

The simplicity that is in Christ  
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*'But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.'* 2 Corinthians 11. 3

### **Simplicity in the gospel**

One of the outstanding aspects of the gospel is its simplicity. To understand that salvation is simply a matter of acknowledging our need of Christ and looking to Him through faith alone to remove the penalty of sin and to make us citizens of Heaven is nothing short of amazing. We can sing the words of that enduring hymn, *'Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!'* Indeed it is amazing grace and the heart that is fully occupied with the Lord Jesus and His gracious work toward us will never tire of singing those glorious strains. It truly is 'love divine, all loves excelling'. How grateful we are for our salvation and what a debt we owe! His love has been shed abroad *in* our hearts so that it can be shed abroad *from* our hearts. It fills us with praise and adoration making us instant in season to proclaim the gospel to all around so that they too can enter into the same love and appreciation for the Saviour.

We do not rely on our own wisdom or elaborate explanation to win people to Christ, but strive to be like Paul who confessed to the Corinthians. *'And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God,* 1 Cor. 2. 1. False teachers had attempted to corrupt their thinking using strategies of philosophy and dialectics and so we should be on guard lest our thinking and preaching is also corrupted through reliance upon our own wisdom and strength. The gospel does not need to be propped up, nor does it need to rely upon our powers of persuasion or cleverly-packaged programming, but rather on the plain, unadulterated Word of God. We should preach with this in mind and leave the results with God.

### **Apostolic example**

The apostles and other servants of the Lord did so; we should do the same. When the Apostle Paul travelled to Athens and stood on Mars Hill before an antagonistic crowd, Acts 17, he unabashedly presented the Person of the Christ and the exclusivity of the gospel as the only means of salvation. In the midst of rampant idolatry, he boldly proclaimed, *'Him declare I unto you'*, v. 23. It was a simple message that stood in contrast to the various religious and philosophical sophistries that resided atop the Areopagus and nearby vicinity. He did not map out a 'seeker-sensitive' strategy before he preached but instead, swung the gospel hammer and broke through stony hearts to the glory of God, Jer. 23. 29. We would do well to do the same.

### **Simplicity in worship**

Not only is it important to emphasize the simplicity of the gospel in our preaching, but we should stress it in our worship as well. We should be like that leper in Luke chapter 17 who being healed of his dread disease, rushed back to thank the Lord for the miraculous work that God had done in

his life. We too have been healed of the dreadful disease of sin and should return to give Him thanks regularly. The early disciples worshiped together on a weekly basis according to Acts 20 verse 7 and were occupied with but one Person-the Lord Jesus. Boldness was also a recognized result of being with Jesus and people will recognize that we too have been with Jesus as we witness for Him, Acts 4. 13. Moses face was radiant after being in the presence of the Lord (Ex. 34. 29) and we will be radiant as we spend time in the Lord's presence.

Worship is not about performing, but rather about prostrating ourselves in the sacrifice of praise. When the Old Testament priests entered the Tabernacle to worship the Lord they saw themselves in the mirrors that made up the base of the brazen altar Exod. 38. 8. When we come to worship we cannot help but 'see' ourselves in the light of gospel truth-what we were and what we are now in Christ. Amazingly, we are what we are *now* despite of what we were *then*. Without reservation we can say, 'We love Him, because He first loved us'.

### **Worship is always Christ centered**

Not only do we love Him, but we look to Him because He is our Shepherd and we daily need His help and guidance. We also live for Him because we know that there are others who are watching our lives closely and could ask us at any time about the hope that lies within us, 1 Peter 3. 15. We love Him and look to Him and live for Him and therefore it makes perfect sense that our gatherings should emphasize *Him* and not allow anything to dilute or distract from that emphasis. There is nothing that thrills our souls more than when we set our affections and focus our attention on the Lord. We are not to be those that are taken up with religious trappings--ceremonies and rituals and traditions of man, but rather we are taken up with Christ. Like Simeon of old who upon entering the temple where the Lord Jesus was being presented as a little child, embraced Him and blessed Him proclaiming, 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation' Luke 2. 25-35. Simeon's actions underscore the truth that salvation and heart-felt worship is not centered in a place or in performance, but in a Person.

### **First experiences of Christian simplicity**

When I first entered through the doors years ago where a company of Christians were meeting solely in the Lord's Name and gathered to worship Him, one of the first things that stood out to me was the simplicity of the meeting. There were no stained glass windows, no relics, no icons, no special titles recognized, no priestly vestments worn by those who addressed the audience, no candles, and no religious or cryptic-looking symbols on the wall. In many respects it was a regular looking room. There was a verse on the wall however which read. '*For God so loved the world that He gave His begotten only Son...*' Coming from an unsaved background and not yet a believer, these words were easy to understand and together with the simplicity of the meeting became far less intimidating than I had supposed it would be when I first walked through the doors.

What was also unusual to me was that there were no offerings taken. I kept looking around to try to figure out who was in charge but no one appeared to be dressed differently or the leader above the rest. When the speaker got up to address the audience, he spoke in such a clear and simple

way that I understood completely what he was saying, even though I knew nothing about the Bible. It was as though he was talking directly to me. As he spoke of Christ, tears trickled down his cheeks, though he remained calm and dignified. His voice did not quiver nor was there any histrionics in his manner. I had never heard nor seen such a thing in my religious life before and so it made quite an impression on me. No one cornered me as I left; but on the other hand, they did not have to since I was planning to return anyway. Like John Wesley, my heart was also 'strangely warmed'. One thing was sure; more was 'said' by what I saw than by what I heard. That was my first experience of this kind of meeting and its simplicity truly made a difference to me.

As our world becomes more technologically advanced and we are 'wowed' at every turn by new and eye-popping innovations, there will always be subtle pressure upon the churches to borrow from worldly sources to make the gospel message more impressive and less offensive. The same pressure will demand to make the Christian life more palatable to them to the unbeliever in order to attract them to it. But what will speak more powerfully to the all around us will be 'a changed life' as the result of the simplicity that is in the gospel of Christ. This is what will always need to be protected. It will be demonstrated by a genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus, adorned not by ecclesiastical traditions, but by a transparent life declared in the simplicity of worship and the plain declaration of God's Word and His great love for the entire world.