

Finishing Well

Lesson #42

Old Gate: Beware of Detours

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The old apostasy was marked by Verbal Destructive Denials. [Deity of Jesus Christ, etc.]

The new apostasy is marked by Practical Destructive Denials.

The new phase claims to affirm the fundamentals of the faith. [Old Gate]

However, there is a paradigm shift: The Bible is no longer the final authority in determining divine truth, but Experience Is Equally Valid.

In actual practice, the experience takes priority over the Scriptures.

If the Bible contradicts the practice, then the practice is justified as being "a new move of the Spirit."

Therefore, what the Scripture actually says can be contradicted by a new experience.

This is a far more "spiritual" way of denying the truth of God and, therefore, far more deceptive.

Paul warned this would happen in...

Eph. 4:8-16 This, in turn, has led to many *strange and divers doctrines*, causing many to be truly tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and resulting in total spiritual instability.

They may affirm the authority and inspiration of Scripture, but it is only their experience that determines the meaning of the text in particular and truth in general.

Key Point: The new apostasy has produced the same fruit as the old apostasy.

They mock those who will not join the "new wave" and they have caused schisms dividing both churches and families.

Rom. 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

Consider: The proper way to Determine Truth is to go to the Word of God first. [II Pet. 2:1-2]

Do Not Rely On The Experiences Of Other People.

The Bible must be the final and only authority on all matters of both faith (what we believe) and practice (actions and experiences, etc.).

Unfortunately, what has happened in recent years is that:

A new experience or phenomenon breaks out in some part of the church.

Then people simply try to find verses to justify the activity rather than be willing to admit that the experience—no matter how wonderful or supernatural it felt—was simply not of God.

Most of the proponents defend the practice, not on the basis of Scripture, but on the basis of their own experience.

The most common evidence is that it makes them feel happy and joyful, though this does not take into account that any kind of emotional release of this nature will make one feel better.

Even unbelievers can have this same experience.

Furthermore, Satan would not be a very good deceiver if he made one feel badly, would he?

He can give people joyful, happy experiences which give him a victory if that experience—rather than God's Word—becomes the final authority for determining spiritual truth.

Isaiah 8 shows the contrast between the Remnant [Jews who believe] and the non-Remnant [Jews who do not believe].

In verse 16, one crucial difference between the two groups is the place that the Scriptures have in their lives.

The remnant believed that which Moses and the Prophets declared: it is the foundation of their faith, and their final authority.

Non-Remnant rejects the Scriptures as the final authority and seeks to make God more "real in their experience" by going toward idolatry and looking at gods and goddesses they could see, feel, and touch, creating a more visual picture while they worship.

Isa. 8:19 Warning: Do not go after counterfeit spirits and teachers *that chirp and mutter*.

Warning: Do not pursue supernatural things that cause them to make the strange sounds of chirping and muttering, for while these experiences might come from the supernatural, not all that comes out of the supernatural is of God.

Indeed, those who go after those *that chirp and that mutter* could well come out with great testimonies of experiencing the supernatural and feeling joyful and great.

But Isaiah would not accept any of the experience and feeling as valid testimony.

Isa. 8:20 *To the law and to the testimony!* Back to the Scriptures > the only final authority.

Closing phrase if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no light in them.

Acts emphasizes: Paul, Silas and others always had God's Word as their final authority.

Acts 17:1-3: Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews ² And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,³ Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Paul did not use his personal experiences as a tool for evangelizing.

The Scriptures were the final authority.

Those who came to believe (v. 4) didn't believe because of any signs and wonders they saw Paul perform.

They believed because of how he expounded the written Scriptures and showed how Jesus fulfilled the necessary Scriptures.

The two times Paul gives his personal testimony of salvation is used as part of his defense when he is on trial. Many can give a powerful testimony of how their lives have changed. The final authority and criterion must be the written Word of God for one's claims or beliefs.

Acts 18:28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Acts 28:22-24: But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against. So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

²⁴ And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. The refutation of the unbelievers was not based upon signs and wonders, but on Scripture.

The Focus Was On The Trustworthy Prophetic Scriptures And Not On Experience

II Peter 1:16-21: For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

As convincing as the Transfiguration experience might have been to Peter, he points out that a far more authoritative base for believing that Jesus was the Messiah (and that this was not *cunningly devised fables*) is the Scriptures > Pay Attention To What The Prophets Wrote. Their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place. Because the written Word of God is the product of the Holy Spirit, that is, indeed, the *word of prophecy made more sure*.

Paul's Admonition to Church at Corinth:

I Cor. 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

Warning: If any manifestation or phenomenon goes beyond what is written in God's Word, it must be rejected as not of God.

II Cor. 11:3-4; 13-15 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Paul emphasizes: Believers of the Corinthian Church can also be deceived by Satan and his ministers. Remember: Church had a strong tendency to be involved in the sensational & the experiential and signs and wonders which opened it up for deception by false teachers.

People desire some new word, new revelation, new experience.

Paul labels 3 things by the word another (v. 4): *another Jesus, another gospel, another spirit.* The Greek, however, has two different words here, both of which mean "another," but they carry a slightly different shade of meaning.

1. The *first* term means "another of the same kind"

2. The *second* term means "another of a different kind"

Rendering verse 4 a bit more literally from the Greek, it would read as follows:

For if he that comes preaches another Jesus of the same kind, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive another spirit of a different kind, which ye did not receive, or another gospel of a different kind, which ye did not accept, ye do well to avoid him.

Paul is saying the gospel being presented is another gospel of a "different kind."

The source is another spirit of a "different kind."

However, the Jesus being presented is another Jesus of the "same kind."

Paul admonished the church at Galatia:

Gal. 1:6-9 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to 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. if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

The need for restoration is perpetual, for there will ever be the inclination to drift.

Paul Identifies Three Areas Of Potential Spiritual Deception:

1. Power

2. Signs

3. Lying Wonders

Counterfeit Power — Acts 8:9-11 But there was a man named Simon, who had formerly practiced sorcery in the city to the utter amazement of the Samaritan nation, claiming that he himself was an extraordinary and distinguished person. ¹⁰ They all paid earnest attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that exhibition of the power of God which is called great (intense). And they were attentive *and* made much of him, because for a long time he had amazed *and* bewildered *and* dazzled them with his skill in magic arts.

Counterfeit Signs — Exodus chapters 7-8 detail the works of the Egyptian magicians who were able to mimic the first 4 miracles God worked by the hand of Moses before Pharaoh whose heart grew hard against God because of these signs produced by his magicians.

Counterfeit Wonders — What is a "wonder?" It comes from the Greek word *teras*, which means "an exceptional event" or "omen."

It is used only 16 times in the New Testament, 13 times speaking of the Works of God.

Matt. 7:22-23 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Notice what these false teachers were able to do in the name of a counterfeit Jesus!
They used the name of Jesus.

Consider: The frequent use of Jesus' name deceived so many.

They were able to do three specific things: *prophecy* events which did come to pass; *cast out demons*; and do *many mighty works*, such as miracles of healing and other signs and wonders. Yet, *in that day*, Jesus will say to them: *I never knew you*.

Who were in danger: just a few? No, many.

Were evil acts being performed?

No, they were doing miracles, great signs and wonders, prophesying.

Were they done in a demon's name? No, in JESUS' NAME! In His Holy Name.

Yet, He said - depart from Me.

How "good" it all looks and sounds - in our eyes. Not in His.

Consider: These are high-profile Christian leaders apparently performing signs and wonders in the name of Christ. Tragically, they seem to think their ability to prophesy and to perform wonders proves they belong to Him. The signs and wonders are so impressive that doctrine no longer matters -exactly what we see today! Obviously, something more than mere trickery is involved. These miracle workers are backed by the power of Satan, whom they unwittingly serve in the name of the Lord.

Our Lord's words here indicate that we dare not attempt to distinguish false teachers from a true teacher merely on the basis of their ability to perform mighty works.

After Israel's exodus from Egypt, God warned that FALSE PROPHETS would arise.

Deut. 13:1-5 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, ² And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

³ Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams:

for the LORD your God proveth [testing] you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him.

⁵ And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

In Deut. 13:6-10: He said even if it is your brother, child or the wife you cherish, you must not follow after these false gods. Rather, you must not have pity on him, but expose him so he can be put to death.

Extreme? People today would shrug it off as no big deal. Moses KNEW that false teachers would infect many, causing irreparable damage to God's people.

The new wave of apostasy: The name of Jesus is heavily used in almost ritual-mantra style, claiming all kinds of signs and wonders are occurring.

By themselves these things do not prove anything because Satan can duplicate these.

NOTE: The name being used to foster the work of deception is the name of Jesus that sounds like and seems like the Jesus of the New Testament. It must be a carefully disguised counterfeit so those who do not judge by the Word of God are very easily deceived.

Note: To carry out the work of deception, they must certainly focus on the name of Jesus. The mere usage of the name "Jesus," even in the context of words like "praise," "glory," etc., does not authenticate anyone's ministry.

Get back to the written Word of God: the final criterion & source of authority, and the final foundation for all matters of faith and practice.

The final authority must be the Scriptures and not experience, signs and wonders, unusual activities, or strange noises.

The response of some is: Isn't the manifestation of the supernatural the evidence that this is a work of God, even if it is not found in Scripture? Are not signs and wonders the evidence of the work of God, even if the specific signs and wonders are not found in Scripture?

The answer is a decisive "NO."

Scriptural warnings foretell the delusion we find in our day:

- 1) A false signs and wonders movement led by many false prophets, teachers and "Christ's"
- 2) Many being deceived through these seeming miracles.
- 3) The rejection of the Biblical teaching concerning apostasy -> end times sign

Questions: Does the Holy Spirit indwell those who are born again? Is He in our midst when we meet? Are we to be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times? Is the Word of God sufficient?

Why, then, run after signs and wonders as though unusual manifestations prove that God is at work, while neglecting what God has already given us?

Massive interest in the occult, astrology and New Age are drawing even strong believers away. This dangerous spirit has infiltrated our churches. As we are more concerned about the culture and the comfort of people, we have created an atmosphere that is a hindrance to the manifestation of God's Holy Spirit in our midst.

Christians are turning away in mass from the foundational truths of God's Word.

- John 14:6 Salvation by grace alone
- Jesus is God.
- Bible is inspired by God and inerrant
- The Trinity
- Sin must be punished.
- God is Holy & Just.

- Hell is not a myth.
- No chance of salvation after death
- Life is eternal

Kidnapped Convert > Col. 2:8-10 BEWARE lest any man cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, after the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not after the teachings Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

You are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power.

Warning: Do NOT let your hunger for a more fulfilling Christian experience cause you to trust in a teacher, a group or a system of thought more than in Jesus Christ.

He is your hope and your true source of wisdom.

Truth: Only by being connected with Christ through faith can anyone have eternal life.

Only through a CONTINUING connection with Him can anyone have power for living.

Andrew Murray: The believer can each day be pleasing to God only in that which he does through the power of Christ dwelling in him.

If "power, signs, and wonders" can be produced by both God and Satan, how can we know which are of God?

I John 4:1-4 "Beloved, do not believe [put faith in] every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know [perceive & recognize] the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses [acknowledge the fact] that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh [actually was God in the flesh] is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.

And this [non-confession] is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Spiritual discernment requires testing. The authentic Holy Spirit will never contradict the Scriptures. Never use our "natural mind" to discern the activity of the Spirit.

The truly spiritual "judge all things" to determine what is truly from God.

These 5 tests will reveal whether they are real or a counterfeit.

The Source Test:

Is his source the Word of God? What is the basis of his teaching? Does he have revelation *other than* the Bible? Some want to lay some other source down alongside the Word of God. But the Bible says we're not to add to, take from, amend, or adjust it.

The Savior Test:

Do they see Jesus Christ as the virgin-born Son of God, and God the Son, the Messiah, God in human flesh, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father? The Bible is full of the worship of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly the Bible and the gospels tell how they worshiped Him.

The Subject Test:

What is their subject? The gospel of Jesus Christ? Or do they want to talk to you about what they call "kingdom truth"? I Cor. 2:2 Paul said, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Everything else comes out of that. The Bible has one theme, salvation. One hero, Jesus. One villain, the devil. The Old Testament says Someone is coming; the New Testament says Someone has come; the book of Revelation says Someone is coming again. That person is the Lord Jesus.. Gal. 1:9 "...if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." We are talking about the eternal destiny of people.

The Salvation Test:

Do they teach salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? Or do they try to mix in works, baptism, or anything else?

Rom. 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Shall Be Saved."

Anybody, anytime, anyplace, who calls upon Jesus in repentance and faith will be saved.

The Sanctification Test:

Do they teach and endeavor to live a holy life? If they lack personal holiness and separation from sin, there's something rotten in their teaching.

"The fruit of a false prophet is poison, yet it is offered to the sheep as good food."

What can we do in this age of deception?

II Timothy 4:2-5 "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

- Discern apostasy from the true Gospel = Be consistently in the Word of God.

Heb. 5:13-14 For everyone that uses milk is unskilfull in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

So if someone is not growing in Biblical knowledge [on milk] rather than knowing more Biblical knowledge [meat], his powers of discernment are not trained by constant practice in the Word of God. Thus, he cannot "distinguish good from evil" teachings by apostates.

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

They did not use the fluctuating criteria, emotions, experiences in their testing.

They used the only one, reliable, trustworthy, infallible standard: The Word Of God

Henry Morris: When the teachings of men conflict with the Word of God, it is WISE to go with the Word of God.