

## Betrothed to Christ – 2 Corinthians 11:1-4

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Weddings

1. After 27 years as a pastor, I've seen a lot of weddings.
  - a. They run the gamut from simple to elaborate.
  - b. I've officiated at ceremonies of a half dozen in a living room, at the beach, in the foyer of the church.
  - c. Then there have been the huge affairs in large churches with hundreds.
  - d. Some of the ceremonies have lasted no more than 10 minutes, others over an hour.
  - e. In some, the wedding party was dressed casually, other times they were formal.
2. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are, *every* wedding is special & marked by great joy.

#### B. Picture

1. That's the image behind what Paul shares in the first verses of ch. 11.
2. He has a wedding in mind.

#### C. Set the Scene

1. Paul's assistant Titus had just come from Corinth with a report about how things were going there.
2. Chs. 10 thru the end of the letter deal with a part of that report that caused Paul concern.
3. Titus told him some false teachers had recently shown up in Corinth.
4. From what Paul writes we conclude they were what were known as *Judaizers*.
  - a. They were Jews who *claimed* to be sent from the church at Jerusalem as spokesmen for the disciples.
  - b. They claimed the title of "super-apostles" (v. 5) & carried forged letters as credentials.
  - c. These Judaizers taught that before Gentiles could be saved, they had to become Jews.
  - d. Simple faith in Christ wasn't enough; they had to keep the Law of Moses.
5. Of course this was totally contrary to the Gospel of Grace Paul taught. He'd stood against the Judaizers & their false teaching time & again.
  - a. Galatians is his eloquent refuting of their heresy.
  - b. But they followed Paul around & infiltrated the churches he planted, trying to cull their own following from his converts.
  - c. They'd finally shown up in Corinth & had begun their shenanigans.
6. In ch. 10, Paul told the Corinthians to not be fooled by their *fake credentials*.
  - a. The Corinthians were enamored by degrees & titles.
  - b. Their heads were easily turned by grand claims of greatness which the Judaizers loved to boast of.
  - c. So Paul pointed out the foolishness of self-commendation.
  - d. What *ought* to commend someone & validate their calling by God is the *actual fruit* of their ministry – *not grandiose claims*.

7. Then in v. 1 he writes . . .

## II. TEXT

### A. V. 1

**<sup>1</sup> Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.**

1. Keep the context in mind in all we look at today.
2. Paul was dealing with false teachers & their dangerous lies
3. He knew *what the Corinthians believed* was the most important thing about them.
4. So he wanted to *inoculate* them against the deception brought by the Judaizers.
5. One of the tactics they used was to attack Paul's credibility.
  - a. They denied his calling by God & said he had no credentials.
  - b. You see, before they could promote *their* error, they had to undermine Paul's *authority*.
6. Paul knew how hung up on credentials the Corinthians were.
7. Though he'd just shown how silly self-commendation is, *for their sake* he'll engage in a little of it.
8. Later in ch. 12, Paul lists his accomplishments & shows the Corinthians why they can have confidence in his calling as an apostle.
9. But first, he tells them **WHY** he's willing to engage in what he considers silly .

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### B. V. 2

**<sup>2</sup> For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**

1. As the apostle who'd *started* the church in Corinth & had led many of them to Faith, Paul was their spiritual father.
  2. And just as fathers in that day arranged the marriage of their children, Paul saw himself as having *betrothed* the Corinthians to Christ.
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3. Betrothal was like an engagement, only stronger.
    - a. During the betrothal, the couple were for all intents & purposes married, they just hadn't consummated the marriage & weren't living together.
    - b. Betrothal was an exclusive commitment between a man & woman so strong it could only be broken by a divorce.
    - c. The purpose of the betrothal was to give the groom time to build their house.
    - d. The bride spent the time preparing her wedding dress.
    - e. She didn't know the precise *day* when her groom would call for her, only the approximate time.
    - f. When that time arrived, she was supposed to be dressed & ready for the summons to the wedding.
  4. It was her father's duty to make sure she was ready & that during the betrothal, while her groom was off building their house, she remained loyal to him, pure in her devotion.
  5. All of this is the backdrop to Paul's words here.

6. He'd betrothed the Corinthians to Christ.
    - a. Just as Jesus said in John 14, He'd gone to prepare their place, & would come again to call His bride to the wedding.
    - b. Paul saw it as his task to ensure the Corinthians remained loyal & pure.
    - c. He knew the false teachers would try to seduce them away from the Lord.
  7. He saw them as a dangerous challenge to the Corinthians loyalty to Christ & was *jealous* for them.
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8. Jealousy is often incredibly harmful.
  - a. It was because of jealousy Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery.
  - b. It was for jealousy the Jewish leaders conspired to kill Jesus.
  - c. Many of us have seen the terrible effects of jealousy.
  - d. I've known people married to spouses so jealous of them they exercising a level of control over them that was psychotic!
9. Because of the evil that accompanies much of the jealousy we see, people find the Bible's mention of the jealousy of God disturbing.

10. In the Ten Commandments God says, [Exodus 20:3-5a]

**3 "You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God . . .**

- a. This bothers many because they think jealousy is beneath the dignity of one as great as God.
  - b. What we need to understand is that jealousy is a necessary component of God's love.
11. He's not jealous in the sense that He wants to *control* us, drawing a tight circle around us & *limiting our choices* so that we're forced to remain loyal to Him.
  12. That's what the overbearing jealousy of some is – a desire to control, to limit, to force someone into love.
  13. God doesn't want to *control* us! He's the One who *gave us* the power to choose! He gave us free will!
  14. God is not jealous **OF** us, He's jealous **FOR** us!
    - a. He loves us so much He wants *the absolute best* for us.
    - b. The thing is – the absolute best, the all-time best thing is Him!
    - c. We were created *for Him*. Life doesn't work unless He's at the center of it.
  15. So God is jealous for us in the sense that His love for us wants the best.
  16. If we exercise our will to choose *lesser* things, if we fritter away our lives on affections that can't satisfy, but actually *harm* us – God is rightly grieved.

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17. Here's an 8-layer chocolate fudge cake; it's super yummy. This will make you happy!

- a. This is a cow-pie. [cover with whip cream & sprinkles]
- b. Put these in front of a toddler & he may well go for the cowpie because it looks more appealing.
- c. But it's manure! The parent of that child wants/yearns for the child to choose the good cake.
- d. If the youngster goes for the manure, the parent will do his/her best to

- dissuade them.
18. God is the best & right choice. He rightly wants us to choose Him.
  19. His jealousy for us isn't selfish – it's selfless; the cross proves it.
  20. God is so jealous *for* us, He gave Himself in the ultimate act of sacrifice so we could know the greatest blessing.
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21. God put His concern for the loyalty of the Corinthians in Paul.
  22. He stood guard over them like a father over a betrothed daughter, making sure she wasn't seduced by others until the day when Jesus comes for His bride.

### C. Vs. 3-4

**<sup>3</sup> But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.**

1. The false teachers had already made some inroads in Corinth.
  2. Paul saw them as dangerous seducers, agents of the devil who were doing what he'd done with Eve.
    - a. Mixing truth with error –
    - b. All to the end of turning the Corinthians away from God.
  3. The devil is clever; he's crafty.
    - a. He's an astute observer of human behavior & has thousands of years of experience.
    - b. He knows what lies are especially seductive.
    - c. He knows just how to pitch his appeal to that within us that needs to be redeemed.
  4. Satan knows the longing there is in all of us toward pride.
    - a. He constantly hammers away at our tendency to *add* to the work of Christ.
    - b. Instead of seeing ourselves in Christ alone,
    - c. He appeals to our pride, to our flesh, to perform some work that will vindicate us.
    - d. He ever angles to take us out of grace & put us into works so that our pride can flourish.
  5. This was precisely the teaching of the Judaizers troubling the Corinthians.
    - a. They said salvation came from keeping the Law.
    - b. From studying the "deeper truths" which only they possessed & would impart to those who pledged their loyalty to them, the "super-apostles."
  6. The Corinthians were being led away from the *simplicity* that's in Christ.
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7. Knowing what the Bible says about God, we would expect the Gospel to be simple.
    - a. God is no respecter of persons. He wants *all* to be saved.
    - b. So we would expect the Gospel to be something even the simplest could respond to.
    - c. The Gospel can't require an advanced education or only be accessible to those of a certain IQ.
    - d. I've met several people with *Downs Syndrome* who understood the Gospel & came to faith in Christ.
    - e. They had as keen a sense of morality; their sin & need of Christ as anyone.
  7. That's precisely what we would expect from God.

8. The True Gospel is simple. It's about believing in Christ alone.
9. It leaves no room for pride or self-effort in our salvation; it makes us wholly dependant on God.

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10. False teaching always carries *an emphasis on self*, on something *we must do* to be saved.

**4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!**

11. Knowing how the Corinthians think, Paul warns them.
  - a. Their heads were easily spun by those making grand claims.
  - b. Anyone who was eloquent in their delivery received an enthusiastic hearing.
12. So Paul cautions them to check the message against the truth they'd already come to know **AS** truth.
13. The Jesus of the false teachers wasn't the Son of God Who died for their sins & rose again from the dead for their justification & new life.
14. The spirit that empowered them wasn't the Holy Spirit who led the Corinthians to faith in God. It was a demonic spirit – look at vs. 13-15

**For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.**

15. The message of the Judaizers wasn't the Gospel of Grace; it was a mesmerizing mish-mash of this & that that sounded good but was empty.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Careful!

1. We must heed Paul's caution because Jesus said the last days will be marked by widespread delusion.
  - a. Spiritual counterfeits will abound. Many will come in His name.
  - b. He said deception would be so pervasive, even the elect will be in danger of being fooled.
2. Just because someone says they're preaching "Jesus" doesn't mean they're proclaiming the Savior.
3. Just because they claim to be operating by the spirit doesn't mean it's the Holy Spirit.
4. And though they claim to have a divine message, that doesn't mean it's The Gospel of Grace.
5. The claims of those who say they have a message & ministry from God are not enough.
  - a. Compare what they say to the Scriptures!
  - b. Don't let even that which *appeals* to you lead you off into some new doctrine.
  - c. That's *ever* the enemy's tactic; it *sounds* good, it's *appealing*.
6. Every true Christian desires to respond promptly to God.

- a. We don't want to hesitate or fudge when He speaks.
- b. So there's something in us that's *reluctant* to hold up stuff we hear that claims to be from Him.
- c. Yet in 1 John 4:1 we're instructed to "*test the spirits.*"

**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

- 8. *The Secret*, is not from God.  
Echardt Tolle is a false prophet, regardless what Oprah says.  
*A Course in Miracles* is a *different gospel* that preaches *another Jesus*.

### **B. Offspring → Life!**

1. As we end, want to return to the betrothal image of v. 2.
  2. Ideas about sexual purity have changed dramatically in the last 50 years.
  3. It used to be considered a virtue & supreme value for a woman to come to her wedding night a virgin.
  4. Today, virginity is disdained as an unfortunate condition to be shed as quickly as possible.
  5. I want to explain WHY virginity was such an important thing among God's people, in Israel.
    - a. It had to do, among other things, with the family & land.
    - b. The land of Israel was given by God to His people & divided up among their tribes, clans & families.
    - c. Each generation received their land from the previous generation & would pass it on to the next.
    - d. It was important each man & woman be sexually faithful to their spouse so that their families would remain intact & the land would pass to the *right* heirs.
    - e. It was all a part of their covenant with God.
  8. When a woman entered into marriage, her husband needed to have the confidence that the child growing in her womb was really his,
    - a. Because the first-born son would carry on the family name & receive the inheritance of land.
    - b. It was their union as husband & wife, that produced fruit of children who carried on the covenant.
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9. In a similar way, as those who've been betrothed to Christ, it's crucial we remain loyal to Him –
  10. Reserving our affection for Him alone, allowing no one & nothing to seduce us away from Him.
  11. It's our union with Him by the Spirit that produces spiritual fruitfulness; a fruitfulness that leads to more new life, both in us, in those around us, and even in winning the lost to Christ.
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