

91 - Only by the Spirit of God do you know what you are dealing with

I looked for a scripture and never found it, but here's how I've heard it: "Whose report shall we believe? We Shall believe the report of the Lord." I thought I'd find it in numbers when the spies Moses sent into Canaan came back with their report. It wasn't there. I went through Google with a fine-toothed comb and found lots of references to the quote, but none with a scripture reference. Apparently, the line comes from a song by Becky Fender, and not from the Bible at all. The closest I could find was this:

Isaiah 53:1 - NIV

Who has believed our message [report in other versions]
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Here's a more modern take from Paul:

Romans 3:3-4 –

"For what if some disbelieve? Will not their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God?
4 May it not be coming to that! **Now let God be true, yet every man a liar**"

I spent hours preparing for tonight, but I could give just one scripture and we could all get on with our lives:

Exodus 20:2-3, and Deuteronomy 5:6-8 –

I am the Lord your God...you shall have no other gods before Me.

If we have any questions, measure everything against that standard.

Jesus said, in **John 17:17 –**

Hallow them by Thy truth. Thy word is truth.

How will we be hallowed (or "holy-ized" – great word);

How will we be, "separated from profane things; consecrated, dedicated to God; purified"?

"by Thy truth," Jesus said. And what is God's truth? "Thy word," Jesus said. God's word.

Why am I going on about this? It's all stuff we know; and we've heard it before, right? Obviously, God IS true and His word IS truth, so what's the big deal?"

Watch the landmarks with me tonight, because we are in a new season, one that we began declaring six weeks ago. Things have heated up since then, in that what we had grace for on the other side of the Jordan, so to speak, we don't any longer. We're at war in this new land! God's gone before us, but we have to take the land, destroy the other kings – and the gods they serve, leaving no one alive.

Today, we ought to be at least as militant in the spirit, as the Israelites had to be in the natural.

Look with me at **2 Corinthians 10:**

3 For, walking in flesh, we are not warring according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful to God toward the pulling down of bulwarks;

What's a bulwark? Listen to this: "a castle, stronghold, fortress; anything on which one relies; **the arguments and reasonings by which a disputant endeavours to fortify his opinion and defend it against his opponent**"

Paul is telling us 1) we're At war, 2) it isn't against anything in the natural. 3) our job is to pull down the **arguments and reasonings that anyone wants to throw up to dispute us; it's all their opinion (absent of experience, mind you); it's all manufactured and none of it has substance; And the person who is the mouthpiece for this filth thinks WE are the opponent when really it is him or her who is opposing!**

5 pulling down reckonings and every height elevating itself against the knowledge of God, and leading into captivity every apprehension into the obedience of Christ,

6 and having all in readiness to avenge every disobedience, whenever your obedience may be completed.

Luke 20:17-18 –

What, then, is this that is written, "The stone which is rejected by the builders, This came to be for the head of the corner"?

18 Everyone falling on that stone shall be shattered, yet on whomever it should be falling, it will be scattering him like chaff."

Far better it is for us to fall on the Rock – Who is Christ – than for the Rock to fall on us and be scattered like chaff!

We've had to dis-fellowship ourselves from some folks recently, because they liked listening to their demons – really, they like dancing with Satan – more than they wanted God. What characterized them were actions and words that were sniping, back-biting, full of self-centered, self-absorbed, religious prideful and arrogant. If that sounds like harsh judgment, look at

2 Timothy 3:

1 Now this know, that in the last days perilous periods will be present,

2 for men will be selfish, fond of money, ostentatious, proud, calumniators, stubborn to parents, ungrateful, malign,

3 without natural affection, implacable, adversaries, uncontrollable, fierce, averse to the good,

4 traitors, rash, conceited, fond of their own gratification rather than fond of God;

5 having a form of devoutness, yet denying its power.
6 These, also, shun. For of these are those who are slipping into homes and are leading into captivity little women, heaped with sins, being led by various lusts and gratifications,
7 always learning and yet not at any time able to come into a realization of the truth.
8 Now, by the method by which Jannes and Jambres withstand Moses, thus these also are withstanding the truth, men of a depraved mind, disqualified as to the faith.
9 But they shall not be progressing more, for their folly shall be obvious to all, as that of those also became.
10 Now you fully follow me in my teaching, motive, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,
11 persecutions, sufferings, such as occurred to me in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra: persecutions such as I undergo, and out of them all the Lord rescues me.
12 And all who are wanting to live devoutly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.
13 Yet wicked men and swindlers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.
14 Now you be remaining in what you learned and verified, being aware from whom you learned it,
15 and that from a babe you are acquainted with the sacred scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
16 All scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness,
17 that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act.

Balaam's donkey could see the angel of the Lord with the sword in his hand, ready to strike Balaam down, but Balaam couldn't see him! He just took out his frustration on the donkey, so if you're a target today for someone blind to things of the Spirit of God, you're no donkey! You're the son or daughter of the living God. If He's giving you a word for that person, give it. You might be their last, best chance to get saved, but remember what Paul wrote in Romans . . .

Romans 16:17-20

Now I am entreating you, brethren, to **be noting those who are making dissensions [division] and snares beside the teaching which you learned, and avoid them,**
18 for such for our Lord Christ are not slaving, but for their own bowels, and through compliments [kind sayings] and adulation are deluding the hearts of the innocent.

Let's get some perspective on what Paul is saying: many years ago, I was invited to say a few words at a friend and colleague's funeral. I told a story of a hiking adventure that to me encapsulated the essence of my friend's life. It's called

delivering a eulogy? In **Romans 16:18**, Paul uses the word, adulation. In Greek, the word is “Eulogia” – the word, “blessing” comes from the same Greek word. Listen to the meaning: “*praise, fine discourse, polished language*” – here’s the definition I believe Paul had most in mind: “*language artfully adapted to captivate the hearer*” (Thayer).

Paul is cautioning the Roman ecclesia, many of whom were believing Jews – along with Gentiles, of course – to AVOID ones who are deliberately puffing you up, basically; who are saying wonderful things about you or to you. Why is this a problem? Because, eulogizing you, they’re making division. May I ask, “What does the Christian church today look like? Actually, what has it looked like since the end of Paul’s life, and especially within its first 200-500 years? In 2001, the World Christian Encyclopedia reported: “There are approximately 38,000 Christian denominations in the world.”

Paul went on to say that the “eulogizers” were also making “snares” – The Greek word is Skandalon, from which we get the word scandal – a snare is a means of tripping or a cause of falling. These guys are sticking their feet out, Paul said, by their lofty praise and high-sounding words, and causing people to trip and fall. He is saying, “I’m begging you, here...take note of these guys and avoid them – steer clear of them; and here’s how you’ll know them: they’re teaching something other than what you learned (he didn’t say “what you learned from me,” but it’s clearly implied.

The Apostle Paul was never embarrassed of what he called, “My evangel.” He knew Who his teacher was. He knew the One Who had revealed his evangel to him. He had no problem saying, “if anyone has told you something I didn’t, throw it out.” That may have offended a lot of people. It sure would today, UNLESS you knew Paul by the spirit. And that, I believe is his whole point here...and the point of our study tonight:

1 Corinthians 2:14:

those things which are of the spirit of God...are spiritually examined.

Paul also said in that same passage that these spiritual things look completely stupid to someone “soulish” – that is someone who is lower-minded, to put it kindly. Paul said he can’t even know spiritual things; it’s impossible for him.

Here’s the takeaway so far: The only way anyone comprehends the ways of God, the things of God, even the word of God – I mean REALLY comprehend it – is by the spirit; and if we ever find ourselves slogging through the swamp of doubt, condemnation, resistance, self-pity; self-absorbed, self-centered preoccupation, we have mis-taken God. We have misunderstood and grossly underestimated, or even failed to take into account, His sovereignty.

Our lives better be about something other than what we get out of them. Our lives better be God's, to do with whatever He sees fit – we'd better fall out of agreement with any purposes WE have, and come into agreement with God's purposes. When our lives are about Him and not about us; when our lives aren't even ours, but His, THEN, and ONLY then, will we find real peace, real fulfillment, true satisfaction.

When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me," call me crazy, but I believe He was serious! If we think for a second that we're going to get to the Father because we earned it by what WE did (according to our own standards, I suppose), then, truly, we have received "the grace of God for naught" (as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:1).

step out of the way and give God full reign to get them right or get them out!

Brothers and sister in the Body of Christ, "We had better apply these standards to our interactions with everyone who God allows to cross our path, or in whose path He places us. Like

A man called today—someone whom I've never met—who, bless his heart for calling, did so, only because he knows, loves and respects others who also know Barbara and me. They are, in effect, our bona fides—our "letters of recommendation" if you please—to him. Their report, or message about us, through the testimony of their lives convicted him to call because of bitterness in his heart toward me especially. I blessed him for his apology, of course, and forgave him immediately – whatever was going on had only hurt him, as is true with all enmity. That was the easy part. The harder part of his call was a quandary that only God can answer and satisfy ultimately.

What I heard by the Spirit within this person's questions, and in the obviously troubling deliberations going on inside him, were the signs of what Barbara and I have seen and heard in people who have been indoctrinated into a cult. Not the kind of cult that makes the evening news, but one that operates in what to me is among the methods that the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4, calls, "the systematizing of the deception."

Now, I'm no recognized expert in cults, but I know bondage when I see it. Although Paul didn't have a term for it, he addressed the concept in **2 Corinthians 3:6**

1 Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Or need we not, even as some, commendatory letters to you or from you?

2 You *are* our letter, engraven in our hearts, known and read by all men,

3 for you are manifesting a letter of Christ, dispensed by us, and engraven, not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets, but on the fleshy tablets of the heart.

4 Now such is the confidence we have through Christ toward God

5 (not that we are competent of ourselves, to reckon anything as of ourselves, but our competency is of God),

6 Who also makes us competent dispensers of a new covenant, **not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter is killing, yet the spirit is vivifying.**

Mark 4:24

"Beware what you are hearing! With what measure you are measuring, it will be measured to you, and it will be added to you.

25 For he who has, it shall be given to him; and he who has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

Remember, Jesus is often speaking figuratively, and this scripture is sandwiched between two parables about the kingdom of God; so the having and the taking in Mark 25 is not material, but is in the context of how we are measuring, in verse 24.

So, are we generous or meager in our measuring toward others, particularly those in the Body of Christ, and even more particularly toward those whom God has placed in our lives either to watch over or be watched over.

As we do to one another, we're doing to Christ! "As you do it to the least of these," Jesus said, "you do it to Me."

You are a liar and the Father of all lies.

A liar from the beginning Jesus said, in . v called it out in he letter of the law, rather than its spirit.

Romans 1

2 Thessalonians 2

You will know them by their fruits.

How can two walk together

Mind stayed on Christ

Conversations corrupt kind hearts

by the scriptures that are applied as if have heard a report from people that is different from ours (to refer back to Isaiah) – some of whom may be believers and some of whom are clearly not -- not are just as self-absorbed – that is all-concerned about themselves, and their positions – as if there's some heavenly Board of Directors they're busy trying to qualify for – as people in the world who don't give God a second thought!

Philippians 4:12-13

I am aware what it is to be humbled as well as aware what it is to be superabounding. In everything and among all am I initiated, to be satisfied as well as to be hungering, to be superabounding as well as to be in want.

13 **For all am I strong in Him Who is invigorating me -- Christ!**