

The Serpent's Cunning
2 Cor. 11:1-15

"Betrothals in the ancient world were binding: there were no casual engagements, and a sexual fling by a betrothed woman would be viewed as nothing less than adultery. Paul, acting as the father, has betrothed the Corinthian church to Christ. As an honorable father, he desires to present his daughter as a pure virgin to her prospective husband when he comes for her (at the Parousia). Instead, Paul hears reports that she is playing around with other lovers, and he is appalled. More, he is jealous for his daughter (not 'of' her, but 'for' her): Incensed at the seducers, lovingly concerned for her purity and her future, hurt, outraged at her fickleness...

We like to have our Christianity shaped less by the cross than by triumphalism or rules or charismatic leaders or subjective experience. And if this shaping can be coated with assurance of orthodoxy, complete with cliché [Christianese]. We may not detect the presence of the archdeceiver; nor see that we are being weaned away from 'sincere and pure devotion to Christ' to a 'different gospel.'" D.A. Carson

- I. God is jealous for his people, for their spiritual well-being, purity and holiness. He alone was proactive in offering His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. By grace, He drew us, saved us, and chose us to be holy and blameless in his sight. We are His possession, blood bought at a tremendous price, and **our responsibility** is to make sure that we keep ourselves as a pure virgin to him undefiled by the ways of the world.

2 Cor. 11:1-2, 5-12

John 14:23

Deut. 4:23-24

"... it is as if Jehovah in effect says, 'I refuse to consider the possibility of a rival. I must be master, I must be supreme. I must be Lord, total Lord of all, or I'll not be Lord at all. I am not going to compete with another for a place in your affection; ... I will be your sovereign, I will be your Master, your God, or I shall be nothing.'" (Redpath)

- II. Satan is very cunning and will use whatever deception or means necessary to woo and win our minds and hearts away from our affection for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is our enemy, which means that we are at war with him. **Our responsibility** is to be alert and sober minded, to resist him by standing firm in the faith. Otherwise, we will remain like infants who are *tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming* (Eph. 4:4).

2 Cor. 11:3-4

2 Cor. 10:5

1 Jn. 4:3-4

2 Cor. 4:4-5

ἀπλότης haplótēs singleness, simplicity, sincerity, mental honesty. The virtue of one who is free from pretence and hypocrisy. Not self seeking, openness of heart manifesting itself by generosity. Strong's

1 Peter 5:8-9 *8Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

- III. Satan's cunning deception can be very hard to distinguish from truth if we chose to remain ignorant about the knowledge of God. In fact, it is what Satan counts on so that he can deceive us and keep us stupid and ill-informed about the power of the cross and what it means for us. *"The point is that the archenemy is an archdeceiver. Unless we understand this, we will be pathetically gullible, sucked into various sins and blown this way that that in our doctrine. The only certain antidote is the kind of humble walk with God that is characterized by a growing and mature knowledge of the Scriptures."* Carson

2 Cor. 11:12-15

1 Jn. 5:18-19

Rev. 3:1-3

1 John 4:1 *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

"Satan does not come to us as Satan; neither does sin present itself to us as sin, but in the guise of virtue; and the teachers of error set themselves forth as the special advocates of truth" (Hodge)