

Double Mindedness

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James wrote, “The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (Jas. 1:8) Though this certainly includes the usual applications commonly made to such ideas as wishy-washiness, waffling, indecisiveness and other similar conditions of the soul, this is rarely addressed at its deepest application (that of the spiritual mind vs. the carnal mind) because it calls into question too many of our routine thoughts, opinions and actions.

Paul wrote, “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Rom. 8:6) The one who has been born again of the Spirit is in a unique position to partake of either of the two natures present inside him: the fallen nature of Adam (with its attendant additional propensity toward demonic influence and controllability) or the Spirit, nature and even Person of God. God, in pouring out His Spirit on all flesh (Acts 1:17, Joel 2:28) has, in effect, brought individual men and women (whoever will believe - Jn. 3:15) back to the Garden of Eden and set them before the two trees - the Tree of Life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9) - and given them the same choice He gave to Adam and Eve.

This is also one reason James writes, “Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh.” (Jas. 3:11-12) The Spirit-nature of God that resides in us does not produce the works of the flesh any more than the flesh can produce the fruit of God’s Spirit. (see Gal. 5:19-23) The flesh still wars against the Spirit and the Spirit still wars against the flesh (Gal. 5:17) and “those who are Christ’s have [past tense] crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Gal. 5:24)

So, in truth, although both natures are present within, we cannot continue in the flesh after the Spirit of God has taken up residence within. (Rom. 6:2) To continue in the flesh is to neglect the great salvation that was given to us. (Heb. 2:3) The judgment against us on the last day will not be measured so much in terms of how much truth and light we possessed but in terms of how much truth and light we rejected. Paul wrote that those who “do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness” will receive from God “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.” (Rom. 2:8-9) Truth is not just a set of facts to be analyzed, memorized and known – truth is the Spirit of Christ who is to be followed and obeyed. Those who know Bible facts but who do not obey the Spirit of truth and bear the fruit of God’s Spirit are in a worse state than those who have never become acquainted with the way of righteousness. (2 Pet. 2:21)

This is also consistent with Paul’s warning about the last days. He wrote, “[The people deceived by the man of lawlessness are perishing] because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Ths. 2:10-12)

We need to open that up a little bit and work our way back through that. Unrighteousness is anything except what is right in God’s eyes. Here we see a group of people who take pleasure in things that are wrong in God’s eyes. These did not believe the truth (which we know ultimately to be the Spirit of truth - Jn. 16:13) – instead they preferred some form of unrighteousness. As a result of this preference, God gives them over to the work of the devil (the father of *all* lies - Jn. 8:44) that they should share in the devil’s fate: eternal condemnation.

Paul also wrote, “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?” (2 Cor. 6:14) Righteousness is doing that which is right in God’s eyes – and it is contrasted here as being completely apart and unlike from lawlessness. Lawlessness, is best defined as the absence of any objective standards – it is doing what is right in one’s own eyes. Lawlessness is certainly not the only form of unrighteousness that one can take pleasure in – but it *is* one of the characteristic signs of the end of the age. (Mt. 24:12) As such, understanding what lawlessness is and how it can divert us from truly following Christ ought to be a major concern to us.

The one who does things that he knows to be wrong is not the one who is lawless. That one is simply evil or wicked. The one who is lawless does what he believes to be right and good – not because God says it is right and good but because he, the man, the individual, thinks of it as right and good. This one’s actions might appear good and right to the world who is incapable of making righteous judgments but in God’s eyes it is wicked and evil. This was the essence of the Pharisees and teachers of the law (scribes) in Jesus’ time. They so twisted, spun and distorted the law of God that it no longer was the work of God in a person’s life but the work of the deceiver. Any and every kind of exception was made for those who were “in” - but the sinners, the tax collectors and especially the Gentiles weren’t even to be bothered with. This self-righteous hypocrisy is a paramount sign of lawlessness and is a rampant tendency in nearly every “church” today.

“Church” - as it is primarily practiced in North America at any rate – is such a distortion of the way of following Christ that most often it is no longer the work of God in a person’s life but the work of the deceiver. “Pastors,” staff members and prominent “church” members exercise control over the rest of the people with gossip, slander, accusations (often clumsily disguised as “admonishments from the pulpit”) and other means of politicking and power mongering that puts worldly elections and business meetings to shame. But these are the ones permitted to step into the pulpit and tell others how to follow Christ!

Those who take pleasure in their “church” that functions along these lines – and most of them do to one degree or another – are those who take pleasure in unrighteousness. The strong delusion these receive is the lie that there is nothing too seriously wrong with their “church” (after all, it’s not all that different from other “churches” and it is actually better than some) and they are thus able to be faithful members all their lives. The ones and twos God manages somehow to move toward some semblance of genuine spiritual maturity, however, soon begin to ask embarrassing questions and are no longer welcome at that “church.” Too many of these ones and twos wander off to subsequent “churches” only to find the same kind of worldly gamesmanship (even in some house-“churches”!) and sadly conclude that either there is no God or there is no real human expression of His body to find. It is difficult to blame them too much for reaching that conclusion.

But this too is only a test of our deepest loyalties. “He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6) Those who truly and diligently seek after God will not have too much trouble forsaking their “church” loyalties so as to remain faithful to Him. But those who prefer their “church” ties over an obedient life toward God are those who are taking pleasure in unrighteousness and disobeying the truth – no matter what spin they put on their actions, behaviors and lifestyles.

The writer of Hebrews goes on to say, “See that you do not refuse Him [Christ Jesus] who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him [God] who spoke on earth [to Moses and others], much more shall we [who have come to Mount Zion and all that that means] not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.” (Heb. 12:25)

The sheep who truly belong to the Lord hear His voice (Jn. 10:27) - whether that be in their own hearts, in the circumstances around them or in the words spoken to them by others (even when those who speak the words of the Lord do so from a deceitful heart!). Blind followers of blind leaders are not the Lord's true sheep (Mt. 15:14) and they will not escape the wrath to come.

The "church"-ite who has tasted something of the heavenly gift of eternal life but who refuses to step out in obedience to the Spirit of truth will not recognize when their actions are demonstrating the instability produced by their double-mindedness of carnality and spirituality. The unstable wife who has brought her spiritual husband much misery fails to see that she has *any* real blame in the breakup of their marriage. The old preacher, lonely in his old age, is completely unaware that even though he constantly tries to share the gospel with everyone he encounters, he is completely oblivious to the damage his lusting after the company of women is doing to his reputation - and the reputation of the Lord and His gospel! An elder "sister" ("church"-ite) rebukes a younger sister with worldly wisdom and philosophy but fails to see any hypocrisy or arrogance in her refusal to even listen to or consider the younger sister's spiritual rebuttal. A prophetic sister hears an instruction from the Lord through a spiritual brother's writing but listens instead to an older "church"-ite "sister" who incredibly dismisses the writing as an instrument to stir up the flesh. If these do not repent and turn away from this unrighteousness, these will take their rightful place among those who are perishing because God will send them strong delusion so that they can believe they are "OK" with God. This is what Paul is saying - if we will but have ears to hear.

Most who claim to be "Christians" have great difficulty admitting this life and death nature of following Christ because, if they did, they would have to admit that their life clearly demonstrates that they are not on the Lord's side of the struggle. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Paul wrote, "for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ...those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:7-8)

Some "theologians" and Bible "scholars" (Pharisees and scribes) explain away the clear meaning of Paul's words by going on to the next verse where Paul says, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." (Rom. 8:9) There it is, they say. The Spirit of God came to live in my heart when I said my "sinner's prayer" - therefore I am "in the Spirit" now.

No! We must read on. In the next verse, Paul says, "If Christ is in you..." There's the condition and next comes the conclusion. "...the body [carnal nature] is *dead* because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness [what is right in God's eyes]." (Rom. 8:10 - emphasis added)

John confirms this nicely when he writes, "Whoever commits sin [a willful choice that results in failing to attain to God's perfect standard] also commits lawlessness [what is right in one's own eyes], and sin is lawlessness... In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness [what is right in God's eyes] is not of God..." (1 Jn. 3:4, 10)

It is clear all over the New Testament. True followers of Christ are dead to the flesh (carnal, sin nature) and live by, to and for the Spirit of Christ. This life is evidenced by what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23) "Theologians" and "scholars" (Pharisees and scribes) must dismiss this clear either/or message of life and death because, if they didn't, they would have to admit that their theologies and conclusions were not the product of divine

revelation by the Spirit of God but the product of a carnal, fleshly intellect steeped in religion and lawlessness (what is right in their own eyes).

Buried between the passages in Romans 8 that we are discussing is Paul's very clear statement: "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom. 8:9) The one who has the Spirit of Christ crucifies his own flesh – he does not pamper it or make it comfortable with the paganistic practices of modern "churchianity" demonstrated in religiosity and self-righteousness. He does not display flagrant acts of the flesh most of his life and put on a grand facade of "Christian" behavior while at "church." No lie is of the truth (1 Jn. 2:21) - not even "church" lies.

Let he who has ears hear.

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