

Two Reasons for Spiritual Error

by Charles Leiter

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing both the Scriptures and the power of God to avoid spiritual error and grow in our faith.

Duration: 51:54

Scripture: Acts 8:29, Acts 13:2, Acts 16:6

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing the Scriptures and experiencing the power of God in our lives. It highlights the need for both Word and Spirit in our spiritual walk, using examples from the Bible and personal experiences to illustrate how error in understanding Scripture can result from a lack of knowing the power of God. The speaker encourages testing all experiences and guidance by the Scriptures to avoid falling into spiritual error.

Transcript

Well, it's been several years since I spoke to the San Antonio church here on a Sunday morning. Things look quite a bit different than they did in Fatty's Restaurant. All we need is the Lord, isn't it? If He would just give us a glimpse of Himself, we would go away changed.

So let's pray in that direction as we open the Scriptures. Our Father, we pray that You would save Your people today. We pray that You would effectually mortify and put down the flesh and that Your Holy Spirit would rule and reign here.

That You'd give utterance and hearing and understanding and truth that would help us in the days ahead to glorify You more and to go on with You. We ask these things in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Well, the first Scripture that I'm going to be reading this morning is from 1 Thessalonians 1. Paul is talking about how he has confidence that the Thessalonian believers have actually come to know God. He says, knowing, brethren, beloved by God, His choice of you. And then he tells how.

For our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction, just as you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake. What I have to share this morning can be summed up in two words here. Word and Spirit.

And really, this is kind of an introductory passage. We're not going to be looking at this passage directly, but it gives an introduction. Our Gospel did not come to you in word only.

Evidently, it is possible for the Gospel to come in word only. The Gospel has to come in word. First of all, it must come in word.

There's content, there's truth, there's propositional revelation. And unless you come to know the truth, you are certainly not going to be saved. Men go to hell because they don't receive the love of the truth.

You've got to have truth. Jesus says, Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. If you continue in my word, you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.

So you've got to have truth. You've got to have content. It's not enough to have religious feelings.

It's not enough to have stained glass windows. It's not enough to feel tingly or what have you. You've got to have truth.

You've got to receive the love of the truth. And that comes in words. And so words are absolutely essential to convey the truth.

But it's possible for the Gospel to come in word only. And if it comes in word only, it will not do anything. You can go out into a cemetery and preach absolute truth, orthodoxy all day long.

It's not going to do anything to raise the dead. It has to come not only in word, but in power and in the Holy Spirit. And so there's two sides to this spiritual reality.

You can evidently have perfect orthodoxy. Even have an apostle preach to you, the Apostle Paul. And evidently, it's possible for the Gospel to come in word only and it won't do anything.

It has no power. But by the power of the Spirit, what happened at Thessalonica was, the Gospel did not come in word only, but also in the power of the Spirit. We must have both.

And that's the basic theme that we're going to be looking at this morning. But we're going to do that from a different passage. And that's from Matthew 22.

So if you could turn to that, Matthew 22. And in these last chapters of Matthew, we have various men confronting the Lord Jesus Christ, trying to trap Him in different ways. And in verse 23, we're told that the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and questioned Him, saying, Teacher, Moses said, if a man dies having no children, his brother, as next of kin, shall marry his wife and raise up an offspring to his brother.

Now there were seven brothers with us, and the first married and died having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. So also the second and the third, down to the seventh, and last of all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven shall she be? For they all had her.

But Jesus answered and said to them, You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures or the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God? Do you realize this? That which was spoken to you by God, and he quotes something that God said to Moses, but it was spoken to us by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. When the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. I'd like to consider with you this morning two reasons for spiritual error.

And what I mean by error is error with regard to spiritual matters. What you might call invisible reality. Error that relates to our thinking about God and His ways.

And so the text is verse 29. You are mistaken not understanding the Scriptures or the power of God. The authorized version says you err not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God.

One of the Greek lexicons, Thayer, says it this way. This word literally means to go astray, to wander, to roam about, or to be led away into error and sin. It's the same word that's used of the 99, when it says one goes astray.

You err. You go astray. We're talking about two reasons for spiritual error.

Going astray. Same word in James 5, 19. If any among you strays from the truth.

And then the same word in Revelation regarding Satan who deceives or leads astray the whole world. So this strain or erring that the Lord is speaking of here is a serious thing. It's not just a little misunderstanding or doctrinal technicality.

It's a matter of life and death. Beloved, spiritual error damns people. It causes people to go to hell.

And it also, and if you are a Christian, spiritual error hurts you. And I like to think of doctrine as a description of invisible reality. I mean, we have different ideas in our mind about God and about His ways that we get from the Bible.

And we call that doctrine. But really, doctrine is telling us about things that we can't see with our physical eyes. They're descriptions of invisible reality.

And if you, you know, invisible reality is just as real as physical reality. In fact, it's more real. It's eternal.

The things that we see are temporal. But the things that are not seen are eternal. And if somebody blindfolded me and I came into this room and one of the brothers says, now there's a pulpit right in front of you, just step two steps to the left, now walk forward.

Now you're going to hit a chair if you don't, you know, go to the right about ten steps. As long as he gives me an accurate description of invisible reality, I won't bump into anything. But if I have wrong ideas about invisible reality, I'll bump into things.

And in the spiritual realm, it hurts a lot when you bump into spiritual reality. When you have mistaken ideas about God and His ways. Even the godless men.

A.B. Simpson was a godly man who lived about a hundred years ago. God miraculously healed A.B. Simpson. And he got into this teaching, he thought he saw it from Scripture, that it's never God's will for His children to be sick.

And when you come to the point of dying, he said, death is just like a ripe apple falling into the hands of the gardener. So you pick this picture, you get old and you just fall asleep and fall into the hands of the

gardener. Well, the problem is that when he started getting older, he got sick and he suffered a lot.

And you can start looking at it, if you believe wrongly about invisible reality, you bump into reality. And it caused him a lot of distress in his heart. Right here, you're already sick, that's bad enough.

And you're suffering, but you've got wrong ideas about God. There must be something wrong. I must have sinned or something.

You see what I'm talking about? Wrong views. Error hurts even Christians. A lot of you know about Johnny Erickson.

She's actually, I think, almost about exactly my age. And I believe it was when she was 16 when she dove into that shallow water, broke her neck, and never could move after that. And painted cards with her teeth, holding a paintbrush and all those things.

She came under the teaching that it's always God's will to heal. And so, you come and you try to get healed and you don't get healed. Well, what is that? If it's always God's will and you're not healed, it must be because you don't have enough faith.

Must be because there's some sin in your life. And on and on and on. And you see, you're already suffering enough because you're paralyzed from the neck down.

But now you've got to believe that somehow God is against you and that you're failing God. And I'm saying these things hurt. And eventually, she came to understand that that was a false teaching.

That it's not always God's will to heal. And so she got her ideas straightened out about where the furniture was in the room, you see. That's what we're talking about.

So, two causes for error. You know, again, spiritual error hurts even in the area of our counseling other people. Not only hurts us, but it can hurt other people.

Somebody comes to you with a physical problem and you tell them that it's a spiritual problem, you're going to hurt them. On the other side, if they come to you with a spiritual problem and you diagnose it as a physical problem and give them a bunch of pills when they don't need that, you're going to hurt them then too. If something is physical and you think that it's demonic, see, the devil does this kind of stuff.

He gets us tripped up and things. A lot of people, a lot of women go through a period of time whenever in their monthly cycle where they feel like God has forsaken them, everything goes black, it's horrible. If you think that's spiritual and the devil can get you to believe that you've done something wrong, then he's got an inroad, you see.

Just give that as one example. But all of these things relate to wrong understandings of spiritual reality. And so, we need to take a lowly position and ask the Lord to teach us.

Paul says, if anybody supposes he knows anything, he doesn't know anything yet as he ought to know. And so we come to the Lord and we say, Lord, I'm a little child, teach me about Yourself. Help me to rightly understand Your ways.

I want to begin here by pointing out that there are two reasons for going astray. We're talking about error, going astray in our understanding. There are two reasons.

You do err, you do go astray not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God. And most Christians have a very strong natural bias against believing that there are two reasons. There are some Christians that are more cerebral, more analytical, more doctrinal, more systematic.

And they go for theology more and they try to figure out everything. And so they would not have worded it like this. They would have said, you do err not knowing the Bible well enough.

You do err not knowing the Scriptures. And that's where they would have stopped. You know, study the Bible enough, get everything lined up, systematize everything, be careful in your reasoning from texts, and that's all that's needed.

Well, beloved, that's wrong. Think of this prayer. Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.

What's that mean? That means that you can read the Bible and not see wonderful, glorious things that are there and miss them totally because you need the Holy Spirit to open your eyes. Paul says it, doesn't it? He prays for them that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened, that the Holy Spirit would give illumination. It's more than just analyzing and putting together things.

This is supernatural. Hudson Taylor, we were talking about him yesterday. He was over there on the mission field.

He's a man of God. He's dealing with all these hundreds of missionaries. And he saw something in John 15 that I know I haven't seen.

I mean, I've read John 15 a hundred times, I hope, at least, or more. But he looks at this all of a sudden. His life is transformed.

What happened? God had illuminated him to enter into something that we would all agree with about the vine and the branches and so on. Somehow he entered into this. What we're saying is that it's not enough to just have analysis of Scripture.

We need to have revelation. We need to have comprehension. So there are some who tend to be towards this way.

They would have said it, you do err not knowing the Scriptures. There are others that tend to be the other way. They're not analytical.

They're not doctrinal. They're more based on emotion and experiences. And they might be tempted to say to the Sadducees, you do err, you go astray, not knowing the power of God.

And that's the side that they emphasize. I knew a lady one time, more from a charismatic background. She made the statement, she said, I don't care what Paul said.

I know such and such. Well, that's a recipe for disaster. You must have both, beloved.

You've got to have both. And we must force ourselves, if we're to fall on one of these sides, we've got to force ourselves to come back and think about the other side and ask God to help us so that we might be preserved from spiritual error that will harm us and others. So there are two reasons for spiritual error, for going astray.

And I want to look first of all then at the first one, which is not knowing the Scriptures. Now, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of knowing and understanding and memorizing and ransacking the Scriptures. I mean, the Bible ought to flow out of you.

You've got to memorize, spend time in it. I mean, every moment that you spend memorizing Scripture and meditating in Scripture is going to affect the entire rest of your life. And it's important to dig into the Word of God.

I mean, I remember times when my present co-pastor and I were in Germany, we were single men, and we spent hours memorizing, memorizing. He was memorizing Hebrews, and I was trying to memorize Romans, and we'd review each other for hours. I look back on that, my entire life was changed through that.

My entire life, for how many years? 30 years, 40 years, 50 years. There was a guy in our church, always weak, vacillating, struggling. He started memorizing the book of Romans.

He'd get up early in the morning, I think it was 5 o'clock, to memorize. His wife said, look, if it's going to change you this much, I want you to keep doing this the rest of your life. All he did, he was just getting the Word of God into him.

And we need to know the Word of God. You see, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, and he comes quoting Scripture. Remember it with Jesus? If you're the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written.

And how did the Lord respond to him? He defeated the devil by two or three verses out of Deuteronomy. He said, yes, but it is written. And you've got to have those there when the devil comes to you and gives Scripture to you and twists it a little bit.

You've got to be able to say, yes, but it is written. He didn't answer him in terms of experiences or feelings or anything. He answered him in terms of Scripture.

You remember in Deuteronomy 13, God said if there arises a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign and a wonder, and that sign and wonder comes true. But his teaching is leading you astray from what God has already revealed, leading you away from God. He says, don't listen to him.

God's testing you to see if you love the Lord with all your heart or not. And that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be stoned to death. What was the test? The test was a doctrinal test.

Not signs and wonders and miracles. Isaiah 8.20, he says, to the law and to the testimony, if they do not speak according to this Word, it is because they have no dawn. And Matthew 7.22, many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many miracles.

And I will say to them, depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you. So, everything has to be tested by Scripture. I want to give you one example of this, a very striking illustration, from the life of John the Baptist.

In Luke chapter 7, let's just turn to that if you have your Bible there, Luke chapter 7, we read from verse 11 to verse 17, about the Lord Jesus raising the widow's son from the dead. And it says in verse 16, fear

gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, A great prophet has arisen among us. God has visited His people.

And this report concerning Him went out all over Judea, and in all the surrounding district. And the disciples of John reported to Him about all these things. And summoning two of His disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, Are you the one who is coming, or do we look for someone else? Now, this is incredible.

If you look at the immediate context here, what was happening? Jesus is raising the dead. Everybody's glorifying God, and they come to John in prison, and they say, This is what's happening. He's raising the dead.

He's healing the sick. Now, what's the next step? Well, send two disciples and say, Are you the one or not? What's going on here? And even if you just think of John's life as a whole, his life was surrounded by glorious, miraculous things. His parents, before he was ever born, an angel appears to his father and says, Your wife's going to have a son, and he's going to be the forerunner of the Christ.

And before, you know, before John baptized Jesus, he said, I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize said to me, He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one. And John says, I've seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God. He saw the Spirit descend upon Him.

He heard a voice out of heaven. Think of all the stuff John had seen. And he sends two disciples and says, Are you the one who's coming or not? Now, what's happening here? Well, what's happening is exactly the opposite of what a lot of commentators say.

They say, Poor John, here he was in prison, and it's damp and smelly, and his faith starts to get weak, and he begins to doubt. And he said, That's not it at all. The problem John was having came from the Bible.

All of this experience that he had had, he was willing to set aside because he was bothered because the Bible said, the Old Testament said, when Messiah came, He was going to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. That was John's message, you remember? He'll gather the wheat into the barn. Why is the Messiah not bringing about justice? He's going around healing people, but He's not bringing justice.

He's not bringing judgment. And as John looked back at the Old Testament, you know, it's kind of like a mountain range. You can't tell.

Those two mountains look like they're side by side. There might be a 2,000 year valley in between before the first coming and the second coming. John didn't know that.

He didn't have any way of knowing that. And I don't think for a moment that he doubted that Jesus was the Christ. I don't believe that.

But he's bothered by why is he not fulfilling the Scripture? And he sends to the Lord, and he asks Him this, and what's the Lord respond? Well, verse 20, And when the men had come to Him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, Are you the one coming? Or do we look for someone else? At that very time, He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits, and He was granting sight to many who were blind. And He answered and said to them, Go and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised

up, the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

And blessed is He who keeps from stumbling over me. Now, it looks like when you first read that, Jesus said, Go and tell John about all the miracles I'm doing. That wouldn't have helped him at all.

That's what he had just heard. He had just heard about the miracles, and he sent those men to ask, What is Jesus actually doing? He's quoting from the Old Testament prophecies in Isaiah about the Messiah. And what he says is, Go tell John I'm fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures.

Blessed is He who keeps from stumbling over me. You can't possibly understand the whole plan, but I want you to know that what I'm doing is Scriptural, and I'm fulfilling what the Messiah was supposed to do, and I think John had peace in it. No, he knew this is according to the Word of God.

And when they leave and go back, does Jesus say, Oh unbelieving generation, how could John have so much doubt? No, He said this is the greatest of those born of woman. There's no one like this. See, to test.

The Holy Spirit specifically says, When I come, test me. Test me. Don't believe every spirit.

Test the spirits, whether they're from God. And the test is a doctrinal test. John goes on there in 1 John, and gives some doctrinal statements to test the Spirit.

So, we need to hurry on to the second one, but just think about this. Suppose a man comes working miracles. Suppose you see a miracle.

Oh, I ought to listen to him. Maybe, maybe not. What you need to do is test what he does, what he says by Scripture.

You need to see if this thing is Scriptural or not. And not just in the surface way. Like I said, the devil uses Scripture all the time.

You need to dig into the Scripture and see if it's Scriptural. Leonard Ravenhill, who was a big influence in my life, he once said a man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument. He's talking about the blind man who had been healed.

The man who was blind from birth. And those Jews came along arguing with him, and he said, one thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I can see. A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.

Conrad Merle came along and did something better than that. He said, yeah, but a man with the truth is never at the mercy of a man with an experience. And if you've got the truth, that is what protects you on this side over here.

It protects you from error in the spiritual realm. You say, I don't care what happens. I don't care what anybody does, what miraculous thing they do.

If I have the truth, I'm not going to be budged away from the truth by what they're saying. And you've got to have the truth and test things by the truth. Proverbs says, buy the truth and sell it not.

Give anything. I mean, what's that mean? Truth is going to cost you to get it. You can't purchase it, but it's going to cost you to get truth.

You're going to have to cry for discernment. Lift your voice for understanding. If you seeker of silver, search for us for hidden things.

Discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. It's a promise. So you have to buy the truth and then there's the danger of selling it.

You know, men compromise. They see something for a while, but it costs. They start losing friends.

They start having opposition. And there's a temptation to compromise and to sell the truth. It's costly.

It's expensive. It hurts. Don't sell it.

God gives you something. You know this is true. Don't give in.

It doesn't matter whether everybody else in the room believes you're wrong. If you have truth from the Word of God. But the other side, the other reason for spiritual error is not knowing the power of God.

And that is just as real. Error in understanding and interpreting Scripture is often a direct result of not knowing or experiencing the power of God. Let me just try to illustrate what I'm trying to get across here.

One time I was out working outside. I used to lay carpet to help pay the bills. And I was doing some kind of work outside of an apartment complex.

And a Jehovah's Witness girl came up. They were going canvassing the area. And she started talking to me.

And I said, let me ask you a question. Have you ever worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, in the Bible, they did worship Him, didn't they? I said, have you ever worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ? She said, no, why would I want to do that? I said, if you ever see Him, you will worship Him. But you see, the point is, is that Jehovah's Witnesses are not going to hell because they can't exactly explain some complex doctrine of the Trinity.

None of us can explain that. But the difference is, is they're wrong on the Trinity because they've never seen the glory of God in the face of Christ. If you ever see the Lord Jesus Christ, one thing you know, the first thing Paul said, Who are you, Lord? He knew that.

You know that right away when you come in touch with Him. The problem with the Jehovah's Witnesses, they don't understand the Word of God because they don't understand anything about the power of God. You err because you don't know anything about the power of God.

You've never seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. You've never had your eyes open. You have no spiritual understanding.

Well, unbelief and spiritual dullness affect our interpretation of Scripture. And that's true for both the Christian and the non-Christian. We have to have the illumination of the Spirit, a mind that is filled with unbelief and unreality is going to interpret Scripture wrongly.

And fear of the supernatural, we will interpret Scripture wrongly. Now, I want to give you one case in point that I hope will be practical to you. And that is in this whole area of subjective guidance.

Does God ever speak to anyone directly in our day and tell them something that He wants them to do or reveal anything to them? And there are many in the reform camp that say, well, no, God never does that. If God ever spoke to you directly and showed you anything directly, then that would be a new revelation on par with Scripture and it would overthrow the authority of Scripture if there's any kind of revelation of this sort. Does God ever impress anything directly upon the Christian's heart? And they say absolutely not.

Why do they say that? Because God never has impressed anything directly on their heart. And you read the Scripture wrongly. You do err not knowing the power of God.

And you get around, it's the same thing with all these theories about God never does any such and such miracles anymore. God never does this anymore. You know, some of them go so far as to say there's no such thing as demons anymore in terms of demonic oppression where anybody would have to command a demon to leave.

Why are they saying all that? Because they've never seen any of it. But when you come face to face with it and then you go back to the Bible, oh, that's what the Bible's talking about, you see. And you understand Scripture rightly. In reaction to the gross excess of the charismatic movement, many have gone in the opposite extreme and deny everything.

God never speaks to anyone except through Scripture and through Scriptural principles logically applied in various situations. Well, in order to take that position, you have to go against mountains of church history. Let me just give you a few personal experiences.

I knew a man in Iowa who was deeply burdened to go visit one of his neighbors. And he didn't know why. It was impressed on him very strongly.

And so he got in the car, went over there to his neighbor's place. The guy was out in the field doing something on his tractor. And he walked up to him, and the guy stopped the tractor.

And what is it? He said, I don't know. He said, I just felt like God impressed me to come here and talk to you. The man burst into tears.

He said, this morning I prayed that if God was real, He'd send you to me. Here's an example. Not somebody I heard about.

Somebody I knew. I lived with a godly family for a while when I was a college student. I saw the mother get up early one morning.

I said, what's going on? She said, well, I didn't see her get up early, but I knew she had once I got up. But she had been woken up early in the night. God impressed her that she was going to have visitors that day and she needed to get started baking.

And when the visitors arrived, everything was all ready to go. I mean, God just showed her that. There was a brother from Nepal that I had the opportunity to be with for a while.

And I was talking to him about the matter of prayer. And he had been used greatly in Nepal for the salvation of people and the Gospel spreading into Nepal. And I was talking to him about prayer.

And he said, well, God will give you a burden. For example, he was deeply burdened. There was a village up in the mountains.

Now, we're talking about the Himalayas. It's not easy to get places there. And there was a village up in the mountains where one woman was converted in the whole village.

There was one Christian. And he was so burdened for her, finally, he sent two of his workers to go up there. Not a five-minute drive.

They walked for two days to get to the village. And when they got there, they found that she had been poisoned. She was in her house and she was dying.

She had been poisoned by somebody in the village. And they were able to rescue her, get her help. And she knew who had poisoned her, but she refused to press charges.

And it opened the Gospel up for that whole village. Now, what verse in the Bible tells you, send two workers to so-and-so village because this woman is in distress? Nothing. There's no verse on that.

That's God directing the heart of His people. And there are so many examples in church history that I couldn't even start to tell you all of them. Hudson Taylor, he said whenever he gave his life to God, it was as real as if I was taking something and handed it to you and you took it.

He said he knew that God took his life. He knew that he was giving everything into God's hand. As soon as he did it, it came strongly into his heart and mind.

Then go from me to China. Not Africa. Not some other country.

Not just go anywhere, wherever you think there might be a need. No, God told him, and he could no more have gone anywhere else than he could have stayed home. It was clear.

China. Duncan Campbell in the Hebrides Revival, he was in the midst of a series of meetings there. This was back in the late 40s.

And he was in a series of meetings and he was strongly impressed. You need to leave here and go to such and such island. And he got there and there was a little boy.

He got there, I guess, went over on the ferry and he got off the ferry and onto the dock. And there was a little boy playing there and he said, could you lead me to the minister on this island? Well, he said, we don't have a minister right now. No minister here.

So Duncan Campbell said, well, could you show me the house of the praying man? And this boy said, he lives over there. He knew who to pray about. And so he said, could you go tell the praying man that Mr. Campbell has arrived? So the little boy goes up the hill.

He had his luggage there. And the little boy came back down. He said to tell you that he had already had the meeting arranged at such and such place.

And so you have the confidence of going over there. God had showed that man to get the building and everything ready before he got there. That'd give you a lot of courage preaching, wouldn't it, brother, if you do? I was talking to the men yesterday maybe about Dan Smith.

Or this was in one of the messages. Dan Smith, when he was in China, he was a missionary in China. In the mission.

Had such a strong impression. Go upstairs. Go upstairs.

He finally went upstairs. And when he got up there, he heard gunshots down below. And his fellow missionary was killed.

Now that didn't mean that he was more godly or more sensitive than his fellow missionary. Maybe less. Maybe God saw this guy's ready to go and Dan isn't.

I don't know. But I just know this, God's able to talk to you and to direct you and to show you things. Now, what does all this prove? I've given you a bunch of examples.

What do they prove? They prove absolutely nothing. Remember the first point? They prove absolutely nothing unless the Scripture teaches the same thing. Okay? So test it by Scripture.

And you go to the Bible and you start reading the book of Acts and you start reading the epistles and you start finding out, lo and behold, the problem with this other position is it's not Scriptural. You see, the two always go right together. You err not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God.

You've got to have them both. You've got to have them both together. Listen to what the Bible says.

The Spirit said to Philip, go up and join the chariot. And behold, at that moment, three men appeared before the house in which they were staying, Peter speaking, having been sent to me from Caesarea, and the Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. Here's Acts 13.2, while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I've called them.

Acts 16, 6, and 7, they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word in Asia. And when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. Now that's the book of Acts.

Incidentally, that's an important passage. Paul says we tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit didn't permit us. Most of the decisions in the Christian life were based on what you might call sanctified Christian reason.

You don't get up and ask God, which shoes should I put on or whatever. Most of your Christian life, you could say 99.9% of it, is just living the Christian life according to the principles of the Bible. But sometimes, you don't want to lock the door the other direction and say, God could never speak to me and tell me something to do or something not to do.

That's the problem. During the Welsh Revival, Evan Roberts, a young man who was greatly used by God, fell in. He was always looking, always wanting subjective guidance.

And so, he had some powerful experiences of God directing him and leading him at the beginning of the revival. He started looking for that all the time. And so, he would be announced that he was going to preach at a certain meeting.

And he sat out in the audience for three hours waiting for the Holy Spirit to prompt him to get up. Well, eventually, he basically had what we would now call a nervous breakdown or would have called a nervous breakdown. So, you start straining to hear a voice all the time.

You know, does God want me to get a cup of coffee back there or not? Does God want me to do that? You start asking subjective guidance in things that you don't need it. But don't go to the opposite extreme and rule out the possibility that God might impress you with something. I realize all these things need to be treated very carefully.

You start talking like this, you open the door to all kinds of error and problems. Where there are no oxen, the crib is clean. But much strength... how is it? Much increase comes through the strength of the ox.

In other words, God's saying there's a lot of good stuff, but there's going to be things that you have to deal with. The Bible, the New Testament, is not a book of interesting history. It was given to the church.

It's not something to tell us the way things used to be and the problems that Christians used to have to deal with and the spiritual opposition that Christians used to face and the instruments that God used to give Christians to deal with spiritual opposition and the gifts that God used to give Christians. That's not what it is. It's a book for us to help us.

You know, the devil, like I said, he wants to make us go to see this direction or that direction. He wants to make us afraid of the Holy Spirit. I was at a well-known Reform Conference a few years ago.

Well, actually, many years ago now. But here's 200 ministers singing at the top of their lungs, and one of the brothers had the audacity to let out with a hallelujah. And he might have gotten away with it if he had only done it once, but he did it the next day too.

And that was it. He was called aside. Now think about this.

What's wrong with that? Is it not Scriptural to shout with joy? Let me read it to you. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones, and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart. Here's another one.

Sing them a new song. Play skillfully with a shout of joy. Oh, clap your hands, all people.

Shout to God with a voice of joy. See, what's wrong with calling a guy down for saying hallelujah? The fact is, it's unscriptural. That's what's wrong with it.

We've got to test everything by the Bible. Are we really so afraid that 200 Reformed ministers who have had their nose in theology books for the last 25 years are going to be turned into howling charismatics because some guy shouts hallelujah? And it's the wrong attitude. Tozer said it's like putting a cordon of police around a cemetery for fear there's going to be an uprising in the inhabitants.

That's not our problem. Our great danger is we define ourselves as having New Testament Christianity when we're so different from the New Testament. That's the danger.

You know, the Holy Spirit is not capable of doing anything that's not glorious and wonderful. He doesn't do anything small. He doesn't do anything ugly.

The Holy Spirit doesn't make people go around on their knees barking like dogs. He doesn't do that. But the thing, when He comes, He does wonderful, glorious things.

Charles Culpepper was a Baptist missionary who was in the Shantung revival. And I heard a series of tapes where he told about that revival. And even listening to the messages on tape, it was like he was gazing through the back of the building.

I could feel it in the message. He's telling about what God did. He said the Lord did more in two or three weeks than they had done in ten years.

Saving people. Glorious thing. But in one of the meetings, he said there was an old lady, a peasant woman, who could not sing, you know.

She could not carry a tune. It's like I've experienced this before. You stand beside a certain person and you're not going to be able to sing that song.

They just something. He said he heard this beautiful, angelic voice in the back of the room. And he turned around and it was that old lady singing.

She did it one time. Never did it again. The Holy Spirit came and took control of her voice and caused beautiful, glorious singing to arise to God.

That's the kind of stuff God does in revival. You read some of the accounts from church history. They're so wonderful.

I mean, fathers standing up on one side of a room and the wayward son on the other side and they're sobbing and looking at each other. Will you forgive me? Will you forgive me? That's the kind of stuff the Holy Spirit does. But He's not going to do it if we're so afraid of Him that we shut everything down.

Sometimes somebody says, Hallelujah. But you've got to have both. Immediately.

I can't even talk about it without getting scared. Because I've seen so much, and you have too maybe, so much error. But you realize, when you bring in Scripture, all Scripture, test it by Scripture, mercilessly, the Holy Spirit says that.

Test not everything that I do by Scripture. If you do that, you'll have something like what was happening in the New Testament, which is a lot of glorious things and a lot of problems. But wouldn't it be wonderful to see more, to know more of the Scriptures and of the power of God? Two reasons for spiritual error.

May God help us in this. This is kind of an introduction really. It's the beginning of a series of messages.

So maybe some of these other men will give the series. I've created enough trouble problems. Amen.

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