our thoughts are single and pure toward the Lord, there is one inevitable outcome. Not only will our thoughts be folded together with an undivided heart *for* Christ, but we will be folded together *with* Christ in heart as well. This speaks mightily of relationship. Paul did not state this directly, but it must be so.

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *To Christ*

Folded together with Christ in love.

Do you see the beauty of the word *simplicity*? “Folded together” or a “woven braid” speaks of *oneness*, which refers to our relationship with Christ. You cannot attain any greater relationship than a tightly woven braid or something that is folded together. This is to be our life in Christ. If we are folded together with Christ, we are like two lovers in an embrace. Is this not the relationship of a husband and wife?

The spirit of God is calling us to be folded together, even braided, with Christ. He is calling us to a life of holiness and purity before Christ. He is calling us to a living, reverent, love relationship with Christ, the One to whom we are to be presented as a chaste virgin in the kingdom of His glory.

Today, the Lord’s people are exhorted to shun and cut off the spirit of the world, and return to Christ. If our personal life has become complex and our loyalty to Christ has become divided because of the spirit of the world, then we must cut off everything that leads us away from the simplicity and purity. We must get off the train of this *kosmos* life that is growing stronger and stronger as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil grows to its full stature. It will rise, taking many with it, until it reaches the height of darkness in the sight of God, and then God will cut it down and burn it in the fire of His judgment.

If things in our own lives have become complex and frantic, what are we to do *today*? We are to do the same thing that all the saints down through the centuries have been exhorted to do. It is time to come back to *the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ*. It is time to come back simply to Christ.

Meekness and gentleness of Christ.

If we do heed this warning, will there be some change of character in our lives? Absolutely! Paul, who is our example, wrote to the Corinthians:

Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! (2 Corinthians 10.1 NASB)

Let us not confuse meekness with weakness, for meekness is not weakness. Paul was not a weak man, but he was a meek man. Jesus was not a weak Man, but He is the meek Man.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” (Matthew 11.28-30 NASB)

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *TO CHRIST*

What is meekness? It is humility. According to the English dictionary, *humility* is “the absence of pride or self-assertion.” A humble person is one who is not self-centered. In other words, such a one is not interested in promoting his self image but lays down his own life for the sake of others. Is this not our Lord Jesus?

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3.16 NASB)

Is not humility love in action? Jesus never did anything according to His own desires or will. He only did what the Father commanded. He never asserted His own rights but gave up His life so that we would have His life. This is the humility of Christ.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
(Philippians 2.8 NASB)

Because of the humility of His Son, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4.6). As Peter exhorted: **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time** (1 Peter 5.6 NASB).

When we are folded together with Christ, we are being yoked with the One who is gentle and humble in heart. When we are close to a humble person, we are influenced by his humility. As we are yoked with Christ, we too will learn of His ways and we will become like Him, gentle and humble in heart.

It is time to be folded together and yoked with our beloved Lord. If we are, then we are being prepared to enter His coming kingdom and to sit upon His throne as He has sat upon His Father’s throne for the last 2,000 years (Revelation 3.21). He has been gone a long time, but He is coming very soon to take possession of His inheritance (Psalm 2.8) and to share it with His lovely bride.

“Blessed are the gentle [meek], for they shall inherit the earth.”
(Matthew 5.5 NASB)

Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God! Let us not seek for the now; instead, let us seek for the glory of the kingdom. Let us take all our thoughts captive to His obedience, and as we do, let us dwell on His beauty. Let us learn how to be braided together with our loving Lord in this day so that, when the day comes, we will be prepared as His bride and run to Him in reverent, abiding love.

Let us be folded together with our Lord and live wholly devoted to the One who loves us and is loving us!

He jealously desires you!

SIMPLICITY AND PURITY *To CHRIST*

Scripture Abbreviations:

CV	Concordant Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NKJ	New King James Bible
WNT	Weymouth New Testament

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