

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. subtilty: 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 subtilty and a negative subtilty.
 1. Subtilty 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. Subtilty 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.) and of dual-class citizenship.

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 slobs 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 as much as the Ephesian townclerk's pronouncement. **ACT 19:35-36.**

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)
- M. Effective communication requires a clear conveyance of message from giver to receiver.
1. Consider very small children who are unable to process spoken language.
 - a. Parents can successfully convey a message of love to them by tender care and supply of their needs, touch, smiles and positive vocal tones.
 - b. Parents can successfully convey messages about boundaries by measured physical pain combined with a simple verbal “No.” c/w **PRO 29:15.**
 - c. Do not wait for a child to develop oral language skills to begin messaging. **PRO 13:24.**
 - d. Do not confuse messaging by punishing good behavior or rewarding bad behavior (a life-long principle!).
 - e. Do not leave children in bondage to non-verbal communication. Encourage their reading and speaking language skills as they grow.
 2. One can convey a message with such things as hand motion. **PRO 6:13.**
 - a. Hand motions, though, cannot convey abstract concepts unless there is a previously established signal-interpretation model in place.
 - b. Hand motions in one culture may be negatively interpreted in another.
 3. One can convey a message through things like symbols.
 - a. Symbols, though, are subjectively used and interpreted. This is an advantage to a deceiver who intends the symbol to convey a different message than what he holds that it means.
 - b. The above quote by Martin L. Wagner is appropriate here.
 4. The most effective communication is by oral or written language which is understood by both giver and receiver. Both sides should have the same understanding of the terms used in dialogue.
 - a. It was by speaking that God created all things. **GEN 1:3.**
 - b. The Second Person of the Godhead is The Word, not the symbol, color, hand signal, emotion, star formation, etc.
 - c. The incarnation of God in the flesh is the epitome of messaging by language. **JOH 1:1-3, 14, 18; 1JO 1:1; 5:20; HEB 1:1-2.**
- N. It is a great goal of Satan to destroy or corrupt messaging from God “...by any means...” (**2CO 11:3**) in order to control men’s minds for his own antiGod purposes in keeping men from Christ through Whom the true God is known.
1. Satan has ever wanted to be God, as do his agents. **ISA 14:12-14; 2TH 2:3-4.**
 2. Satan has an ally in our fallen nature: a mind that thinks like his. **EPH 2:3.**
 3. How critical it is that our minds be delivered from Satan’s captivity to Christ’s captivity and girded up accordingly! **2CO 10:5; 1PE 1:13 c/w EPH 6:14.**
 4. How important it is that we be *not ignorant of Satan’s devices* (**2CO 2:11**), especially his subtle ones by which he deceives us away from Christ!
 5. By corrupted messaging, one can be deluded into Satan’s service while thinking he

is doing God service. **JOH 16:1-2.**

- a. This is a key area of evangelical conversion: the realization that you have been believing a lie and so honoring the father of lies, Satan. **ACT 26:9; 2:37; JOH 8:44.**
- b. Conversion is not always only a matter of men being convicted in their minds about their flagrant sins knowingly committed against God; it is often a combination of needed reformations that clear truth demands. **ROM 12:2.**

VII. Consider various means by which Satan puts himself between God's words and men's minds so that the message of truth is ineffective.

A. Satan might destroy God's word but he is blocked by God's sovereignty in the matter.

PSA 12:6-7; MAT 24:35.

1. Consider Eden (**GEN 3:1-6**). God had spoken and the message was universal: all parties knew it and its Origin. There was no way to "destroy" the information once it was given.
2. Satan therefore "spun" God's words with a counterfeit message that added to, and took from God's words. The seedbed of his message was doubt. Never underestimate the power of doubt to confuse, conflate or confound plain words from God.
3. To corrupt men's minds, Satan must corrupt God's words, a popular tactic. **2CO 2:17.**
4. Once God committed His words in writing exclusively to Israel (**PSA 147:19-20**), the rest of the world was left with only the raw revelation of God in nature and false prophets.
 - a. It was relatively easy for Satan to corrupt the revelation of God in nature since its structure and motions were under the *bondage of corruption* and subjectively interpreted by the vain imagination of man. **ROM 8:20-21; 1:21-22.**
 - b. This blinded ignorance masquerading as wisdom God winked at until Christ's resurrection. **ACT 14:16; 17:30.**
 - c. The gospel went to work undeceiving the nations to deliver them from the bondage of Satan's lies which are his power. **ACT 26:17-18.**
 - d. Unable to destroy God's preserved word, Satan has ever sought to negate its power by counterfeits as he did in Eden. It is a solemn fact that the multiplying of Bible versions, for all the academic reasons behind the same, has sown doubt in believers' minds as effectively as Satan did to Eve. Doubt is the enemy of faith. **ACT 10:20; ROM 14:23.**
 - e. Satan once had the nations deceived because they had not the word of God. Satan lost that power over the nations by the going forth of the gospel. He could not destroy God's word but by counterfeits he could undermine and negate its influence through doubt. This all bears a striking resemblance to Eden and to **REV 20:1-8.**
5. NOTE: There are few things as deceptive as a good counterfeit that casts doubt on God's word, appeals to human nature, offers advantages God never promised, and convinces men that it is from God Himself. This applies to religious systems as much as it does to "bibles."

B. Satan can wedge himself in between God's words and your mind by playing word-games like the cults do in repurposing Biblical terms and concepts.

1. The Trinity of a Christian Scientist is not the "God in Three Persons" of **1JO 5:7**

- but rather Life, Truth, Love.
2. The Jesus Christ of the Jehovah's Witnesses is not the Incarnate Deity of **JOH 1:14; 1TI 3:16** but a created god who is really Michael the Archangel, and he did not rise and ascend bodily into heaven.
 3. To the Mormon, Jesus Christ is the son of Adam who pre-existed as the spirit-brother of Lucifer.
 4. There are "lords many" (**1CO 8:5**), "another Jesus" (**2CO 11:4**) and "false Christs" (**MAT 24:24**). The only true "Lord Jesus Christ" is the One Who can be declared from the words of Scripture.
- C. Satan can corrupt your mind by convincing you that there are contradictions in Scripture so you cannot trust it.
1. There are no contradictions in Scripture (**2PE 1:20**); the contradiction is in the mind which by nature prefers the bondage of a lie and is at war with Scripture.
 2. It is too easy to default to the holding of irreconcilable opposites rather than put in the effort with patience that is required to rightly divide the word of truth. **2TI 2:15.**
 3. God is of one mind and completely consistent. **JOB 23:13; JAM 1:17.**
 - a. His judgments are "...true and righteous altogether" (**PSA 19:9**).
 - b. altogether: The whole together, the entire; everything, the whole, the total.
 - c. Any system that requires its adherents to believe polarized positions is not representative of the God of the Bible.
- D. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God through plain unbelief.
1. The words can be plain, understandable, applicable to you, but for various reasons you don't believe them and so they don't have the effect in your life that they should. **1TH 2:13.**
 2. This applies to the preached word as well as the written word. **HEB 4:1-2.**
 3. Here a few reasons that one does not believe the plain words of God:
 - a. The fear of man. ct/w **HEB 13:6-7.**
 - b. The fear of loss of creature comforts. **ACT 26:28.**
 - c. Deeming something else as final authority. ct/w **PSA 119:128.**
 - d. A faulty presupposition such as "The Bible is full of contradictions."
 - e. A faulty presupposition such as "The Bible is entirely too difficult and cannot be understood." ct/w **2PE 3:16; EPH 3:3-4.**
- E. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God by pulling things out of context in Scripture to lead to a false conclusion.
1. He tried this on Christ by twisting **PSA 91:11-12** which is a promise to the man who trusts in God, not the man who tempts God. **MAT 4:5-7.**
 2. How many have taught "anxious seat" salvation of unbelievers from **HEB 3:15** when the context is to believing holy brethren to not give in to the temptation of unbelief? **HEB 3:1, 12-13.**
- F. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God by tribulation. **MAT 13:20-21.**
1. Israel because of oppression ceased to hearken to Moses. **EXO 6:9.**
 2. Satan works through discouragement. **NUM 21:4-5.**
 3. We must be convinced that tribulation is part of this life (**JOH 16:33**), especially to dedicated believers (**2TI 3:12**), is temporary (**1PE 5:10**), is temporal (**2CO 4:17-5:1**) and that God's love for us is not measured by our circumstance but by Calvary. **1JO 4:10.**
 4. Without a steadfast faith in God's words and promises, especially the word of His grace (**ACT 20:32**) we will lose our joy of salvation (**ROM 5:11**) and the joy of the

- Lord is our strength. **NEH 8:10.**
5. No matter the situation, encourage yourself in the Lord. **1SAM 30:6; PSA 27:10-14.**
- G. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God by cares and pleasures of life and the deceitfulness of riches. **MAT 13:22; LUK 8:14.**
1. Under this delusion of success, only the words of Scripture that appeal to the natural man will be heeded. **ROM 8:5.**
 2. The lust-driven will look for other teachers with sweeter stories. **2TI 4:3-4.**
 3. Ambition for worldly increase and worldly success can blind one to the need for blessed prosperity, not blasted prosperity: the difference between Abraham and Lot.
- H. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God by hardening your heart against those who teach you the truth. **GAL 4:16.**
1. Your mind can be evil affected against your teacher. **ACT 13:48-50.**
 2. This may occur when somebody else with a false gospel bewitches you, as happened in Galatia. **GAL 3:1.**
 3. It may occur when your teacher steps on your fantasies and delusions, or reproves you as he must do from time to time. Counter this with David's heart. **PSA 141:5.**
- I. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God by the blinding power of sin in your life.
1. Sin must be laid aside to receive the words of God. **JAM 1:21; 1PE 2:1-2.**
 2. God will even accommodate your delusion if you love unrighteousness more than the truth. **2TH 2:10-12.**
 3. This can become such a severe condition that you develop an outright antagonism towards God's word and refuse to even consider it. **ISA 30:8-11; ZEC 7:11-13.**
- J. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God through worldly philosophy. **COL 2:8 JAM 3:14-15.**
1. There is a worldly wisdom which fascinates but opposes God's words. **1TI 6:20.**
 2. The world by such wisdom knows not God. **1CO 1:21-22.**
 3. Remember that not all deep thought is profitable thought. **PSA 64:6; REV 2:24.**
- K. Satan can corrupt your mind from the words of God by slick orators who know how to get you "under the ether" by appealing to your lusts/natural instincts. **2PE 2:1-3, 18; JUDE 1:16.**
1. Good words and fair speeches can deceive the simple who have not grounded themselves in apostolic doctrine. **ROM 16:17-18.**
 2. With a little effort, a false teacher by appealing to your carnal instincts can convince you of a false prosperity gospel (**1TI 6:5**) or that the gospel encourages fornication and mingled religion. **REV 2:20.**
 3. Saints can be so misled as to willingly accept such bondage and call it liberty. **2CO 11:19-20 c/w ROM 6:1-2.**
 4. Watch out, therefore, for the misleading power of emotion. **GAL 4:17.**
 - a. A false zeal is a dangerous zeal. **ROM 10:2 c/w GAL 1:14.**
 - b. The heart is untrustworthy (**JER 17:9**). Satan knows he is opposed by faith but that he is supported by feelings.
 - c. Christ is to dwell in our hearts by *faith*, not *feeling* (**EPH 3:17**), and faith comes by *hearing the word of God*. **ROM 10:17.**
 5. People can be deceived into thinking they are having true spiritual experiences because of the *feelings* they experience in connection with them.
 6. Scripture nowhere speaks of *feeling* God's presence.

7. **ACT 17:27** speaks of *feeling after* God. This is describing someone seeking God in order to find Him, NOT someone who has already found Him and is enjoying His presence through faith in His word.
8. There is a big difference between finding God through good feelings and finding good feelings through God by faith. **1PE 1:8**.
9. Sadly, the errant model is not atypical of many Christian churches and parachurch organizations. This is a likely contributing factor to the cults' ability to recruit from professing Christian communities: the weak/unstable/unwary/emotion-led have long been accustomed to equating feelings with God's presence.