

(2 Corinthians) ch.10:1-11:3

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of meekness and gentleness in ministry, and the contrast between human and spiritual authority, highlighting the need to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Duration: 43:45

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:1-11

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of focusing on the preaching of the word of God, as it is the only thing that will matter in the day of judgment. The speaker highlights that boasting in worldly achievements or miraculous ministries is deceptive and not of God. Instead, the speaker emphasizes the need to rely on divine power, specifically the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring rest to the mind and to purify our thoughts. The speaker also rebukes the audience for being too focused on outward appearances and encourages them to prioritize bringing their thought life captive to the obedience of Christ.

Transcript

Let's turn today to 2nd Corinthians, chapter 10, and verse 1. 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. When Paul writes, he can use his apostolic authority if he wants, and certainly when writing to the Corinthians, for if you read Acts of the Apostles, chapter 18, you will see that there was no church in Corinth when Paul came there. There were no Christians there.

They had never heard about Christ, the people in Corinth. Paul was the first person to proclaim Christ in Corinth, and through his ministry, people came to the new birth and became Christians in Corinth and disciples of Christ. We can say without any doubt, as he himself says in 1 Corinthians 4, that Paul was the father, the spiritual father, of that Corinthian church and of those Corinthian Christians.

And like he says in another place, if I'm not an apostle to anybody else, Paul says, I'm certainly an apostle to you. And an apostle has authority given by God to establish the churches, to build up, but he says, I don't want to speak to you with that apostolic authority. And there you see the greatness of this man, Paul, that he had authority over people and he wouldn't use it.

That's a wonderful example for all those who are in Christian work today to keep in mind. To have authority over people and not to use it. In the book of Job, there's a very interesting verse in Job chapter

33 and verse 7, where Elihu, the fourth friend of Job, says to him, No fear of me should terrify you, nor should my pressure weigh heavily on you.

And Paul could have said those words to the Corinthians. No fear of me should terrify you, and I should not put any pressure that weighs heavily on you. He could have done that as an apostle, but he refused to do it.

He says, I speak to you, I urge you by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. By the gentleness and the courtesy and the kindness and the reasonableness of Christ. By the humble heartedness of Christ.

By the gentleness and kindness of Christ. It's only on that basis that he speaks. Because he wants them to obey the Lord, not out of his pressure, but joyfully, voluntarily.

He says, I am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent. He's speaking about himself. He says, I'm being very bold when I speak to you now.

They thought he was feeble, but he wasn't. He was strong and fearless. What he says is that my appearance, my personality were not impressive.

He says that later on in the same chapter. But he says, now I'm bold to tell you. He's being sarcastic.

But he says, I beseech you, I implore you not to drive me to show my boldness when I come. With which I propose to be courageous against some people who suspect me of acting from worldly motives. Verse 2. Who regard us as though we were walking according to the flesh.

As though we were being influenced by worldly motives in our ministry. He says, I'm going to be bold toward such people. But he says, I want you to act on my letter so that I don't have to show any boldness when I come there.

That you'd have sorted everything out. Now he's not talking about money. He's finished with talking about money.

He's now talking about sin. He doesn't speak firmly like this when he asks them to give. No.

But he speaks firmly when he has to deal with sin. He says, though we walk in the flesh. That means that we have a flesh with us in which there dwells no good thing.

We do not war according to the flesh. That means we don't use worldly methods and worldly wisdom and human strength to fight these spiritual battles. No.

He says, the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. But divinely powerful to demolish and destroy these fortresses that the devil has erected. Paul used spiritual weapons for this warfare.

In the Old Testament there was no such thing as spiritual warfare. The only warfare they knew in the Old Testament was warfare against the other heathen armies that surrounded the nation of Israel. But that was only a picture of the warfare that we enter into in the New Testament.

In the New Testament we have no physical warfare. Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world and therefore my servants will not fight. One mark of a true servant of Christ is he does not fight for anything of this earth.

He has no enemies on this earth. His only enemies are spiritual. The devil and his hosts.

His only war is for spiritual things. His warfare is not for fleshly things. When you fight for fleshly things you thereby prove that you are not a servant of Christ.

Jesus never fought for earthly things. And his servants do not fight for earthly things. When you fight for earthly things you prove that you are not a servant of Christ.

For the servants of Christ only fight for spiritual things. For spiritual riches. Our warfare, though we live in the flesh, is not according to the flesh.

That means it is not according to the way worldly people fight. For money and honor and position and all the other rotten things people seek on this earth. The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh.

We don't use stinging words to insult people. Or stinging letters. Or any other type of human pressure.

He says we fight in the spirit. With the power of the Holy Spirit. To destroy the fortresses that the devil has built.

To hinder God's work from progressing. And it is this spiritual authority. And this power over the devil's fortresses.

That we need to have. The power of the Holy Spirit. To break down these fortresses.

And he says we are destroying all speculations. We are engaged in pulling down all theories and the conceits of men. All the deceptive fantasies and arguments and reasonings of men.

We destroy them. Because the truths of God are hidden from the wise and the intelligent. And every lofty thing that men have raised up against the knowledge of God.

That is intellectual cleverness. Which people bring into God's work. We demolish it.

Jesus said that the truths of God are revealed to babes. That is to the humble. Not to the proud intellectuals.

And so he says we are destroying speculations. And every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. And we are taking and bringing into captivity.

Every thought to the obedience of Christ. To surrender in obedience to Christ. There we see that this battle is in the thought realm.

All this battle and war that he is speaking of in verses 3, 4 and 5. Is in the realm of our mind. The battle is in the mind. Where our reasonings and our thoughts are raised up against the knowledge of God.

We see that in Christendom today. That there is so much of the exaltation of the intellect. People think that they can understand the Bible just because they are clever intellectually.

If you are wise and learned in the things of this world. You can understand worldly subjects. But not the Bible.

Because the Bible is hidden. Matthew 11, 25. From the clever and the intelligent.

And revealed to babes. And not only that. It says very clearly in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. That if anyone wants to be really wise.

Spiritually. He has to become a fool. He has to recognize his folly.

However clever he may be. If any of you thinks he is wise in this age, 1 Corinthians 3, 18. Let him become a fool.

That he may become wise. In other words, when we come to God's word. Our human ability.

Our intellectual ability. Is not only of no use. It's a handicap.

It's the thing that makes us proud. It's the thing that leads us astray. How then can we understand the scriptures? By humility.

Matthew 11, 25. By obedience to God's word and His will. John 7, verse 17.

And by fearing God. Psalm 25 and verse 14. The secret of the Lord.

Is with those who fear Him. And so we see that God reveals His secrets. In His word to those who fear Him.

To the humble and to the obedient. And in order to. Exalt these virtues.

We have to destroy. All the pride in human intellect. That seeks to find its way into the Christian church.

Paul says in verse 5. We are destroying all these speculations. And all these lofty intellectual ideas. That are raised up against the knowledge of God.

But knowledge of the Bible is one thing. Knowledge of God is another thing. And we want to bring every thought captive.

To the obedience of Christ. Every thought in our mind. A slave to the obedience of Christ.

We turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 10. And verse 5. Paul speaking about the exaltation of the human intellect. In spiritual things.

Says we are destroying speculations. And we can say that is destruction of human reasoning. Which is an enemy to the spiritual life.

Proverbs 3 verse 5 says. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And lean not to your own understanding.

Our own understanding is an enemy of faith. 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. What do we see here? Intellectual understanding of the Bible.

Is not as important. As purity in our thought life. Purity in our thought life.

Every thought. Every thought. Notice that phrase.

Every thought. Is brought to the obedience of Christ. That means.

I do not allow a thought. In my mind. Which is not pure.

Which is not Christ like. Which is not something that Christ would approve of. And we know how we are.

Attacked. Tempted. Besieged by impure thoughts.

Temptations that come to us. In our thought life. From all sides.

In various areas. Sexual lust. Covetousness.

Bitterness. Jealousy. Selfishness.

Pride. Proud thoughts. So many types of thoughts.

Which are contrary to. Obedience to Christ. We can think of the mind.

Like the land of Canaan. With many many giants. Lurking behind.

The hills and mountains in that land. And now we have to take this whole land for Christ. Every giant.

Has to be destroyed. Every one of these. Thoughts that have lifted themselves up.

Lofty thoughts. Giants. That have raised themselves up against the knowledge of God.

Unclean thoughts. Covetous thoughts. Proud thoughts.

Selfish thoughts. Impure thoughts. Evil thoughts.

Must all be brought down. And how are we going to do it? The weapons of our warfare. Verse 4. Are not of the flesh.

It is not by transcendental meditation. Or by some type of self control. Or by some soulish power that we are going to do this.

No. It is by divine power. He says in verse 4. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That we can bring our mind to rest. Heathen religions teach various types of meditation. As a formula for rest in the mind.

And for peace and purity in the mind. But it is all a deception. It is all suppressing.

Not eliminating those thoughts. God desires to purify. Not just to suppress those thoughts.

He wants to purify our mind. He wants us to bring every thought captive. To the obedience of Christ.

The giants in this land of Canaan are to be slain. They are not just to hide in their caves. Alive.

But to be pulled out and slain. And that is why God allows us to be tempted. So that we can seek Him for grace and for the power of the Holy Spirit.

So that we can bring those impure thoughts and covetous thoughts under our feet. While Joshua brought the kings of Canaan under his feet. Every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Make this your goal dear friend. Every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Every thought in my mind.

And he says we are ready to punish all disobedience. Verse 6. Whenever your obedience is complete. He says when the obedience is fulfilled in your church.

Then I am ready to punish all the others who are disobedient. I want to be sure that you yourself are willing to submit. And be obedient to Christ.

In this area that I am speaking of. There is a tendency in us to look at the disobedience of others. Like the Pharisees looked at the woman caught in adultery.

And didn't realize the disobedience in their own life. In their own thought life. And when Jesus exposed that.

They had to slink away. One by one. They could not stand before that all searching gaze of Christ.

And so Paul says forget about the disobedience of others. I will deal with that later. What about your obedience in this area? Let's concentrate on that.

He says the trouble with you is. Verse 7. Look at how boldly he speaks to these his Corinthian children. Because he loves them in Christ.

Like Jesus said as many as I love I rebuke. Paul as a father rebukes these people because he loves them. And he wants them to come to God's highest and not to miss out on God's best.

He says you are looking at things as they are outwardly. You people are taken up with the outward life. He says you people are confident that you are in Christ.

He says well just think of this. That if you are in Christ we are in Christ too. And we are telling you the truth.

Don't look at things outwardly. What a word that is. We could apply that to the vast majority of believers today.

You are looking at things as they are outwardly. You are impressed by the outward life. By a man's personality and by his handsome look.

And by his position in life and by his eloquence and his personality etc. But he says the thing that has really value in God's eyes is if your thought life has been brought captive to the obedience of Christ. This is the contrast.

Bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Verse 5. All being taken up with things as they are outwardly. Paul was concerned with that inner life.

And so is every mature Christian. But the Corinthians were concerned with the outward life. And that is the mark of a baby.

That is the mark of a carnal Christian. That he is taken up with his outward testimony. And he does not concern himself about his thought life.

And thereby you can find out dear friend where you stand. Are you carnal? If you are only concerned about your testimony before men you are. The mark of a spiritual man is that he is concerned that every thought in his mind is brought to the obedience of Christ.

He who has ears to hear let him hear. This is the mark of a spiritual man. Paul was like that.

But the Corinthians were taken up with those who were great outwardly. And he goes on to speak about this outer life and the inner life. The contrast.

A very wonderful passage of scripture where Paul reveals himself. He says even if I should boast somewhat further. Verse 8. About our authority.

You know we were considering earlier about the authority Paul had as an apostle. He had apostolic authorities to set these Corinthians straight. But he would not speak with that authority.

He says I speak with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Verse 1 of 2 Corinthians 10. He says I can boast about my authority but I am not going to do it.

The Lord has given me that authority not to destroy you. But to build you up. He says God has given me authority to build you up.

Not to destroy you. And even if I boast about it. He says I am not ashamed to boast.

I have an authority God has given me. I don't want to have any false humility pretending that I am not an apostle or that I don't have authority. God has given me authority.

And I shall not be put to shame. And he says but I don't want to terrify you. With empty threats in my letters.

He says you shouldn't think I am trying to scare you. And over awe you with my letters. That's not his aim.

For he says I know what you people are saying there. That his letters, Paul's letters are so impressive and forceful. He sounds so big.

But it's all noise. His personality is weak. And his speech as a speaker he amounts to nothing.

Think of that. Paul's personality was weak. Tradition says that Paul was about 4 feet 11 inches tall.

Bald. With a crooked nose. And a bowed back.

Can you imagine a more unimpressive speaker? And this was the apostle whom God used to turn the world upside down as we read in Acts 17. It was not human personality. He makes it very clear that his personal appearance was unimpressive.

And his speech was also unimpressive to those who admired human eloquence. There was no human eloquence in Paul's speaking. There was no impressive personality in Paul's appearance.

It was 100% the power of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't make a difference, dear friend, if you are unimpressive in your appearance. Or if you stutter and stammer in your speech.

The power of the Holy Spirit can make up for all these lacks. God used such a man. He says, let those who are despising my physical appearance and my lack of eloquence remember this, he says, in verse 11.

That what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present. That means as much as I'm going to use my authority to set right all the people who are seeking to exalt themselves and exalt human intellect in the church. When I come there, even though my personality may not be impressive and my speech may not be eloquent.

I'm still going to exercise my authority which God's given me through his Spirit to set things straight. And I'm going to be just as bold when I come into your midst, even if I'm unimpressive, as I am in my letters. Paul was a bold man.

He was not a diplomat. He was not interested in pleasing the Corinthians. He wanted to edify them and build them up.

He wasn't interested in making a good impression on them. This is something that all those who serve the Lord and minister the word of God need to take heed to. You need to ask yourself this question.

What is your aim in your ministry, in your preaching and teaching the word? Is it to impress other people as to what a great preacher you are? Then you can't be a servant of God. If your aim is to build up, as he says in verse 8, authority to build up, then only can you truly serve the Lord. Those who are seeking to impress with their personality are soulish.

Those who depend on the Holy Spirit's power are spiritual. Let's turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 12. Paul is seeking to say some things very straight to these carnal Corinthians about sinful matters that they have not set right in their life, about a wrong understanding of what true spirituality is, about being taken up with the outward appearance.

As he says in verse 7, you look at things as they are outwardly, being impressed by that which the world is impressed by, human personality, position, job, money, eloquence, etc. The word of God says in Luke 16 verse 15 that all that is big and great in the eyes of men is an abomination to God. We must remember that what men value highly is detestable to God.

God has no value for these things that we place such great value on as human beings. And he is seeking to correct this wrong attitude among the Corinthians. This was one reason why the Corinthians were such babes, because they looked at things outwardly the way worldly people looked at them.

Paul had spoken about this in his first letter too. He sees the need to repeat this. And he says concerning himself, whose personality was unimpressive, verse 10, whose speech was not eloquent, but one who had the power of the Holy Spirit in such great measure in his own life, he says, we are not bold, verse 12, to class or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves.

He says there are a lot of preachers who seek to write their own testimonials. That is how J.B. Phillips says, we are not seeking to compare ourselves with those who write their own testimonials, those who boast in their notices for their meetings what great servants of God they are, and who seek to boast in various ways concerning their achievements and their accomplishments and their degrees and their intellectual qualifications, etc., etc. He says, I would never waste my time comparing myself with such people, because I don't have to boast about these things.

It's the inner life that God sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. So he says, we are not going to be so foolish as to compare ourselves with those who write their own testimonials and show off what great preachers and what great, wonderful servants of God they are.

No, he says, when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. Or we could paraphrase those words to say that those believers who compare themselves with each other are spiritual idiots. The best way to be a spiritual idiot is to compare yourself with another believer or compare yourself and your ministry with somebody else's ministry and give yourself a few more marks than the other person for your ministry.

That's the easiest way to be a spiritual idiot, according to this verse. Those who compare themselves with themselves are without sense. To be without sense is to be an idiot, and this is the way to be a spiritual idiot.

No, we are not to compare ourselves with one another. If you do want to compare yourself with somebody, compare yourself with Jesus Christ. The Bible says, fixing our eyes upon Jesus, let us run the race, and then we shall find not something to commend ourselves, but plenty to judge ourselves.

And this is the trick of the devil. He doesn't want us to progress spiritually, and so he makes us compare ourselves with a bunch of carnal believers somewhere and other spiritual babies, and he's always patting us on the back that we are better than them. And that's the way we never make progress, because we're always patting ourselves on the back that we're better than this group and the other group and this believer and that believer, and we stagnate spiritually.

The one thing the devil wants is to prevent you from comparing your life with Jesus Christ, because then he knows you'll make spiritual progress. And that's why he gets baby Christians to compare themselves with each other and give themselves more marks in some area here and some area there. But Paul says we'd never do that.

If I started doing that, I'd become a baby just like the rest of you, and I'd be a spiritual idiot like the rest of you. No, he says, and in any case, what can you compare yourself with another? Only in the outward things. Do you know what a man's thought life is like? No.

Do you know what his inner attitudes and motives are? No. Then how can you compare yourself with the other person? Only in the external life, that which God does not see. God sees the inner life, the heart, the thing of value.

You cannot compare yourself with another. But because you look at things outwardly, therefore you compare yourself with one another, and therefore you end up as babies, as carnal Christians, as spiritual idiots. But he says we will not be so bold, or we could say so stupid.

Verse 13, he says we don't want to boast beyond our measure. He says I don't want to boast about the number of people I've healed, and the blind people's eyes I've opened, and the demons that I've cast out, and the dead people I have raised. He doesn't want to talk about these things.

No. He says we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. The word of God teaches very clearly that to every servant of God, and every member in the body of Christ, God has given a sphere of service, just like in the body.

For example, the kidney has got a certain sphere of service. It's not just that it's located somewhere in the middle of the back, geographically, but that it has a sphere of ministry in the sense that it has the job of purifying the bloodstream. In the same way, the stomach and the digestive organs have the ministry of digesting the food.

The feet have the ministry of walking. They have a particular sphere of ministry apportioned out to them. And in the body of Christ too, every member has got a sphere of ministry apportioned out to him.

And when we seek to compete with another, we only show that we haven't seen the body of Christ. In the body, there cannot be competition. There cannot be carnal boasting.

And there cannot be any such thing as trying to go into the ministry of another. Think, for example, if the foot suddenly decided that it would like to go into the ministry of digesting food. It would be the height of stupidity, because God hasn't given the foot the ability to digest food.

But that can make us laugh, but that is the stupidity that we see with so many Christians in their ministry. They are trying to imitate somebody else, to compete with somebody else, and to show that they have a greater ministry in some area. Even geographically, God gives us a certain area in which to minister.

God gave Paul a certain geographical area around the Mediterranean Sea to minister. And he gave Peter another. He gave Thomas another.

He gave Andrew another. He gives different areas geographically and different spheres of ministry to different members in the body of Christ. And he says, we don't want to boast beyond our measure.

God has given us a certain sphere, and within that sphere, which God has apportioned to us. Notice this phrase in the middle of verse 13. The sphere which God apportioned to us.

Do you know the sphere which God has apportioned to you? If not, you better find out. Otherwise, you're in grave danger of jealousy, competition, strife, and stupidity. You need to know, and it's good to have a sober estimate of ourselves.

But he says, our measure has reached to you. Because when we came to Corinth, he says, nobody had preached the gospel of Christ there. We came there.

We're not building on somebody else's foundation. We're not moving into somebody else's sphere. God gave us an opening in your midst.

And he says, we're not overextending ourselves. Verse 14, as if we did not reach to you. For we were the first to come to even as far as you in the gospel of Christ.

You never heard about Jesus in the gospel till we came. So he says, when I have an authority over you, I'm not overextending myself, Paul says. I'm well within my sphere.

But some of these other preachers who come into your midst, they are overextending their sphere. God hasn't apportioned that sphere to them. They are seeking something for themselves.

And so he says, we're not boasting beyond our measure. That is in other men's labors. Seeking to take credit for the work that other men do.

There's a lot of that in Christendom today. Boasting in other men's labors. Seeking to take credit for that which we ourselves have not done.

But he says, we have this hope that as your faith grows, as you people in Corinth are faithful to the truth that you heard from me, and that as you grow in that, through your ministry, the seed that we have sown in you will spread to many other places around Corinth, and thus the sphere will be enlarged. So that the word of God will spread to many other people as your faith grows. So as to preach the gospel, even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another, we must remember these two phrases.

Verse 13, the sphere which God apportioned to us. And verse 16, the sphere of another. In the body, in the physical body, there is that distinction.

In the body of Christ, there is that distinction. And we are not to criticize or be taken up with or compete with or boast in the sphere of another. Mind your own business.

Don't be a busybody in other people's affairs. And if you have some reason to boast, let it be in the sphere that God has given to you. It says in verse 17, he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

In any case, all our boasting should be what God has done for us. After all, what we have done is worth nothing. Let him boast in the Lord.

And he concludes by saying, the one who praises himself counts for nothing, but it's the one whom the Lord approves, he's the one who counts for everything. And maybe never forget this. Let's turn today to 2 Corinthians chapter 10, and verse 17 and 18.

He who boasts in the Lord, he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord. For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends. Or as J.B. Phillips paraphrased it, it is not self-commendation that matters, it is winning the approval of God.

This is the thing. There is such a tendency in us to commend ourselves to others, to think highly of ourselves and our ministry. Paul says that counts for zero.

It counts for nothing. Your opinion about your own spirituality and your commendation of your own ministry and your projection of your own ministry and your life counts for nothing. The important thing is, does God approve of your thought life? Does God approve of your inner life? Man looks in the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

And this is the important thing. That inner life, which he speaks of in verse 5 of 2 Corinthians 10, that God can approve of. This is the mark of a spiritual man.

And that's why he says we do not waste our time, verse 12, comparing ourselves with those who seek to project their personality and their ministry and write commendations of themselves to impress you. It counts for nothing. If you want to boast, he says, boast in the Lord, in what God has been able to work within your life.

All carnal boasting that is found among Christians is a mark that they are spiritual babies, immature. There are many people in the ministry who are babies spiritually because they haven't got over this self-commendation and boasting about their own life and their labors in prayer letters and reports. And in

so many ways, here is a word of correction for those who have years to hear.

He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord. Look before God's face, brother and sister, and let him approve of your life. That's the only thing that will matter in the day of judgment.

Paul goes on in chapter 11 to talk about the type of things that he can boast of. Not his ministry, not his raising of the dead, not his establishing churches, not his writing scripture, but some other things. Like he was lowered in a basket through a window, chapter 11, verse 33.

That he didn't have enough to eat or to clothe himself with, chapter 11, verse 27. That he was beaten, verse 24, etc. Not the type of things that many people can boast of today.

Carnal boasting in so-called miraculous ministries is a deception. Let no one think that is of God. When people boast about visions and dreams that they have had, Paul would not compete with them.

We'll come to that later in chapter 12. But he says, I wish you could bear with me now, in chapter 11, verse 1, in a little foolishness, for indeed you are bearing with me. He says, I am jealous for you, with a godly jealousy.

He says, I'm not concerned what you think about me. I couldn't care less what your opinion about me is, whether you think I'm an apostle or any such thing. But I'm concerned about you, he says.

Paul was not concerned about the opinion of the Corinthians. He was concerned about their spiritual growth. He says, I'm jealous for you, with a godly jealousy.

He says, I'm concerned that you should not be corrupted. For I betrothed you to one husband. You are to be the bride of Christ.

And that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. Paul knew that he had a responsibility as a servant of God, as an apostle, as a father to the Corinthian Christians, to protect them from worldly influences that would rob them of their spiritual virginity. We can use an illustration from the Old Testament.

We read in the Old Testament that Abraham sent his servant, Genesis 24, to Mesopotamia to get a bride for his son Isaac. That is a picture of God the Father sending the Holy Spirit to the world to get a bride for his son, Jesus Christ. And this servant of Abraham's, perhaps it was Eliezer, went and found Rebekah.

And then it says he brought Rebekah back in that long journey through the desert to Isaac. And that is a picture of how the Holy Spirit seeks to lead us in this long journey through this earth, our earthly life, to the time when we shall see Jesus at his second coming. And during this period, this long journey, the Holy Spirit is leading us to Christ.

Just like Abraham's servant led Rebekah to Isaac. You can imagine with what zeal Abraham's servant would have protected Rebekah from other worldly people, other people on the way who would like to flirt with her. Imagine how he would have stood against them if they tried to flirt with Rebekah.

For he had to take her as a pure virgin to his master's son, Isaac. This is how the Holy Spirit seeks to preserve us from worldliness. So that spiritually we can be presented as a virgin to Christ in the day of the marriage of the Lamb.

And Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, had the same spirit. He says, I desire to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. God's given me a responsibility.

And I'm going to stand against every person who's going to pollute you. Who's going to allow you to be fleshly. So that you're no longer a pure virgin, spiritually speaking.

For spiritual adultery is to give into the flesh. To live after the flesh is to live in spiritual adultery. And when a believer who claims to be betrothed to Christ lives after the flesh, and after the lust of the flesh in his thought life, he is spiritually an adulteress and not part of the bride of Christ.

And that's what he says here. I'm afraid this person who's going to come and try and pollute this bride in the wilderness is the same serpent, verse 3, who deceived Eve by his craftiness. The devil approaches us in two ways.

One is a lion, terrifying us with persecution and threats and trying to bring fear into our hearts. He succeeds sometimes that way, but not most of the time. Church history has revealed that the devil has succeeded much more when he has come as a serpent.

And not when he comes as a lion. Threats of persecution have not made the church polluted. Threats of persecution and persecution itself have only purified the church.

But when he has come as a serpent with craftiness, he has polluted the church. And that's why in Ephesians chapter 6, when we are told to put on the whole armour of God, in Ephesians 6, verse 12, we are told to put on the whole armour of God so that we may stand not against the threats or the persecution of Satan, but against the wiles of the evil one. Against the wiles, the schemes, Ephesians 6, verse 11.

And so he says in 2 Corinthians 11, 3, I am afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve, not threatened or frightened Eve, if the devil had come as a lion roaring at Eve, he wouldn't have succeeded in the garden of Eden. She would have just run away. But when he came as a serpent with his cleverness and his craftiness, he deceived her.

And that's how the devil seeks to come to us, bringing worldliness into the church, through his craftiness. And that you should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. He's speaking about the exaltation of the intellect in chapter 10, verse 5. And we know that Eve was led astray through her reason.

It was through her reason that the devil led her astray. Reason is the devil's strong point, because he is cleverer than all of us. And we are no match for him on the ground of reason.

His weak point is humility. If you're humble, the devil can't touch you. But if you try to tackle the devil on the ground of reason, he'll defeat you, hands down, anytime.

Because he is cleverer. He was so clever that he tripped up Eve in a few seconds and got her to sin. And he says, like the devil deceived Eve, he says, I'm afraid.

Lest your minds, notice that, again your mind, we consider the mind in 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5. Every lofty thing, every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. These lofty fortresses in our mind. A proud intellect.

He says, I'm concerned that the devil will catch your minds and lead it astray. Lead it astray into theological study. Of an academic study of the scriptures, instead of simple, pure devotion to Jesus Christ.

The main thing in the Christian life is devotion to Jesus Christ. Remember what Jesus told Peter after the resurrection? Asked him, do you love me? That's the point. He didn't give him a Bible quiz before appointing him as an apostle.

He asked him, do you love me? He didn't even ask him, will you go and be a martyr for me? He said, you love me. That's the point. If you love me, you'll keep my commandments.

That's the proof of love. It's simple devotion to Christ. If you don't love the Lord, all your Bible knowledge is just garbage.

It's no use. It's simple devotion to Christ. Devotion to Christ.

And when we drift away from that and think that through academic study and through going to Bible schools, we're going to serve God, we're just deceiving ourselves. Simple devotion to Christ. Stick to that.

Make sure the devil doesn't lead you astray from that.

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