

Life in this world (as we all know) becomes complicated and distracting—[1] there are the affairs of life—school and work—these demand our time and energy—and if allowed—can become controlling and suffocating, [2] there are various relationships—wives, husbands, children, parents, siblings, and friends—these too demand our time and make life complicated, [3] there are the fears and struggles of our own souls—which—I think if we were honest—would have to admit—that of all the things that complicate life—first on that list—is ourselves...

Thus—it becomes necessary to simplify life—to realign our priorities—to refocus our hearts—and to remember what's most important—this is largely what we have in the passage before us—the church at Corinth was undergoing various distractions—many of these originated from the false apostles who were casting doubt upon Paul's apostleship—what Paul does in this chapter (ch.11)—is [1] identify the false apostles as what they were (ministers of Satan), and [2] vindicate his own apostleship—thus from v16 to the end of the chapter—he provides a string of evidence verifying his apostleship...

This is what he means in v1—"oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me"—the "folly" referred to—is the time spent (later in the chapter) on proving his apostleship—but before he does that—he reminds the Corinthians of [1] his jealousy for them (v2) and [2] his fear concerning them (3v)...

Thus—I want to consider these two verses under two headings—[1] A Goal, v2—"that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," and [2] A Fear, v3—"but I fear, lest somehow...your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ..."

I. A Goal—v2

II. A Fear—v3

I. A Goal—v2

1. Paul's goal was simple—to present the Corinthians as a chaste virgin to Christ—this was his ultimate and final goal...
2. To understand v2—we must be reminded of the Jewish tradition of betrothment—marriage occurred in two stages...
3. First—the couple was betrothed—this began the marriage—the couple made a public vow in a public ceremony...
4. This betrothed couple was legally married—the only way the relationship was dissolved was through divorce...
5. Secondly—there was the wedding feast—which resulted in the marriage being consummated—and the couple living together...
6. How much time lapsed between these two varied—it depended on how long it took the husband to prepare...
7. Thus—there was a time gap between the first ceremony and the second—within which—the bride waited...
8. Kistemaker—"In the oriental culture of that day, an engagement was equivalent to marriage without consummation. The betrothal period lasted for one year, during which bride and bridegroom prepared for the wedding ceremony. From the day of her betrothal, the woman legally was the wife of her future husband but she remained a virgin until the wedding day. In addition, the engagement might not be broken. If this happened, it was considered a divorce. Only death might end an engagement. Unfaithfulness of either party was regarded as adultery and had to be disciplined accordingly. The bride had to remain a virgin to be presented to her husband. So Paul exerts himself to keep the church pure from doctrine contrary to the gospel as he strives to present her to Christ..."
9. Now—what I want to do at this point—is suggest two quick lessons that natively or naturally flow out of verse 2...

10. Notice [1] Christians are married and waiting—Christians are married to Christ—yet—they are waiting for Christ...
11. Christians are married to Christ—"I have betrothed you to one husband"—that is—the church has one husband...
12. Yet—Christians are waiting for Christ—that is—they are presently separated from Him—in a physical sense...
13. This clarifies several passages that otherwise would make no sense—for example—the parable of the ten virgins...
14. Matt.25:1—"the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom..."
15. Five of the virgins were wise (that is—true converts)—and the other five were foolish (that is—false converts)...
16. Yet—all ten were waiting for the same husband—they were all betrothed or espoused—to a returning groom...
17. Yet—we read in v10—"when the bridegroom came, those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut..."
18. That is—only those who were truly converted—who had the Holy Spirit—symbolized by—oil in the lamp...
19. Furthermore—it also explains Jesus' words in Jn.14:3—"and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also..."
20. These are the words of a bridegroom to his betrothed—he leaves her for a season—as he prepares a place for her...
21. Again—Rev.19:7—"let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready..."
22. Thus—it becomes very important to remember that—while we wait—we must keep ourselves pure to Christ...
23. We are already His—we are betrothed to Him—He is our Groom—we belong to Him—we are one with Him..
24. Notice [2] preachers are jealous matchmakers—that is—their primary task is to betroth sinners to Christ—and then labor to present them pure to Christ...
25. The Scriptures use many different imageries to describe the work of a minister—farmer, builder, soldier, and shepherd...
26. Yet—the one that's often times overlooked or neglected—is that of a matchmaker—a wedding planner of sorts...
27. I don't mind serving as a matchmaker—I think that's proper—I always keep an eye open for singles in other churches...
28. Yet—what is this in comparison to a spiritual matchmaker—who matches unions—that will last for eternity...
29. Now—the work of this kind of matchmaker is twofold—and both of them are found in our text—look again at v2...
30. V2—"for I have betrothed you to one husband (1), that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2)..."
31. Col.1:21-22—"and you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight [Jude 1:24]..."
32. Here we find—the same two-tier relationship—as we have in our text—notice [a] we have been reconciled...
33. V21—"yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death"—that is—we have been betrothed...
34. Notice [b] we will be presented, v22—"to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight..."
35. This word—present—refers to a future presentation such as a wedding—the bride being presented to the groom...

36. Here—Christ (the groom)—is the one responsible to ensure we are presented—His death ensures our purity...
37. Eph.5:25-27—"husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish..."
38. Yet—the lesson I am here focusing upon from our text—is not that Christ presents us—but gospel ministers...
39. Verses 28-29—"Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily..."
40. He labored and worked for a particular and specific goal—"that we may present every men perfect in Christ Jesus..."
41. Yet—he worked conscience that [a] Christ ultimately keeps His people, and [b] Christ was his source of strength...
42. Now—while it is true ministers are to be jealous matchmakers—there is a sense which so are parents and husbands...
43. Parents—what is your primary responsibility toward your children—match them to Christ—and then present them to Christ...
44. Now—remember—Paul labored to present the church to Christ—knowing that ultimate Christ presents the church...
45. That is—God and God alone has to save our children—yet—this does not alleviate our responsibility to work...
46. Husbands—what is your primary task with regards to your wife—labor to present her to holy and pure to Christ...

II. A Fear—v3

1. V2—"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..."
2. Notice two things [1] why he feared, v3—"but I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness..."
3. This is a reference back to Genesis 3—when Satan deceived Eve and turned her aside from devotion to God...
4. Thus—what he feared was that Satan—through false teachers—would deceive and distract them from Christ...
5. 2Cor.11:13-14—"for such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light..."
6. Here—we find how the serpent (Satan)—would deceive the Corinthians—through false apostles and teachers...
7. The exact identity of these false apostles we are not told—but—one thing is for certain—they appeared orthodox...
8. Paul says—they—"transform themselves into apostles of Christ"—v15—"into ministers of righteousness..."
9. In other words—the errors they introduce will be subtle—they wont come teaching open and obvious heresy...
10. They will likely come teaching about Jesus, faith, and love—yet—they will put a subtle twist on these things...
11. This of course—is the whole purpose of the comparison with Satan and Eve—he deceived her with subtle error...
12. Yet—I suggest there is another reason behind the apostle's fear—and that is our remaining weakness and ignorance...
13. That is—it wasn't merely the craftiness of Satan—but it was also the weakness and vulnerability of the saints...

14. V4—"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..."
15. That is—if other teachers come teaching another Jesus, Spirit, and gospel—you would bear them more than me...
16. In other words—he's reminding them how fickle and erratic they've become—how easily they change and err...
17. Notice [2] what he feared, v3—"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..."
18. The GK word rendered "corrupted"—means "to destroy, lead astray, or seduce"—the latter two here fits best...
19. Paul was afraid—that Satan—through the false teachers—would lead astray or seduce—their minds or thinking...
20. He was afraid—their minds would be—lead astray or seduced—"from...the simplicity that is in Christ [to Christ]..."
21. This word translated "simplicity"—literally means "singleness"—it refers to something that's unmixed or pure...
22. For example—what do we mean by the word "simple"—but something not complex—that's single or unmixed...
23. Thus—most of the modern translations have rendered it "sincere"—that is—free from any deceit or impurity...
24. 2Cor.1:12—"for our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you..."
25. Here—the word translated "simplicity"—refers to singularity of intent and focus—with an undivided devotion...
26. Furthermore—notice—such "simplicity" is related to "sincerity"—to have a single, sincere, or pure devotion...
27. Thus—native to the word—are the concepts of—sincere, pure, and single-hearted devotion or commitment...
28. NIV—"I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ..."
29. Simply put—the word refers to a single-hearted, unmixed and pure devotion—" to" "toward" or "for" Christ...
30. Thus—Paul feared—that the Corinthians would be turned from—a whole-hearted commitment to Jesus Christ...
31. Thus—what I want to do in the remainder of our time—is suggest that this simplicity to Christ—entails at least three things...
32. Notice [a] devotion to the person of Christ—that is—Christians will be tempted to lose focus of Christ Himself...
33. This is rather easy to do—we get busy with all kinds of things—many of them—are of themselves good things...
34. Oh Christian—with all of the many things happening around you—never get too busy—that you forget Christ...
35. You know—it's actually possible to be in the ministry—to be busy for Christ—and yet—lose sight of Christ...
36. Rev.2:2-4—"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love..."
37. Notice—in spite of all that they did right—the Lord had this complaint against them—"you have left your first love..."
38. That is—you have left off loving Me to the degree that you once did—your initial love for me has grown cold...

39. Notice [b] devotion to the doctrine of Christ—that is—Christians will be tempted to slight the old truths of Scripture...
40. It is absolutely impossible—to separate Christ from His word—devotion to Christ and His word—are wed together...
41. Jn.14:23—"if anyone loves Me, he will keep My word"—that is—He will keep, obey, and treasure—My word...
42. Oh dear brethren—never grow weary of the old paths—the old truths of salvation from sin—by the work of Christ...
43. Never grow tired—of Christ and Him crucified—never grow tired of hearing—about the great truths of the gospel...
44. Never grow weary about justification of an imputed righteousness—received by nothing—but faith alone...
45. There is coming a time—and it was now arrived—when these old truths will be either denied—or ignored...
46. 2Tim.3:13-15—"but evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus..."
47. Notice [c] devotion to the worship of Christ—that is—Christians will be tempted to forgo the simplicity of NC worship...
48. Now—this word worship can refer either to service to Christ in general—which refers to the totality of life...
49. Or else—it can refer in a more narrowed sense to—what we refer to as—public worship within the church...
50. I can put it like this—beware of being distracted from—singleness of devotion to Christ, His word, and church...
51. Acts 2:42—"and they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers..."
52. That is—no sooner were they united to Christ by faith—they were devoted to His word—and to His church...
53. Simply put—we can never sever Christ from His church—to love Christ—necessarily entails loving His church...
54. And—tragically—the first thing that usually goes from the church—is what we commonly refers to as—plain worship...
55. That is—worship that God commands—worship that God's word regulates—nothing added or subtracted from it...
56. Oh—dear friends—we live in a day—when many have been lead away from—the simplicity of NC worship...
57. Yet—Martin—"I am jealous for you with godly jealousy...that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ..."

III. A Question

1. Let me simply close with this question—in light of what we have seen—have you or I—strayed from simplicity to Christ...
2. Have you or I—become distracted from simplicity (singleness) of devotion to Christ, His word, and worship...
3. Have we allowed bad teaching, our own remaining ignorance, and the cares of the world—to lead as astray...
4. Let us be recommitted this morning—to the simplicity that is in Christ—let us re-devote ourselves to what matters most...
5. Let us—keep ourselves pure as we await our beloved Groom—let us give ourselves solely and totally to Him...