

Simplicity In Christ

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The apostle Paul gives the members of the Corinthian church what appears to be a strange warning in II Corinthians 11:3: "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." He is afraid that the people, so long steeped in the complicated and difficult philosophies of the world, would be turned away from the plain truth that Jesus taught during His ministry.

How apt a warning for us! God's people have endured a decade of philosophy, human reasoning and convoluted arguments—all designed to "prove" that the clear, pure doctrines that the church once held were wrong, insupportable or foolish. We read or heard cunning explanations of various beliefs that appealed to our vanity, spiritual laziness or emotions. One of the primary characteristics of those explanations was their complexity.

Because of these puzzling arguments, many of the weaker members accepted the doctrinal changes without question, thinking, "Who am I? They have degrees in theology. They should know what is right." Some of the more intellectual among us tried to follow the arguments, and sadly, many fell in line out of a sense of intellectual superiority. Most just ignored the explanations out of frustration at trying to understand them.

Yet some did none of these things. A few recognized that these complicated, philosophic reasonings were not the voice of their Shepherd (John 10:3-5). The teachings of Jesus Christ are so elegantly simple that children can easily understand them. Even such "difficult" topics as justification, sanctification, salvation and others can be explained easily and clearly to those seeking to prove what is right rather than trying to disprove and destroy (see Acts 17:10-11).

The apostles tried to warn us of these things. Paul gives specific instructions to Timothy (I Timothy 4:1-2; 6:3-5; II Timothy 2:16-18, 23-23; 4:3-4) and Titus (Titus 1:14; 3:9). Peter warns that some would try to twist the words of Paul (II Peter 3:16). John, too, voices his concern (II John 7-11; III John 9-10), as does Jude (Jude 3-4, 16-19).

Doctrines do not need to be complex to be true. What is more simple than "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8)? Or, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37)? Or, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12)? These are not complicated concepts. They are simple and pure.

The problem occurs when we try to blend worldly "wisdom" and fallible human ideas with God's truth. Like oil and water, they do not mix. Paul says that the wisdom of God is revealed through His Spirit (I Corinthians 2:10). He continues:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (verses 12-13)

We must remember this when we face such twisted arguments as we have seen recently. Let us stop wrangling over useless technicalities and return to the simplicity of God's Word.