

Our Devotion to Christ
II Corinthians 11: 1

INTRODUCTION

The young man was obviously nervous about being in my office. Because of his religious background, he was not sure about Baptist ministers. He had come to me with a very personal question. The young woman he loved very much was refusing to marry him on religious grounds. Because he did not share her devotion and love for Jesus Christ, she would not give herself to him in marriage. He could not understand this. He did not consider himself to be a pagan. He believed in God and tried to live a good life. True, he didn't attend church and did not maintain any disciplines of devotion. He wanted me to explain the behavior of his beloved to him.

The young man had obviously had the good fortune to meet a true Christian. One of the sure marks of a Christian is his personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. From earliest days of the faith this has been true. The First Christians were not just committed to a new system of ethics . . . they are committed to a Person. It was not a casual relationship ... it was their life. Paul had observed this kind of devotion in the Christians in Corinth, but now he felt it necessary to talk to them about it. They could be in danger of losing it. The false teachers who had come to the community were to be seen as a threat to their devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes, "But 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. 'Sincere' has in it the idea of simplicity, of single-heartedness. Their devotion to Jesus was full and undivided. It was also pure. No part of it was reserved for any other lord. Jesus Christ was truly the only Lord of life. They were committed to Him and to Him alone. He is the object of the whole hearted devotion of their lives. It should be so in our lives. This passage helps us understand why it should be true and some of the threats to this devotion.

I. THE DEMAND FOR WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION TO CHRIST

Two great spiritual realities demonstrate the demand for such devotion. First, the nature of God makes such devotion mandatory. As Paul explains his concern for the Corinthians, he points to the nature of God. "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy," Paul wanted it known that his concern was not selfish. The concern that filled his heart had been given to him by God. The concern could best be described as godly jealousy. Literally, it should be translated, "the of God jealousy".

Do you have difficulty in thinking of God as being jealous? Actually it is one of the basic things about God revealed to us in the Scriptures. Our God is a jealous God. In the Old Testament, God was intolerant of a divided loyalty. He wanted all of the devotion of His people. The God revealed to us in the New Testament is the same jealous God. This is a revelation of the depth and intensity of the love of God for His people. He loves so deeply that it hurts Him and moves Him to action whenever His people begin to bestow upon another the devotion that

rightly should be His. God has a deep desire for the devotion of your life. His nature makes this devotion mandatory.

Second, the relationship that we have with Christ makes it mandatory. "I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." Paul is borrowing an Old Testament picture of the relationship that God has with His people. In the Old Testament, God is the husband of His people Israel. In the text, Paul seems to be thinking of himself as the father of the church in Corinth. Through his preaching they had been birthed into the family of God. In that day it was customary for a father to make arrangements for the marriage of his daughter. He would promise her to a man for marriage. During this promise period she was considered espoused to her husband to be. It was just as binding as the marriage itself since the father had given his word. As their father, Paul had promised the church to the Lord Jesus to be His virgin bride. This is the actual state of the church at the present time. She has been promised to the Lord Jesus to be His bride.

But Paul projected himself into the future. He sees himself still acting as the father in eternity where the marriage will actually take place: There he wants to present the church to Christ as a pure virgin to be His wife.

This is the relationship that the church has to Christ. We are engaged to be married to Him when He returns. Surely this makes it mandatory that we maintain our devotion to Him at all costs. This is recognized by all to be a basic demand of the engagement period before the actual consummation of the marriage. When a girl accepts an engagement ring, this is a commitment to use the months ahead to get ready for marriage. It is a promise of wholehearted devotion. Everyone recognized that it is improper for an engaged person to have any such relationship with any other except the one person to whom they are promised. When you received Christ as Saviour, you received the gift of the Holy Spirit - - - dare we call Him the engagement ring? We do know that He is called the Spirit of promise He is the pledge or earnest given to us by God. Surely, this relationship makes any divided loyalty, any half-hearted devotion an totally unacceptable.

II. THE DANGER TO THE WHOLEHEARTED MOTION TO CHRIST

The background of this passage, as we have noted before, is that of the invasion of the false teachers from Jerusalem or some other center. They were basically Judaizers. They sought to make Jews out of the early Christians by laying upon them the burden of the law. Paul saw their ministry as a real threat to the "sincere and pure devotion" of the Christians to Christ. The passage would remind us that the threat can come from different quarters.

The danger can be doctrinal. In this case, it was. The teachers were a threat to the devotion of the Christians because of their doctrinal emphasis. Any teacher who encourages people not to trust in Christ alone for salvation is a threat to their devotion to Him. Those most deeply devoted to Him are those who see Him as the only Saviour from sin. These Judaizers were trying to get the people to add

something to Christ. They wanted them to trust in Christ plus circumcision, plus keeping some of the rules found in the Old Testament law. In doing this they presented a different view of Jesus from that which presented by Paul, offered to them a different spirit --- one of fear and doubt and declared to them another Gospel. All such teachers are a threat to your devotion to Christ.

This danger is still with us. Many religious teachers in the church today present another Christ. The Jesus presented by liberal theology is another Christ. He was not born of a virgin. He was not infallible in his teachings. He did not perform the miracles attributed to Him in the Bible. He did not die for our sins. He did not rise from the dead. He is not coming again. Surely, any teacher who so presents Christ is a threat to your devotion. Such a Christ is not worthy of the full devotion of your life.

Then there are those teachers who have amended the Gospel of Christ. They have added baptism, or church membership, or good works, or some other human factor into the Gospel. They draw our attention to what we do, rather than what He has done. All such teachers discourage a wholehearted devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. So the danger can be doctrinal. True doctrine, the doctrine of Christ, encourages a full devotion for the living Christ .

The danger can be natural. Really you do not need false teachers to lose Your devotion the Lord Jesus. The church at Ephesus had carefully protected itself from the false teachers, yet the Lord could accuse them of leaving their 'first love'. Their devotion to the Lord Jesus was no longer sincere and pure. There is just a natural inclination in the Church and in each of us to cool down our devotion to the Lord Jesus. That is the reason that we need seasons of revival, or recovery. You need to be aware of this very natural danger.

The danger can be practical. We live in the midst of a world that offers many other alternatives to Christ. It is so easy to become so preoccupied with the things of life, that you lose your devotion to Christ. The world with its lust of the flesh, love of the eyes and the pride of life is all that is needed. Nothing more sinister than a vocation, getting an education, building a home, raising a family, taking care of a parent, can be the cause of a lost devotion to the Lord Jesus. Unless you are sensitive to the danger, it is sure to happen.

Behind each of these dangers stands the evil enemy of our Lord. The same Evil One that deceived Eve and led her away from her simple obedience to the Creator, is at work on you. He will not come saying, "I suggest that you forsake the Lord Jesus Christ." He is too smart for that. Rather, he will just cause you to come under the influence of teachers ,-o deceitfully lead you away from Christ. He will just take advantage of some very natural inclinations in you. He will just use the subtle power of the world in which you live. His goal is the same ... lead them away from a full devotion to the living Christ.

Conclusion:

With the demand and danger in full view, what should we do? How can we be careful to maintain this needed devotion to the Lord Jesus? Let me make some practical suggestions. First, we should be a faithful participant in the life of the church. The church where the members are involved and are faithful in worship is more likely to keep the proper devotion to Christ.

Second, we should mature in our faith through personal study. The more you understand your faith, the more devotion you will have to Christ. Understanding comes through discipline in study and prayer.

Third, we should maintain our private worship of the Lord Jesus. The quiet time is a must if devotion to the Lord Jesus is to remain sincere and pure. Nothing must be allowed to take His first place in your life.

Surely, the Lord, is worthy of our full devotion.