



Being Urgently Devoted – Part 1

Guarding Your Allegiance

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The Catholic Pope made news. He's been making a lot of news lately, and one of the things he said that I think may have caught your attention, certainly this one around the world quickly. Most of his statements do, but this one in particular a few weeks back when he said, let me quote it precisely, "God does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war but he rejects them." Now, of course, he's quoting here just before this he said, "this is our God, Jesus, King of peace, who rejects war and whom no one can use to justify war." Now, millions of people heard that and it did catch fire around the world. And people have said when they heard that, a lot of them nodded and they smiled and they agreed with that. They felt like this is the right thing. This is surely what Jesus would say, and it felt right to people. And I just want to tell you that so many people clung on to that, not just for their political frustrations, a lot of people clung on to that just even if they knew nothing about the political headlines or geopolitics, they liked that not because of doctrine or theology, as he was trying to quote. But they like it because of culture. They like it because of kind of the modern understanding of Christianity in our generation, which boils down to in many people's minds that if you're a Christian, you should certainly be nice. And if you're nice you shouldn't want war. And if you are going to be a Christian and be nice you always should want to be at peace with everyone about everything. And that is very common and many, many people will make that case repeatedly in many different ways. They think the most Christlike strategy that you can have is accommodation. "God doesn't listen to the prayers of warriors." People appreciate that from spiritual leaders. We should be at peace.

Now the Pope quoted Isaiah Chapter 1 verse 15 when he made that statement, which is not a statement about war I should make clear about the hands spread out covered with blood. The first five Chapters of Isaiah are about the violence that's taking place in the streets and the crime in Jerusalem, and the oppression of people in the nation at that particular point. But that, notwithstanding, the reality of the warriors in and outside the pages of Scripture engaged in just warfare, God is certainly hearing the prayers of warriors. As a matter of fact, he is answering the prayers of many warriors, not to mention Christ the one he is quoting who ends human history with a war. Matter of fact, he's quoted in Revelation Chapter 19 verse 11 as waging war. He comes back to do that, even though he says in that missive that he carried out and was recorded and sent around the world, saying he rides in on a donkey. Well, the next time he arrives in the book of Revelation, he rides in on a horse and he does exactly what the Pope says he doesn't do. Well, this is exactly what he will do because at times there is, as Ecclesiastes says, "a time for war, and a time for peace." When it comes to Christianity, the reason I bring all this up is because if you buy the modern perception of Christianity you may think, particularly as we deal with more esoteric issues like theology and ideas and topics and doctrines, you may think certainly we don't want to be disagreeable about these things, and to be not disagreeable is to be agreeable and to be accommodating. And I want to remind you as we get into Second Corinthians Chapter 11, that nothing could be further from the truth.



Now, it doesn't mean we're not going to be people who remind ourselves that we have to have a respectful attitude. We need to know that the "Imago Dei," the reality of people being made in the image of God, is certainly important as we address people regardless of what they know or what they believe. But we cannot compromise the reality of who Christ has presented himself to be, who God is, and what Christianity has been revealed to be in the pages of Scripture. This is critically important, and the chapter that precedes it that we just finished going through in the exposition of Second Corinthians, he made this very clear at the beginning of Second Corinthians Chapter 10, when he says that we do have weapons of warfare and we are all warriors when it comes to tearing down any thought that raises itself up against the knowledge of God. We don't just say, oh, that's a nice idea, let's think about that or that's good for you and that's nice and some people in my band, they may like that. Or maybe you should present that to my church they might want to consider that. We are tearing down every thought that raises itself up against the knowledge of God, and we're taking every thought captive to obey Christ. And that means that if you come in with a different Christ or a different gospel or a different idea of what Christianity should be, that we are supposed to counter that, and we are supposed to bring that in conformity with the revealed truth of God's Word. That's what the Bible teaches. That's what Paul has said. He's made that very clear, and he's made that clear in Second Corinthians Chapter 10. And as he turns to Chapter 11 to eventually here in this chapter get to really going after the critics, the critics who he's going to go after have been influencing these Corinthians and pushing Paul out. And really, they've been successful to some extent in getting the Corinthians to say well, maybe Paul's the bad guy, and maybe these people who are talking about a different way to view Christ and the gospel and Christianity, maybe they're right.

And in the first four verses in what I'm now going to use as a five-part series, we're going to look at how we need to think about our Christianity. I've entitled this series Being Urgently Devoted. We need to be urgently devoted to Christ. And that really starts with the battle that's taking place in our minds, our minds as it relates to Christianity. And God wants to see our minds transformed by the truth, continually refined, calibrated based on what God has revealed in his Word. So we're going to go through a shift, and this chapter division comes at a good place as he's shifting into a problem that he's going to address right here in verse 1. And there's kind of an inclusio here, two bookends, verse 1 and verse 4, we're going to see that tie and we're going to understand the concern. And then we'll unpack in future weeks some of the real specifics as to what's going on in the doctrine that's being shared that doesn't comport with biblical orthodoxy.

But right now I just want to read the text. So let's read it together. And by that I mean you follow along with your eyeballs as I read it here in verses 1 through 4, Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verses 1 through 4, I'll read it from the English Standard Version. And what you're going to find here is accommodation is not the goal. Being polite and nice and just giving a listening ear to everything is not the goal when it comes to our Christianity. Now, verse 1. This is a great rhetorical device and there's some sarcasm here as we're about to see. "I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness." Now, take note of that phrase there, "Bear with me." That phrase, bear with me and because we're not reading a Greek New Testament unless in fact you are. You might be, you might have that on your screen or in your lap. That



phrase there, "bear with me" you're going to see that reprised in verse 4. There are the bookends, there's the inclusio. If you were to drop down to the very last line in verse 4 you would find this, if you're looking at the Greek text, you'd find this word again. When it's translated this way, "you put up with." Okay? Now what do they put up with? Look at the beginning of verse 4. "If someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed." Now they're putting up with that. And then the other Greek word is, you put up with that well, you do it well as it's translated. You put up with it, you bear with it "readily enough" as it's translated here.

So the irony of this is that Paul, the church planter, has come into Corinth. He's led them to Christ, and now he's trying to defend his apostleship to bring them back to think properly about Christ and the gospel and Christianity. And he's saying, I need you to bear with me in what is considered here in your eyes, a little foolishness and what I feel weird doing in defending myself, you need to bear with me, but it seems like you're bearing with the critics really well. They want to share some new progressive ideas. They want to share with you some things that seem to comport really well with the spirit of the age there in Corinth. You like all of that, and it seems like you have a listening, warm, accommodating, welcoming ear for all that they have to say. Why don't you give me a little bit of "bearing with" in all of this? It's just an interesting use of the vocabulary both in verse 1 and verse 4.

Okay, now let's read it all again. "I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me!" With what? Verse 2, "For I feel a divine jealousy for you since I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ." Now don't miss this. This is an interesting analogy, and the analogy here is that Christianity is analogized that Paul as a church planter who goes and he leads a bunch of these people to Christ back in the book of Acts, as we looked at last week, and in doing so they commit themselves to be followers of Christ. They put their trust in Christ, which is predicated, of course, on the covenant commitment that Christ makes to them. And now they're in this relationship saying Christ is my King and my Lord and my Redeemer. And Christ is saying, of course you're my son, my heir, right? In Christ I see you as fully righteous. And so we have this covenant-promised relationship between the Corinthian Christians and Christ. And so they're in this relationship. But, as I often say in this church from this platform, Christianity is about the "then and there" and it's not about the "here and now." And as Paul says in First Corinthians Chapter 13 verse 12, "we see through a glass darkly," right? It's now kind of a long-distance relationship barring, of course, the reality of the conviction of the Spirit and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. We're not left as orphans as he says in the book of John, but we're going to then see face to face.

So the reality of all of this, First John Chapter 3, is we're going to have a time when all of this is consummated, we're going to be in the presence of Christ. But right now we're promised, we're committed, but then we'll be in his presence. So it's kind of like a betrothal, certainly in the ancient world where a father would commit in this relationship, this betrothal, his daughter to this man and the man would be committed in this relationship as though it's a contractual commitment. And the daughter, of course, was to be, as it says here, jealously protected to be the future wife of this husband. And you can picture a scenario, you know, very unlike



because it's very unique to think about Joseph and Mary, but think about the situation of a betrothal period and saying if you're the father of the bride, you certainly want her to not fall into what is talked about in the Mosaic Law of being one of the outrageous things that could happen when the husband encounters his wife on his wedding night and realizes that she's been, you know, an immoral woman going out and sleeping around in Israel. Such an outrageous thing should not be done in Israel it says in the law of Moses.

And so what he wants here is, okay, you're committed to this man. You're going to get married to this man. I certainly don't want you out flirting around with other men in your town. Right? You need to be reserved and preparing yourself for your marriage to this guy. And here's the picture. You're committed now to Christ. You're going to be with him in eternity, he says in John Chapter 14, "I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." As many commentators think that's even a picture of betrothal, setting up a household and coming back to get his bride and bring her. That's the picture. You are going to be with Christ, and you now have to keep yourself focused on that. Don't go out and start flirting around with other loyalties. And here's Paul saying, like a friend of the bridegroom, I'm jealous for you to be faithful and loyal to him. As we see in the next verse, he says, "I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve," she was supposed to be loyal to God, "by his cunning," the serpent's cunning, "your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Now Eve wasn't sincerely and purely devoted to God, and you might not be sincerely and purely devoted to Christ, you might be messing around with idolatry, which is basically the basic definition of not being sincerely and purely devoted to God, the Triune God. You start to get other things in between you and God. And how does that work? Well, you start thinking about God and Christ and Christianity differently. You think that it's allowable, you think it's okay, you start thinking differently about all of that. And Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 4, there's always someone involved in that. Someone starts giving you a different pitch. Verse 4, "For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received."

Now translators put that with a small 's' here, which is a translation decision. Because there are capital or small letters, there is in the original language but that convention is not here in Greek to say Holy Spirit or some other usage of the word "spirit." So it's a translator's decision, but I think that it's one I agree with here because I think it says something to do with the idea of the experience of Christianity, what it's supposed to be. And he says, okay, you've pitched a different Christ. He's not the Christ that I've proclaimed to you. Now, I'm an apostle, Paul is saying. Someone else is saying well, Christ isn't quite what Paul said or Christianity that I've proclaimed to you, well, it's not the Christianity that Paul said. This should be a different experience than what he said, or a different gospel than the one you accepted. Right? If someone's pitching you a different gospel, this is really not the thing that God wants you to commit to. This is not the good news that Paul said. This is not how you respond to the good news. There's a different way to do it. There's more to it or there's just less to it. He says it seems like if you hear that you're putting up with it, you're bearing with it readily enough.



So this is a bit of a rebuke. It's also a sobering warning. And he's saying I'm a little concerned that you guys are listening to these people that I know are criticizing me so that they might mute my voice and influence in your life. And really, it's about making sure that amazing line in verse 3 that you have to have "a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." I called it Urgent Devotion because the urgency is you're going to constantly be tested; you're going to be constantly tempted. There's going to be constantly something pulling at you and in our information age, think about it. How many voices do you have coming at you? The din of opportunities for you to hear about different versions of Christianity. I mean, your online algorithms all the time. Think about it. I mean, you're a Christian. I hope your algorithms are, you know, showing that, you know, you're into the Bible, you're into Christ, Christianity, I mean, church. There's stuff thrown at you all week long that's going to appeal to that. And all kinds of voices are going to talk to you about this.

Now, your pastors here are going to talk to you about this. Right? And we have some commitments, creedal commitments, right? Confessional commitments, some vetting that goes on, some schooling behind us, some commitment to you, a love commitment, a career commitment to you. But some guy in his underwear in front of his computer screen pontificating about theology and Christ and Christianity, what Christianity should be, is a whole different experience but he has a lot to say to you this week. There's some reel that's coming your way, some video on Facebook that's appealing to you about how you should think about Christianity. This is happening in our day.

So this is so highly applicable to where we live. And so we want to think about this starting with what he says here in Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 2 regarding jealousy. Now he qualifies the jealousy he has as simply participating in a jealousy that's divine. It's a "divine jealousy," which means God is jealous that you're committed to Christ without any kind of rival, without any kind of idolatry, without anything in between you and your "sincere and pure devotion" to him. And Paul is just saying I'm sharing in that. Just like if you were the best friend of a groom and the engaged woman is flirting around or sleeping around, it'd be like, ah man, I'm terribly jealous for this, the consummation, the purity of this marriage. And so Paul says, I'm sharing in that "divine jealousy."

So he needs to be heard on that, Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 1. And in verse 2 he says I have betrothed you to this. This is how the commitment works. You've committed to Christ, Christ the Lord. Lord is like he's the exclusive one, right? He's the one you're supposed to be fully and wholly committed to. Right? The God-Man, Jesus Christ. Okay, number one, let's just start with that concept and do a little didactic teaching here. Number one, you need to "Understand God's Righteous Jealousy for You." Now we think of jealousy as a negative so often. But jealousy is not negative. That's why my qualifier is "righteous jealousy." And I want to tell you it is for you, even if you're not a Christian here this morning, think about it this way. Here's the basic fundamental truth, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," First Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 26. In other words, everything in the world is his. Every flea on the planet is his. He's designed it, right? And for every flea on the planet he is the creator of that. Every flea, every kangaroo, every amoeba, everything, he is the creator of all things and every neighbor in your neighborhood.



When you drive home you'll pass all those places, all your neighbors. And all those neighbors he is the creator of all those neighbors. He's created them in the image of God. He made them. Acts Chapter 17, "he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything," else. Okay? And they should wake up this morning and say, Creator, God, giver of everything I have, of my strength to make an income and a giver of my life and breath and everything else. And Christ, the agent of creation, the one who holds all things together, right? The God who holds everything together by the word of his power. Christ, in whom "all things hold together." What can I do for you today? First of all, thank you for all of that. And number two, how can I serve you the great King of the universe and creator of my life? That's what your neighbor should do. And if you're a non-Christian here, that's exactly what you should do. He is God. He's preeminent. He is THE God who created you and you should have that perspective.

But if you realize that you're a sinner, as most of you have. You've been convicted by God's Spirit, and you realize you'd be cast into outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth forever. You should recognize that you want forgiveness, of course, because you care about the fact that you don't want to go there. And you say, God, I throw myself on your mercy and your grace, and by God's kindness and love for you, with the "great love with which he loved you," he has solved the problem by sending his Son, and he's absorbed the penalty and fulfilled the righteousness and you have responded to him, and you've said I trust in you, you are my Lord and my King and my Redeemer. And so now not only is he your creator, giving you life and breath and everything else, but he's now also your Redeemer. And so every morning you should wake up and say, God, you're my creator. You're the provider of all things. You're also my Redeemer. You've saved my soul, right? You are now the person to whom I am completely devoted to. Thank you for all of that. And how can I serve you today? Right? What can I do for you? That is what someone does who understands who God is. And if you are in this covenant relationship where he says now you're my child, I am your redeemer, you're my heir, you're my son. You're a participant in the kingdom. You're a citizen of this future thing called the New Jerusalem. Then that's what we should be. He's God.

Now, if your skeptical, critical friend says, well, God sounds pretty selfish, pretty self-centered. You just nod your way through that and say, yeah, he really does. Do you know why? Because he's the center of everything. So he can be this self-centered, selfish person because selfishness and self-centeredness make sense when you're the absolute, pure, and absolutely perfect one who provides everyone with everything that they have. He is the one who should have all honor, all credit, all authority, all dominion, all wealth, everything should be directed to him. And when that takes place in the appropriateness of him being exalted in everyone's mind exactly where he belongs, then everything's good. When your teenage daughter thinks she's the center of everything in the universe that's gross, right? But when God recognizes that he's the center of everything, which of course he knows that, and when you recognize that God is the center of everything, that's perfect, that's good, now life is good. When you think you're the center of everything that's gross. See, so the reality of this is that



everyone should recognize that God is God. And if he's your Redeemer you're doubly his, and that you say nothing gets in front of that.

Speaking of that, we think about the concept of jealousy. If anything starts to become the center of your life that's not the center of the universe and really the center of your life, God can say well, something's wrong here. You shouldn't be that way. Now Christ, your Redeemer and your Lord, you're not acting like he's your Redeemer and your Lord. I don't feel right about that. It's not copacetic with me that you're that way. This is the biblical concept of divine jealousy. And he is zealous about the fact that you should rightly understand who he is. As a matter of fact, he goes back to the first thing that God ever wrote to mankind. I know you think the first thing God ever wrote to mankind is Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." That's not the first thing God ever wrote to mankind because God had not yet dispatched Moses to write the Pentateuch. That was about to happen but he first sent him down the mountain of Sinai with tablets in his hands. And the first thing that God wrote, assuming he wrote the commandments in order was, "You shall have no other gods before me." The very first thing God says to his creatures is I'm God and God by definition is first. I should be first. I should be first in your mind, first in your heart. If that's the way it is everything will go fine. That was the problem in the Garden and it shouldn't be the problem with you.

So let's keep first things first, and I'm first, let's keep that first and nothing should get between us. And if anyone shows up with a golden calf or anything else to say, no, this is instead first, you should say no. "No other gods before me." So if you want to build something or put something else or some little shiny thing as the object of your supremacy, no. I should have preeminence in everything. That's the first thing he says. Go all the way to the New Testament times now, thousands of years later, Jesus shows up. They ask him what's the greatest commandment? He says it in a little different way, but it's the same thing. It's a summation of all the commands of the Old Testament as it relates to vertical commands. He says you are to love the Lord your God up there pretty high on the list about the way you would love your wife and your kids and your grandkids, and maybe the way you love your house, and maybe your favorite motorcycle, or your summer home or your RV. It should be in the top ten at least, that's what Jesus said. Do you remember that passage talking about your RV? Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." Well, I should have some of my strength, soul, mind, heart left over to love some other things.

Here's the deal. According to Luke Chapter 14 starting in verse 25 all the way to verse 33, God is very clear that your love for God should be so preeminent and so superior to everything else, that everything else is so a distant second, that for sure there are going to be people who misunderstand. They may even think, oh, you must hate me because your love for God is so supreme. And they may think they don't even chart on your priorities because your love for God is so supreme. You are supposed to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. There should be no question in anybody's mind that if it means that somebody in your life is going to be hacked off, if there's ever a competing interest, they're going to be hacked off. I mean, that's just what's going to happen. That's why



he said no one can be my disciple unless you hate your own father and mother, sister, brother's life, even your own life, right? You can't be. What does that mean? I thought I was supposed to love my own life. "Love my neighbor as myself." I'm supposed to love my wife and my children or my parents. All of that's biblical. But you know what he's saying here. The supremacy of your commitment to God is supposed to be so supreme that there are no other rivals. There are no other rivals. And if there is a rival, here's what he says in following up on Exodus Chapter 20, the first commandment, have no other God before me, is Exodus Chapter 34. Jot this one down, verse 14, Exodus Chapter 34 verse 14, when he repeats the first command, you shall have no other gods before me. He says, why? Because the Lord your God, whose "name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you." Now that's an interesting way to put it. My name is Jealous.

Now that doesn't get a lot of play in people's minds. It's not a lesson in the Sunday school curriculum of our kids, but it probably should be. But people don't think about that as a central issue, a central attribute of God. He's a jealous God, which simply means it'd go well for you, it'd go well for everyone if everyone would remember that God is zealous about you keeping first things first and the first thing in your life ought to be the first person in the universe. And he is jealous for that. Don't let anything get in the way. And you think, well, that still sounds like a weakness. God tried to make this point crystal clear in the northern tribes of Israel, when he had early on, with the prophets at least, he had Hosea in Hosea Chapter 1 go out and marry a prostitute. Now you can tell the mother of this preacher wasn't very happy about her son's assignment as he got out of seminary, to go marry a prostitute.

Now, of course, he's not going to have her being active in her prostitute duties as he brings her into the home, but, you know, he cleans her up, does what he can to make her a respectable woman. And then by the time we get to the end of Hosea Chapter 2, she goes back to her old ways. Now she goes back to her old ways, you can only imagine how that would devastate Hosea the prophet. And it does. And he's just almost at, you know, he's just disenchanted. He's disheartened and all of this is not going well. And yet God steps on the scene and he says this in Hosea Chapter 3 verses 1 and 2, he says, go out and woo her back. Go win her back. She's out there turning her tricks again, taking a few shekels for bedding down these guys. Go and win her back. And basically this is such a hard thing for Hosea, you can imagine.

But the idea is I want Israel to see what you're putting up with here, how hard this is for you, right? I want them to see how this is for me. And the reality is when you feel bad about what she's doing and your tenacity to go and try and win her back, just know this, you don't have the problem. You don't have a problem with jealousy, Hosea. She has a problem with loyalty, right? This is the problem. The problem is on her side and is not on your side. If you feel bad because your wife is turning tricks, that's her problem. Your problems are totally appropriate because the problem of jealousy is 100% accurate. And it's what you should have. Matter of fact, we'd be concerned if you didn't feel that way. And God said that's how I feel all the time when my people go after the Astaroth or after the Baals, or they go after all these things, and he says this is the problem.



Now the culture was pushing people toward Baal and Moloch and the Astaroth. Our culture is pushing us after all kinds of other things. And it's always going to start with a redefinition of Christianity, particularly for those of us who are submitting ourselves to Christianity, to try and make these things allowable. And I will tell you this, when it comes to the modern idols of our age, I can tell you the number one idol of our age, particularly in South Orange County, California, it's family and children and grandchildren. This is the number one idol of our day, right? At least for most. Right? And there are a lot of other things that we can get into. But let's just talk about that one for a second. We can take Christianity. We can redefine the spirit of Christianity. We can redefine Christ, and we can even redefine the gospel to where we don't have to lay our family on the altar. We don't have to take the love of our family and subordinate it to the love of Christ. We can take Christianity and even redefine Christianity and equate it with family, right? Have you heard that? I mean, you should have a little twinkle of identification and familiarity with what I'm saying right now. And you can do all of that and create a whole different Christ and a whole different spirit of Christianity and a whole different gospel, because it's done all the time, and it always is a capitulation to whatever the idols of our day are.

Now you think, well, I'm in the clear because no one's ever invited me to an Astaroth party or, you know, a Moloch party. Okay, but you're not. You're not in the clear. Because all the time our Christianity is under siege by the enemy who's trying to get us to redefine Christianity that will allow us to indulge in our idolatry. That's the problem. God is a jealous God. And the jealousy of God is don't let anything get between us. And it's not because he's weak. It's because we're unloyal. It's not because he's weak, it's because we are not faithful and it is never going to go well for us.

As a matter of fact, I just want you to jot this passage down. All of this is the engagement period. None of this is going to be a reality when we get to where we're going. Revelation Chapter 21 is the consummation of it all. And I want to show you when we get to our final destination, as Jesus would put it, "I will come again and take you to of myself, that where I am you may be also." That sounds like not a big deal. It's a huge deal. Here's how it's put in Revelation Chapter 21 verse 3, "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.'" Now the God-Man, Jesus Christ, fully glorified, just like we read about in Revelation Chapter 1, now in Revelation Chapter 21 is living among people on a new earth in a place called the New Jerusalem. He will dwell with them, right? He's not dwelling with us now.

Now we have the Spirit, the influence of the Spirit. We have the prompting of the Spirit. We have the conviction. True, true. We're not orphans, I understand that, but we are living "by faith, not by sight." We're living seeing "through a glass darkly." We're living by a constitution of propositional statements on a book that God breathed-out. I get that. Privileges, yes, but not this. And then it says this: listen to these possessive pronouns, "and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God." You know there's going to be a time we move in and he moves in with us, and there'll be no threats, there'll be no temptations, there'll be nothing getting in the way between God and his people. Christ will consummate this and as it says, and I quote it often, Psalm 16 verse 11, in his presence, and we will be



there, in in unmitigated glory. "In your presence there's fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." There's nothing you're going to want to do but be in his presence. And that's coming. And the Bible says, at that point, you're going to realize that all of his jealousy in the engagement period totally makes sense. It totally makes sense. Why would you possibly threaten a good track record of sanctification to get to that? Why would you mess around with loving the world? Why would you mess around with putting your kids before God? Why would you mess around with putting money or advancement in your career above your loyalty to Christ? Why? It would make no sense. You will look back in shame at all of those things. Understand God's righteous jealousy for you.

Some books on the back that may help you. Thoennes' book is always a good one to talk about God's jealousy. There are some great concepts that can be developed in this, but I just had a little bit of time at this particular juncture of our study of Second Corinthians to touch on the topic. Divine jealousy is a godly thing. It's a good thing. Matter of fact, he goes so far in Exodus 34:14 to say it's his name. Jealously is his name, right? He could be called that, jealous, Mr. Jealous. And it's a good and godly, perfect thing.

Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 3, look back at our text printed on your worksheet. All that's great. It sounds good in verse 2 to be a pure virgin, completely. Get there. Sanctification looks clean. It's a good run. Now we're in the presence of God. That's great. "But I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning." It's a word we don't use very often. His craftiness, his scheming. "Your thoughts," that's where it always starts, "will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ." That's what I want. That's what God wants, that's what Paul wants for the Corinthians is sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Nothing's getting in between you and Christ. Nothing. Nothing's going to sway you from it. And I'm not talking about just any Christ or the Christ of your imagination. Right? We're talking about the Christ who God has revealed through his apostles, the clear Christ of Scripture. The problem is we have a very powerful, very crafty enemy that's trying to pull you away from that. Number two, let's put it this way. We need to "Beware the Subtle but Powerful Threat," the subtle but powerful threats. I've already touched on some examples but let me just focus on this. There's a battlefield, and behind the battlefield is a very powerful person.

At the women's Q&A yesterday morning, if you went to that, we had close to 500 women there. We talked about... we started... we kicked off, I got kicked in the shins with the first question. We started with a question about conspiracy theories. And my first reflexive answer to that was, I believe in this conspiracy theory, the one that's spelled out in Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 1 through 3. And it says that there's a "spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience." Right? And Satan is out there at work in people trying to pull people away. That's it. And of course, I had all my studies that I was working on in the middle of yesterday in mind. But with the reality of him trying to move people down a path and blind their eyes, as Second Corinthians 4:4 says, this is his plan. He'll do whatever it takes. He'll use the popular conspiracy theories of the day to fear monger and all the rest, to get people away from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ, which I did challenge people on yesterday, by the way, and that is, I'd love for people to spend as much time evangelizing, worshiping, doing



apologetics on the Christ of Scripture than they do the conspiracy theories of TikTok. I would love that.

But the reality is I want you to know there is something going on and it's a very powerful strategic enemy trying to make sure that people are being deceived, just like Eve was. He's very, very cunning, which I think that word, and this is a Greek text, of course, in the New Testament, in the Old Testament where we see this described in Genesis Chapter 3 verse 1, there's a Hebrew word that's used "‘ārûm," in English "a-r-u-m" that word is the same word used in a positive sense. It's translated "cunning" or "crafty" or "shrewd." That word is used in a positive sense in the book of Proverbs for someone who is prudently putting the wisdom of Proverbs to work. To be prudent is to think past the surface and to get God's wisdom to work in a situation, right? You think of a businessman who's wisely going about what's right and doing the right thing. That's shrewd. It's prudent. That's how it's translated in the book of Proverbs. That concept, now think about it, the wisdom is used in a bad sense by the enemy. He is crafty. He's shrewd.

And in other words, when temptation comes to pull you off the path of a biblical Christ to allow you to do some things that God doesn't want you to do and have an emphasis in Christianity that you shouldn't have, or loyalties in your heart that you shouldn't have. Right? I'm just telling you, it sounds like wisdom to you. It's always going to sound like wisdom to you. It's always going to be packaged just like it did for Eve. And remember how Eve saw it? Oh, this does look good for the eyes. Oh, this will be good, right? Good, good, good to eat. Good for food. Oh, this will make me someone who knows right from... All these things that he pitched to her. It sounded like wisdom. It sounded like it would be good. It sounded right. Just like someone quoting Isaiah Chapter 1 verse 15, as though it's about warfare and not about violence in the streets of Jerusalem. The reality is it may sound good. It may match the sensibilities of our culture and our day, but it doesn't rightly reflect the truth of God's Word. And if that's the case, we reject it. And we have to see through it. Satan is going to appeal to our sensibilities and the cultural mores that we have. The spiritual battle and the off ramps. They seem benign. They don't seem like a big deal. But they are a big deal. Sometimes they seem very wise. Sometimes they don't seem like anything at all. Sometimes we don't even notice them.

My grandfather worked for the Long Beach Gas Department, one of the few cities in Southern California that had a municipal gas utility. And my dad tells stories of when he was growing up of my grandpa coming home and reeking a horrible odor. And it wasn't because of his body odor. Well, it was on his body. That's because he worked for the gas department. And that's an interesting thing if you know anything about natural gas, because it's an odorless, tasteless, you know, colorless gas that doesn't have an odor. But as everyone in my dad's household knew, grandpa stunk. And he was stinky because of something called mercaptan and mercaptan is something that is added to all natural gas. It's a sulfur compound that gives natural gas that rotten egg smell that all of us know. Matter of fact, the mercaptan, is one of the odors most sensitive to human smell. In one part in a billion or whatever. I forget what the ratios are, but we're very sensitive to go, oh, that's a terrible smell. And so of course, this is all, you know, from the mid 20th century injected into utilities to make sure that before it's sent



to the pipes into your neighborhood, that it stinks and it stinks badly enough with just a little mercaptan in it to where when it gets to your house if there happens to be a leak, you smell it and you go, oh, what is that? Well, it's gas. And now you know that smell because it's a unique smell and you say we must have a leak.

Why is that the case? Well, because in 1937 before they started doing that, at a school just outside of Tyler, Texas, there was a school that had a gas leak before any mercaptan was ever put in gas. And that gas leak went on and on and on and on all day long, until finally there was a spark that ignited it. Not a single person recognized there was a gas leak. Not anybody smelled it because it had no smell. No one saw it. There were no clouds or no fog because you can't see it, right? It's colorless, it's odorless, it's tasteless. No one had a weird taste in the mouth. No one smelled it. No one saw it until the spark erupted and it killed 300 people at this school in Texas. And people started saying maybe we ought to put something in this, that if there is a leak, every grade school kid would know it, every teacher would know it, everyone would know it. So of course, by the time we got to the 1940s, we were putting something in, we perfected something that stunk enough to where everybody could say we know what we're dealing with here.

Here's the problem. Some of us don't recognize the error when it comes our way. And the problem is that we are drinking out of the fountain of all kinds of opportunities for us to learn about Christianity, about Christ, about the gospel in our information age, as I said. We can get it all the time. All your online algorithms are a magnet for everything about Christianity. I, you know, I am too. After our Good Friday doing that very extensive and probably too complicated of a presentation on penal substitutionary atonement, I was getting all these reels and all these videos about people saying what a ridiculous concept the blood atonement was. And I listened to these guys and as I often say who knows who they are? Who knows if they have a congregation they have to preach to every week that keeps them accountable with real feedback from real people, right? Who knows where they went to school? Who knows what kind of vetting there was, right? There's no ordination required to have a YouTube channel. Do you know that? There's nobody has to hire you. You don't go through the process that all our pastors go through. There's nothing other than you just signing up with an email address. And yet every month, you know, I was going to say every week, but at least every month someone's coming to me challenging the doctrine of our church because they saw something on YouTube or they heard something on TikTok, or they watched something on Instagram, or they got some link on Facebook. And all I'm saying is you've got to have enough discernment to at least start to say I have to be really careful and start injecting a little mercaptan in things. Even where I get it from, I'm just going to be a lot more skeptical and discerning before I start listening. They were not bearing with Paul's defense. Paul knows, he says would you bear with me, please. Just listen to me for a minute because you sure are open-minded about all those other people. You are sure pulling up a chair and having a cup of coffee and leaning into a conversation with someone who has a kind of a new-fangled way to explain all this.

Now, Paul felt silly, right? I mean, he felt uncomfortable. I shouldn't say silly. He felt uncomfortable trying to defend himself because it sounded self-serving. And I can tell you this sermon felt the same way for me. Trust me. I'm not going to go home feeling good about this



sermon this weekend. And I'm telling you this, right? It feels that way. I'm not telling you that your pastors here at this church are the smartest guys in the world, we're certainly not. But I will tell you this. There's something about the built in accountability and the concept of being people on the ground in real life, preaching to people in the open forum of a church, caring for you, burying your relatives, marrying your kids, doing what we do, school vetting, all that we do to week by week, month by month, deal with you in the real situation of trying to disciple and train before someone wafts into your little screen on your phone to tell you we're all wrong and they're right, and they sound persuasive because everyone sounds persuasive before someone can come in and challenge them. And we don't have the opportunity to do that when you're watching twenty videos before you ever get to a church service, and the sermon is about something entirely different. And all I'm telling you is to be careful, right? It's odorless, it's tasteless. Right? It just comes in and it doesn't smell like anything at first. And just sometimes we have to slow down and say is this an explosive doctrine that's going to do something to move me away from Scripture?

There are some ways to help us with this. Let's hurry on to the fourth verse. And though we don't in this sermon unpack the other Jesus, the different spirit and the different gospel, we'll get to that in the rest of this series. But I want to focus in on a phrase. If we're going to have a sincere and pure devotion to Christ, the Christ of Scripture, then we're going to see that just clearly spelled out. That's not an assumption. That's right here in Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 4. "If someone comes and proclaims another Jesus," now here's the phrase, "than the one we proclaimed." Now he's an apostle. He's proclaimed it. He's codified it in the writings of the New Testament, along with the other apostles who have written Scripture. "Or if you received a different spirit than the one you received," because it was received and proclaimed in the New Testament. "Or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted," which of course as Galatians Chapter 1 says was given to them directly from Christ through the apostles, well then it seems like you're swallowing that hook, line and sinker, and you're pretty hungry for it. But you shouldn't. Why? Because we've proclaimed it differently. We've given you the right one. We've told you the one that's biblical. And so all I'm saying is that there's a comparative, there's a benchmark, there's something you measure it by.

So the real imperative here, the real command, I'll give you in the third point. Let's put it this way. Number three, "Don't Tolerate Twisted Versions of Christianity." Don't tolerate Christian versions of Christianity like Christology. Right? What the Christian experience should be, what the gospel is, or how you respond to it. Whatever the aspect of Christianity is, don't let someone say well, here's the new thing, but the safeguard is to go back to what was taught. Go back to what the Scripture says and just know that the job of the pastors at your church is to exegete the Word. That's what we do when we study. We spend a lot more time studying than we do preaching you should be glad to hear. And then we get up and exposit it. We actually read the Bible and then we exposit the Bible. And in doing so we're trying to be as careful as we can to tell you what the Bible says. A lot of guys can proof text passages and give them to you on a YouTube channel. That's easy to do, right? But in our job that's what we're trying to bring. And in doing so this is the thing that we can now say this becomes the standard. This is what we're trying to get people to measure things against.



It's our job according to Ephesians Chapter 4:11 through 14, as pastor-teachers is to have us grow up into a "unity of the faith," to be on the same page doctrinally, "and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," not just to know it, but to live it out, "so that we may no longer be children," notice this now, "tossed to and fro by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning," it's not just Satan's cunning, but human cunning, "by craftiness in deceitful schemes." Because ultimately the deceitful scheming is the conspiracy of the enemy. He's the one ultimately scheming deceitfully, but he's using people, just as it says later in our chapter, just like Satan is masquerading as an angel of light, so do his servants.

Old school Christianity, speaking of my grandfather, your grandpa's Christianity is being supplanted by your grandkids' Christianity and your grandkids' Christianity seems much more palatable to the culture that we live in. But all I'm telling you is before you say well that old ridiculous notion of having only male pastors, that just seems all outdated and so Ludites. Before you do that we'd better figure out what the Bible says, right? Because I can proof text and take passages out of context as well as anyone. As well as the Pope proved that he can do that. I can do that. Sorry. I can do that. But what does the Bible say? Did we really get it wrong for the last 2,000 years and finally we figured it out when we had enough pressure in our culture, right? Or really did it take us 1,900 years before we figured out that the spirit of the church was all wrong? It took, you know, it took Parham and it took the Azusa Street Revivals, and it took all that went on in 1901 and 1905 for us to change the whole experience. Or John Wimber to say, well, you know, we're really missing out on what Christianity should be. Really did we miss it all? You know, this whole thing, which I hope we can see through the veneer of this, is it really that traditional biblical Christian marriage or the binary of male and female, really we should stand on that as a biblical, revelatory truth? It's easy for us to capitulate to culture, but we have to get back to what the Bible says.

Two passages real quickly on this. Go with me to the Old Testament passage of Isaiah Chapter 8, Isaiah Chapter 8. Now, if you were with me yesterday morning, some of you gals know I quoted verse 12, which is not a bad place to start. Verse 12. This is when the northern tribes were dealing with the Assyrians and the pact that was going on. We won't get into all that. But in verse 12, plenty of fear is going through the land. And he says in verse 12, Isaiah Chapter 8 verse 12, "Don't call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear." Because as I said, most conspiracies are all about fear mongering. "Nor be in dread." There are some things to be afraid of, as he says in verse 13, but not what a lot of the people say to be afraid of. "But the Lord of hosts," Yahweh of the armies, "him shall you honor as holy." He's the one in charge. "Let him be your fear, let him be your dread." You should care about what he says, not what the people say, not what the polling says, not what the culture says. I fear him, therefore I'm going to care what he says. "He will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel." They're going to mess up. They're going to incur God's judgment by the Assyrians in the north and the Babylonians in the south, "a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken." That's repeated in the New Testament several times.



Now look at this. What do we do? Isaiah Chapter 8 verse 16, "Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples." That sounds like close it up, put it under your bed, lock it up. That's not what we're talking about. This is about what you do with a king's missive, a king's heralded message. We're going to put the imprimatur on it. We're going to make sure everyone knows this is the truth and make sure the disciples know it. "I will wait for the Lord (Yahweh), who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I'll hope in him." I want among the disciples to know what the truth is. And these people are lost. They're stumbling around, and they're going to incur the penalty. But "behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. And when they say to you," these people, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," sounds a little bit like the Azusa Street Revivals, "should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony!" I love that the translators put an exclamation point after this grammatically strong Hebrew phrase, "To the teaching and to the testimonies!"

What should we do? You go back to that thing that he talks about in Isaiah Chapter 8 verse 16 to the authoritative Word of God. Back to the thing I should be concerned about in verse 13, right? I should fear God. I should have him as my dread. What does he say? That's what I can't wait to get home, open our Bible and find out what the Bible says. Not what some church down the street did, or what some YouTube video says, or what the polls are saying that churches should do. What does the Bible say "to the teaching and the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it's because they have no dawn," they have no light, and you should change churches. You should not be there. It's not worth going there. "To the teaching and to the testimony!" That's the benchmark.

One more passage, I said two passages, Jeremiah Chapter 23. This is going on not only early in the demise of the northern kingdom, but also in the demise of the southern kingdom. 721 B.C. is when the north is going to fall. In Jeremiah he's chronicling what's going to happen in 586 B.C. and all this was going on in Judah. In the book of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, he's tired of these prophets lying. Look at how God puts this in Jeremiah 23 verse 25. Let's start there. Read through verse 29, verses 25 through 29. Jeremiah 23:25. "I've heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name," just because someone has a title doesn't mean he's telling you the truth, "saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!'" I have something to say. Here's my thought. "How long shall there be lies in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart?" I'm not saying they all know they're lying. Sometimes they're deceived in their own hearts and they're just sharing what they think. "Who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another." They're always encouraged by each other, right? They all tell their stuff, their thoughts. They write their books. They read each other's books. "Even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal."

Now notice this, verse 28, it's like an open invitation to post your YouTube video. "Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream," fine, whatever, "but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat?" Really? What do a well-exegeted



text and a clearly expounded sermon have in common with some reel on Instagram? Really? What does it have in common? I mean, if you have a properly hermeneutically given instruction in a good book versus somebody telling you something that's just coming down the pike because someone's trying to pontificate on Jesus or the atonement or on church and what it should be. You should be able to tell the difference. The Word of God spoken faithfully versus someone telling their ideas. "Is not my word," Jeremiah Chapter 23 verse 29, "like fire," compared to the straw, it's just going to burn it up, "and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" And even if it's popular, even if it's like a rock. They complain, it's like, this is a big deal. That's not straw. Stop talking about my opinion being like straw. My ideas are big. Everyone agrees with mine. Well, God's word is like a hammer. It can break rocks, too.

Colossians 2:4 talks about plausible-sounding arguments. People have them. God's always telling us don't be deluded by them. Everyone sounds like they have all the answers until someone comes along and challenges them. They'll always be novel takes on Christ, the gospel, Christianity. Your job is not to be nice, right? You should be gentle, respectful. I get all that. But if niceness means you have to tolerate it all then you've missed the point.

Speaking of tolerance. In September 1938 the crowds were cheering the very tolerant, agreeable, accommodating spirit of the British Prime Minister. You do know that history, right? Neville Chamberlain came in getting off the runway, the tarmac. He'd returned from Munich. He was coming back to London. He had a signed agreement in his hand, and he had Adolf Hitler's signature on it. Chamberlain waved it in the air as he got off the plane and he declared this "peace for our time." I have his signature. All's good, everything's copacetic. All's peaceful. The crowds cheered. Everyone thought he was a hero. All was good. The problem was what he'd actually done was extend an accepting, comfortable welcome to someone dead set on destroying them.

Danger didn't arrive with an alarm or a name tag. It arrived with a handshake and a signature and a smile. And people fell for it because they thought, well, this is how it should be. Let's just all be nice and get along. After all, isn't that what Jesus would do? There was a man who saw it for what it was. He was an Apostle Paul figure, if you will. His name, of course, was Winston Churchill. He saw it immediately. He stood up in Parliament after this and he said something no one considered nice. He said this after that, he said, "we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat." Think about that. The members of Parliament booed him for saying that. They called him a warmonger, but within a year they had changed their opinion. People learned you don't assess a threat by how reasonable it sounds or how warmly it's presented. At that point, the MPs knew there was nothing more inevitable, there was nothing more righteous and nothing more they wanted to pray about as warriors than the war they were engaging in. And they prayed, and those warriors were answered.

Paul is sounding the alarm here in our passage, the way Churchill sounded the alarm in Parliament. It was a warning that you can't just be accommodating when there's a threat to the truth. Our weapons of warfare in the battle we're fighting, unless of course, you are a career military person, ours are not of the flesh, but they are divinely powerful to tear down strongholds. Take down anything that raises itself up against the knowledge of God. The



revealed, truthful, codified knowledge of God. You have to be willing to trade all of our comfort because it is uncomfortable at times, I understand that, to confront what is not true. Godly Christians don't love conflict. We don't. We're not looking for a fight, but we want to be like the Bereans. We'd like to be like Churchill. When we see something that doesn't add up, something that's not going to be good, it won't be good for us, it won't be good for those who believe it. We can't just make terms of peace and call it a virtue. Truth and loyalty are worth the discomfort.

Let's pray. God, we know you're a jealous God. We know you care very much about us being right with you. And our allegiance to you certainly deserves more than our niceness. It deserves our zeal, our resolve, our commitment. I pray we would not be so accommodating to teachers we have no idea who they are. We don't know what they believe. We don't know where they got what they're saying. Let us be much more discerning. Let us just be a little bit more discerning about where we get our truth. Hoping that we go to the Bible ourselves and learn how to rightly handle it. And that takes some time but to rightly handle the word of truth, "a worker who has no need to be ashamed." Let us be that increasingly so as we're discipled and trained and in a context that is good, is tested and tried. The next time we hear a video about the afterlife or the redemptive work of Christ or the incarnation or whatever it might be that says maybe what your grandpa believed isn't right. We might be really slow to change our views, especially if the Word of God is seemingly very clear about it. We don't want to ever change our views if your Word is clear. God, so just help us to recommit our hearts to you and to your truth even today.

In Jesus' name. Amen.