



## The Single Heart Gene Hawkins

"Servants, be subject to them which are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart as unto Christ." (Ephesians 6:5)

The word "singleness" is used a number of times in Scripture and means "sincerity (without pretense or self-seeking), generosity, bountifulness, liberality." It is translated "simplicity, liberality, bountifulness, and singleness."

Paul uses the word in four different applications. Here in our text, it is in reference to obedience. II Corinthians 8 shows the single heart or purpose of the Macedonians in giving of their substance. It is applied in II Corinthians 1:12 to our testimony before others, and it is used to show a complete dedication to Jesus Himself. This is the view which we would like to enlarge on.

"But I fear, lest by any means ... your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (11 Corinthians 11:3). The word for singleness is here translated simplicity, and as in all the above applications, it means that there is to be a single purpose with a definite focus. There must be single-minded dedication which will yield to no distraction. Such is the commitment of which the apostle speaks in regard to Jesus as the Head of our lives.

The foundation which he lays in order to make such a statement is vitally important to understanding just how weighty it is. Verse one pleads, "bear with me in my folly, and indeed bear with me." What is the foolishness to which Paul refers? Verse two provides the answer: "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

What Paul is talking about is still foolishness to the Church as a whole. The general perception is that the entire Church will automatically be translated when Jesus comes for His Bride. However, several statements tell us that such a thing is not going to happen. What the apostle says may be foolishness to the majority, but it is perfectly clear to the one who has a single heart unto Jesus. This Chief Apostle did indeed "espouse" or engage the Church unto Christ; however, an engagement does not constitute a wedding. It is only a time of trial and proving, and many engagements have been broken for various reasons. All believers have been engaged, but not all will qualify for that very elite place. Paul tells us that the special one who will be joined unto Christ will be a "chaste virgin." This term can in no wise be applied to the whole Church. Not only do we see carnality all around us, but Jesus Himself testified of it in His letters to the seven churches. His messages in Revelation two and three describe every condition of the Church that has existed from its inception to our day. All but two of them record the command, "Repent, or else ..." That is an indication that the chastity which describes this woman is grievously lacking. Smyrna, which testifies of those who have gone by the way of the grave, and Philadelphia, which represents those who are alive and remain, waiting to walk through the open door in heaven. These two churches will occupy the place which is provided for the "Wife of the Lamb."



Another requirement of this special virgin is that she will be mature. The Corinthian Church as a whole is a portrait of the entire Body of Christ, and Paul declared: "Brethren, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (I Corinthians 3:1). The Church today is also tremendously lacking in growth and maturity, and like the Corinthians, unable to digest the deep meat of God's Word. The sad fact is that so many do not even want to perceive such glorious treasure. Furthermore, the apostle had a great 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." If the entire Body of Christ is to become the "wife of the Lamb which hath made herself ready," then Paul's fear is totally unwarranted.

Such fear, however, brings us to the subject of this message. Just as Eve was deceived by Satan, so the Church has been taken away from the single-minded love and dedication to Jesus. He warned the church at Ephesus of this very thing when He said, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). Though these Ephesians were highly commended in a number of areas, this lack of singleness deprived them of the lofty place and prize they could have had. We know that "Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved," and that all believers in this Church Age are going to be in heaven, but all of them are not going to qualify for that place as the Bride of the Lamb.

In our text, Paul tells us that just as Eve was beguiled, so we can be deceived and fail to get the place which has been provided. We must heed his warning and take the necessary steps to ensure that we do not fall into the same trap as Eve did. To do that, we must understand exactly what happened in the garden that day. Just what tactics did the enemy use to deceive her?

Genesis 3:1 declares that "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." Paul warned the Ephesians, "Put on the whole armor of God that ye may stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:1 1). It was not power which overcame Eve, but the subtle tricks of the devil. Likewise, the Church is being deceived, because they have failed to be enlightened by God's Word, or they ignore His warnings.

One of Satan's primary methods is to form doubt in his victim's mind. "Yea, hath God said?" He used the same approach when tempting Jesus -- "If thou be the Son of God ..." One major reason the Church, as a whole, is in trouble today is because people do not know what is in God's Word, or they do not really believe it. They doubt what is written, and if we doubt any truth in Scripture, Satan has an open door to attack us. When men doubt, they usually establish their own ideas what the Scripture says, and such reasoning minds do not develop the faith which comes only from the Word.

In Eve's case, the door has been cracked open and the devil is able to intrude farther when the woman begins to answer him and argue her case. Jesus established the pattern for us when He simply replied to the devil, "it is written." However, Eve did not just quote what God said, but proceeded to add to it, and then take away from it. "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it lest ye die."

Satan subtly induced a very legal, or law-keeping attitude in Eve. God never did say that



the tree could not be touched. It is man' s idea to bring himself some insurance. The idea is "If I put it farther out of reach, then I won' t touch it, let alone eat of it." Today also, men have added many requirements which are not a part of the Word and they expend great amounts of energy trying to meet them by their own efforts. When one has such a mind-set, he is shut up to his own resources. Satan is then well on his way to victory.

Next, Eve takes away from the force of God' s Word. He had emphatically declared, "Thou shalt surely die." Eve indicated that death might be only a possibility when she stated, "lest ye die." It seems that the Church has ignored such messages as "If you yield to the flesh you shall die," or "If you sow to the flesh you shall of the flesh reap corruption." Sadly, the Church has allowed society to establish the standard for chastity rather than the Word of God.

Finally, we note that Eve never once called for Adam. Today, the Church is listening to other heads than Christ. This is what Paul means when he fears that "your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." The apostle was concerned that men would lose that single, dedicated focus to Christ. Eve evidently entertained the reasoning of Satan who suggested that surely God is just withholding something from you. He knows that when you eat of this tree, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil. Many people today are confident that the stringent Christian experience is going to deprive them of some wonderful things that would bring them satisfaction and fulfillment.

Eve made her decision, independently of Adam, and the results speak for themselves. Instead of great blessing advertised by the enemy sorrow, misery, heartache and destruction followed. The same results prevail in the Church, and for the same reason. It is interesting how Scripture points out that even though Adam was in the transgression, he was not deceived -- I Timothy 2:14. She would have been better served to have had singleness of heart toward him. Instead, she became the leader as she partook of the fruit "and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat." So also in the Church, many have taken the leadership, not only of their own lives, but in programs involving the Body, instead of relinquishing that place to the One Head, Christ.

II Corinthians 11:4 further defines what it means to corrupt the simplicity that is in Christ. "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with me." The little word "for" connects this verse with the previous one, as Paul lists three ways whereby men can be "corrupted from the simplicity (singleness) which is in Christ."

There are those who would indeed preach "another Jesus," for there are some in the Church who assume a place belonging only to Christ. Many take the place of Shepherd, Leader, and Savior in the lives of other believers. They love to have control over others, who welcome it, because they trust what they can see, rather than walk by faith, believing only God.

Secondly, They would receive another spirit. This is that which is contrary to the spirit of Divine Grace demonstrated by Paul. Jesus spoke of that spirit after the disciples wanted to call fire of judgment down from heaven to destroy those who had resisted Him. He said



to them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man came not to destroy men' s lives but to save them" (Luke 9:55-56). The spirit of genuine grace is also missing in the Church today.

Finally, Paul speaks of the Corinthians receiving another gospel than what he had preached to them. Throughout the rest of this chapter, he is forced to defend himself and the place which God had given to him. So also, the Church has soundly rejected the depth of truth that God gave to the Chief Apostle to the Church, which alone can bring us to full growth and maturity. Christians in great part do not want to put forth the effort to study the Scripture, and spend time waiting on the Lord to reveal His glorious message to them. Many had much rather be "working" for the Lord in man-made programs, or invest their time being entertained and enjoying a "feel-good gospel." Paul' s message is one that will send our spirit soaring, but it is also one which will judge the flesh and bring great pain when it begins to change us from what we are to what He wants to make of us.

The results of one having a single heart toward Christ is found in II Timothy 4:7-8. It is the testimony of Paul' s own life which is proof that the Gospel he preached will do what God intended it to do. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."