



Devoted to Jesus
2 Corinthians 11:1-4
February 3, 2019

What would those who know you best say you are truly devoted to? Your football (or other) team? Your friends? Your fone? (yikes!).

Once we have discovered Jesus and decided to follow him, we live out our lives in devotion to him as our teacher and Lord. Paul compares this to “betrothal” (v. 2), which is a Jewish practice similar to getting engaged, only stronger. The church at Corinth was engaged to Jesus as a bride-to-be. Paul wanted them to have a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (vv. 2-3). He is not saying you have to be a virgin to be a Christian. At Corinth, both married people and people who had sinned sexually in the past had been washed, sanctified, and justified by Jesus and become his holy people (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 7:1-7). Rather, his point is that they should be sincerely devoted to Christ, like an engaged couple are to each other. The word “devotion” here means something like “toward Christ.” Everything is geared toward him. The occasion of Paul writing these words is that deceitful religious teachers and distorted spiritual teachings were vying for the Christians’ attention and hearts (v. 4). Paul is concerned that these rivals might lead them to be unfaithful to Christ.

This indicates that being a Christian entails devotion to Christ. Jesus taught the same (Matthew 6:24), and the Old Testament, too, advocates wholehearted devotion to God (2 Kings 20:3; 1 Chronicles

28:9). Above any action or thing, our primary devotion is to Christ and God personally. Christians are to be “toward Christ.”

Then, if we are devoted to Christ himself, we will also devote ourselves to activities that will help us become like him and better represent him in the world. We devote ourselves to the apostles’ teaching (found in the Bible), the fellowship (special, helpful relationships that are formed by those who follow Jesus), breaking of bread (sharing meals together and also the special “meal” in memory of Jesus’ death), prayer (communicating directly with God), and good deeds (helping others in the name of Jesus)(Acts 2:42; Titus 3:8, 14). The words for devotion here indicate we are to “busy ourselves with, be busily engaged in, be devoted to, hold fast to, continue and persevere in” all these things. They will help us become like Jesus, which is the goal of a disciple (Luke 6:40).

Where does such devotion come from? One answer is in the Titus passage above. Paul says there are things we can stress so that those who have trusted God will devote themselves to doing what is good (3:8). What are “these things”? The kindness and love of God, in person, in Jesus (v. 4). Salvation based not on righteous things we have done but on his mercy (v. 5). The washing and renewal he has given us generously through Christ our Savior (v. 6). Our justification by faith so that we can be heirs and have a solid hope for eternal life (v. 7). In other words, if we remember and stress how wonderful our covenant partner is and all he is done for us, we will be much more devoted to him.

The mistake the Corinthians were making suggests an additional way to increase our devotion to Christ. To use Paul’s metaphor, rival lovers can lead us astray. For them it was religious teachers and teachings. For us it could be that too but could also be secular rivals. Allowing one’s heart to be attracted by a rival is the beginning of unfaithfulness. Thus, refusing to flirt or get too involved with rivals will help us hold on to our sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

