

# Staying Loyal to Christ

(2 Corinthians 11:1-6)

Remaining loyal to Christ is crucial in the Christian life. In this passage, Paul is encouraging the Corinthian believers to do just that. He begins this passage by writing; *I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me!* (11:1). The *little foolishness* is Paul's defense of himself. He is following the principle in Proverbs 26:5. Personalize it below:

We must answer the foolish arguments of fools, or they will become wise in their own minds.

Paul feels foolish repeating his apostolic credentials. However, if he doesn't, the false teachers in Corinth will continue to lead the believers astray. Therefore, Paul gives us **three** requirements for **staying loyal to Christ**, beginning with ...

## Remember divine jealousy (11:2).

To explain his concern, Paul writes, *For I feel a divine jealousy for you* (11:2a). Divine, or "godly," *jealousy* is very different from human jealousy. Godly *jealousy* is an overwhelming desire to protect someone from spiritual harm. After giving the first of the Ten Commandments, God says: *"You shall have no other gods before me"* (Ex 20:3a). How does He explain why He makes this statement (Exodus 20:5b)?

With this same kind of *divine jealousy*, Paul wants to protect the believers God has entrusted to him. Every pastor and teacher must possess *divine jealousy* also.

Paul has already described himself as the spiritual father of the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 4:14). Therefore, he writes, *since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ* (11:2b). Paul is like a concerned father wanting to protect the purity of his daughter. He is anticipating a wonderful day when he will present the Corinthians to Christ as a pure, spiritual virgin, undefiled by false teachers and the world.

In Ephesians chapter five, Paul describes the church as the bride of Christ. He also writes that *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* (5:25). Then, what does Paul add in Ephesians 5:27?

Because of his *divine jealousy*, Paul is willing to do some foolish boasting to make sure the Corinthians keep themselves *pure* in their loyalty to Christ.

To stay loyal to Christ, **remember divine jealousy** and ...

### **Reject Satan's deceit (11:3-4).**

The false teachers at Corinth aren't just questioning Paul's apostolic authority; they are also leading the Corinthian believers astray. Therefore, Paul writes, *But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ* (11:3).

Do you remember how Satan *deceived* Eve? God tells Adam and Eve they can eat of every tree - except one - in the Garden of Eden. He tells them the day they eat of the forbidden tree; they will surely die. However, Satan later tells Eve that God is holding out on her and depriving her. He tells Eve she won't surely die if she eats of that tree (Gen. 3:1-4). Instead, what does Satan say will happen, according to Genesis 3:5?

In other words, you can decide for yourself what is right and wrong. False teachers always use that same deceit, because it still works. They will tell you, "Your pastor, or church, is holding out on you. There is another gospel of Jesus Christ." Or, like when Eve was tempted, "You have misinterpreted what God says in the Bible. You need some clarification." False teachers today use the same *cunning* methods from Satan to convince you they have something more.

Paul explains, *For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted* (11:4a-c). The Jesus the false teachers are proclaiming is not the same Jesus Paul preached to them. In accepting the message of these false teachers, the Corinthians have received a *different spirit*, but it is not the Holy Spirit.

They are also in danger of accepting a *different gospel*. Paul doesn't explain what the false teaching, or different gospel, is. However, it undoubtedly denies salvation is by grace alone.

All false teachings have one thing in common. They misrepresent grace. What does Paul write in Romans 11:6?

We can't mix *grace* and *works* because they are mutually exclusive. If we add anything to God's grace, it is no longer grace. False teachers don't understand that and are always adding something to God's grace.

Regarding this false teaching, the Corinthian believers are putting *up with it readily enough* (11:4d). They are *readily* accepting another gospel, which is Satan's deceit.

To stay loyal to Christ, *remember divine jealousy*, reject Satan's deceit, and ...

### **Rely on the simple Gospel (11:5-6).**

Paul now sarcastically writes, *Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles* (11:5). The word translated super, or "chiefest," means "big shot" in plain English. For the sake of argument, Paul is calling on the Corinthians to at least admit he is not inferior to these false teachers, who claim to be "big-shot" super-apostles.

Paul explains, *Even if I am unskilled in speaking* (11:6a). Paul is unskilled, or untrained, in Greek oratory and rhetoric. The Greeks loved and valued polished oratory and intellectualism. Corinth was located in southern Greece, about 48 miles southwest of Athens. Paul had written in his first letter to the church at Corinth: *For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom* (1 Cor. 1:22).

Desiring to preach a simple Gospel, Paul tries to avoid refined oratory. What had he already written in 1 Corinthians 1:17?

Even if he is unskilled in polished Greek oratory, Paul writes, *I am not so in knowledge; indeed, in every way we have made this plain to you in all things* (11:6b-c). Apparently, some of Paul's critics claim his simple preaching is an indication he is simple-minded. When confronted with such accusations, Paul doesn't try to present the Gospel in some kind of Greek rhetoric. Instead, how did he earlier explain his preaching in 1 Corinthians 1:23?

Jesus' dying on the cross just didn't fit into the kind of sophisticated Gospel the Greeks preferred. However, Paul would not change the Gospel, no matter how much its simplicity was scorned by the Greeks.

God made the Gospel simple so anyone could understand and proclaim it. God loves to circumvent the powerful and educated to reveal what anyone who is dedicated to Him can do. How did God send His Son into the world? As an uneducated son of a carpenter. That infuriated the educated priests, Sadducees, and Pharisees in Jerusalem. How did Paul earlier sum up God's method in 1 Corinthians 1:27?

Why did God make the Gospel very simple? *So that no human being might boast in the presence of God* (1 Cor. 1:29). No one in heaven will be able to say, "I'm here because I was smart enough to understand the Gospel." God made it so simple even a child can understand it. What does the Lord Jesus say in Mark 10:15?

Therefore, Paul doesn't use sophisticated rhetoric or polished oratory to persuade his listeners. He simply preaches the Gospel of Christ crucified. Paul's methods may have changed, but his message never did (1Cor. 9:22).

To stay loyal to Christ, **remember divine jealousy, reject Satan's deceit, and rely on the simple Gospel.**