

## The Simplicity of the Gospel

### 2 Corinthians 11:3 NASBS

<sup>3</sup> But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

- *Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians against one of the devil's traps that could have sidetracked their faith and shipwrecked their lives, which was to "be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."*
- *This strategy of the devil is much more subtle and in some ways more insidious than the straightforward sins of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*
- *One of the ways Satan leads Christians away through his craftiness and deception is not by having them immediately forsake Christ, because many Christians would quickly recognize this trap. Instead he distracts them from their pure and simple devotion to Jesus.*
- *Satan leads Christians away from the simplicity and purity of their devotion to Christ by distracting them from the finished work of Calvary. These types of "doctrines" try to add to what Christ has already done by suggesting or implying there is something more we must do before we can appropriate all Christ has done for us.*
- *The Greek word for "simplicity" means "sincerity; singleness." Thus our single purpose is to focus on Jesus Christ and all His glory, His power, His love, His purity, and all the infinitely wonderful attributes of God.*

### 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, NKJV

<sup>1</sup> And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.

<sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

- *Paul's preaching of the Gospel was not with excellence of speech or to impress people with deep hidden secrets and mysteries of wisdom as if from God, but simply to proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*

- *Many times Christians can be drawn away when someone claims to find some special formula to pray or some mystery of how to break curses that the devil has placed over them. These things become a distraction from our simple and pure devotion to Christ.*

## 2 Corinthians 4:5 NKJV

<sup>5</sup> For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

- *We are not to draw people to ourselves or to some special secret doctrine, but to Jesus Christ. With open hearts we are to stand in awe at His love and the unfathomable sacrifice He made at Calvary as we gaze up to Heaven to see the risen Christ seated at the right hand of the Father.*
- *When it says “we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” it means the only source of freedom and victory is found in Jesus Christ.*
- *In difficult times some Christians may look to themselves for the solution. Some may say, “If only you can believe harder” then you will receive what you need. That causes us to take our eyes off of Jesus and onto ourselves to find the solution.*
- *Faith is simply having a strong and unshakeable confidence in God and His faithfulness. True faith causes us to take our eyes off ourselves and the problem and focus on Jesus Christ and His faithfulness.*
- *When we are fully and sincerely devoted to Jesus then our faith grows and a deeper level of confidence and peace fills our hearts.*
- *Faith in Christ releases the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to transform us.*
- *Faith to forsake — This empowers us to forsake our sinful life and receive Christ which results in justification.*
- *Faith to follow — This empowers us to become disciples of Jesus and walk a life of obedience leading to sanctification.*
- *Faith to finish — This empowers us to finish the race victoriously resulting in glorification.*

### Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV

<sup>1</sup> Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

<sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- *When we are weighed down with temptations which try to ensnare and stumble us what are we to do? — “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”*
- *Jesus is all we need. He is the author and He is the finisher—He is the beginning and He is the end.*

### Revelation 1:8 NKJV

<sup>8</sup> “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

- *Four times in the Book of Revelation Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.”*
- *When reading the Book of Revelation, often Christians try to figure out who the anti-Christ is. However, when studying any part of the Bible, including the Book of Revelation, we should be seeking to know Jesus in a more intimate way.*

### Revelation 19:10 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

- *“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” – The purpose of all revelation is to point us to Jesus.*

### Colossians 1:14-18 NKJV

<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

<sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

<sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

<sup>18</sup> And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

- *These five verses in Colossians, Chapter 1, sums up the central theme of the entire Bible—it is all about Jesus Christ.*
- **For by Him all things were created.**
- **All things were created through Him and for Him.**
- **He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**
- **That in all things He may have preeminence.**
- *There are two essential elements in any sermon for it to be balanced and fruitful:*
  1. *It must be Christ-centered.*
  2. *It must be biblical.*
- *Jesus Christ must receive more than just a brief mention in a sermon. He must be front and center because without the centrality of Jesus Christ every biblical principle, no matter how sound, will lead to legalism or discouragement. Without Jesus, we end up trying to serve God in our own fleshly strength.*

#### Colossians 2:16–17 (NASB95)

<sup>16</sup>Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

<sup>17</sup>things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

- *All the Old Testament celebrations and rituals were only a shadow pointing to Jesus Christ, Who is the reality and substance.*
- *If we study the Old Testament without seeing that its purpose is to point us to Jesus Christ, then we will completely misunderstand the message and come to a spiritual dead-end.*

- *Although the Pharisees and religious leaders were very diligent to study every word of the Torah and the Prophets, they completely missed what God was revealing through His Word. They failed to understand that the central theme was the Messiah, the Son of God.*
- *Not only did the Pharisees and religious leaders miss the message found in the Scriptures, they became enemies of the message God was revealing.*
- *Whether we pray, study the Word, fellowship, or share the gospel, it is all to be done with singleness of purpose to glorify Jesus Christ.*
- *Some have focused exclusively on biblical principles, but the fruit was legalism because they strayed from their focus on Jesus Christ. Focusing on Jesus produces holiness, focusing on principles produces legalism.*
- *However, when we take those same biblical principles and see Jesus in them, it produces a consecrated life that expresses the holiness of Jesus Christ.*

#### **Philippians 3:8–10 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup>Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

<sup>9</sup>and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

<sup>10</sup>that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

- *The central purpose of our lives—“that I may know Him”*
- *The signature of the Holy Spirit is that everything He does is for the purpose of revealing and glorifying Jesus Christ. (John 16:13-15).*
- *If our focus is Jesus Christ and our goal is to know Him then we will find passion, joy, and fulfillment in our prayer life, and our time spent in the Word.*

#### **John 8:44 NKJV**

<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

- *The devil is the father of lies and the only power he can exercise over a believer is when we believe his lies.*

#### **John 14:6 NKJV**

**<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

- *Jesus Christ is the truth!*
- *The way we overcome the devil and his lies is to simply keep our eyes and hearts focused on Jesus and the light of His truth will empower us to walk in freedom and victory.*
- *We must always interpret experience through the lens of Scripture and never try to interpret Scripture through the lens of experience.*
- *Sometimes people have had an experience with God and because of that experience they try to form a doctrine, method, or formula to determine how God works.*
- *Some think that certain prayers need to be worded certain ways, because once when they prayed a miracle occurred. However, this type of thinking can make us feel like God is distant since we may think He can't answer us unless we pray the "correct" way.*
- *When we pray God is not interested in the eloquence of our words but the openness of our hearts to receive His love and to love Him.*

#### **Matthew 14:25-33 NKJV**

**<sup>25</sup> Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.**

**<sup>26</sup> And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.**

**<sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."**

**<sup>28</sup> And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."**

**<sup>29</sup> So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.**

<sup>30</sup> But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

<sup>31</sup> And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

<sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

<sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

- *Peter obeyed the words of Jesus and stepped out of the boat and began to walk on top of the stormy sea!*
- *However, when Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and onto the waves, fear and doubt filled his heart and he began to sink.*
- *Then Peter prayed one of the most biblical Christ-centered prayers one could pray—"Lord, save me!" No theologian or Bible scholar could frame a more Christ-centered scripturally sounding prayer—a simple cry to our loving God for help.*
- *God is our loving Father and He is attentive to each one of our cries and tears. He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us!*

"And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Verse 31).

- *Jesus asked Peter one simple question as he rescued Peter from his fears — "why did you doubt?"*
- *The answer is both simple and obvious—he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked at his circumstances.*
- *This is the key for us to walk in victory—keep our eyes and hearts firmly fixed on Jesus and all He has done for us.*
- *There are only three things that can hinder our walk with God:*
  1. *Choosing to walk in deliberate sin*
  2. *Having unconfessed sins*
  3. *Believing the lies of the father of lies.*

- *The lies that can trip Christians up are sometimes so subtle that some may mistake them for truth.*
- *Some Christians are afraid that those who practice witchcraft, for example, can speak curses over Christians and cause calamities or other such problems. However, as followers of Jesus, we have been purchased by the blood of Jesus—"you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20).*
- *We are God's property and His possession and the devil has no power over us when we are walking in obedience to the Holy Spirit.*

#### **Proverbs 26:2 NKJV**

<sup>2</sup> Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, So a curse without cause shall not alight.

- *When we are walking in Christ the enemy is powerless and he can only do what God our Father allows. God has promised, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).*
- *Sometimes Christians say that when you choose to walk with God the enemy gets really mad and he comes against you even stronger.*
- *However, in reality, when we walk closely with God we are in the center of His will and the enemy can do nothing without God's allowing it and if God allows it that means God has a purpose to bring forth much glory through our trial.*
- *Don't allow the enemy to lie to you and make you into a superstitious Christian who fears curses and the powers of darkness. Instead, believe God's Word, Trust in His faithfulness and rejoice in Christ's finished work at Calvary.*

#### **Deuteronomy 5:9-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup>you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

<sup>10</sup>but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

**"visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me"**

- *Some Christians hearing this may fear that because of some sin one of their ancestors did, they are going to suffer even though they themselves have no idea what their ancestors may or may not have done.*



- *First, this passage was speaking to Israel who was under the Law. Once we have received Christ we are no longer under the Law.*
- *Second, the one who is exacting out the consequences of the sin is not the devil but God. Once we receive Christ we are no longer under His wrath but we who have put our faith in Christ have been redeemed from the curse of the law—“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")” (Galatians 3:13).*

#### **Jeremiah 31:29-31 NKJV**

<sup>29</sup> In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.'

<sup>30</sup> But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

<sup>31</sup> "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-

- *The prophet Jeremiah says there will come a time when no longer will one say that the fathers have sinned and the children suffer but each will be responsible for their own sins.*
- *‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge,’ (Verse 29). When will this proverb come to an end? It ended with the New Covenant—“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” The New Covenant changed everything!*
- *Under the New Covenant through Jesus Christ we have the new birth, a new identity, and a new future.*

#### **2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- *We are a new creation!*

#### **2 Thessalonians 2:2 NKJV**

<sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

- *Paul warned believers not to allow their faith to be shaken.*
- *The Bible says in the last days that many believers will have their faith shaken and fall away.*

### Romans 8:31-39 NASBS

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?  
 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?  
 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;  
 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.  
 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?  
 36 Just as it is written, "For YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."  
 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.  
 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,  
 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- *In recent times even some Christian leaders have stumbled over questions regarding suffering and evil.*
- *However, we can clearly see from Scripture that suffering and persecution are part of the Christian life and that it will even intensify in the end times. But then God gives one of the purposes—so we can be overwhelmingly victorious.*
- *The Bible foretells that as we get closer to the end times suffering and turmoil will increase.*

### Mark 13:8 NKJV

<sup>8</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

- *If the world was getting better, we would have to conclude that the Bible was not true.*
- *Many struggle with this question: "If God is good, why is there evil and suffering?" As they wrestle with this question, they come up against a philosophical brick wall.*
- *The reason some Christians have had their faith shipwrecked because of the question of evil and suffering is that they are asking the wrong question.*
- *They are asking the "why" question which many times is not understandable from our temporal earthly point of view. However, the question that really needs to be answered is "Who is God and can I trust Him?"*

- *When our relationship with Jesus is solid and we are confident that God is love and good we no longer need to ask the “why” questions but the “what” questions—“Lord what do you want me to do?”*
- *Jesus is calling us to a life of surrender and self-sacrifice.*

**Matthew 16:24-26 NKJV**

**<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**

**<sup>25</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**

**<sup>26</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**