

The Simplicity in Christ (2Corinthians 11:1-4)

- I. This study examines various means by which Satan frustrates the word of God, particularly in believers.
- II. Definitions.
 - A. corruption: The perversion of anything from an original state of purity.
 - B. simplicity: The state or quality of being simple in form, structure, etc.; absence of compositeness, complexity, or intricacy.
 - C. simple: Free from duplicity, dissimulation, or guile; innocent and harmless; undesigning, honest, open, straightforward.
 - D. beguile: *trans.* To entangle or over-reach with guile; to delude, deceive, cheat.
 - E. guile: Insidious cunning, deceit, treachery.
 - F. subtily: Acuteness, penetration, perspicacity. 3. Cunning, craftiness, guile.
- III. Observations.
 - A. There is a positive simplicity and a negative simplicity.
 - 1. The simplicity in Christ is obviously positive and commendable.
 - 2. Simplicity in the form of base thinking or willing ignorance is another story. **PRO 1:22; 9:4-6; PSA 94:8; HEB 5:12-14; 2PE 3:5.**
 - B. There is a positive subtily and a negative subtily.
 - 1. Subtily in the sense of gaining perspicacity (discernment, clearness of understanding, keenness of sight) is obviously positive and commendable. **PRO 1:1-4 c/w PSA 119:97-98; MAT 10:16; 2PE 3:18.**
 - 2. Subtily in the sense of crafty guile to deceive is another story. **MAT 26:4; ACT 13:10.**
 - a. There is a worldly wisdom which opposes God and is to be shunned. **ROM 1:22; JAM 3:14-15; JER 4:22 c/w ROM 16:19.**
 - b. Deep thought is not necessarily good thought. **PSA 64:6 c/w REV 2:24.**
 - 3. It is the lie of Satan that good and evil are indistinct or fluid and may be equally “known.” **GEN 3:5; ISA 5:20; ROM 3:8.**
 - C. There is a need to discern between unintentional deceit and intentional deceit.
 - 1. A deceived heart cannot see its own deception so as to be delivered from it. **ISA 44:20.**
 - 2. One may be a deceiver by simply repeating the same deception to others which holds himself captive. **ACT 26:9.**
 - 3. But one may be an intentional deceiver, as Satan. **EPH 4:14.**
- IV. An overview of **2CO 11:1-4**.
 - A. This epistle is written to the saints of the church of God in Corinth and to satellite saints in Achaia (**2CO 1:1**). They are believers by definition, therefore are born of God. **1JO 5:1.**
 - B. Paul was the father of their understanding. They had been begotten to his gospel and ways in Christ (**1CO 4:15-17**). His pure gospel was being threatened by rival teachers with a different message and agenda who might affect these converts. **2CO 11:13-15.**
 - C. The Corinthian saints had a history of idolatry and immorality (**1CO 12:2; 6:9-11**), the remnants of which still lingered. **2CO 12:21; 1CO 10:14, 19-22.**
 - 1. People with lingering sin or guilt issues are ripe candidates for alternative gospels that offer earned righteousness.

2. Satan's key to reel them in is to deceive them away from the message of grace. **GAL 2:21; 3:1.**
 3. But how does he do that when the message of "grace that saved dead sinners" is so plain?
 - D. Chief rivals of Paul's gospel were professed Hebrew Christians. **2CO 11:22-23.**
 1. They had monotheistic history to their credit. **DEU 6:4.**
 2. They had Jerusalem church membership to their credit. **ACT 15:24.**
 3. They also had a honed Pharisee sophistry with its rabbinical glosses which tended to confuse and obfuscate. **LUK 11:52.**
 - E. Paul draws a parallel between Satan's beguiling of Eve and false teachers beguiling the church.
 1. The church was espoused to its husband, Jesus Christ. **v. 2.**
 2. For the analogy to be fitting, Satan would seem to have beguiled Eve away from her husband, Adam, as well as from her Creator.
 - a. The Fall began as a marital tug-of-war: Satan pulling Eve away from Adam's headship, and she was not even a *silly woman*, per **2TI 3:6.**
 - b. John warns the elect lady to not entertain a deceiver. **2JO 1:10.**
 - c. Eve *gave heed* (careful attention, care, observation, regard) to a seducing spirit. c/w **1TI 4:1.**
 - d. There is wisdom in shutting the door to contradiction. **PRO 19:27.**
 3. A review of **GEN 2:15-17; 3:1-6** shows that it only took a few moments of separation, isolation, doubt-sowing and humanistic reasoning about the advantages of something other than what God had said to lay the groundwork for the Fall.
 4. Where Eve first gave way, was in mentally harboring for a moment the possibility insinuated by the serpent, of God not having her truest interests at heart, and of this "other" professing friend being more concerned for her than God.
 5. Did Satan "come" to Eve with a rival message that seemed to make sense? So, "...if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus..." (**2CO 11:4**).
 - F. This situation reinforces the importance of not being moved from First Principles, plain though they may be, reasoning from solid foundation and premise to a proper conclusion.
- V. All Scripture is profitable (**2TI 3:16**) but the New Testament given through Christ's apostles is a "...more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed..." (**2PE 1:19**).
- A. If the revelation given to Christ's apostles was not final, then it would not be "sure." Open-ended revelation implies *uncertainty*.
 - B. The N.T. writers wrote that we may "...know the certainty of those things..." (**LUK 1:1-4**).
 - C. Vision and prophecy were to be *sealed up* by the end of the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy, which week included Messiah's cutting off and Jerusalem's destruction. **DAN 9:24-27.**
 - D. Beware of any spirit whose message is that revelation was not completed by the ministry of those apostles who were *personal eyewitnesses* of Jesus Christ. **ACT 1:21-22; 1JO 1:1-3.**
 1. Such a spirit is saying that God's words as given were only part of the story: one could not by them truly know the spirit of truth so as to discern error. **1JO 4:6.**
 2. This is the spirit of Satan in the garden advancing the idea of a deceptive revelation from God that did not tell the whole truth about human potential, and that God's words were merely a covering of a deeper meaning.
 3. Run from the notion of "deeper meanings" which exceed the simplicity of word definitions and grammar! **2TI 1:13 c/w 2CO 1:13.**
 - E. There was sufficient plainness in the O.T. for a believer to know the difference between

right and wrong, know his duty, how to please God in service, etc. The Scripture was the chief advantage of the Jew. **ROM 3:1-2.**

1. But it also had its share of dark sayings and difficult prophecies.

PSA 78:1-2; PRO 1:5-6; ACT 8:30-31.

2. The Law was a veil through which occasional pinholes of light shone. They were "...shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (**GAL 3:23**).

3. The veil is taken away in Christ, Whose life, ministry, suffering, death, burial and resurrection fully satisfied the demand of the Law for righteousness and makes possible the understanding of the O.T. scriptures.

2CO 3:14; ROM 10:4; LUK 24:44-45.

F. The N.T. declared and written by the apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost is therefore a more excellent glory than the O.T., and accordingly presented with "...great plainness of speech" (**2CO 3:9-12**).

VI. God's people should be able to rejoice because of understanding God's word. **NEH 8:7-8, 12.**

A. Mind that they did not rejoice because the Levites explained away God's word!

B. Understanding is the key issue. **PRO 4:5, 7; 16:16.**

C. Without understanding, Satan makes off with the words of God. **MAT 13:19.**

D. Understanding is more important than gifts like tongues. **1CO 14:7-9, 18-20.**

E. Understanding fits us to know Christ and the Father. **1JO 5:20.**

F. Paul continually pressed and prayed for understanding. **COL 1:9; 2:2; 2TI 2:7.**

G. The words which God gave Paul for the opening of his understanding are the same words which Paul gave us to facilitate our understanding. **GAL 1:11-12 c/w EPH 3:1-4.**

1. There was no "elite" information lorded over the average believers who were not fit to be acquainted with the divine revelation. This counters the notion of double-standards in general (religion, politics, law, etc.).

2. The teacher and the hearer had the same words from the same Spirit and were therefore able to dialogue intelligently about them. **ACT 17:11-12.**

3. It is God's blessing that the lower echelon can therefore instruct their teachers, correcting them as needed. **JOB 32:5-10 c/w PSA 119:99-100.**

4. NOTE: Few things aggravate the elite more than to have one of the slobbs assume that he is on the same playing field as themselves. **JOH 9:30-34; 7:46-49.**

5. NOTE: False systems of religion and secular government both depend upon the assumption of an elite class with an elite information set that is not for the benefit of the lower classes who are merely expected to be supportive, compliant pawns.

6. NOTE: If any science cannot be questioned, it is not true science: it is dogma or propaganda.

7. It was an unusual characteristic of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ that He deemed all men equal before God's law, spoke with clarity, and therefore "...the common people heard him gladly" (**MAR 12:37**). **MAT 11:5 c/w JAM 2:5.**

H. Understanding is best promoted by plain speech that is readily understood and so fits the hearer with discernment and power. **HAB 2:2; 2CO 3:12; JOH 11:11-14; 16:29-30.**

I. Paul renounced and avoided all pseudo-intellectual arts that are not meant to convey understanding but rather to confound it (as Satan did to Eve). **2CO 4:2; 1:12-13.**

1. It wasn't for lack of academic prowess that Paul ministered as he did. **ACT 23:3.**

2. He could have used enticing words of man's wisdom but he did not. **1CO 2:4.**

3. He knew the corruptive potential of enticing words of man's wisdom. **COL 2:4.**

4. It was his frank, plain mode of communication that made clear the will of God that was ironically denounced by his detractors. **2CO 11:6-7; 10:10.**

- J. Beware the man or system which obscures the obvious with complexities, mysteries, symbols, etc. Christianity is NOT a cunningly devised fable. **2PE 1:16.**
- K. “Corruption in doctrine works best when it is unfettered by any explicit statement of that doctrine. Error loves ambiguities. It does not desire to state its position clearly, either because it has no distinct position to state, or if stated, it would stand convicted of iniquities in the eyes of all honest and God fearing men.” (Martin L. Wagner)
- L. “Laws are made for men of ordinary understanding and should, therefore, be construed by the ordinary rules of common sense. Their meaning is not to be sought for in metaphysical subtleties which may make anything mean everything or nothing at pleasure.” (Thomas Jefferson)