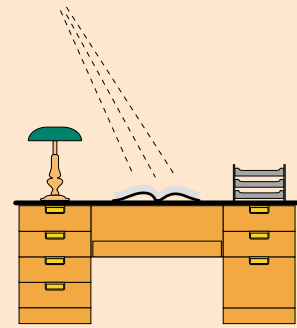


A Derek Prince Teaching Letter

No. 22: The Spirit of Truth



Dear Friend

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”¹

When Jesus promised His disciples that He would ask the Father to send them a divine Helper, He gave this Helper a special name: “the Spirit of truth.” At the same time, however, He warned them that the world would not be able to receive this Helper.

For this, the Scripture supplies two reasons. First, from the time that men turned away from God in rebellion, they have been unwilling to accept the truth which exposes their unrighteous deeds. Therefore they “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”²

Second, rebellion against God has exposed humanity to the domination of the god of this age, “Satan, who deceives the whole world.”³ Deception is the primary weapon that Satan relies on to keep humanity under his control. Once his ability to deceive is stripped away, Satan has nothing to offer anyone except a place with him in the lake of eternal fire!

Over many centuries, human philosophy has never been able to produce a satisfactory definition of “truth.” On the other hand, the Bible gives a threefold answer. First, Jesus said, “I am the truth.”⁴ Second, in praying to God the Father, He said, “Your word is truth.”⁵ Third, John tells us, “The [Holy] Spirit is truth.”⁶

In the spiritual realm, therefore, there are three co-ordinates of truth: Jesus, the Scripture and the Holy Spirit. When these three are in agreement, we know that we have arrived at truth – absolute truth. It is important, however, that we check all three co-ordinates before we arrive at a conclusion. There are three questions that we must ask concerning any spiritual issue:

- Does it represent Jesus as He truly is?
- Is it in harmony with Scripture?
- Does the Holy Spirit bear His witness?

Historically, the Church would have been spared many errors and deceptions if it had always checked all three co-ordinates of truth. It is not enough that a teacher paints an appealing picture of Jesus as a perfect moral example. Or that a pastor batters his congregation with a barrage of Scripture verses. Or that an evangelist impresses his audience with a thrilling display of the supernatural. Before we can accept what is presented to us as truth, all three co-ordinates must be in place: Jesus, the Scripture, the Holy Spirit.

In the threefold presentation of truth, the distinctive function of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness. “It is the Spirit who bears witness.”⁷

The Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus as the eternal Son of God, who shed His blood on the cross as the all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. In the words of Charles Wesley:

- “The Spirit answers to the blood
And tells me I am born of God.”

The Holy Spirit also bears witness to the truth and authority of Scripture, as Paul wrote to the

Thessalonians, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance . . .”⁸

Ananias and Sapphira

There can be no compromise between the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, and Satan, who “is a liar and the father of it.”⁹ This was dramatically demonstrated in the early church, when Ananias and Sapphira lied about the money that they had offered to the church. They claimed that they had brought the full price of the property that they had sold, whereas in fact they had kept back part of it.

However, the Spirit of truth in Peter was not deceived. He charged Ananias with lying not merely to men, but also to the Holy Spirit Himself – the one who is the very Spirit of truth:

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.¹⁰

Three hours later Sapphira came in and repeated the same lie. Like her husband, she paid for it with her life.

Rightly defined, the sin of which Ananias and Sapphira were guilty was hypocrisy – religious pretence. They were pretending to be more generous and more committed to the Lord than they really were. Jesus reserved His strongest words of condemnation for this sin in the religious leaders of His day. Seven times in Matthew 23 He said to them: “Woe to you . . . hypocrites!”

What Is Hypocrisy?

Our English words “hypocrite,” “hypocrisy” are directly derived from the Greek word *hypokrites*, which means “actor.” This is the essence of hypocrisy: putting on a religious act. Probably no sin is more common among religious people than hypocrisy. In fact, some forms of religion almost demand it.

When people enter a religious building, their whole demeanour changes. They are no longer natural, free and open. They appear to be gripped by some kind of invisible “cramp.” They feel required to put on a religious mask. Different branches of religion may require masks of a different kind, but few of them allow people to be their real selves.

When the preacher condemns certain sins, such people respond with a dutiful “Amen!” But outside the church they commit those same sins without even a twinge of conscience. If they pray out loud, they use a special tone of voice and often a special vocabulary. They do not stop to consider how a human father would feel if his child were to address him with such artificial language or to put on an unnatural form of behaviour just to impress him.

The God of the Bible has no time for hypocrites. This comes out very clearly in the story of Job. Job’s three friends poured forth a torrent of religious platitudes. They said, in effect, “God always blesses the righteous, they never suffer unjustly.” On the other hand, “God always judges the wicked, they never prosper.” Yet the facts of history demonstrate that this is not true. It is just religious talk!

On the other hand, Job was completely frank. He said, in effect, “God is not treating me fairly. I have done nothing to deserve all this. But even if He kills me, I will still trust Him.”

In Job 42:7 the Lord revealed His estimate of the conduct of Job and his friends. “The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not

spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.”¹¹

We need to ask ourselves: How does this kind of religious behaviour differ from the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, which cost them their lives?

The Moment of Truth

At a certain point in his career, King David was guilty of two terrible sins. First, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of his neighbour Uriah. Then to cover up his sin, he procured the murder of Uriah.

Apparently David got away with all this. He still went through his regular forms of worship. He still carried out his duties as king. He still lived in the royal palace. Outwardly nothing had changed – until God’s messenger, the prophet Nathan, confronted David with his sin. At that moment David’s eternal destiny hung in the balance. By the grace of God, David made the right response. He offered no excuses, made no attempt to cover up. He acknowledged, “I have sinned.”¹²

Later on, in Psalm 51, David offered up a prayer of confession and then a cry for mercy. Verses 5 and 6 each begin with the word, “Behold,” expressing a sudden revelation of a vital truth.

Verse 5 says, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” David had come face to face with something that only the Spirit of truth can reveal: not just the sinful acts that he had committed, but the awful evil power of inherited sinfulness that indwells every descendant of Adam.

Verse 6 reveals the only basis on which God offers deliverance from the power of indwelling sin: “Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts.” Even after his sin, David had continued to go through all the outward forms of behaviour appropriate to his role as king. But now there was a vast gap between his outward behaviour and the inward condition of his heart. He had become a hypocrite – an actor playing a part which no longer corresponded to what was in his heart. For this there was only one remedy: honest confession and wholehearted repentance.

From Palm Sunday to Good Friday

There is one truth that runs through the whole Bible: God will never compromise with sin. This is vividly illustrated by two days in the life of Jesus: Palm Sunday and Good Friday.

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem as a popular hero – “the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”¹³ The whole city was open to Him. He could easily have set aside His bitter enemies, the religious leaders, and established Himself as King. That was what the people were longing for.

Yet He chose another way. Five days later He hung rejected and naked on a cruel cross. Why? Because God will never compromise with sin and the only way to deal with sin was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Many Christians today are speaking and praying about “revival.” They often overlook the fact that there is one barrier to revival that can never be bypassed. It is sin. Until sin is dealt with, true revival can never come. And there is only one way to deal with sin: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”¹⁴

Frankly stated, many sections of the contemporary church are full of “covered sin.” Here are some sins that Christians often seek to cover:

1. Abuse of a child – physical, emotional, sexual – or a combination
2. Broken marriage vows
3. Unethical dealing with money
4. Addiction to pornography (I have been shocked to discover how common this is among leaders in the church)
5. Gluttony – over indulgence of our physical appetites.

God's remedy is twofold: first, confess; then, forsake. It is seldom easy to confess our sins. Yet there is no other remedy. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."¹⁵ God has never committed Himself to forgive sins that we are not willing to confess.

But it is not enough merely to confess. We must also "forsake." We must make a resolute determination not to continue to commit the sin we have confessed. We must follow the succinct advice that Daniel gave to King Nebuchadnezzar: "Break off thy sins by righteousness."¹⁶ Between righteousness and sin there is no middle ground. "All unrighteousness is sin."¹⁷ Whatever is not righteous is sinful.

Are you face to face with a difficult decision?

If this letter has caused you to question things in your life that you have been accepting, or has confronted you with some area of disobedience, open up to the Spirit of truth! He is ready and willing to come to your help.

Yours in the Master's service



Derek Prince

PS: The theme of my next letter will be the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

¹ John 14:16 - 17

² Romans 1:18

³ Revelation 12:9

⁴ John 14:6

⁵ John 17:17

⁶ 1 John 5:6

⁷ 1 John 5:6

⁸ 1 Thessalonians 1:5

⁹ John 8:44

¹⁰ Acts 5:3 - 5

¹¹ Job 42:7

¹² 2 Samuel 12:1 - 15

¹³ Matthew 21:11

¹⁴ Proverbs 28:13

¹⁵ 1 John 1:9

¹⁶ Daniel 4:27, KJV

¹⁷ 1 John 5:17

For further study, we recommend audio cassette
4216 "Deliverance from the World - Part 1"
4217 "Deliverance from the World - Part 2"

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