

“I Am Jealous ... With A Godly Jealousy”

“Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness, but indeed ye do bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ. For if he that cometh preached another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with him. For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge; nay in every way have we made this manifest to you in all things” (2 Cor. 11:1-6).

Paul has shown the folly of men using a false standard for comparing themselves and particularly if their measuring stick was those of like mind, or even themselves. Such efforts to prove such ones was without understanding. But, he feels to defeat these false teachers he must meet them on their own ground — their inordinate boasting regarding themselves. Thus Paul urges the Corinthians to bear with him or indulge him in a “little foolishness” — boasting, which he says already they did bear with him.

His purpose for what he is about to do grows out of his deep concern for the Corinthians. He fears for them; he is jealous over the influence of these usurpers were having on them, but his jealousy is not a selfish motive: it is a godly jealousy for he primarily fears, not that they would be moved from allegiance to him, but that they would be moved away for the simplicity and purity toward Christ. He knew the devices of Satan (the serpent) and fears these agents of his might move unsuspecting brethren away from Christ.

Paul had preached to the Corinthians originally and in their obedience he had “espoused them as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Paul likens the church as the bride of Christ not only here in this passage, but in others as well, particularly see his words to the Ephesians (5:23-32). But whether Paul in so doing stood symbolically as a father who sought to keep his virgin daughter pure until her marriage, or as the friend of the bridegroom (who stood in the same role) is not clear — Paul does often refer to these brethren as his “children,” so it seems to me that he is using the figure of a father to a virgin daughter.

The Corinthians are warned that if those who came and troubled them cause them to receive a different Christ, spirit, or gospel which they had not received from him, these brethren would do well to bear (beware) of them. If these interlopers preached a different Christ other than the suffering Messiah Paul presented, they did not present the Christ who could save — or if they preached a different gospel than that Paul preached to them, they would be anathema — the warning Paul gave the Galatians who preached or received a different gospel (Gal. 1:6-9); or a “different spirit,” there was cause for alarm. There is some question here as to who or what he means by “spirit”. If spirit should be “Spirit” — a reference to the Holy Spirit they would have received

teaching from some source other than God; if spirit should be “spirit” than a different attitude would likely be the apostle’s point.

Paul’s warning is followed by his statement, “I reckon that I am not a whit behind the chiefest apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5). We are not to suppose by “chiefest of the apostles” he refers to the twelve; clearly these were on the same page about the Christ, spirit, and gospel as was Paul. It is to the disrupters in Corinth who were the harsh critics of Paul to whom the apostle refers. The greater context has Paul saying, “Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13f). Adding to his statement that he was in no way behind the chiefest apostles are found the words: “For though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge: nay in every way have we made this manifest to you in all things” (v. 6), Paul concedes (not necessarily agreeing) to his critic’s charge that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible — but his critics did not charge him with error in what he taught. And, the message always is infinitely more important than the messenger and the presentation, whether weak or eloquent. Paul is fighting vigorously to save his brethren from being deceived by these messengers of Satan!

Jim McDonald