

## **The Way Out of the Mess We Are In**

Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1988

### **2 Corinthians 11:3**

*“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*

My message today is on this subject: “THE WAY OUT OF THE MESS WE ARE IN.” I want you to listen to this message. I think it will be Scriptural; I believe it will be enlightening and I believe it will be irritating. This message may be rejected and refused.

I want you to give it your attention; will you give me a hearing? That is all I am asking of you, just give this message your attention on “THE WAY OUT OF THE MESS WE ARE IN.”

Paul wrote in Second Corinthians Chapter 11 verse 3, these words; *“I fear.”* This is the beloved apostle of our Lord, the apostle to the Gentiles. He feared some things. He didn't fear men, but he feared God. He feared false converts. He said, *“I fear less by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, his craftiness, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* Do you read that word, *“corrupted?”*

I want you to read some of these words now. He says, *“I fear; (I'm afraid) less by any means as the serpent beguiled our mother Eve through his subtilty, his craftiness, that your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*

All of these fears are revealed and realized today in what we call religion. Where is the simplicity of Christ and the simplicity that is in Christ? Where is the simplicity of worship, where is the simplicity of walking with God? Where is the simplicity of preaching the Gospel? Where is it? Where is that faith in Christ, that love for Christ, that worship and exaltation of Christ alone, like Enoch of old, who walked with God and walked right on into glory?

Religion today is corrupted; it is corrupted and it is complicated. Do you know that the average person does not even know what is going on in church? He cannot understand the theological terms; he can't understand all the ordinances, rituals, and liturgies. He doesn't even know what is going on. It is so complicated and so corrupted.

Listen, religion has its popes, its cardinals, its bishops, its priests, its vicars, its reverends, its doctors, its elders, its superintendents, its symbols, its steeples and its uniforms.

Religion has all of these things and is complicated. Religion has its temples, it has its cathedrals, and it has its shrines and holy places. Religion has its crosses and statues; it has its pictures and idols. Religion has its Sabbaths and holy days, altars and all these words like conformation, catechisms, constitutions, choirs and cantatas and entertainment. What has happened?

Where is the simplicity of Christ? Where is the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ? Where is the simplicity of worship? When do people hear and understand, know and walk in the way of the Lord? It is so complicated.

Religion has its denominations; there are hundreds of them. There are all different brands and names springing up every day. Religion has its organizations. I'm talking about high-powered organizations and multi-million dollar organizations. Religion has its conventions; it has its centennials, it has its schools and high-powered orators, organizers and politicians, money raisers, picketers and petition-gatherers. Religion has all these complicated things.

Where is the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ? That is what I am asking, and that is what Paul warns us of. He said, *"I'm afraid of you, less Satan the serpent who deceived Eve with his subtlety and craftiness, should corrupt your minds and take you away from simplicity,"* the heart worship, heart faith and heart love. I'm afraid of you less Satan take you away from sitting with the people of God, worshipping the Lord Jesus and praising His name and walking with Him in a child-like faith.

A bowl is a font. You always call them a bowl with water in it. They say that it has to be a font. You just don't, in 1988 say, "We met in the auditorium; you say, "We met in the sanctuary."

A preacher is no longer a preacher; he is a clergyman. He is a member of the cloth. Most people don't even know what that means.

You don't just say, "Pray for us, you say; "Would you render the invocation or would you pronounce the benediction?" You see; we have high-sounding words. This is Satanic. This is nothing in the world but mind-cloudiness and brainwashing. This is the work of Satan that takes us away from the simplicity of Jesus Christ and this is what gets us in the mess we are in.

How long has it been since you have worshipped God? I didn't ask how long it has been since you have been to church. You might be a regular attendee. What you call church

today along with all of this confusion, competition, contests, recognition of the flesh and all of this money-raising is not worship. That is not worship!

How long has it been since you worshipped God? I didn't ask how long since you heard a sermon. I'm talking about how long has it been since you worshipped God from the heart and heard the Gospel of His Divine, dearly Beloved Son? How long has it been since your heart and soul and affection was set on things above?

Where is the simplicity that is in Christ? Well, Paul said in Acts 17:24 as he was preaching on Mars Hill. It would be like he was walking through Huntington, West Virginia, Beckley, Ashland, or Parkersburg and saw all of these steeples, cathedrals, churches, temples and buildings. It would be like him seeing all of these religious monuments. He said, *"I passed by all your altars and shrines; you are a religious people; you are a superstitious people. I saw one shrine unto the unknown God";* that is the one that I am going to preach to you, *"the unknown God,"* God that made the world. Listen to Paul in Acts 17:24, *"God that made the world and all things therein and seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth."*

He is not a little peanut-god that dwells in some little temple somewhere; He is Lord of heaven and earth. *"He doesn't even dwell in temples made with hands."* There it is, Acts 17:24; *"God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands. He is not worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything. Seeing, He giveth to all life and breath and all things."*

Christ our Lord said to the woman at the well, *"True worshippers worship God in Spirit. God seeketh such to worship Him."* God is Spirit; *"They that worship Him worship Him in Spirit and truth."*

Worshipping is not playing games like ring-around-the-rosy, holding hands, burning candles and all of these fleshly demonstrations about outward piety. God is Spirit; we must worship Him, like Paul wrote in Philippians 3:3, *"We are the true Israel who worship God in Spirit (from the heart) and we rejoice in Jesus Christ."*

We don't rejoice in our buildings, our denominations, or our numbers. We don't rejoice in that; we rejoice in Christ Jesus and only in Christ Jesus. *"We have no confidence in the flesh."* We have no confidence in continuation of anything that we do, have done, or are doing.

This whole thing may fold up tomorrow. Let it fold up, if God be glorified. Listen to what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 66. You need to draw a big circle around verses 1 and 2. I

read this to our congregation just recently; *“Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house you build Me? Where is the place of My rest? Where would you have Me to abide?”* Huh?

*“You thought I was all together such a one as yourself?”* He said, *“All these things My hands made; I made the heavens and the earth, stars, seas and the dry land. I made the rocks; I made the trees; I made all of these things. All of these things have been.”* Are you going to bring some of them together? Are you going to build Me a house? Are you going to shut Me up there to rest? *“But to this man will I look.”*

I will tell you something that caught my attention, *“But to this man I will look.”* I’m not going to look to the fellow out there that is sweating, laboring, and building some kind of temple or cathedral for God to live in. If his god is that small that He can live in that thing, then that is his whole problem. God said, *“To this Man will I look, even to him that is poor in Spirit.”*

Arthur Pink said one time, somebody asked him; *“What is this poor in Spirit?”* He said, *“A man that is poor in spirit, spiritually, has nothing, is nothing, knows nothing and can do nothing. He has all things through Christ from God.”* He is poor! *“I’ll look to that man who is without, who is poor.”* I’ll look to that man that is of a broken, contrite, heart. I will look to that man who trembleth at My Word.

Where is that man who is poor and of a broken heart and that trembleth at God’s Word? I ask where is the simplicity that is in Christ?

I ask where is the Shepherd King? You talk about David’s greatest moments; his greatest moments were not when he was building or getting the material together for Solomon to build that temple. His greatest moments were when he was sitting out there on a rock, playing his lute and singing, *“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.”*

Where is that simplicity? Where is that worship? *“He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through this valley of the shadow of death; I will fear no evil for Thou art with me.”*

I thought that we had to go down to the building to meet God. David sat out there on the side of the hill and said, *“Thou art with me:”*

He walks with me and He talks with me

Along life's narrow way,  
The joy we share,  
As we tarry there  
None other has ever known.

Where is that? Where is the Mary of Bethany? Oh, for someone like Mary of Bethany who sat at the feet of Christ. Our Lord said, "*She has chosen the good thing.*" Martha was busy organizing things. "*Martha was busy and cumbered about with so much care,*" our Lord said.

She was in and out of the house, up and down the steps, slamming doors and opening cupboards and cabinets. She was preparing food, and finally she came in there and said, "*Master, don't you care that my sister lets me do all this preparation, serving and working while she just sits there at your feet and listens to you?*" He said, "*Martha, Martha, Martha, you are cumbered about with so much care; Mary has chosen the good things.*"

Stop your feet and shut your mouth; sit down at the feet of Christ! Maybe we will learn something. We haven't learned much. "*We are ever learning and not ever coming to knowledge of the truth. We have a form of Godliness, but deny the power there.*"

Where are the people? I would love to preach to those who came from afar and had one request. They came from many miles and they had one request for these apostles. They said, "*Sirs, we would see Jesus.*"

We're not here for the contests. We're not here for the bake sales. We are not here for the money raising. We are not here for the "rally day," we are here to see Jesus. Do you reckon that anyone around here would preach Jesus Christ to us?

Where are the people who heard the apostles, like those noble Bereans? Where are those noble Bereans who heard the apostles? They heard the apostles and they didn't go out to dinner. They didn't go down to the ballpark; "*They went home and searched the Scriptures to see if these things be so.*"

You do it, you search the Scriptures to see if I am telling the truth. Nobody cares. They just take the word of any Tom, Dick, or Harry that graduated from the seminary, has a D.D. after his name, and says he is a preacher, no matter how big of a crook he is. You better buy you a Bible and search the Scriptures "*To see whether these things be so.*"

Where is the preacher who says, *“I covet no man’s silver or gold.”* That is what Paul said to that bunch of elders down in Antioch when he started to leave and go to Rome to be killed. He said, *“You won’t see my face anymore. I labored among you and I coveted no man’s silver or gold. I kept back nothing profitable unto you. I didn’t shun to declare unto you all the council of God. I was determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”* Where is the preacher who covets no man’s silver or gold?

Where is the preacher that is not afraid of a board of deacons? Where is the preacher that is not afraid of the woman’s missionary society? Where is he that is not afraid of his denominational hierarchy, church heads, and ecclesiastical powers?

Where is the preacher that is not afraid of any man? He that is boldly called the bond-slave of Jesus Christ who will tell the truth whatever it costs. Where is the preacher? Who is the preacher that can say, *“I’m content with what I have and where I am?”* The Scripture says, *“I have learned that no matter what state I am, therewith to be content.”*

Where is he? If you can find him, listen to him because he has something to say. He has someone to tell you about because God sent him. God’s servants are God’s servants. They are not men servants. They are not interested in pleasing men at all. They know that if they please men then they are not the servants of Christ.

Where indeed, I ask you; where is the simplicity of Christ, the simplicity of Gospel preaching? Where are the men like John Bunyan? He was the man who spent twelve years in prison because he dared to preach the Gospel of God’s grace. He dared to battle the religious traditions of his day.

Where are the men like Martin Luther that were hounded and chased all over Germany because he dared to tell the truth? He had the courage to rebel against the corrupt, organized religion of his day.

Where are the men like George Whitfield? These preachers, Bunyan, Luther, and Whitfield were cast out of organized religion, but they preached Christ to all who would listen to them.

Where is the simplicity of worship, I ask you? You talk about being in a mess. Where is the simplicity of worship when men and women gather together before God and praise Him in hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs? Where is the simplicity of worship when they gather together to hear the Gospel preached, where the Word of God is read and Christ alone is exalted?

Where is it when you can go away from that worship service and saying, “Did my heart burn within me when I heard His Word, when I sang His praises and heard the Gospel preached?”

Is it not true that today’s church service is a fashion show? If we spent near as much time preparing our hearts to go to the house of God to worship Him as we spend before the mirror preparing these corrupted bodies and putting on clothes that will impress someone, we might contact God some day in a worship service.

Today’s church service is a fashion show. It is not a show of grace or a show of humility. Is it not true that today’s church services are a time of fellowship with men, not a coming before the Lord?

Why are people counted? I ask you, why would a church count the people that are there? What difference does it make how many are there. Doesn’t God know who is there? Well, what does it matter if anyone else knows how many are there?

Who cares about records? Who keeps records? Why keep records? Why are all of these records kept of how many we had a year ago, how much we gave a year ago and how much are we going to shoot for next year? If God isn’t there, we are wasting our time anyway. David counted Israel and God killed 70,000 men. He said, *“I know how many people I have.”*

Why are visitors recognized? We get into a church service and everybody has to raise their hand and stand up. They have to get a card to sign and recognize the visitors. I thought that we were there to glorify God. Well, we might miss someone, they might get mad, and they won’t come back. That would be a joy!

Paul the apostle spoke of this day, this day of competition, this day of commotion, this day of contests and this day of corruption. He warned us, but we haven’t listened. We have ignored his warning.

I’m heartsick over everything I see and hear today in the name of God. I don’t see anything, anywhere on television, radio, newspaper or anywhere else that gives me any indication at all that God Almighty is within 100 miles of this place.

Oh, for a return to the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ. I am doing my dead level best at the church where I have pastored for 37 years to worship God, and preach His Word, and to tell men the truth. I pray that they hear that Gospel and come to know Christ.

Well, what would it be like? I can tell you. We worshipped God yesterday. I can tell you. This thing of worship and is a thing of simplicity that is in Christ is when people, the people of God gather together at the time appointed, to worship God. They come to that place for no other purpose.

There are no contests, no competitions, no coercion, and no pressure. They come there to worship God, because they want to worship God. They need to worship God. They love to worship God.

David said, *“I was glad when they said to me; Let’s go to the House of the Lord.”* A lot of people will say, “Oh, I’ve got to go to church.” They say, “Could you come over and visit with us? No, we’ve got to go to church.”

You don’t have to go to church! Anytime you feel like you have to do something, have to contribute to the Kingdom of God, don’t do it. God will not receive your presence or your gifts when they are coerced, done, and given out of a sense of responsibility.

I will tell you something else that will happen. Men and women will gather together to worship God because they want to. Second, the House of God will ring with the praises of God. I’m not talking about this modern, jive-singing that exalts the flesh and talks about what I have given up for Jesus.

No, the praise of God will be in the hymns. Prayer will be offered in the Spirit of God and the Word of God will be read. There will be no announcements, no reports, no records, and no recognition of men. There will be just the uninterrupted worship of God from the beginning to the last amen. No announcements, no recognitions, no contests, reports, or records read, just worship God.

Come in and sing, praise God, and read His Word. Pray, preach the Gospel. Fall on your faces before God. The Word of God will be preached. It will be the center of the worship service, preaching God’s Word.

God speaks through His Word. What Word will we preach? We will preach God in His Majesty and Glory and God in His power. Like Isaiah of old, *“We will see the Lord.”* David said, *“Come see the Lord; let’s magnify the Lord; let’s exalt His name together.”*

I am not talking about this little peanut-god of impotence that I hear preached today, this little weak god that wants to and can’t, wills to, but is not able. I am talking about the *“God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of heaven and earth, who reigns and rules and does what He will, when He will, with whom He will.”*

He is the first cause of all things. That is the God that I am talking about, God Almighty. He will be preached.

Our sinfulness will be preached. If we see God, we will see ourselves! Preachers we will see themselves too! Preachers laud and exalt themselves, as if they are on cloud nine and have the world by the tail on a downhill pull. They are just as full of fear and doubt as anybody else. They are just as in need of mercy, maybe more.

The Lord Jesus will be exalted and He will be preached. They will come preaching Christ. He won't be preaching "*another jesus.*" He will be preaching the Christ of the Bible, who He is, what He did, why He did it, and where He is now.

I will tell you this, the preacher will not compromise the Word of God. He will preach it verse by verse, line upon line, precept upon precept.

Today, this thing is such a mess. It is so organized that they preach their little program or recipe. They will say, "Every head bowed and every eye closed." The organ starts playing, the choir starts singing and they start practicing that psychology on you.

They say, "Bow your head, raise your hand, raise the other hand, now, put your feet in motion and do what your hand says and walk down here and we'll save you. You pray the sinner's prayer. You repeat after me. I'll tell you what to pray."

You don't have to teach a drowning man what to say. We preach the Gospel and the Holy Ghost will be left to work in men's hearts. There's no pressure, no persuasion, no psychology to get professions or joiners of decisions. The preacher will preach the Gospel; he will preach the Word of God and will leave people alone. They will leave them in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

Coming to Christ is not moving your feet down an aisle; coming to Christ is in loving Him and believing Him with your whole heart. Oh my soul! People will return to their homes after that kind of service and preaching, and they return rejoicing. They return with anticipation, waiting to come back to meet with you, at the feet of Christ.

The way out of the mess we are in, has a way out. We are going to have to turn to God.