

The Word of God

by Mose Stoltzfus

The Word of God is the ultimate tool for discernment, and it must be interpreted in context to understand its true meaning.

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Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:1, Matthew 7:3-5, Matthew 7:15, 2 Corinthians 2:9, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Biblical Interpretation", "False Teachings"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of interpreting and applying scripture correctly. He shares a personal experience of attending a church where a repetitive preacher would often quote 2 Corinthians 2:9. The speaker emphasizes the need to understand the central truth of a scripture passage by examining its context and studying the words used. He warns against false teachings and the danger of being misled by those who twist scripture for their own gain.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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Greetings to all of you in Jesus' name. Precious to use that word, isn't it? Amen. When we know Him and believe in Him.

Well, I'd like to say an amen to what was said concerning the Sermon on the Mount. In the prior message, that definitely is a key to many things in the understanding of the Scriptures or the heart of God and taking it to ourselves. This morning I would like to look at, as we continue to look at our tools for discernment, I would like to speak somewhat on the Word of God.

Even though that is a broad term, as you understand, but if you ever want to discern anything today in light of truth, in light of reality, the Word of God is in that sense the answer to the whole thing. And I feel so inadequate to be able to treat it here in one or two messages that I'll be talking about this and some of the concepts of how to arrive at, as I have on the board here, the central truth of a given text. But I'm going to try to give you at least a few thoughts that may help you along the way.

Shall we just bow our heads for prayer? Father in Heaven, take this feeble effort and this feeble person, God, and use us to thy glory and praise as we stand here before these men to try to open their eyes and help them to see the reality of truth. Thank you for the Word of God. Thank you, God, for the English language.

And thank you for my education that my parents sent me to school that I could learn to read and comprehend and understand this language. And thank you for other languages that you give us, too, alongside of the English one. Thank you for Spanish and for German and Russian and whatever else may be represented here today that even we can have a broader sense sometimes of the text that is given to us in the Scripture by multiple languages.

I pray, God, that you would give us an understanding today as we attempt to open this subject. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

When I was converted at the age of 15, I was virtually biblically illiterate. The Bible, to me, the only one I had was the New Testament. Until I was maybe 15 or 16 years of age, I got a Bible.

The only reading that I ever did that I can remember was forced reading. When my father sat us down occasionally, like every two weeks, and had us read a portion of Scripture in German in order to learn a bit of German, we never explained the Scriptures. And he was only beginning to come to light through those years, my father, which then did become a Christian.

But the faint memory I have was so different than that, and that is the years in his searchings that I saw him and heard him read the Scriptures out loud and stop for long periods of time in between to meditate upon it. That I don't forget. But I didn't even know where the Old Testament books were, many of them.

When I got converted, I did not get converted by the Word of God. I got converted by the Spirit of God and by conviction because of my sin. I recognize that we can get converted by the Word of God or by the Spirit of God or sometimes by the life of a Christian who lives out the Word of God.

But I do believe the Word of God ultimately and finally is the powerful tool, the most powerful tool in the world, to discern good and evil. It is impossible, it is impossible to go through the maze of the confusion of religion without the Word of God, without the Word of God. When we started our mission in Haiti some years ago, we got upon the problem that 85% of the people were illiterate.

They could not read or write. And of course, we soon excused ourselves for the support of a school that could teach these people to read and write because we said, where do we begin if they cannot read the Word of God? And those are some of the things you run into in some of those poor, poverty-stricken third-world countries, which we ran into there. The Word of God.

Now, let me tell you from the beginning that you cannot separate the Word of God from the Spirit of God. Dangerous, dangerous business. People try to do that and have tried a lot in the last years.

God told me. God told you. If it doesn't agree with the written Word of God, God didn't tell you.

And that's the only hope we have out of this confusion. And God has laid it in the conviction upon my heart, even though I'm a Christian over 40 years. In the last two, I have a renewed zeal in my heart to stay as scriptural as I possibly can.

I have had to, as an elder, go through a lot of confusion and maze of doctrine and teachings and literature that come my way. I have always had a bit of leaning in that way. I love doctrine.

I love truth. I love teaching. And I do as the Scripture says.

I scrutinize it, and I analyze it, and I try to find out what truth is. I'm a curious type of fellow, and I want to know who's right and what's right, you know. And when I hear some of these things, I have to figure out what's going on.

I can't just take it. I can't just let it many times either. Sometimes it's a benefit to do that, but it's just part of my makeup that I spend much time in trying to find out whether something is right or not.

And that has brought me to the reevaluating of some things that I had accepted as normal and as okay in my Christian life and some of the influences that I had in prior years. And that has been, I believe and I trust, a good thing. That would be my testimony.

Now, the first thing I would like to give you is the simple, the simple form. Not the one I have on the board behind me, which is a bit more of the complex form. I don't have the name of it up there.

It's called a syllogism. Syllogism. But the simple form, because I know many of you are simple folks, and you don't know what syllogism is, probably like I didn't.

And that, when I started out my Christian life, I started out in the simple form. And you know what? It worked. And that was simply that I did have a good grip on the English language.

God had blessed me with a love of reading in school years and vocabulary. And I don't have all those words right yet, Brother Manny, either. But I did have a love for reading and a love for understanding.

And when I quit school at the age of 13, 14 years of age, I didn't quit school. And I began to go for that dictionary and find out what words mean when I come across them. And that's been a great benefit.

I recommend that to anyone that you never quit school. Never quit school. But the simple form to me was to pray when I came upon a portion of Scripture and ask God, Lord, what does that mean? And stop and think.

It's amazing, totally amazing, the amount of times that somehow God showed me. I'm touched by that today yet, the simple form of learning to know what the Scriptures mean. I wasn't smart enough and knowledgeable enough at that time to compare Scripture with Scripture because maybe I didn't know what was in the other parts, the other books.

I had not seen this and this and saw that they fit together, which is a very important, very important part of Scriptural interpretation and Scriptural discernment. But even in spite of that, somehow I had a sense of what it meant. I remember one of my favorite chapters as a young Christian was Romans 6. And I wrestled over this thing of being buried with Him in baptism.

And I asked people, what does this mean? Well, they'd say that means spiritual baptism, where you got born again. And then the emergentists, you know, they had their absolutes that it meant you have to go under the water and all that. Well, I do agree that the picture there of being buried with Him in baptism, that like Christ died and was raised so we can die and to sin and be raised again and walk in newness of life, that I would understand more than ever today that that being buried in baptism, its best literal picture is to have water baptism in immersion.

I think that's the best picture of it. But I can't write it all off and say it's all spiritual. You know, it was my new birth.

But I also don't believe that baptism washes away sin and converts you. And so you have to come to those balances over the years. But that's how I wrestled through some of those things in my early years.

But what I would like to suggest to you, and I need this as I go through more complex discernments this week, is how to approach the biblical text. Now, my first premise to you would be to interpret the text in context. What the false prophets are doing is grabbing at verses and taking them out of context, out of their surrounding use and Scripture and building an absolute mountain out of them.

And then teaching it and trying to stand on it and trying to name it and claim it and heal it and believe it and just take a couple of words or one verse and run all the way to town with it. And that is what has done so much damage to the whole biblical concept of preaching and teaching in these last 50 years, especially. Although it's been excellent all through the years, this has been a problem.

So I have a diagram on the board here which I mentioned is called a syllogism. And I want to illustrate that a little bit this morning. We used this in Manitoba in our Bible school there this winter and got to appreciate this.

Although many times I was doing this, again, just by my understanding of how maybe through the Spirit of God or that when you look at a Scripture, it is good to read enough of Scripture surrounding it that you have a subject or a text within the context of which it is found. And that's what I have here on the board. Here at the top would be the interpretation, taking the various verses of the Word of God and bringing them into a major premise or a central truth to find out what is a central truth of the written Word of God that you happen to be reading or studying.

That is what is called the interpreting of the Scripture. What does this mean? What is it telling me? What is the major premise here? And then there are minor premises also of that truth that are found within that text and many, many lessons to be learned out of it by the words that are used and studying the words and other things that Jesus says alongside. And then there is a conclusion.

Then we make a conclusion of that central truth. And may I just say, then after we conclude what that Scripture, what the central truth is, then we apply it to all of our life. It goes back out again.

It comes in. It comes into our mind. It comes into our heart.

It comes into our soul. And we draw a conclusion of what that means. And you take the Sermon on the Mount, my, the mileage that you get out of a portion of Scripture like that when you do that and then you go home.

You haven't just read the Scripture. You haven't just heard a message. And you apply that to all of your life.

That is what should happen in this matter called syllogism. Now, I have to give you an interesting story that I heard where this was used. But Brother Denny yesterday was talking about this revival fellowship.

And a few of us had attended that that he was talking about yesterday where this panel was sitting with these old men who were up front there, 70, 80 years old and were doing this panel. One of them was a man by the name of Richard Owen Roberts. Some of you know him.

He's a revival preacher, famous for revival preaching for probably 50 years or more across the United States. And I would have to say by my observation, a very godly man from what little I know of him. But that dear brother was preaching one day on the suffering of the Christian.

He was talking about, because he's one of the old school, you know, he believes that we should suffer, that we should prepare to suffer. And he was preaching on the text, all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And if you ever heard him preach, the man preaches with great passion.

And after he was done, a fellow came up to him and walked up to him and said, Sir, I want you to know that I'm the city attorney. And I want you to know that nobody persecutes the city attorney. Well, all the wisdom of that 75 years or 80 years went into action.

And he said, let me give you a syllogism, major premise. All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Minor premise, the city attorney does not suffer persecution.

Conclusion, the city attorney does not live godly. Now, you know, I appreciate this diagram. I can't get over that.

I tell you, that spoke volumes to me. Fellows can come up and say what they want to. When the truth is established through eternity, then that is the way it shall be.

And the city attorney and the rest of us have to somehow fit into it. It is not bendable, not disputable, not twistable. And yet, sadly, sadly, that is what so many are doing.

Well, let me give you another experience that I had in my life. I went to church as a young Christian where there was a man who was a repetitive preacher. He got up to preach, especially in the opening meditations for about 25, 30 minutes.

And I would believe that some of you fellows know men like that, that half of his words were the same words every Sunday morning. But anyway, one of them was 2 Corinthians 2, as I remember the case. But I don't know how many times, for how many years I've heard this, 2 Corinthians 2, verse 9. But as it is written, I have not seen, nor ear heard, nor have it entered into the heart of man, the things the Lord has promised to them that love Him.

End of quote. End of quote. And that was used over and over again.

And the concept that was given is that, oh, and it's a true concept, we have no idea what is going to be in heaven and what God is preparing for those that love Him over there in heaven. And as I began to study the Scripture, I dawned on me one day in the next verse, it says something totally different. But the Spirit of the Lord has revealed it unto them.

And I thought, something is so desperately wrong here. Something is so wrong. And if I could just read down through that passage, just to show you now, what the text will do in context.

Let's look at it. Verse 8, which none of the princes of this world knew. Excuse me, I have to start earlier.

Verse 6, howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come do not. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even God, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written, I have not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of men, the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, sayeth the Spirit of man which is in him.

Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now, we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Verse 15, yet, he that is spiritual judgeth all things, or discerneth all things, yet he himself is judge of no man. For who had known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him, but we have the mind of Christ.

Well, when you take that text in context, you get a totally different picture, don't you? And that is how I want to show you. When you take all of those verses brought together, you have a central truth. What is it? That giving you the Holy Spirit reveals many things to people.

It reveals, yea, even the deep things of God. And the princes of the world had no idea what they were doing. Herod didn't know, and Pilate didn't know, and the soldiers that drove the nails didn't know.

If any of them had any idea what they were doing, they wouldn't have done it. Now the Jews knew it. They knew it.

Because you remember Nicodemus said, we know that thou, we elders, we Pharisees, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, and no man can do the things that thou doest, except God be with him. But the elders, or the rulers and the princes of the world, they didn't know. If Pilate would have known, and Herod and some of them would have known exactly who they were dealing with there, they wouldn't have done it.

But Pilate didn't know. He hadn't followed him around apparently, and hadn't investigated enough about who this man is. And he, wanting to show the Jews a pleasure, you know, gave Jesus into the hands of the Jews to have him crucified.

But he had to send his soldiers to do it, to do the job. But what he's also saying is, I haven't seen all through the Old Testament. They don't understand its mystery.

It's only been revealed now by the Holy Spirit, which is dwelling in the heart of man, that reveals these things unto him. And now we have a light, and we have an understanding we have never had before. And that's the truth of this.

Not talking about heaven, not talking about the city and the place that God is preparing for them that love him, not at all. And so you can see how we can just get off by just taking a verse and quoting it, because it sounds so nice, and we're thinking about heaven, and we're taking a verse totally out of context. Now, let us look at another one.

And by the way, I wanted to give a correction, if I could, on my speech yesterday or my topic yesterday. I was somewhere else, I'm sure, in my thinking when I made the statement that the sign of the prophet Jonas, or the message of the sign of the prophet Jonas was the preaching of repentance. That was a minor premise.

The major premise was that he spent three days in the whale's belly, and that was the type of Christ being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And somebody gave me the third premise, which is also good one, that Jonah also preached to the Gentiles for three days' journey going through the city, which was also a type of what Christ, the gospel, would open up to the Gentiles. So those are minor premises.

But I apologize there. I had missed the major premise and dwelt on a minor then when I made that statement. Just not thinking it through.

I knew the Bible said that, but in my haste when I was studying, or in my thought, it just didn't come to me at that time. So that is where we meet each other on that. Now, let us turn to Matthew 7 in the Sermon on the Mount.

And I just want to give you, use this one again for an illustration here and speak on this subject of discernment out of Matthew 7 here. Judge not, verse 1, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.

And with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured unto you again. For why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye? And behold, the beam is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

End of subject, end of text, in context. And then he changes the subject there somewhat, I think. Now, what often happens in this situation, and I hope you can relate to this, probably has happened, you have seen it happen, and I will give it the way I have seen it happen already.

But, a group of men on a Sunday afternoon are sitting in a circle in a living room. And you know how it is, we talk about anything and everything, and these subjects come up. And of course, there is a discerning brother in the midst, maybe two out of the three, others are probably not so much discerning, and that's normally a bit of the average.

And so, these things are discussed, and this matter of discernment or judgment comes to the surface, and we are beginning to try to draw a few conclusions on a given subject, a given text, or a given happening, and discern what it is. And about the middle of that, a young sister, or a wife of somewhere, pipes up in the

middle of the conversation and said, Now, don't judge. And everyone has got handcuffs on.

The subject dries up. We don't know how to proceed. And I tell you, brethren, that has happened so many times.

Yes, and those, you know, we, and maybe it is a little hard, but men need to handle hard things, you know. And maybe it's a little critical, and that needs to be mellowed out too, and isn't quite right, and all that can take place, and we need to check and examine our hearts. But the last thing that is supposed to happen is that the men all get handcuffs on and can't say anymore because some lady said, Now, don't judge.

Now, let's look at it in our syllogism. Major premise, thou shalt not judge. No.

What's the major premise? We exercise ourselves a little bit here. What's the major premise in the text? Don't you judge if you're guilty of the same thing. The major premise is not to not pull beans out of people's eyes.

No way. The major premise is not let them in. The truth of the Scripture is not saying don't pull them out.

It just says you remember that don't you pull them out if you have one in yourself. First, take the one out of your eye, and then you may do it. Right? Totally misunderstood by the lady who said, Do not judge.

God says don't judge and stop everybody from the process. You see. And I see that happening in churches, Bible schools, seminaries, living rooms, brothers meetings, and on and on it goes, which ends up sometimes because someone's a little hard, a little critical.

We don't want to excuse that. We need to soften, we need to mellow, and we need to balance ourselves and all of that. Tone down a bit in the tone of voice.

That's one of the problems that I have is more of a prophetic voice like that. I have to be careful. I don't give it too strong or too hard, but it has to be given.

Or we are in trouble. We are in deep trouble. So, if I might ask a question here just to begin this portion, this subject on this is, Is it right to judge? Is it right to discern biblical judgment or to practice biblical judgment? Is it right to name names? Is it right to discern concepts and doctrines and teachings, men and meetings that are being held, tapes and seminars even.

They must be judged. Were the Bereans not more noble than the Thessalonians? Because when they heard things they examined by the Scripture, they judged to discern whether these things are so. Does this line up with the Word of God? And they got the highest honor in the epistles of a group of people who were able to do it.

And too many others weren't doing it. And when you go back in the Revelation to the letters of the seven churches, strong rebuke was given and a threat that the candlestick would be removed because they had them there that allowed Jezebel to have her way and teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication. They had the doctrine of Nicolaitans.

They had lost their first love and all these things had come in. And nobody was judging. Nobody was taking the beams out of people's eyes.

And it was a sad situation. It has been known as one of the most misused verses in the Bible. Judge not that ye be not judged.

Every Scripture verse should be read in its context if we are to properly understand the true meaning. In verse 2 to 5 of this same chapter, it is evident that verse 1 is referring to hypocritical judgment. A brother who has a beam in his own eye should not be judging the brother who may have a moon in his eye.

The lesson is plain. You cannot judge another for his sin if you are guilty of the same sin. Those who claim to judge not that ye be not judged, to condemn those who expose error, should read the entire chapter.

Because in that chapter, Jesus says, Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing. How can we ever know who the false prophets are if we fail to examine the sheep as to whether there are wolves about them or whether there are such a thing as ravening wolves as they are given by the Word of God. All through the Bible we find proof that they must be identified and exposed.

And you notice the Apostle Paul. He has broadcasted it for 2,000 years in Holy Writ. The names of the men like Demas, Hymenaeus, Philetus, Alexander the Coppersmith, and the two that fell over dead, Ananias and Sapphira.

We know those names. Balaam, the doctrine of Balaam. What is the doctrine of Balaam? That poor man had such a reputation smeared over his name for 2,000 years.

He did wrong. And his name is an example of that. And so is it with Ananias and Sapphira and Alexander the Coppersmith and all those people.

And if my name is ever named there, or your name, and is rightly so, then it has to be so. You can't just say, Oh, we can't do that. And therefore, we tie our hands.

The Bible talks about, You shall know them by their fruits. And I'll probably want to handle this more specifically. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Did the Lord mean that we could not judge the tree or the person by the fruit of their life, and doctrine? Certainly not. For you cannot know without judging. All judgment should be in the basis of clear biblical teaching, though.

Not on, I don't feel good about it, or on, well, I'm just not sure, and I'm suspicious of something that you don't know, and you're skeptical, and you're cynical, and all that. That doesn't work. That won't stand before God.

We cannot give ourselves to those spirits and those ways of doing things. But when we have a clear Word of God, a principle of the Word of God, and don't let anybody hamstring you either on the fact that where's the verse, if the verse doesn't say a television is wrong, and you can't say anything on it, you can't let them do that either. Because there are principles where we gather together from the written Word of God across the span of Scripture that build a premise of which we must conclude that this thing is evil.

It has an adverse effect upon us in our lives. We must do that. If we can't do that, and I tell you, I know this comes close home.

Some of you are wrestling with that. You have bought into that perhaps, and somebody in the church has said, well, if the Bible doesn't say anything about it, you can't say anything about it. Meaning, mentioning the thing.

Boy! With all the inventions that the devil has brought together in these last years, we are done if we can't apply the given principles of the Word of God, of life and godliness to what the devil has come up with. And I know people take it to extremes. And they put their little things in there, and we have come out of systems, many of us like that.

And you know, but we can't let the pendulum swing to the other side and now say we have our hands tied. If the Bible doesn't mention a video, or it doesn't mention rock music, or it doesn't mention this, or it doesn't mention that, then we can't say anything about it. God has called us to judge righteous judgment and to pull the grand theme and the general premise of the written Word of God together and to address the issues of life.

We must do it, or we perish. Our churches will fall apart. They will be filled with worldliness and ungodliness.

The young people will go after all kinds of fleshly things if we allow ourselves to do that. But we must be men. We must be fathers.

We must be ministers of the Gospel. We must be preachers, teachers and prophets. And we must rise up and identify that devil when he comes around in his subtle ways and simply expose him and say, that is not of God.

We have to do it. And just because some do it wrong, doesn't say we should not do it. The Bible says in John 7, 24, judge not according to appearance.

An interesting verse to put that check in us. But judge righteous judgment. Our Lord commends that we are to judge righteous judgment, which is a judgment based not on our opinion, but on the written Word of God, the central truth for time and eternity.

The fornicator. In 1 Corinthians 5, verses 1-13, what did Paul say? Well, hold the whole thing until I get over there and talk to him. Is that what he said? These guys are shaking their heads no.

What do you think over there? They're negative on it. Paul said, I'm not coming. I've judged him already.

If that's what he did, then this is what you do to him. And that's it. But you didn't go talk to him first, Paul.

You've got to go over there and sit down with him and talk this thing over first. You didn't use Matthew 18, Paul. You've got to be wrong.

Oh, how many times have ministers been shut up and put back in a corner. And I see that all the time because they didn't exercise Matthew 18 in a given thing. Let me tell you something.

It is my persuasion that in false prophecy or in open sin like this, no Matthew 18 needs to be handled. Not in a process like that. Paul said, what? A man had his father's wife.

He's a sinner. Excommunicate him. Turn him over to the devil that he may learn the consequences of his sin that the Spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Paraphrasing it a bit there in my own words. But that's what he's saying. And the Greek word for judge is the same here as in Matthew 7. Verse 1. Look at that.

Amazing. And Paul did not violate the judgment that you be not judged. In judging the man, he simply discerned this is sin that will contaminate, as he says, a little leaven, leaven is the whole lump.

This is leaven that will permeate the body. Get it out. And do so quickly.

A person who is able to discern between good and evil has at least one of the major marks of spiritual maturity. As I quoted yesterday in Hebrews 5.14, strong meat belongeth to them who are of full age. Mature men need to do it, not fellows that have just been born again a half a year ago.

That's not going to come out right. Even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Vine says, the meaning of discern is the distinguishing, clear discrimination, discerning, judging.

It's translated discerning in various different portions of the Scripture, like in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 10, of discerning spirits, judging by evidence whether they are evil or of God. And Strong's agrees with the same thing. Now, those who are unwilling and incapable of discerning or judging between good and evil in this manner, simply reveal their disobedience to the Scripture or their immaturity.

If they're immature, God bless you, you can't handle that. And even in our own situation, I tell you, we come across things that you have to put on the shelf and give it more time to discern it at times. I don't have it.

There are times when I say, this is too big for me. Somehow, I have to put it on the shelf and observe it for a while longer until I see more fruit coming out of it and the result of it until I can judge and discern the matter. There are times we just don't know what to do.

We pray, ask God for wisdom, still unsure. Sometimes, that's how difficult it is to judge all things and discern them that come our way. John the Baptist, our example, greatest prophet that ever lived among men.

He called the religious leaders of his day. He discerned them to the core. Herod, oh, that name.

He exposed him for having his brother Philip's wife. It got him so mad, got her so mad, that it cost him his head because he discerned. She don't belong to you, Herod.

And it was his wife, his brother Philip's wife. Still, even though she was living with Herod, isn't that interesting? That's right. She was his brother Philip's wife.

It's not right for you to have her. Give her back. He might as well would have said, I think, then that's the only thing to do with her if you have something that doesn't belong to you, go back and give it back to where you got it from.

Jesus said to the religious Pharisees, oh generation of vipers, how can you being evil speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. And to many evangelicals, fundamentalists even today, that would be unacceptable language. That would not be politically or even religiously correct to say anything like that today.

But it's the biblical language that comes from the mouth of the Son of God. Standing face to face with false teachers, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, called them hypocrites, blind guides, blind, whited sepulchers, serpents, generation of vipers. Yet we are told today that we are to fellowship with men whose doctrines are just as unscriptural as those of the Pharisees.

Some who would say that they are biblical believing Christians insist on working with Roman Catholics and Word of Faith people. Don't say a thing. I mean, there's Christians in there.

We're not saying there's not. On their way out, someone became a believer. But we know that the premise is wrong.

The interpretation, the doctrine, the teaching is false. If somebody's waking up in the middle of it, praise God! That don't make us say good things about the Catholic Church. His words are sharp.

Lord Jesus, when He spoke to some of those situations, Matthew 23 is a hard chapter, but it's one of those that are contained in all the kind and loving ones that are also there and we cannot put away. Now, just in looking at how the Bible admonishes us to expose error, and I may speak more specifically of this, but in 1 John 4, verse 1, let us look at that verse. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God, because many false prophets are going out into the world.

And as I mentioned yesterday, that word try there could also be read test. Test them. All doctrines and teachers are to be tested or tried according to the written Word of God.

That is our criteria. That is our standard. That is our judgment.

It cannot come to well, I think, and it is my judgment. That is very, very dangerous. It sets you up as some kind of an authority on the issue that is outside of God's authority at times, if you are not careful with that.

We must judge upon that which is already judged. And when God has already judged it, then all we are saying is, here, there is a connection. This is speaking to this issue.

That is all we are doing. We are not making the judgment up ourselves, but simply making the connection. We have the church at Ephesus was commended because they had tried them or tested them, which say they were apostles and were not, and has found them liars.

In Revelation 2.2, the church of Pergamos was rebuked because they tolerated those that held the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which things I hate. You tolerated them and didn't judge them. And therefore, that was written off against them there at Pergamos, or was read off, and they were judged for not judging.

You see that? And I tell you, fathers, ministers, deacons, we will be likewise. We will be judged for not judging. There is an accountability of what goes on in our homes that lies upon us men.

There is an accountability for what is tolerated in our churches. Ministers, we are responsible and we will have to give an account before God. If we let sin, just let it go.

Let it, as some would say, well, I don't want to be the Holy Spirit. I'll let the Holy Spirit do that. It is not the Holy Spirit's job for all of that.

Some of that is the Holy Spirit's job to bring conviction, and some, if a hardened heart exists, falls back upon the men that God has set in charge of the church. And that's not very popular teaching either today, but it's clearly the Word of God. When diatribes went off in 3 John, wanting to have the preeminence, John did not teach us to say, let the Holy Spirit deal with him.

He went and dealt with him. And you have that 1 Corinthians 5, the same way, many, many other times in the Scriptures. The Bible says even that we are to mark them and avoid them.

Now, I beseech you, brethren, Romans 16 and 17, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. Now, I know this is all done wrong. At times, but I'm simply saying, the Bible does not say, let the Holy Spirit deal with them.

The Bible says you, brethren, are to put a mark on them. You are to expose them to the congregation and say, don't go over there for a doggy roast or to have supper with a man. Stay away from him.

He's got dangerous doctrine. He subverts his hearers. He's deceptive.

He teaches deceiving doctrines and perhaps even has a deceiving spirit. And people just think, that's impossible to do that. But it's in the Word of God.

And we are not right if we don't do it. Hopefully, we don't have to do it often. But just so we equip ourselves that when the need comes, it has to be done.

Ecumenists, new evangelicals, compromising fundamentalists, they resist all effort to obey this Scripture. They don't want to be marked. Nobody wants to be avoided.

It's a time of ecumenism. Accept everybody. And where that has gone in the last 20 years is just unbelievable.

Unbelievable was some of the facts that I gave you yesterday to where an agreement is made for the next two years by a theological cemetery not to proselytize Muslims, not to tell them about Jesus, not to witness to Him. Imagine. And given a million dollars to help do it.

We are to rebuke them. The Bible says, "...Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." This was written to Titus because there were those going from house to house and subverting whole houses with false doctrine. And there are those going from house to house today with their multimedia programs and doing exactly the same thing.

Some time ago, I heard of one of those fellows that was preaching that said, the time is coming when you can bring your dead bodies up to the television and put your hand up against the screen and they'll raise from the dead. Imagine the subversion, the such teaching. And somebody who has a loved one, imagine the embarrassment of the whole thing.

Dragging that dead body in its coffin over to the television set and putting its hand on the program while the program is being played by one of those false prophets and expecting that the individual might rise from the dead. And no one does. The Bible says we're not to have fellowship with them.

"...Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Ephesians 5.11 Reprove means to censor, condemn, find fault, rebuke and refute. How can we obey this Scripture unless we try them or test them by the Word of God? And then we are told to withdraw from them. Everyone,

every brother that walketh disorderly, not after the tradition which ye receive of us.

We are to withdraw from those who teach false doctrine and conduct that does not conform to the Word of God. And that is even true with religion. That is even true with religion.

"...From such withdraw thyself." The Bible teaches about those who are teaching religion, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Are there any of those around having a form of godliness, but no power? And the Bible says "...From such withdraw thyself from them." And that is because... Why? It kills your own spirit, doesn't it? Have you ever been in a funeral like that or in a wedding and those kind of things go on and whoo, that thing is heavy and everybody is dressed in black and I am not talking about a funeral. That is kind of a natural custom by many people.

But, you know, there are those who are all dressed in black clothing and dark clothing and they have dark spirits and dark faces. You come out of there and you feel a little dark yourself. Don't we? But if we act like it doesn't affect us, that's fine.

And I believe there are times when we go in those places with a purpose to witness for Jesus, we are fine when we have that mindset. But I tell you, when we don't, we kind of want to see all the uncles and all the aunts and all the cousins, who are all locked up in those kind of things and everybody looks at us and they don't have anything. They don't have a fraction of what we are talking about of having a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

And the next thing we know, it crawls on us and we are dark for three days because of it. It can happen to us and our wives and our families. So, be careful with that.

You need a lot of discernment there. And lastly, we are not to receive them into our house. If they are coming into you and bring not this doctrine, in 2 John 10, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed, for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds.

No doubt, John is speaking about those who transgress and abide not in the doctrine of Christ. Now, I may just mention, going back into trying them, let's go to John in closing 1 John 4. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, or test them, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are going out in the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.

This is the Spirit of Antichrist which ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is into the world. In the world. Now, there's been a lot of confusion about this, and I don't know if I have a final in my own heart on exactly how this is to be exercised, but let me give you, and I'll probably talk a little bit more about this tomorrow, that it's so important to know the historical setting sometimes of a verse like this that's hard to understand.

Now, the historical and actual setting of which this was given had to do with Gnosticism. While Peter and John, those men, especially John, who was alive until he was in his 90's, the only apostle that died a natural death, Gnosticism had already come into the churches. Paul had already said, you know, that after my departure grievous wolves are going to go in and not spare the flock.

And that was already happening while John was alive, because when John read, got the vision, on the Isle of Patmos, to the seven churches, look at what was already happening in the churches. So, things were happening. But this Gnosticism was going, and that was that there is not a relationship between the spirit

and the body.

My body is sinful and carnal. It'll fornicate. It'll commit adultery.

It'll lie. It'll steal. But my spirit is safe.

You see, they were saying that. And then they were also saying at this time, that Jesus didn't really come in the flesh. We had His spirit, and there was a human body, but that was something different from His spirit.

They did not believe, and not confess, and not teach, that Jesus Christ was a man. Literally had come in the flesh. And so in light of that teaching, here comes this teaching from 1 John.

It says, Beloved, now you try these spirits, and any spirit, or any person, who will not confess that Jesus Christ actually did come in the flesh, He was flesh, and He was spirit, in a body, is the spirit of Antichrist. It's not of God. It has nothing to do with Him.

You know, it's false spirit. Anybody who says that. So that, I believe, is the truest sense.

But then how to test it today is different people have thought, you know, at times that when there are strange things going on, and possibly demonic influence, or false spirits, that one of the things to ask is, did Jesus Christ come in the flesh? I have done that numerous times. It's amazing some of the results that are given. But I'm not saying it's 100% because I have the deep sense that people have mechanically been able to squeeze out those words and say them, and I still had no witness that they were true.

And that's why I do not give that as 100% proof. But many times I have found out they would actually say, I can't say those words! I can't say that! And I know just some time ago I heard of somebody, one of our churches dealing with somebody, they worked for hours with an individual trying to get them to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and they couldn't open their mouth to say those words. So I think that also applies.

Here's another one I'd like to give you. Whosoever doesn't confess with their life. And I like that one too.

There are people who might be able to squeeze the words out and say, yeah, I believe Jesus Christ came in the flesh. But their life doesn't measure up. And they do not confess it by their works or by their life.

And that is also a correlation in the scripture that needs to be united with his whole matter-of-mouth profession. Because Jesus did say, as Denny said, many shall say, Lord, Lord, haven't we done all these things? And he said, I never knew you. So we also have to look at those things.

Alright. May God add His blessing as we come back tomorrow to look at more of the tools that are specifically given to us now in the Word of God and other methods that we have to be able to give right discernment and right judgment to the things that we face. Shall we just bow our heads in prayer? Father in Heaven, I thank you for your Word and I just pray, God, that you would sanctify us, body, soul, and spirit, that we may be holy, may be right.

Give us discernment, I pray. God, give us discernment in these last days. We pray, bless these brothers in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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