

False Prophets Discount The Holy Spirit

I'll never forget Charles "Tremendous" Jones. Perhaps you have heard of him. He became a highly successful salesman and spent many years giving seminars on successful sales techniques.

I attended one of his seminars in Detroit, Michigan with my father. We laughed and cried at his humor and poignant stories that emphasized his remarks. Many of his points stick with me today.

My wife and I used one of them with our children. He told of how he paid his children to read books he thought they should read. We followed his advice with our daughters. (We did test them to make sure they had read them.)

Perhaps he acquired the idea from a quote by Claud Cockburn:

"Never underestimate the effectiveness of a straight cash bribe."

Bribery does work. Many businessmen use it to get ahead in their careers. Businesses bribe customers to entice them to purchase goods and services. Others corrupt legal authorities to ignore and to overturn legal requirements.

However, no one can bribe unbelievers to trust Christ. Nor can the assembly of the first-born use it to expand Christ's kingdom so His glory fills the earth. Further, it does not enable Christ followers to fulfill the impossibilities of the Christian life.

The believers at Corinth in Paul's day faced problems. Their world emphasized wealth, wickedness, and wisdom. Especially, the citizens of Corinth prided themselves in their ability to discern truth. Paul feared that the Corinthian believers, in their desire to know God, would use the means that their fellow citizens followed to attain wisdom.

How did the Corinthians attain wisdom that Paul feared his friends would adapt?

The Corinthian Error

The Corinthians had a thirst for communicating wisdom. To persuade audiences, speakers compiled a collection of volumes on how to sway people in any kind of audience of any truth, regardless of the opposition to it.

When any speaker wanted to convince a group of people of some truth that he held, he went to this set and researched how to present the truths that he wanted them to believe.

Then, when he came to the audience, he presented his speech in the way those volumes directed him as the best means and methods to communicate his truth to persuade his audience.

Two phrases describe the Corinthian culture's way of communicating truth and convincing people to believe it:

- excellency of speech: and
- enticing words.

Every speaker used these techniques as revealed in the volumes that taught persuasion.

Correlation

Modern day adaptation of the Corinthian error

Our world replicates the world of Corinth at the time of Paul. We have our culturally influenced means and methods of presenting the gospel in hopes of persuading people to believe the gospel. Modern day false leaders and pastors use a variety of false means in their gospel proclamations.

- **Authorities**

For example, they rely upon human authorities. This method comes in three forms:

- famous and spectacular people to give endorsements of Jesus;
- human interest polls to determine sermon topics, church program selection, types of meetings, and music;
- area demographics to dictate building location, income targets, and ethnic emphasis or exclusion.

- **Apologetics**

Still others depend upon apologetics, using skillful argumentation against famous religious leaders to defend the gospel. Although apologetics can prove the rationality of the Scriptures, it fails as an effective means of spiritual revival in the Church and the world. It cannot change the heart to believe upon Christ.

- **Archaeology**

Proponents of archaeology rest upon artifacts and geographical digs as a foundation for presenting the claims of Christ. They believe that these evidences will prove the validity of the Bible and convince unbelievers to trust Christ. The Bible does not require archaeology to verify its message.

- **Appeals to the flesh**

Another way in which we adapt to our culture counts on appeals to the flesh. We specifically design church programs to please human nature, hoping to draw in the crowds. These occur in some churches as a regular pattern. Others follow it at popular holidays, like Easter, Christmas, or national celebrations.

The promotion of these events concentrates upon vivid descriptions of the program that caters to the flesh and the satisfaction of its desires.

- **Appeasement**

Worse yet, many present the “gospel” by appeasement. These false prophets and teachers proclaim a message designed not to offend anyone. So, they couch it in terms that make their audiences feel good about themselves, never mentioning the demands of Christ upon those who follow Him.

- **Alternatives to the Holy Spirit**

1. We confuse emotion and excitement for the Holy Spirit. Music groups and bands whip up excitement and audience enthusiasm and call it the moving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit affects people’s emotions, but you cannot manufacture it. The mere presence of emotion and excitement does not equate to the presence of the Spirit.
2. In similar fashion, false prophets and pastors tend to confuse the spectacular with the supernatural. This especially plays a role in special presentations designed to appeal to the flesh. However, a spectacular presentation does not guarantee the supernatural power of God. The supernatural can be spectacular, but the spectacular is not necessarily supernatural.
3. Again, we mistake a lively sermon presentation for the unction of the Holy Spirit upon the preacher. Too often we mistake enthusiastic and bombastic presentations for the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Many in leadership of professing churches reject supernatural activity. They say, “It is not for our time. It no longer occurs in our day. Oh, yes, in times past supernatural activity took place. We can read about it in the Bible. It did occur. But that is not for us anymore. Don’t expect anything supernatural to happen in your life, because that does not come from God.” So, they disavow the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and rely upon human means to achieve their goals.

These examples highlight a few of the methods that false pastors and leaders use from the culture to present the truth of Jesus Christ. However, their application rejects Biblical patterns. They contradict how Paul proclaimed Christ to Corinth and in every place where Paul taught.

The Biblical means of spiritual effectiveness

- **Paul’s Method for Spiritual Effectiveness**

He did not follow the Corinthian format. In fact, he came to them in the opposite fashion. He contrasted between the way that the world presents wisdom and the way that God presents it.

In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul described how he came to them and spoke of Christ to them.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2.1-5)

He did not come in the fashion that the Corinthians desired, relying upon human means and methods. He certainly could have, because he studied under the greatest teachers of his day. A well-educated and highly trained man, he could have relied upon his brilliance in the Scriptures.

In contrast, Paul rejected their commonly accepted methods. He did not want the Corinthian believers’ faith to rest upon human artifice. Instead, Paul wanted their faith to rest upon God. So, Paul rejected the appeals, attractiveness, and winsomeness that the culture’s system would produce. He preached to them in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Many of us have seen demonstrations at stores, malls, and county fairs. A person displays a product and shows its uses, hoping to convince you to purchase the product. That pictures the meaning of Paul’s description of how he presented Christ to the Corinthians. He proclaimed Christ by the supernatural ability that the Holy Spirit gave to him.

By the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit, the Corinthians believed Paul’s message, and God changed their lives.

- **Biblical spiritual effectiveness in demonstration of the Spirit**

When we talk about the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, what do we mean? I suggest a few examples to evidence the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. For example, everyone’s salvation results from a supernatural act. You cannot save yourself. Salvation comes from a work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life, supernaturally.
2. The Holy Spirit turns sinful, wicked men and women into saints, who do not have to rely upon the Greek original to prove their sainthood. Their lives demonstrate it. The demonstration of the Spirit and of power will produce true, Biblical saints.
3. Further, the demonstration of the Spirit and of power provides unction to a preacher. Unction, a Biblical term, describes one totally absorbed by God. The preacher speaks with a fervency and urgency, which consumes the speaker. You can see it. The preacher is on “fire,” spiritually speaking.
4. Again, the demonstration of the Spirit and of power affects the atmosphere of the meeting. I do not refer to the air that you breathe. Rather I intend the sense of God’s presence. Awe pervades the place without anyone asking for silence. The quietness recognizes a holy condition that occurred supernaturally, without manipulation. A holy fear grips you, not a flippant carefree attitude. God has invaded the meeting and made Himself known to those present.
5. In addition, prayer depends upon the supernatural intervention of God on behalf of the matter requested from Him. I do not doubt that a direct correlation exists between the rejection of the Spirit’s supernatural work and the decline in prayer. Despite the thousands of promises in the Bible for answered prayer, believers simply do not believe that God answers prayer. Therefore, prayerlessness pervades the Church today. Prayer and faith in the supernatural work of God by His Spirit go hand in hand. False prophets and Church leaders explain away the obvious. The Church and believers in Christ must turn to God in prayer to plead for mercy from Him to intervene again, supernaturally. Prayer can be and should be a vital relationship between you and God where you bring to Him your needs and you expect Him to answer. God still answers prayer.
6. Additionally, we can see supernatural activity by miracles. We see very few miracles in our day. I have often thought about why we do not see miracles in our day. Many people say that we do not see

miracles today, because God does not do miracles anymore. Well, I suppose you could give that as an answer, except I am prime example number one that that is not true. God does do miracles today, because I can tell you several that God did in my body. Supernatural miracles. On one occasion, the doctor, absolutely dumbfounded, staggered out of the surgery room to my wife and said, "I can't explain it. It is not there. It was there on the operating table before surgery, but it is gone." That only describes one of them. God does miracles this day, in our day. Why doesn't He do more? I admit I do not know why He does not. However, I know one reason why He does not. It comes from the fact that we do not ask Him for the miraculous. We fail to ask Him to perform for us those things that only He can do, the supernatural, requests that require Him to do something that no one else can do. Miracles? Yes, the supernatural activity God on behalf of His children.

Implications

In many ways, the professing Church fits the description of Corinth: wealthy, wicked, and wise. We have the same interests and desires as our Corinthian counterparts. With few exceptions, everything about the present-day professing church can be explained in human terms.

The professing Church rejects Paul's counsel and concentrates upon the world's ABCs of Church growth, attendance, buildings, and cash. We expect preachers today to follow the pattern of the world in their appeals to us.

Thus, we have great misunderstandings of Biblical truth because we approach it as we approach every other kind of knowledge. We cannot understand God and His provision in Christ the same ways that we attempt to learn science, mathematics, business, or literature.

Because of the unique nature of God, it requires His Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds to understand spiritual truth. Paul made this evident in his reminder.

The examination of Paul's approach to the Corinthians helps us to distinguish between false and true ways in which to present the gospel. It also enables us to discern the false prophets and teachers who present the gospel incorrectly.

So, when Paul said, "When I came to you, I came to you in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," what did he mean? The things that we just examined and perhaps more. The Holy Spirit worked in him beyond human explanation. The Corinthians saw it and believed Paul's messages. (See Romans 15.17-19.)

In similar fashion, today, we need to see once again the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit, not the explainable ways of the false prophets, pastors, teachers, and leaders so abundantly present.

Where has the Spirit of God identified in your heart and life your failure to apply these truths? Do you rely upon the ways, means, and methods of the world to try to understand God? Do you follow those that choose the world's ways instead of reliance upon the Holy Spirit?

I pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see the abundant supernatural works that He can and will provide to you and His children who ask Him. He waits for your call.

Questions For Reflection And Application

01. How did the Corinthian society identify and understand truth?
02. How do modern false leaders and pastors use human authorities in their method of proclaiming the gospel?
03. Why are apologetics ineffective as a means of spiritual revival?
04. Why are special programs for Easter, Christmas, or holidays usually ineffective in developing spiritual growth and maturity?
05. Why do you think church leaders have a fear of offending someone through preaching a gospel that includes the demands of Christ upon His followers?
06. How can you correctly determine the presence of the Holy Spirit in a church meeting?
07. Have you ever experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in a church meeting? Describe where it was and what happened.
08. When have you enjoyed a demonstration of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life?

09. What is the role of prayer in profound demonstration of Holy Spirit power?

10. Do you believe in the miraculous? Why or why not?

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for this vivid example we have from your servant Paul. It shows us how You used him, and how he relied upon You by Your Holy Spirit to demonstrate to the Corinthians the truth and reality of Yourself.

Father, I pray that in Your grace and mercy by Your Holy Spirit You will demonstrate the truth and reality of what we have examined, especially concerning the Lord Jesus Your Son. Open our eyes to see and to understand the truth, so that we might commit our lives to it, trusting your Son Jesus exclusively as Lord and Savior, and that we might be reconciled to You through His blood.

We will give You thanks, Father, for what you accomplish.

I ask these things in Jesus name, Amen.