

Another Spirit

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

(Galatians 1:6-8)

“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. 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 him.”

(II Corinthians 11: 3-4)

Both of the scriptures above were written by the Apostle Paul to churches. His concern was over Christians who had left or were in danger of leaving the true gospel. The enemy he identified was Satan who beguiled Eve or even an angel from heaven. These enemies had been able to deceive a certain segment of church leadership. The end result was that they were preaching “another Jesus”. In other words, they were presenting to the people a Jesus other than the one Paul had originally presented to them. This, obviously, is a very real danger or it would not be presented to us in the New Testament scriptures.

People don’t want to be deceived. They want to know what is of God and what is not. A few years ago a thing called “the Toronto Blessing” had people divided over whether it was of God or not. Others have wondered whether Benny Hinn or the methods of other such men are scriptural. The problem is that many are seeking to know what is right or wrong based on the outward appearance. God has an acid test that goes much deeper – to the root in order to discern the true nature and source of a thing. God tests the spirit of the thing.

This article is not written to give you answers in relation to the Toronto Blessing, Benny Hinn, or any other thing. Many of us are faced with weekly situations within our own sphere and in our own church settings. We have enough challenges without “going after” specific ministers and ministries. We must learn discernment for our own lives before we take on larger problems.

Paul himself had examples of problems that were within the churches in which God had used him to raise up. Within his letters to all the churches you find him weighing and testing them. The Apostle was able to correctly divide what was of God from any counterfeits. He knew what he was doing.

The question for us today is, What sure-fire methods did he use to know when they were “on” and when they were not? Two such groups of churches that he addressed were at Galatia and Corinth. You find his spirit is disturbed and he seeks to address those who are “off” and to awaken and enlighten those who are being lead astray by others who are leading them.

When a particular teaching, method of ministry or person who is contaminated gets in a group and infiltrates it, after a while the whole group may accept the counterfeit because it has been around so long and has become generally accepted. If that spreads to enough places then a wider view of it is accepted and people begin to believe that “this is the way it is supposed to be.”

This is what happened at Galatia. The letters of Ephesians, Corinthians, Romans, and Colossians were all written to specific churches in a specific city. For example, the letter to the Ephesians was written to the church in the city of Ephesus. But the letter to the Galatians is different. There was no city of Galatia. This letter was written to Christians in a vast area known as Galatia. The “off” thing that Paul was addressing to the Galatians was written to a multitude of churches and people who had all been contaminated with the same specific “thing” and it had found general acceptance among them all. Paul seemed to come in with an “outside” view that was throwing a contrast upon the whole thing even though he was their founder. He seemed to be an outsider and his message may have seemed as the interjection of some new thing. Some among them might question whether what Paul was telling them was right for, after all, he was only one man and the majority among them had embraced and believed what it was that Paul was “cursing” (Galatians 1:7-9).

We talked earlier about an acid test that God uses to measure a thing. Man will use many things to help him test whether a thing is valid or not. One of the things that God does not use is the principle of the “majority rules.” When Jesus came to the earth, the whole world was in darkness and only One had the true message of God. From everyone including Joseph to Noah to Elijah to David in exile, God is very used to the majority of His people being “off” and only a few actually following Him. Many of the methods we use to prove whether a thing is really of God is not used by God as a means of analysis.

So the question arises “Then by what means may we know the true, the real and the godly?” In those same verses in Galatians where he identified the problem, we find the answer given. Paul says, “If a man come unto you preaching any other gospel.” We find in Corinthians that he uses a similar phrase “preach another Jesus” and adds something else “or have another spirit”.

There is a certain spirit in which the true minister of God will proceed. That spirit will permeate his ministry and it will order his words. The gospel that he preaches and the spirit of his ministry will bear witness in one.

We see Jesus using this acid test early in relationship to His own disciples. When

they saw people ministering in the name of the Lord but not being part of their group, they wanted to rain down fire on them “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luke 9:51-55).

Jesus’ rebuke to them was telling. He could have dealt with right doctrines or introduced them to proper methods of ministry, but instead He went to the heart of the thing. “Ye know not what spirit you are of.” It is not the thing done or the method used that is of primary importance to the Lord. The first thing He notices and the thing of primary importance is what spirit it is ministered in.

It is strange because I believe that many feel that they are already using the same method Jesus used. They feel they are identifying the spirit of the thing. When they see someone ministering to sick people or leading people to the Lord, they assume that this spirit of helping and giving is the right spirit. However, I believe that Jesus goes beyond the exterior of the thing. He does not look and see one man murdering someone and look at another man helping someone and make His conclusions based on the actions that are going on. He goes beyond judging by actions and outward appearance. He looks on the heart. He determines the true motivation.

We must understand that a man may do all manner of good things that appear to be carried out in a right spirit and yet be from a wrong spirit. Jesus noticed that the Pharisees were very diligent to pray and tithe but He also noticed that their “public ministry” had much to do with being seen of men. Their good deeds bolstered their ego and fed pride. The things done were done as much for themselves as they were for others. Men may take on a meek demeanor and speak with a humbled tone and yet do it all with the goal of finding wider acceptance. If the exterior becomes the basis of our judgment, we may find ourselves deceived by someone with a humble demeanor.

However, another man may speak with authority and firmness and be perceived by people to be hard or harsh. But his motives, when weighed by God, may be found to be in brokenness and humility. Such was the case with the prophet Jeremiah. His words are some of the hardest and most severe in the Bible. However, he is known as the “weeping prophet”. Why? Because every word was spoken in brokenness regardless of how harsh he appeared publicly.

A man may speak right words, even words about having the right spirit and yet that man’s spirit may be wrong. The acid test is not applied to the person’s words, demeanor, or subject material first. It is applied to his true spirit. Yes, there are little “give aways” within his words and little actions that show his heart, but these are not first the proof.

They are fruit but the root is the determining factor.

The true spirit of who and what Christians represent is seated on the throne of the universe: it is the spirit of the Lamb. Beware of the false. ***