

DISCERNING
TRUTH
FROM ERROR

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International Ministries

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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DISCERNING TRUTH FROM ERROR

This small teaching will help you discern in some areas between good and evil, that which is of God and that which is false teaching. We know that in the world there is much incorrect teaching and philosophy based on unproved theory, “gut feelings” and emotional responses. Therefore we need to be thoroughly grounded in God’s Word in order to distinguish right from wrong, and not be led astray by what someone thinks or feels in relation to truth, especially regarding spiritual and moral matters.

Background Reading: Galatians 1:1-12

Let’s turn to the Gospel of John:

JOHN 1:1 In the beginning (speaks of creation) was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

JOHN 1:14 And the Word was made flesh (this was the Incarnation - God became man, a man called Jesus), and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (as “flesh,” proclaimed His Humanity, “Grace and Truth” His Deity : E.S.B.)

We as Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us (1 Corinthians 3:16). It is the Holy Spirit Who brings the essence of the Father and the Son to dwell with us.

JOHN 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him (all through the Holy Spirit), and make Our abode with him” (Jesus explained that His manifestation of Himself was to the heart; it was inward and spiritual, so that the heart would consciously enjoy His abiding in it : E.S.B.).

1 JOHN 4:15 *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God (the confession John speaks of here is a lifetime confession, and represents the sustained attitude of the heart : E.S.B.), God dwells in him, and he in God.*

However, there are numerous churches and religions which do not preach that Jesus is God the Word (the second member of the Trinity) come in the flesh, the Creator of all. There are many religions which do not believe that Jesus is God, as clearly evidenced in the scriptures:

COLOSSIANS 1:16 *For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible (seen) and invisible (unseen), whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him:*

COLOSSIANS 1:17 *And He is before all things (He pre-existed all things), and by Him all things consist (hold together). (Proverbs 8:22-31)*

HEBREWS 1:2 *(God) Has in these last days (the Church Age) spoken unto us by His Son (Jesus Christ), Whom He has appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds;*

HEBREWS 1:3 *Who being the brightness of His glory (the radiance of God's Glory), and the express image of His person (the exact reproduction), and upholding all things by the Word of His power (carries the meaning of Jesus not only sustaining the weight of the universe, but also maintaining its coherence and carrying on its development), when He had by Himself purged our sins (which He did at the Cross, dealing with sin regarding its cause, its power, and its guilt), sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high (speaks of the Finished Work of Christ, and that the Sacrifice was accepted by the Father); (E.S.B.)*

There are also some people who say, “Yes, we believe Jesus is God.” And many of these may even say, “Jesus is the way,” often leading people to believe they are saved and their churches are of God. However if we take a closer look at their doctrine, it could reveal that they also believe that we will all be gods one day or that Jesus developed into a god, or that Jesus is one of many gods, all of which deny His Divine identity as God the Word. Therefore we must be wary of false teachers and doctrines. Jesus Himself forewarned us about false teachers:

MATTHEW 24:4 *And Jesus answered and said unto them, “Take heed that no man deceive you.*

MATTHEW 24:5 *For many shall come in My Name, saying, ‘I am Christ;’ and shall deceive many.”*

LUKE 21:8 *And He (Jesus) said, “Take heed that you be not deceived: for many shall come in My Name, saying, “I am Christ;” and the time draws near (for the Rapture): go you not therefore after them (do not follow them).”*

The Apostle Paul gave further warnings, both to Timothy and the Galatian churches:

1 TIMOTHY 4:1 *Now the Spirit speaks expressly (explicitly), that in the latter times (the period in which we now live) some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing (deceiving) spirits, and doctrines of devils (doctrines inspired by demons but taught by man).*

GALATIANS 1:7 *. . . but there be some that trouble you (cause confusion), and would pervert the Gospel of Christ (by false teaching).*

“ . . .if we take a closer look at their doctrine, it could reveal that they also believe that Jesus developed into a god . . . thus denying His Divine identity as God the Word. . . ”

GALATIANS 1:8 But though we (Paul and his associates), or an Angel from Heaven, Preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you (Jesus Christ and Him Crucified), let him be accursed (eternally condemned; the Holy Spirit speaks this through Paul, making this very serious). (E.S.B.)

2 TIMOTHY 4:3 For the time will come when they (men) will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers (who will teach them not truth but what they want to hear), having itching ears (ears itching to hear comfortable words);

2 TIMOTHY 4:4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (and thus darkness).

Because they lack the knowledge of God's Word in their hearts, many people are deceived by cults which teach false doctrines. Unfortunately sometimes Christians are also led astray by these cults and as a result, forfeit their salvation. Therefore we need to study the Word of God, so that we can recognize these false teachers and their false doctrines, not only for our own sakes, but also for the sake of our fellow man. We need to remember that the gift of salvation is precious beyond measure and the truth of the Gospel is the only light given to illuminate the way to life in this spiritually dead and darkened world. Therefore we need to allow the Word of God to direct us and light our pathway, hungering for the Law of God as the Psalmist did (Psalm 119:72;105;165, 19:7-10).

UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURES

There are many methods of interpretation of scripture including the allegorical method, the mystical method, the devotional method, the rationalistic method, the literal method, etc. The two we will mention here are the allegorical method and the literal method.

“The allegorical method presumes that beneath the plain and obvious sense of scripture lies its true meaning. It believes that what the words of Scripture literally say are only external “chaff” which hides the true spiritual “wheat” of the Word.

In relation to Scripture, the literal method of interpretation is the oldest in existence. It is said to have originated with Ezra, the Father of Hermeneutics . . .

The literal method assumes that the words of Scripture in their plain evident meaning are reliable; that God intended His revelation to be understood by all who believe; that the words of Scripture communicate what God wants man to know; and that God based the communication of truth on the regular laws governing written communication, thereby intending for it to be interpreted by those same laws. This is not to deny the Holy Spirit’s involvement in both the production and the interpretation of the Bible.”¹

(underlines added)

It is not our task to introduce meaning into scripture but to extract meaning from scripture. This should be primarily done according to the literal methodology whereby scripture is interpreted in terms of context. This involves plain and evident meanings which must always integrate harmoniously with the Bible as a whole. These meanings are to be understood, with the help of the Holy Spirit, by all who believe. As we interpret scripture according to the literal method, we discover that the Holy Spirit reveals not only “the letter of the law” but “the spirit of the law” as well. The interpretation of scripture must also, of necessity, allow for the use of idiom and various forms of exaggerated language - for the literal truth will be in the figurative language, e.g. Matthew 7:3-5; Matthew 23:24, 27; Mark 10:25; Luke 14:26.

“. . .It is not our task to introduce meaning into scripture but to extract meaning from scripture. . .”

There are some truths contained in the scriptures which do require the use of so called “spiritual maths” to be clearly discerned. This includes the interpretation of some prophetic, and also some symbolic material. Within this context, interpretation must always agree with the harmony of the scriptures. For this kind of interpretive work, we are always dependent, of course, on the Person of the Holy Spirit, for it is He Who functions as the Revealer of truth (John 14:26; John 16:13, 14).

There is much to be studied in relation to this subject of interpreting the scriptures. At this point we are only making you aware of this subject and some of the ramifications of the different approaches that exist.

Again let us say that we are to seek, find and embrace, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the meaning of scripture. We are not to impose meaning on scripture but to extract the true meaning of scripture. This will enable us to understand the Bible according to its real interpretation, i.e. the way God intended.

DISCERNING TRUTH

Background Reading: Luke 6:43-44

If a person is open to the Spirit of Truth (the Holy Spirit - our Teacher), the greatest sign to show that a teaching is of God will be God’s convicting power on the Word of truth when it is spoken in wisdom and faith. As the Spirit bears witness with our spirit (Romans 8:16) that the words being spoken are from God, if truly open to this truth, we will experience an inner conviction. It is this inner witness (the knowing within) that will tell us whether a teaching is of God or not (again, that is if we are open to the Spirit of God). However, many may be unable to correctly perceive this leading. For this reason they need to be protected from the enemy

and themselves through submitting to God-given leadership - their shepherds (pastors and teachers) within the Body.

God's purpose in shepherding His people doctrinally is revealed in His exhortation to Timothy:

2 TIMOTHY 4:2 Herald and preach the Word! Keep your sense of urgency (stand by, be at hand and ready, whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it be welcome or unwelcome, you as preacher of the Word are to show people in what way their lives are wrong) and convince them, rebuking and correcting, warning and urging and encouraging them, being unflagging and inexhaustible in patience and teaching. (Amp.)

Another version reads:

2 TIMOTHY 4:2 Preach the Word (refers to the whole body of revealed Truth, which means the entirety of the Word of God); be instant in season, out of season (presents the idea of the Preacher holding himself in constant readiness to proclaim the Word); reprove (the Preacher is to deal with sin, both in the lives of his unsaved hearers and in those of the Saints to whom he Ministers, and he is to do so in no uncertain tones and terms), rebuke (a suggestion in some cases of impending penalty), exhort with all longsuffering and Doctrine. (This tells us that the "reproving" and the "rebuking" must be done with gentleness . . .) (E.S.B.)

Many become shipwrecked in their faith because they never put down roots, but move from church to church, thinking they are qualified to act as their own pastors. This goes against the teaching of scripture which states that God gave the offices of the Five Fold Ministry (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers) to the Church for the express purpose of ". . . the perfecting of the Saints, . . . the work of the ministry, . . . the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

“ . . . Many become shipwrecked in their faith because they never put down roots, but move from church to church, thinking they are qualified to act as their own pastors. . . ”

In fact part of God’s prescribed order for our Christian life is to become committed to a local church and to submit to those whom God has placed in authority over us in this place. There are shepherds and there are sheep - and the sheep are ill-equipped to shepherd themselves. Therefore we find specific instruction in God’s Word to:

HEBREWS 13:17 Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves (to them in the Lord): for they watch for your souls (have a responsibility for your spiritual welfare), as they who must give account (to the Lord), that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

This is not an authority which is to be exercised in a dictatorial way, for all things need to be taken to the Lord in prayer. While the shepherd must give account, each person is still responsible for their own spiritual walk. The key in all this is humility, and a heart’s desire to please the Father:

1 PETER 5:5 Likewise, you younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yes, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. (Proverbs 3:34)

1 PETER 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time (proclaims the route to the Blessings of God : E.S.B.)

The first sign which shows that a teaching is of God is that it will line up with His Word - His principles. Then if it does, it must also be a balanced message, in context, and applicable for today.

Indeed there are many hermeneutical rules which govern the interpretation of scripture. Biblical hermeneutics is the science of interpretation of scripture.

Note that we will not know if a teaching is correct by how much emotional response we have to it, or by how “comfortable” we feel. Both of these indicators can be based purely on the senses, and the senses are not able to accurately or objectively discern spiritual truth.

“. . . The first sign which shows that a teaching is of God is that it will line up with His Word - His principles. . . ”

When God’s teachings are received and acted upon in faith, His power will be released to back up His Word of truth. And there will be signs and wonders which accompany and confirm the preaching of the message of truth.

ROMANS 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation (of spirit, soul and body) to every one who believes . . .

MARK 16:20 And they (the early Church) went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs (and wonders) following. Amen.

These signs will include lives transformed at an experiential level to express the fruit of the Spirit.

GALATIANS 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

GALATIANS 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (This fruit can only develop when Christians are led and empowered by the Spirit.)

GALATIANS 5:24 And they who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

GALATIANS 5:25 *If we live in the Spirit (speaks of salvation), let us also walk in the Spirit (speaks of ongoing sanctification, i.e. living our life on a daily basis according to the graces and energies of the Divine Nature).*

We cannot, however, rely on the numbers of people being saved and healed alone to tell us whether a certain teaching is truth or not. This is because people have wills and can reject the truth, thus choosing not to receive of God's teachings through His chosen vessels. By doing so, such people remain in bondage because of their unbelief or rebellion. Therefore we cannot rely on signs alone to establish the authenticity of a teacher or teaching.

“. . . We cannot, however, rely on the numbers of people being saved and healed alone to tell us whether a certain teaching is truth or not. . . ”

Indeed the power of the Gospel is only realized when people receive, believe and act on God's Word in faith - for until truth is believed and acted upon, it will remain merely empty or dead words. But when it is appropriated according to the conditions of God's Word, it is transformed into the living word which can release the power of God unto salvation of spirit, soul and body.

We can see an example of people rejecting God's teachings when Jesus, the greatest teacher of all, returned to Nazareth, His home town.

MARK 6:1 *And He went out from thence (Capernium), and came into His own country (hometown - Nazareth); and His Disciples follow (accompanied) Him.*

MARK 6:2 *And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, "From whence has this*

man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works (miracles) are wrought by His hands? (They did not question the wisdom or the works, but rather His right to do such things. In their thoughts, He wasn't worthy!) (E.S.B.)

MARK 6:3 *Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? ” And they were offended at Him (disapproved of Him).*

MARK 6:4 *But Jesus said unto them, “A Prophet is not without honour (proper deference and reverence), but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house (probably meaning His brothers and sisters).”*

MARK 6:5 *And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.*

MARK 6:6 *And He marvelled (was amazed) because of their unbelief. . .*

Even though God had performed many mighty miracles and wonders through Jesus' ministry, people still rejected Jesus and His teachings, and the same still happens today to God's ministers. Therefore a lack of signs and wonders does not necessarily mean that a teaching or a ministry is not of God.

However, we can state categorically that if a teaching does not line up with God's Word, we need to reject it, no matter what so-called "signs" may accompany it (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Thus to know if a teaching is correct and in context, we must know the principles contained within God's Word. Otherwise we could be deceived by wrong teaching and succumb to confusion and error. We need proper doctrinal filters to work through the doctrines of the Bible. In other words, scripture will not contradict itself, and will always harmonize. As we understand basic doctrines, we can use these as a filter by which other doctrine can be tested, and if true, then digested. As scripture itself tells us, we must be built up, doctrine upon doctrine, "*For precept must be upon precept, precept*

upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10). In this way we can progress gradually from the milk of the Word to the meat of the Word:

HEBREWS 5:13 For every one who uses milk (doesn't refer to new Christians but those who have had opportunity to grow in the Word and haven't done so) is unskilful in the Word of righteousness: for he is (still) a babe.

HEBREWS 5:14 But strong meat (of the Word) belongs to them who are of full age (mature in the Lord), even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both (distinguish between) good and evil.

EPHESIANS 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children (immature Christians), tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men (unscrupulous teachers of falsehood), and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (by deliberate scheming)

Remember that the foundation of all doctrine is the Cross. Therefore anything, meaning any doctrine which is not based on Calvary - on the Cross (the Atonement) - will be false and will bring nothing but error and distraction of one kind or another.

“. . . We need proper doctrinal filters to work through the doctrines of the Bible. In other words, scripture will not contradict itself, and will always harmonize. . .”

We are responsible for our own personal growth in the Lord. We are responsible for what we do with what we hear. God has commanded us to seek Him and His truth with all we have, and He promises that if we do, we will find both. To do anything less than this is to deny ourselves God's fellowship and love, and this may

bring bondage into our lives and even cause others to remain in darkness (through a lack of discipleship and Christian witness on our part).

God will protect new Christians in their initial growth in a limited way as long as they follow Him wholeheartedly. Just as parents care for their children and protect them from harm when they can, God does the same. However the degree of help, protection and provision that God gives will depend on the individual's willingness to allow Him to do so. And we need also to allow God to direct us in regard to the church we attend and the ministry we sit under, for in these matters we are also responsible before God. We should allow these things to be of God's choosing, not ours - for in relation to God we are but babes, and it is He Who knows both us and the future. So leave the future in His hands, by allowing Him to lead in all these areas.

“. . . We need to allow God to direct us in regard to the church we attend and the ministry we sit under, for in these matters we are also responsible before God. . . ”

THE NEED TO FIND THE RIGHT CHURCH

We are instructed by scripture to seek out fellow Believers, which includes attending and supporting a local church of the Lord's choosing, located of course after much prayer that has sought the Holy Spirit's leading.

HEBREWS 10:25 *Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as Believers] (at church and teaching meetings), as is the habit of some people, but admonishing - warning, urging and encouraging - one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching (the return of our Lord Jesus Christ). (Amp.)*

If Christians are attending churches which they find are not teaching correctly in major areas, they should pray and ask the Lord

for direction concerning this, i.e. whether to find another church or not. The reason for this is that if Christians remain in these places, they may become weakened in their faith, stunted in their spiritual growth, or even led into error.

The devil will use such situations to weaken Christians spiritually, keeping them in ignorance and bringing them into unbelief. You can be sure that Satan does not want Christians absorbing the powerful truths of God's Word. His ploy is to try to stop Christians believing on the Word of God, having them say, for example, "Healing is not for today," "God doesn't do miracles any more," "God put this sickness on me to make me humble and to test me," or make other kinds of erroneous statements which he can deceive people into believing and proclaiming as truth. Of course what accompanies unbelief and wrong teaching is usually a lack of true compassion and love for one's fellow man. Christians may try in the flesh (emotions) to love, but it will not be love which flows from God's Divine power working within. Sadly judgement, backbiting, gossip and people justifying their sin usually constitute further fruit of "weak Saints," strong in the flesh but weak in the power of the Lord.

***“. . .If Christians remain in these places,
they may become weakened in their faith,
stunted in their spiritual growth, or even
led into error. . .”***

The devil will use anything he can to keep people from the truth and from having true victory in every area of their lives. So if Christians purpose to study and believe for healing or deliverance (or one of the many other promises in God's Word), and then go to church and hear that healing is not for today (and other erroneous teaching), it can hinder or stunt their growth in this area. This is why some may need, according to the Lord's leading, to change their place of fellowship - so that God can teach them and nurture them in His truths. Otherwise there is a danger that they will experience defeat and spiritual bankruptcy in many areas of their lives, as they are suffocated and weakened by a lack of the spiritual food needed to strengthen their inner man.

Just a warning - quite often the very church the Lord would want you to attend may be labelled by lukewarm Christians as “weird” and “fanatical” because of its uncompromising stance concerning the standard required by the Word of God. Do not let the opinions of others rob you of hearing the voice of the Spirit. If Satan cannot rob you from outside the church, he will try to do so from within the church and sad to say, he has much success.

Note also that we were never designed to be islands unto ourselves, and our Christian walk includes commitment to a local body of Believers with whom we can share our faith and be mutually encouraged and edified. We can also understand that Christians are not meant to teach or pastor themselves in the sense of being independent, and isolated from the Body. Yes the Holy Spirit will bring revelation of the Word, yet this almost always takes place in the context of submission to God-ordained ministers of the Gospel, teachers and pastors through whom the Lord works in order to edify and develop the maturity of the Saints of the Kingdom.

“. . . We were never designed to be islands unto ourselves. . . . and Christians are not meant to teach or pastor themselves in the sense of being independent, and isolated from the Body. . . ”

THE NARCOTIC OF DARKNESS

The Word tells us:

1 PETER 5:8 Be sober (mentally alert), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour (destroy)

However his attacks can be subtle and insidious to the point where Christians have no idea that they have ingested darkness from his evil storehouse. This darkness, once tasted and consumed by the

flesh, becomes addictive. Unless the Christian is an earnest seeker of truth, and wants an ongoing relationship with the Author of all truth, they can become so blinded and paralyzed by this evil onslaught that they are rendered ineffective, at best, for the term of their earthly journey.

The narcotic of darkness is the drug that puts Pentecostal, Charismatic and mainline Christians into a stupor, bringing a haze across their minds so that they have no proper perception, in a doctrinal sense, of right and wrong. In other words, they cannot see truly. The sad thing is that many of them love the closet of darkness, for where there is no light, little is revealed and so little is seemingly required of them by God. This in their willing ignorance appeals to them. It is, however, totally wrong.

***JOHN 3:19** And this is the condemnation (verdict), that Light is come into the world (Jesus is the Light Who has come), and men loved darkness (sin) rather than light (they reject the Light), because their deeds were evil (they are sinners desiring to sin).*

***JOHN 3:20** For every one who does evil hates the Light, neither comes to the Light, lest his deeds should be reproved (exposed and revealed for what they are).*

***JOHN 3:21** But he who does (practises) truth (and lives by it) comes to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest (clearly revealed), that they are wrought in God (have been divinely prompted and done with God's help).*

Ignorance due to slackness and unbelief is not bliss but sin, and with it comes not only the stench of hell but also its power to stir the lusts of the flesh. But again there are those in the Church who love darkness or part of it more than the light of God's Word (and will). Once addicted to this darkness, people crave more, and gather around themselves teachers who will accommodate their desires (2 Timothy 4:3).

“. . .The narcotic of darkness is the drug that puts Pentecostal, Charismatic and mainline Christians into a stupor, bringing a haze across their minds. . .”

Many, out of a sense of self-preservation, only allow a certain level of darkness into their lives. This level of darkness, because of their self-preservation, will not cause them to forfeit their salvation but it will cause them to be ineffective and unfruitful as Christians. They choose only a little of hell/darkness so they can remain saved but still serve their own wants and fears.

If one does not fill one's life, however, with what God's desires for them, then all that remains is for man to rule his own life from the beach on which he has built his kingdom of self-rule. Then with one storm, or even a high tide, the sand on which his desires rest will be washed away. Great is the ruin of a life built on these sands. Only on the rock of God's Word and will can a life be worthwhile and of value, producing fruit that will have an everlasting effect. No matter what storm comes against this house contained inside God's city, it will not fall (Matthew 7:24-27).

Our lives need to be built on and rooted in God's Word. The Bible says that God's Word is the seed that must be allowed to take root in the soil of our hearts. Then for this heavenly seed to germinate in our lives, heavenly water, which brings the spiritual elements needed to do this, must be applied to the heart of the hearer. When the Christian does not open up their heart to heaven's rains brought by the Holy Spirit, then no word, no crop, no heavenly manna will be on the table of their heart. With no spiritual food to digest, the Christian will be spiritually weak, and this will show forth in their life - in the compromised decisions they make, in the way they always choose the easy road, in their failure to stand up for what is right and righteous, etc.

LUKE 8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God.

LUKE 8:12 Those by the way side are they who hear; then comes the devil, and takes away the Word out of

their hearts (because they have little regard for it), lest they should believe and be saved.

LUKE 8:13 *They on the rock are they, who, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

LUKE 8:14 *And that which fell among thorns are they, who, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*

God has already given His Word to the Church, but the rain of the Holy Spirit must germinate the seed of His Word in our hearts. So first we must seek His seed, and with the Spirit's help, we must find that seed. Then we must pray that God will bring the "rain of His Anointing" upon it. Without all this happening, we will remain spiritually bankrupt, destitute, empty and hungry. Intellectual mental assent will never germinate God's seed - otherwise it would be a work of self. Because we live in an Age of Grace, self can never be the source. God must be our Jehovah Jireh, our Provider, in all things.

Anointing on the Word of God (the heavenly seed) causes a spiritual "chemical" reaction to take place in the heart of a yielded Saint. God has chosen that the soil in which He is to bury His precious seed is to be the hearts of men and women "in Christ." It is in Christ that the Father has placed all the heavenly manna we will ever need - and the real need for us and others is nothing but the Father's will. This indeed is the promised land that will not only give us our seed but also our harvest. So we should seek God's will so that, by God's grace at work in us, we can abundantly receive from the Lord of the harvest. Then we can praise His Name and worship Him for the abundance of His Word which has caused our hearts and minds to be changed and transformed in the Light of love and power, now and forevermore.

“ . . .Anointing on the Word of God (the heavenly seed) causes a spiritual “chemical” reaction to take place in the heart of a yielded Saint. . .”

Sadly the fleshly lust for more, on whatever plane and to whatever degree, is the driving force for many Christians to grasp false doctrine within the Church and so maintain their hearts as sterile ground in which the true Word of God cannot take root.

Self is promoted when lust is the goal.

God is promoted when God’s will is truly the goal.

Another word for lust is desire, and worldly Christians even use scripture, taken out of context, of course, to validate their sin. For example Jesus said:

MARK 11:23 “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, ‘Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea;’ and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he says.

MARK 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.” (When we are seeking the will of God, we will be desiring what He desires.) (As is obvious here, the receiving of these things, whatever they might be, requires relationship, and that is the key : E.S.B.)

This scripture is often used by carnal Christians to back up all kinds of material, worldly and temporal desires being supposedly confessed into existence, all emanating from self-wants rather than God’s desire for their lives!

Talk about calling evil good, and good evil! (Isaiah 5:20-21).

In self-determining our lives we really become gods. But only God has this right and the necessary wisdom - being all-knowing,

all-powerful and all-loving - to daily direct us in the important issues of our lives. Man was created to rely on God in all things, not on the flesh with the sin nature enthroned (Galatians 5:17). Many Christians are taught to pray to the Father with the attitude that God must give me my desires because they are “good” desires. How ridiculous!

How can man think he can desire rightly within himself? To trust himself in this is to become totally foolish, i.e. man trying to become a little god. But this is what is taught as a formula to “success,” another word that appeals to man’s lusts. We could go on and on, but we are just bringing this foolishness to the table of teaching. “Prosperity” teachers promote this approach which then stirs up the “flesh” in Christians’ lives, and therefore their wants. This leads them into a form of lust, and diverts their attention and focus away from what should be their primary aims - to develop their love-relationship with the Lord and to serve Him in the Kingdom.

Lust in a Christian’s life is built up in that life or rules that life when a person lacks the desire to seek God’s truth and His will on every matter through His Word. In fact the reason for every deception found within the Church is the lack of desire for truth, for the very reasons we have discussed. Lust is a spiritual drug of darkness that is addictive. Lust is promoted when the Christian is told by Christian teachers that our self-wants are our rightful inheritance, backing up their teaching with scriptures taken out of context or misinterpreted. When this happens, the Christian is convinced, rather easily in most cases, and so the fires of lust are given the fuel to burn to motivate the carnal Christian. Only seeking, finding and embracing God’s will in all things in our life will extinguish these fleshy fires and deliver us from the driving need to self-rule. When this happens, we are delivered by God’s power of truth and love (in the Name of Jesus, our wonderful Saviour and Lord) from the spiritual narcotic of darkness at an experiential level.

***“ . . . Lust in a Christian’s life is built up
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SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Background Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18

As Christians, we need to realize that we do not have to succumb to the wiles of the enemy. Satan uses evil strategies and ploys to deceive people and keep them in bondage, blinded to the truth. But the only power Satan retains in Christians' lives is that which they give him, through sinning and remaining in ignorance.

It is also essential we realize that in ourselves, we have no power to defeat the enemy. Many people try to fight the devil in their own strength - their willpower - and they fail. In Christ, however, when we are living in harmony with God's Word, we can allow God's power into our lives to defeat the enemy. It is therefore not we who deal with the devil - rather, it is God's grace working through us, energizing us and giving us the power we need.

God's grace is revealed in the two aspects of His power which work together for the benefit of His people. The first aspect of His power is demonstrated through God supplying us with the provisions we need to run the race of faith. This includes our daily physical needs, from finances, to protection, to the healing of our body. The second describes God's power at work within us so that we are able to do His will, being empowered to resist the destructive urges of the world, the flesh (the sin nature) and the devil. This power comes through the imparted Divine Nature which energizes our human nature as we submit to the Holy Spirit.

***“. . . the only power Satan retains in
Christians' lives is that which they give
him, through sinning and remaining in
ignorance. . .”***

If the enemy is causing havoc in a Christian's life, they need, in faith, to take authority over that situation in the knowledge of who they are in Christ. This is done by that person first repenting of any sin, and so eliminating any legal ground which the enemy may have. They can then pray to God in Jesus' Name to remove the devil's influence. This can be done by saying, in faith, "In the Name of

Jesus, I bind the enemy's influence in this area, and I loose him from this situation," as Matthew 18:18 instructs:

MATTHEW 18:18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever (evil spirit) you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven (by heaven's power): and whatsoever (evil spirit) you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (by heaven's power).

By faith, through the prayer of binding and loosing, God's power can first immobilize the enemy and then remove his influence from a particular situation.

Note: Normally one should seek the leading of the Spirit before undertaking such prayer.

“ . . . It is also essential we realize that in ourselves, we have no power to defeat the enemy. Many people try to fight the devil in their own strength - their willpower - and they fail. . . ”

When we pray in this manner, we are focusing on God and dealing only with Him. In other words, WE DEAL WITH GOD AND HE DEALS WITH THE DEVIL. Although we are binding the enemy in the Name of Jesus, we are, spiritually speaking, in the throneroom of grace, appropriating God's power according to His will through the prayer of binding and loosing. Through our prayer of faith, God's power deals with the enemy. Therefore anything done by us in this regard is carried out by God the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, via the agency of the Holy Spirit. So always remember, we do not deal directly with the devil. We deal with God through Jesus Christ, and then God's power can remove the enemy's influence. Again, we have no power in ourselves, but through Jesus we have access to God's power, indeed the corporate power of heaven, to change circumstances - the mountains that confront us (Matthew 21:21). Remember we also have the power within, through the Divine Nature, to help us change and develop our character so that we become more Christ-like.

It is the devil who blinds people from receiving the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is he who deceives and destroys. It is he who lures people into hell through lust, unbelief, vain philosophy, religion, fear, etc. We thus need to acknowledge that he is mankind's enemy, and treat him accordingly.

Satan was originally an anointed cherub, but now he is “the Adversary,” “*the father of lies*” and the one who promotes all that is evil. He is at enmity with God and hates all that God has created, especially mankind. Satan delights in deceiving people and drawing them into hell to experience eternal torment. Therefore we should use every weapon that God has provided against him. Without faith-filled Christians using the armour and weaponry which God has given, many more people would be rushing headlong into hell. It is therefore our responsibility as soldiers of the Cross to become aware of our enemy's tactics, and to oppose him to the level of our spiritual maturity and ability in the Spirit. As we commune with God, He will lead us in the paths of righteousness, giving us the necessary weapons of warfare. Always remember, however, in dealing with the enemy, it is not really us, but us in God, and so God through us Who accomplishes this purpose. Consequently, all the power and glory belong to Him.

Therefore we should not become “devil-oriented.” We need to remember, as we have said, that in spiritual warfare we are dealing with God, not the enemy and his forces. We also need to remember that God's power is so much greater, and that indeed the enemy is a toothless lion for those who know their authority in Christ and are walking uprightly before God. So let us strive to always be balanced in our spiritual warfare, keeping our focus on the Cross, and the love and power which flows from it to us, day by day.

“. . .It is therefore our responsibility as soldiers of the Cross to become aware of our enemy's tactics, and to oppose him to the level of our spiritual maturity and ability in the Spirit. . .”

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

Background Reading: Matthew 11:28-30

So if you are experiencing any difficulties in your life, do not focus on the problem. Rather, focus on the answer - the Word of God and the power given because of the Cross. When people meditate on a problem, it can easily become amplified to the point where there appears to be no solution. As a result, many lose their hope, and their faith in God to protect them and provide for their needs. In doing so, they are allowing the enemy to run roughshod over their lives and their affairs.

We are not saying we should not acknowledge that there is a problem if one exists in our lives, but we are saying we must seek for the answer to that problem in Christ.

God teaches throughout His Word that we are to seek Him diligently. This is especially the case when we are confronted with problems of any kind. As we seek Him with all our hearts, He will then reveal the answer to those who are open to Him, this answer being the truth needed to set us free. For this is His promise:

MATTHEW 7:7 Ask (in faith) and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

MATTHEW 7:8 For every one who (truly) asks receives; and he who (truly) seeks finds; and to him who (truly) knocks it shall be opened (assuming the seeker does so with a sincere heart).

LUKE 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom (the love, truth and wisdom of God: Matthew 6:33).

We cannot emphasize strongly enough that each and every Believer needs to spend time in study and in fellowship with God each day in order to gain that which is needed to live a successful life here on earth, pleasing to the Father. And true fellowship comes through speaking to the Lord, praising and worshipping Him and

taking quality time to hear the gentle voice of the Spirit. This voice can come in many ways, but most of the time people will find that the Lord will speak to them primarily through the scriptures, as they hear, read and study them.

God is our Heavenly Father and He wants to provide for us. The main thing we need of course is truth. Through receiving and acting on the truth of His Word, we will obtain all we need. As Matthew 6:33 states:

MATTHEW 6:33 . . . seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness (this gives the “condition” for God’s Blessings; His interests are to be “first” : E.S.B.); and all these things (everything you need) shall be added unto you.

The devil may try to tell us that the Bible is only a book of religious philosophy and myths. We need, however, to reject his lies by lifting up God’s Word as truth - truth with the power to deliver and set free. We can then bring the devil and his lies into subjection to God’s Word, and he will be placed where he belongs, under Jesus’ feet.

In doing all this, we will be lifting up and glorifying the Name of Jesus - for the Name of Jesus is mighty! It will certainly set us free, along with anyone else who wants to partake of the blessings of God.

“. . .When people meditate on a problem, it can easily become amplified to the point where there appears to be no solution. . .”

When we pray to the Father, it is to be in the Name of Jesus, the Jesus of the Cross, our sacrifice of Atonement. And for our prayers to be focused and effective, we need a proper understanding of the Atonement - which is the suffering, death and Resurrection of Jesus.

The Name of Jesus is supreme - it is above all. When the Name of Jesus is spoken in faith and the conditions are met, everything

must bow - every circumstance, every sickness, every disease and every mountain in a person's life. Indeed the Name of Jesus has authority over everything, as Philippians 2:10-11 tells us:

PHILIPPIANS 2:10 That at the Name of Jesus every knee should (must) bow, of things in heaven (angels and departed Saints), and things in (on) earth (those living on the earth) and things under the earth (Satan's forces and hell's occupants),

PHILIPPIANS 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To gain victory in our lives, we also need to take up the cross of self-denial. Along with this again we need to focus on the Cross and Christ's finished work, and believe and trust that God has given to us in Him the new Divine Nature. When a Believer yields to the Holy Spirit, the energies and graces of the Divine Nature are absorbed in an experiential way by the human nature, so empowering the Saint to both desire, and in faith and love to do God's will, totally and completely.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (so that you go on to maturity in the Lord, not backsliding or stagnating, for your salvation is your most precious possession).

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 For it is God Who works in you (through Divine enablement) both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

It is the grace of the Holy Spirit which will empower us to work effectively for our Lord. Wuest comments on Philippians 2:12-13 in regard to this, and just as importantly, our role in it.

"In verse thirteen we have divine enablement. The saints are to carry their salvation which God has given them and which thus

belongs to them, to its ultimate goal, always remembering and depending upon the fact that it is God who is working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. The word “worketh” in the Greek means “to energize, to work effectively.” Our words “energy” and “energize” come from it. The words “to will” are the translation of a Greek word meaning “to desire,” and refer to a desire that comes from one’s emotions rather than from one’s reason. It is this desire to do the good pleasure of God that is produced by divine energy in the heart of the saint as he definitely subjects himself to the Holy Spirit’s ministry. It is God the Holy Spirit who energizes the saint, making him not only willing, but actively desirous of doing God’s sweet will. But He does not merely leave the saint with the desire to do His will. He provides the necessary power to do it. This we have in the words “to do.” The Greek construction implies habit, the habitual doing of God’s will.

In verse twelve, we have human responsibility, in verse thirteen, divine enablement, a perfect balance which must be kept if the Christian life is to be lived at its best. It is not a “let go and let God” affair. It is a “take hold with God” business. It is a mutual co-operation with the Holy Spirit in an interest and an activity in the things of God. The saint must not merely rest in the Holy Spirit for victory over sin and the production of a holy life. He must in addition to this dependence upon the Spirit, say a positive NO to sin and exert himself to the doing of the right. Here we have that incomprehensible and mysterious interaction between the free will of man and the sovereign grace of God.”²

(underlines added)

“ . . . It is God the Holy Spirit who energizes the saint, making him not only willing, but actively desirous of doing God’s sweet will. . . ”

If a Saint does not follow the prescribed order set forth in God’s Word, they will leave themselves open to attack from the enemy. But all those who flow in God’s grace are promised power over sin. Then no agent of the enemy shall succeed! Indeed the power of sin was broken at the Cross. *“It is finished”* for all those in Christ, and

we can now choose to seek and follow after the Spirit of Grace and Truth.

Another timely warning - if Christians try to seek truth as a formula to escape from bondages (difficulties, character flaws, areas of defeat) in their life, without seeking the relationship that the Spirit desires to have with them, they will ultimately fail. This is because we need that relationship which is built on the union of two, and gives us a solid foundation of truth and love. From this stems everything else pertaining to spiritual life. The love displayed at the Cross for man still extends today through the ministry of the Holy Spirit Who was sent to be our Comforter and Teacher. It is He Who brings the essence of the Father to us so that we may commune with the Father. It is the Holy Spirit Who would empower us to love, believe and trust in our Lord - in all things, and at all times.

A formula by itself will not produce freedom. Only the love and power which flow through relationship, a relationship which is created at the Cross, will enable the truth to set us free.

GOD'S CONVICTING POWER

Background Reading: Hebrews 4:12-13; John 16:7-15

If we have sin in our lives, God will want to expose it. He can do this through making us aware of truth - right and wrong and the answer needed. God, however, does not condemn. He desires to restore and liberate.

When conviction operates, we will feel guilty of sin. The answer to this is repentance. Condemnation, on the other hand, will cause us to feel worthless and hopeless, a state of being for which there is no remedy. A feeling of condemnation can also cause a man or woman to rear up in pride and anger, and to try to justify their sin (as people have done throughout human history). The devil promotes condemnation, while God, through conviction, tries to bring us to an awareness of our sin for the purposes of repentance.

When truth is declared, God's convicting power can show us any wrong in our lives. This is the reason we must seek truth, no matter what cost is involved. However, if people react negatively to God's convicting power, condemnation can come into operation and cause them to feel condemned and worthless, or strange as it may seem, even to become puffed up with pride. The way people react when

confronted with the truth concerning an area of wrong in their lives will determine whether or not condemnation can gain legal ground to operate. To react wrongly can, as we have said, allow condemnation to operate. To respond with humility and a desire to please God will produce repentance and subsequent liberation. And this is the purpose of God's convicting power. It comes from the Father of Lights, and shows us the way out of our darkness and ignorance.

“. . .The devil promotes condemnation, while God, through conviction, tries to bring us to an awareness of our sin for the purposes of repentance. . .”

Sometimes when truth is spoken in wisdom, people may not recognize it as such because of their biased attitudes. We find that many people are closed off to truth in certain areas because they cling to traditions, beliefs and ideas that contradict God's Word. They hold such concepts in high esteem and are unwilling to consider anything which may challenge them. Then in rejecting the truth because it does not line up with their own thinking, they allow themselves to remain in bondage to such things as fear, sickness, worry, poverty (spiritual and/or physical), greed, lust, materialism, etc.

God always wants to reveal truth but for Him to do so, we need to yield to the Spirit of God by being open to His Word of direction, correction and deliverance.

Scripture also tells us that if people reject God's teaching and seek false teaching which is pleasing to their ears (or senses), their consciences will become seared, and thus numbed, and alienated from their thinking processes. They will then be deceived, and cause others also to be deceived.

1 TIMOTHY 4:1 Now the Spirit speaks expressly (clearly, pointedly), that in the latter times (towards the end of the Church Age which is now) some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits (evil

spirits of deception and religion), and doctrines of devils (doctrines inspired by demons and taught by men);

1 TIMOTHY 4:2 *Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron (this refers to the teachers of these demonic doctrines);*

2 TIMOTHY 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine (fundamental Bible teachings - the Cross, the Blood, repentance from sin, ongoing sanctification, etc.); but after their own lusts shall they (so-called Christians) heap to themselves teachers (of false doctrine), having itching ears (to hear what their flesh craves);*

2 TIMOTHY 4:4 *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth (because they don't want to hear it), and shall be turned unto fables (myths, lies, deception).*

If we reject or remain ignorant of God's Word, we will remain in whatever bondage holds us captive. So it pays to find out what life's boundaries are, i.e. the way God wants us to live. In this way we can walk before Him in the freedom Christ has won for us. And when we walk in freedom and spiritual strength, we will be in a far better position to help others - both in leading people to salvation, and helping others progress in the Kingdom of God.

If God reveals that we have sin in our lives, the sin nature, in that area, will have once again ascended the throne. Therefore we will need to take account of ourselves and address the problem. We will need to make sure we are doing all the Lord has commanded. We will also need to review our priorities, and see how much or how little we are committed to Him.

Note: God may reveal things to us through an inner witness or through other people. Whether or not these people are ministers does not matter - we should always be open to correction and teaching. In this way, our minds can be renewed and we can live productive and consistent Christian lives.

We need to take all things that are new, and of which we are a little unsure, to the prayer closet, so that we can ask the Lord to

reveal the truth concerning these things - whether they be right or wrong. This may take a commitment to seek and study, so that with the help of the Holy Spirit, illumination may come.

“ . . . If we reject or remain ignorant of God’s Word, we will remain in whatever bondage holds us captive. . . ”

We should always be open to the Lord’s direction, so that He can show us any problems in our lives and we can then make the necessary changes. Acknowledgement of any weakness or problem is the first step and this needs to be followed by true repentance. Then we can go on in God, not being held back by any past failures or ongoing weaknesses.

So it is wise to position oneself in regard to righteous living, and to be open to God’s convicting power - for when acted upon, this will bring the peace of God that passes all natural understanding into our lives. This will continue as we take up our cross of self-denial on a daily basis and follow Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 4:7 And the peace of God, which passes (goes beyond) all (human) understanding, shall keep (and fill) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This is the wage of living God’s way. We have peace of mind from the knowledge of who we are in Christ. This gives us confidence. With this knowledge, we can properly focus so as to flow in the power of God, yielding to the Holy Spirit so that the graces and energies of the Divine Nature become available to us to do God’s will. From this position, we are more able to help other people come to know the truth and walk in freedom. Indeed God is calling all of us to live in His Word of deliverance so we can be cleansed vessels, fit for our Master’s use:

2 TIMOTHY 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

2 TIMOTHY 2:21 *If a man therefore purge himself from these (attitudes and deeds of the flesh), he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet (fit) for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

As Wuest puts it so clearly:

"The Christian who does not maintain a real interest in and hunger for the Word of God, and satisfy both by a constant study of that Word, is not co-operating with the Spirit, and is not giving the Spirit an opportunity to work in his life and cause him to grow in the Christian graces. The Spirit works through the Word of God that we have stored in our hearts, and not apart from it.

Likewise, the believer who does not actively participate in the activity necessary to the saying of YES to the will of God and of NO to sin, is not co-operating with the Spirit. And the Christian who does not engage in a Holy Spirit directed ministry of some kind in the work of furthering the knowledge of the Word of God, is not co-operating with the Spirit. It is this ideal combination of a moment by moment trust in, submission to, and dependence upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the constant interest in and participation with the Holy Spirit in the things of God, that produces the best results in the Christian's experience. This combination develops Christian men and women with a sense of responsibility, with moral courage and stamina of a high order, with a balance and poise that weathers the severest storms, with a delicate sense of tact that enables them to move among their fellowmen without riding roughshod over their tender hearts, but rather in a loving way so that their passing leaves a sense of the presence of the Lord Jesus. It develops spiritual giants, men and women who can be trusted in a time of crisis."³

(underlines added)

These men and women, led and empowered by the Spirit, will discern truth from error.

May you have the victory in Christ.

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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crossroadsministries.org.au

NOTES

- 1 Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin, *Interpreting the Scriptures*, pgs.15 and 18.
- 2 Wuest, K. S., *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Philippians*.
- 3 Wuest, K. S., *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Untranslatable Riches from the Greek New Testament*, pg.113.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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