

Biblical Christianity vs. Churchianity.

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 December 2008

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] In our last session together, we just began a brief series dealing with the subject of confusion in Christianity. You'll recall that this was an article that we submitted to the local newspaper in a column that was printed on, I think it was July 12, in the Saturday Church page.

And it was in response to an imaginary question that was posed by an imaginary person by the name of Clarkus. And we attempted to answer the question.

And by the way, yours truly is Clarkus. And the question that was posed was this. How is it that we can explain why there remains so much confusion surrounding Christianity when it has been in existence for over 2,000 years?

Isn't it about time that we be able to get it right? What is responsible for there being so many diverse opinions and ideas about what constitutes Christianity?

And I went on to suggest that there are three reasons that come to my mind. And I'm sure there are many more than that. But these are the three that stand out the most in my mind as to why and how there is still so much confusion about what constitutes a Christian or Christianity after all this time.

[1 : 32] The first one we dealt with in our previous session. And if you were not here and would like a copy of it, I suspect that there are some back there. And they are free for the taking.

That was last Sunday's message. And in it, we dealt with the issue of man's thinking, man's reasoning, man's logic is really different from God's.

Divine logic transcends or goes beyond human logic. We think in terms of the merit system. And everything is based on behavior and performance.

So we just naturally carry that over into the sphere of spiritual things. And we think, after our human reasoning, that that's the way it works with God.

You be good. Do good. Be nice. Treat people nice. Do the best you can. God will reward you. And your reward will be heaven.

[2 : 34] That's only logical. Work it out yourself. Work your way to heaven. You deserve to be worthy of heaven. And God will pronounce you Christian.

And then you'll go to heaven. It sounds very logical. But it's very wrong. Because God's logic is on the basis of His grace.

Not on the basis of human performance. And there is a clash that exists there. Because God and man just don't think alike. That produces a lot of confusion.

And it is rampant. So, that's the first one that we dealt with. Only in a lot more detail than what I just gave you. And the second is what we want to treat this morning.

And that is, the reason that there is yet so much confusion surrounding Christianity is that, sadly to say, oftentimes, the church has managed to confuse itself with Christianity.

[3 : 42] And when that happens, you have just reduced Christianity to churchianity. And it will not get the job done.

There are multitudes of people in virtually every continent on the planet who are involved in religious organizations.

And they see their involvement with that organization as being their contact point with God. It has always been that way.

And let me explain to you why this is. We are talking about organizations, people, individuals, groups of people, etc. Being in positions of power, prestige, and authority.

To whom the common people look for direction, for guidance, sometimes, sad to say, even for salvation. It is possible for a religious organization to entrench itself in the minds of people in such a way that they make that their ticket to heaven.

[5 : 01] I have talked with people over the years. You probably have, too. Asking them about a personal relationship with Christ. Oh, that's all taken care of. I said, really? How is that? Well, I'm a member of such and such a church.

And as far as they are concerned, if you are in good standing with the church, you're in good standing with God. But it just doesn't work that way.

How is it that this problem even exists? Let me explain. It's perfectly natural. It is systemic to human nature.

It is the kind of corruption that was experienced by the Roman Catholic Church in the early centuries, up through the Middle Ages, and even to the present time.

And it is also rampant in the Protestant Church. But they both have a precedent because it has always been like this as long as humanity has been around.

[6 : 10] The problem that exists in the Roman Catholic Church regarding corruption is not due to the fact that they're Catholics. It's due to the fact that they're human beings. The problem that exists in the Protestant Church in regard to corruption, and I'm talking about the corruption of doctrine and giving people the impression that if you're in good standing with the church, you're in good standing with God.

The problem that develops there is not because they are Protestants. It is because they are humans. This is the way human nature works.

It seeks to take advantage intentionally or unintentionally. It takes advantage of power, position, prestige, and influence.

We use those things and manipulate people with them. It is human nature to do that. It isn't right, but it's natural. How many times over the last 35 years have you heard me tell you that the pulpit is a ready-made opportunity to manipulate people?

You can put people under a ton of guilt. You can intimidate them because when they look to the pulpit and they look to the man behind the pulpit, they often think there is some kind of special authority there.

[7 : 42] It's not the same as God speaking, but it's close. It's close. And when people start thinking that way, they become capable of being manipulated and used.

There is a huge difference between using the pulpit to motivate and energize people as opposed to manipulate people. People do not need to be used.

And they don't want to be used. They want to be needed, but they don't want to be used. Let's go to Isaiah, and I'll give you the precedent for this.

It goes all the way back. It precedes the Roman Catholic Church. And all the Roman Catholic Church did was pick up on the corruption motif that was laid down earlier.

And all the Protestant Church has done is picked up on the Roman Catholic corruption motif, and it is perpetuated. And none of these is because it is Catholic or Protestant or Jewish.

[8 : 49] It's just because it's human. That's the way human nature works. And I want you to see this in Isaiah chapter 1 and beginning with verse 10.

I want you to be aware now, God is speaking to His covenant people. These are people who already have the law, who are under the blessing of God, who are in a covenant relationship with Jehovah, who have the fathers and the sacrifices and the offerings and the ritual and the Mosaic code and everything that goes with it.

And this is what God says to His chosen people, beginning in verse 10. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Now, folks, that is not a compliment to be called the rulers of Sodom.

It's not a compliment. Give ear to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah. That's not a compliment either. What are your multiplied sacrifices to me, says the Lord?

I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle, and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.

[10 : 07] Now, wait a minute. Aren't these sacrifices that God Himself required? And weren't these people providing them as the law prescribed?

Absolutely. Well, why is it that God is so opposed to them? Why is He reading them out for this? For the simple reason that mere ritual without an involvement of the heart is utterly worthless.

These people were just going through the motions. That's all they were doing. They were capitalizing on the ritual, using it to intimidate and control people.

You've got to understand that power and authority puts you in a position to get your agenda accomplished. It creates a kind of spiritual elitism that tends to put the average layperson down here somewhere.

Below you. Second class spiritual citizen. And it's all wrong. It is spiritual corruption.

[11 : 23] It goes all the way back to Isaac. Actually, it goes back further. It goes all the way back to Babylon. But this is one of the more pronounced instances. In verse 12, God says, When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts?

Bring your worthless offerings no longer. Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assembly. I cannot endure iniquity in the solemn assembly.

I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts. Well, who ordained these? God did.

Well, why is He opposed to them?

Because they were just mere ritual. That's all. Jesus is going to say of this same caliber of people, These people worship Me in vain.

Their lips praise Me, but their heart is far from Me. They had all of the outward show, but they didn't have any of the inner heart.

[12 : 33] I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts. They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. So, when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you.

Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. You think you can be guilty of the shedding of innocent blood and then come into My courts with the appropriate sacrifices and everything is okay?

It doesn't work that way. This is nothing but sheer hypocrisy that is unmasked by Isaiah. Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.

Cease to do evil. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Reprove the ruthless. Defend the orphan. Plead for the widow. This was a corruption of the Mosaic system that God had established under the leadership of Moses.

He had incorporated everything that they needed to know in the law. The problem was, they found a way to use it to their own advantage.

[13 : 48] Man just has a bent to do that. But, you must understand, and if you don't understand this, you missed the point of the whole message.

All of this is connected to the systemic, sinful nature of fallen humanity. What I am telling you here is not the exception.

It is the rule. This is the way power works. And let me tell you, it doesn't work any different in religious power than it does in political power.

Same principle. Power is power. It means the ability to rule, to reign, to get your agenda done, to put people under you, to exercise authority over them.

It has all of the earmarks of creating a kind of superiority. You know, authority is a tough thing to handle.

[14 : 58] We have a lot of people in positions of authority who abuse it, and everybody suffers for it. We have police officers who abuse their authority.

We have prison guards who abuse their authority. We have pastors who abuse their authority. We can have even presidents or Congress who abuses their authority.

And I think you'll see some of that come out in the constitutional classes that we will be sharing come the 1st of September. Please understand, this is the way human nature is.

You need to recognize that. This is exactly why our founding fathers built into our Constitution a separation of powers with the three aspects of government, the legislative, the executive, and the judicial, simply because they knew that no single body of individuals could be entrusted with that kind of power.

Why not? Aren't these good, honorable, decent people, don't they love their country? Yes! But they're human beings. And we have this natural, ingrained tendency to be self-serving and self-seeking.

[16 : 25] That is the rule. That's not the exception. That's the rule. That's the way human nature is. That's why we've got to have a check. Branches of government have to be able to hold one another accountable.

And if you don't, you end up with a dictatorial. Look, for instance, at what's happening right now in Central America and in South America and in Africa and in certain of the countries of Asia, especially Eastern Asia.

Look at what's happening there. Where there is no kind of government that is in power that has any kind of check on anything in government, you will see despotic rulers, warlords.

Everyone who has the power does everything in their power to keep the power because that way you get people to do what you want them to do.

And by the way, there is a very insidious rationale to a lot of this. You know, we can have a benevolent ruler or we can have a malevolent ruler.

[17 : 43] A benevolent ruler is one who really does care about the people and he has a benevolent heart. Now, that is an exception. And then there is a malevolent ruler.

And malevolence is the opposite. They are the people users. They are the ones who milk the masses. They are the ones who take advantage.

They are the ones who consolidate power. They are the ones who are so filled full of corruption.

And this is why people by the millions today are under bondage and oppression wherever you have an absence of the freedom and liberty like we have here.

You have somebody in a position of power and it is a kind of paternalism. And those who are benevolent as opposed to malevolent can justify it with a kind of misplaced paternalism or big brotherism.

And how that boils down is this. One can be in a position of power and authority and in an elitist kind of attitude can take the position that I am going to place these demands and these requirements upon you and this you have to do because I am in charge and you have to do what I say.

[19 : 16] But it is for your own good. Now parents, you can tell your children that and it is true and you mean it.

It is for their own good. But in a case of religious elitism or political elitism, it is nothing more than my telling you, listen, you are too stupid to know how to spend your own money.

You are too stupid to know where you ought to work or how you ought to live. So I am going to tell you and I am going to see to it that you do it. And it is for your own good.

It is for your own good. That makes me feel better by being able to tell you it is for your own good.

But do you know who is good it is really for? Mine. It is for my good.

Not only is it power and influence, but it is ego. Ego. Ego. There is something about power that goes to a man's head and makes him feel that he is a lot bigger and a lot smarter and a lot wiser than he really is.

[20 : 30] When President Truman took the White House upon the death of FDR in 1945, shortly before the war ended, he was just unexpectedly thrust into that office with the sudden death of President Roosevelt.

And he was trying to get his bearing and this was the time, the dropping of the atomic bomb and all of that. But anyway, President Truman had been in office for just a few weeks and an old boyhood friend of his from Missouri, where they both grew up, came by the White House to visit the now President Harry Truman.

And they sat there in the Oval Office. And before this friend got ready to leave, President Truman called him by name and he said, Well, now tell me, do you have any words of wisdom for an old friend who is now President?

And he stroked his chin and he said, Well, Harry. Yes, actually, I do. He said, There's going to be a whole lot of people come by your desk here and tell you how powerful you are, how smart you are, and how strategically placed you are, and how the whole world is depending on you and your wisdom.

But Harry, you and I both know that it just ain't so. Amen. And with a smile, they shook hands and parted company.

[22 : 08] That's kind of cutting you down to size, you know. None of us is as hot stuff as we think we are. But there is something about being in a position of power and influence that tends to bring on delusions of grandeur and unrealistic thinking about ourselves.

That can happen. And let me tell you something. It does happen in religious circles as well as political circles. You take, for instance, in the Middle Ages, actually the 1500s, when Martin Luther

came on the scene, and he, you must remember, was an Augustinian monk. He was a member in good standing of the Roman Catholic Church, and he loved the church. But corruption was afoot, and the selling of indulgences was really out of hand. And when you go and make a plea to poor ignorant masses who don't even know how to read and write, and this, by the way, is why they called this the Dark Ages, because it was. And when you go and tell these poor peasant people, listen, if you will give X amount of money to help build the basilica at St. Peter's and put that money toward that, that will enable your mother to be released from purgatory three months earlier. And you have people who really believe that, and they put confidence and trust in those who are telling them that. That is crass manipulation. [23 : 46] That's using people. Now, they didn't do that because they were Roman Catholics. They did it because they were human beings, and they had an opportunity to do it, and they took advantage of it.

Today, here in the United States of America, of all places, right here, we have multitudes of people who are in denominational churches, and probably some non-denominational churches, too, who are given the confidence and assurance their name is on the church roll, and that's all you've got to worry about.

My church takes care of my salvation, say they. I'm in good standing because I'm a member of such and such a church. I go every Sunday. I give money, etc., etc.

What does this all do? It results in profound confusion because people are saying things like this, and other people are listening, and where is the gospel in all of this? There is no gospel. There is no good news there. This is all human performance, and it all contributes greatly to the confusion that's going on out there. It goes back as far back as man goes.

[24 : 57] So you don't need to look just to Roman Catholic corruption. There's plenty of corruption in Protestantism, and there was corruption in Judaism. Let's go to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 3.

Matthew, Chapter 3. Okay.

Matthew 3, preaching of John the Baptist. Verse 1, In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord. Make his path straight. Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt about his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the plain. And they were being baptized of him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

[26 : 08] But, when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, You brood of vipers.

You know what that translated means? Sons of snakes. Sons of snakes. This is not a compliment either. Like the Sodom and Gomorrah thing.

This is not a compliment. You brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance.

You are looking to perform the outward show, but you do not have the interchange of the heart. And he is, by the way, when he says in verse 9, Do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, We have Abraham for our father.

You know what that's saying? You know what that's the equivalent of? We're in the right church. Same thing. Same principle. We have Abraham as our, we are descendants of Abraham.

[27 : 12] And the implication is, that's our ticket. That's all we need. We are children of Abraham. And he goes on to tell them, I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

And while we're in Matthew, come over to chapter 23. We will see our Lord continue the kind of rebuke that John began. This is near the end of Christ's ministry in Matthew chapter 23.

And look, if you will, at verse 13. Christ is speaking, and he says, Woe to you. And that is not good news.

Woe. Someone says, If the Lord ever says, Woe to you, you've been woe'd. This is woe to you. Scribes and Pharisees.

Who are these people? They are the religious authorities. This is the establishment we're talking about. These are the in people.

[28 : 18] These are the elite. These are those in the inside circle. These are the ones who were regarded as being just that far away from God.

And the idea is, to hear them speak, is to hear God speak. Think that isn't intimidating? When someone stands up and says to a congregation like this, God told me to tell you.

Brother Jones, you are to write a \$5,000 check for the building fund. God told me to tell you.

Now, nobody here is going to fall for that baloney for a minute. But let me tell you something. And we laugh. We laugh. But you know, seriously, there are places where this is implemented and people buy it.

It is tragic. Tragic beyond belief. I think that pastoral manipulators, possibility of which absolutely terrifies me, are going to have something special to answer for.

[29 : 35] People don't need to be used. They are a divine resource that God has provided for the enrichment of the body, but they are not to be taken advantage of.

They are not to be imposed upon. They are not to be manipulated. And we must exercise every precaution against that. Christ says, hypocrites, you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men. You do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Well, how could they keep them from it? Well, because they are in the position of authority. These are the gatekeepers.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees! You devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers. Hey, isn't that doing something religious?

Yes, and that is all it is. It is just doing something religious. And God is not impressed. Make long prayers. Therefore, you shall receive greater condemnation.

[30 : 50] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees! Hypocrites! Listen, these are the elite. These are the people that everyone is supposed to admire and follow and obey.

Little wonder there is so much confusion today. Verse 16, Woe to you, blind guides, who say, whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing.

Whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated. All of this nonsense. Verse 19, You blind men. There wasn't anything wrong with the actual vision of these people.

Probably some of them had 20-20 vision. But they were blind spiritually. And he calls them that.

Verse 23, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees!

Hypocrites! You tithe mint and dill and cumin. You know what these are? These are spices. Spices.

[31 : 52] Can you imagine how to spend your Sunday afternoon, sit down and pour out your salt shaker? And tie the grains of salt? You say, Come on, that's getting really picky, picky, isn't it?

Sure it is. That's what these people were all about. They were consumed by minutiae and detail, and they ignored the things that really mattered.

Like justice and truth and mercy. All of those things went by the wayside so they could keep their nitpicking little details. Pathetic. Jesus said, You people, you people will strain out a gnat.

You see those little bothersome insects that fleet around and you try to catch them like that and you can't there so fast. A little gnat. If one gets in your cup of tea, you will strain it out so that you don't contaminate yourself with that.

And then you turn right around and swallow a camel. Well, now, we see that as an obvious hyperbole. How's anybody going to swallow a camel? What the Lord is saying is you go to great lengths for the petty, the minute, and the detail, and you turn right around and you swallow something that is unimaginable.

[33 : 15] And you know what they're swallowing? Their own self-importance. They're believing it. They're trafficking in it. They are using it. And you use it to oppress people and hold people down.

As long as you can keep them stupid, you can control them. That's the rationale that was in the Dark Ages.

Keep the laity ignorant. Keep them illiterate. Don't let them read so they can educate themselves and you can control them. It has always worked.

It still does. And it's in place several places throughout the world even to this day. All of this is systemic to humanity and that's the thing that I want to emphasize more than anything else.

People don't do these things because they are of some particular religion or denomination or belief. They do these things because they can.

[34 : 22] They do them because it's part of human nature to take advantage like that. You have often heard me say, the greatest asset to the cause of Jesus Christ is a believer who is lovingly

walking in the Spirit.

Amen! And the greatest liability, the greatest liability to the cause of Jesus Christ is a believer who is walking after the flesh.

It confuses people. It sends them mixed signals. They don't know what to make of it. They look at this person and they see this and he professes to be a Christian. They look at this person and they see this and he professes to be a Christian.

They scratch their head and say, what's going on here? This doesn't make sense. It's all very confusing. And we can add to that confusion. Or we can add to the clarification.

And I trust that a message like this will be more of the latter than the former. And I am going to resist the temptation to go on and wax eloquent. I'm going to open it now for comments and questions from you.

[35 : 36] Anybody? Anybody? In the back. I can't see who is it. Okay. Use the microphone, please.

All these ministers you see on TV that are always asking for money, telling people that they need the money because God said so. And, you know, they say all kinds of things.

And you think they would, they really don't believe that they're ever going to have to pay. For what they're doing. It's like they think they're immune. Yeah. Well, I would say the people that you mentioned represent two classes.

And I don't know which belong to which. But there are people in television. And by the way, there are some wonderful things on television. Some godly people on television who are really doing a great job for the Lord.

But there is also an element on television that is nothing but a flat-out embarrassment to the cause of Christ. And some of these people really believe this stuff.

[36 : 42] I mean, some who are doing this really believe in it. They really believe God operates this way. They really believe they are doing the Lord's work.

They are sincere about it. They think that's just the way you carry out ministry. That's the way it's supposed to be. And do you know what? They often have pragmatism on their side.

And pragmatism can be death to a Christian ministry because the way pragmatism works is this. If it works, if it gets results, it's obvious that God is behind it.

No, it isn't. That's right. Not necessarily. It is incredible what can be accomplished in the flesh that God has nothing to do with.

And I'm talking even about raising huge sums of money. So, do not use the rationale, well, because X number of dollars came in, obviously God was behind it. Not necessarily.

[37 : 42] God may have had nothing to do with it. The flesh can accomplish a lot. So, there are people who are sincerely involved in this, and I'm talking about the health, wealth, gospel, and the healing, the claiming, the name it and claim it, and blab it and grab it, and all the rest of it, that they may be very sincere, and they think that this is the way it works.

And they are pursuing that. And then there are those of the other element who know full well that there is nothing to it at all except their charisma and their ability to persuade and put it over.

And these are individuals who are despicable. But they are out there. My problem is I don't have the ability to look at any of them and say which one belongs to which crowd.

I don't know. I have to leave that with the Lord. But I'm sure that there's some of each. Terry in the back has a comment. Would you get the mic back there, please? So if these people are very dedicated in their cause and they're working very hard and they're raising a lot of money, but it turns out to be that the flesh is what is doing this and it's not God, how do you tell when it is God's will that you raise the money and that you proceed forward with what you truly believe in?

You mean how can... I'm not following you. Elaborate a little bit on that. Well, you just said that the flesh can do many things and God has nothing to do with it.

[39 : 23] Yet they say, look at all the money we raised and look we were able to build this brand new church. It must be God's will that these things be done. How do you distinguish and how do you determine whether or not God truly is pleased with this and in favor of it?

And it's not just the flesh. Okay. Very good question. I wish I had a very simple answer. I've got an answer, but it's not a very simple one. In the first place, there are some procedures and practices that I think the Scriptures might address either directly with chapter and verse or with the general tenor of Scripture.

If there is anything at all underhanded or shady about it or deceptive about it or that does not come with full disclosure and openness about it, if you've got anything to hide, God has nothing to do with it.

It has to be open and above board. And secondly, I think there should be some kind of a consensus with things like that where multiple minds should be praying and considering a course of action rather than one individual with a charismatic personality who has the ability to sell himself and sell whatever he's promoting.

That's behind most of this. And when you look to most of these organizations, you will usually find a charismatic individual with a lot of persuasive ability manipulating people.

[40 : 53] In fact, this is the genius of virtually every cult. You look at every cult that exists today and you will see at the forefront a charismatic personality.

I mean, it's just, it's been like this. Elmer Gantry, Jim Jones, and on and on it goes. You've got to have accountability.

You cannot allow a lone ranger to take control of people, manipulate, use, etc., as often happens with a cult. This is one of the reasons why it is very, very important to have multiple positions of authority available where people have input, where there is accountability, where no one has all of the say-so in a dictatorial kind of way.

And there are a lot of churches run that way. There are a lot of churches run that way where whatever the pastor says is law and people will be absolutely scared to death to even cross him. That's not right. That's not right. The pastor needs to be accountable to a board. The board is accountable to the pastor. Both are accountable to the congregation.

[42 : 08] You are all accountable one to another. That's the way. That's our protection. That's our protection device. Someone else comment or question?

Ron and then over here. Thank you. Thank you. We were studying in 1 Corinthians today about Paul was saying some say I'm a Paul, some say I'm a Paulus.

But the chapter 3 says Jesus Christ is a master builder. That's right. If anybody builds upon anything other than Jesus Christ, whether it's wood, hay and stubble or precious stones, they won't be accountable.

Absolutely. Thank you. That's an excellent, excellent tie-in. Thank you. Byron over here had a question or comment. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We were recently in a church where some of this nonsense was happening and it's unbelievable how subtle it starts and then it becomes so deep and you don't even realize it and it took me a real kick in the pants before I realized some of the things that were going on there.

As you were teaching this morning, I just wrote down some things that had happened and that were said or documented in the bulletin. One of them was if you don't give 10%, God's going to judge you.

[43 : 41] If you leave a full-time ministry, God's going to judge you. That one really struck me because I just resigned from a teaching position within the high school there and if you're not giving more than last year in your faith promise, you're not growing in the Lord.

Some of these things are just inserted so subtly into the message or into the bulletin and that's a very prominent church here in the Dayton area. It's unbelievable. That is so sad.

That kind of thing just breaks my heart because, and you know, people are taken in by that. They are influenced by it. They swallow it. And why do they believe that?

Well, this is the person in the fulcration. This is the person in charge. I don't know anything. I'm just a dumb layman. I don't know. I just take what he's saying as it's from God and I'm supposed to be doing that and it's just, it's terrible.

Just terrible. In the back, there's a question back there. Where's the microphone? Yes, go right ahead, sir. My name is Jason Gregory, just so everybody knows. In reference to the question that the man was asking about how we know, you know, when you're giving or if they're asking for money and they've raised a lot of money, we have to, as we strive to get closer to the Lord, we begin, we have to walk in the spirit all the time.

[45 : 12] But the closer you get to God, the more you will be able to see. And this example of this in the Bible was Paul. As Paul began to get real close to God, he was able to see things that even the other apostles couldn't see.

And that's my admonishment to everyone. Please take your relationship with God seriously to where you have to keep growing. If you're not growing, you really need to look at your relationship with God.

But as you get closer to Him, God will give you more spiritual discernment. He'll help you to see the devil and see what he's doing. Now, I do want to say this. Sometimes God does lead us to give because I have someone in the TVN and I've been blessed for doing it.

But we need to get the Spirit's approval. If they say something on there and maybe you're thinking about it, ask God. Just ask Him. Say, Lord, is this what you're leading me to do? Do you want me to give?

You know, don't just do it off the top of your head because of what they're saying. But we have to, and the Scripture God gave me was 1 John 4 and 1, Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

[46 : 23] But God will give us spiritual discernment to see because if He didn't, we'd get swept away just like everybody else. Thank you, brother. Thank you. I appreciate that. Question in the back.

And while you're taking the microphone back there, Roger, in the back, I'd just like to say in response to that, you're right, we do need to ask the Lord and we also need to be careful about the way we interpret an answer because how does God speak to us?

Principally, He speaks to us through His Word. But there is a great difficulty sometimes in discerning what God is telling us because of the principle of human subjectivity.

we tend to hear what we want to hear and you've got to be careful about that. You've got to be careful that it's the Lord and not just your own wishes or your own desires.

And sometimes, you know, I've never had God speak to me audibly. I've never heard the voice of God. I don't know anybody who had, well, I remember one person who was asked whether God ever talked to him directly and he said, yes.

[47 : 33] And he said, well, what did the voice sound like? And he said, sounded just like my wife. But I think there was a little confusion there. So, you need to get your answers from the Lord but you need to be careful about how you get them too because subjectivity can come in.

Where's the microphone? Back or in the back? Yes. I was just thinking when the gentleman was talking about the bulletin and the different ways that people are coerced into giving and it just ties in with what you're teaching is rightly dividing.

These people go back to Malachi when they talk about you know, giving. And they get the messages confused as to the Jew or to the body today.

You're right. You're absolutely right. The confusion exists on a general plane like we've been talking about this morning but on a more specific plane there is enormous confusion that exists regarding the dispensational plan and program and in a way it's an even more devastating kind of confusion because you've got chapter and verse together.

Oh, how are you going to stand against that? I mean, Ruth just said Malachi 3 bring all the tithes and offerings into the storehouse and make that my house may be full and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing so great you'll not be able to receive it and you're not tithing?

[49 : 12] Shame on you. Look what you could be having. Look what God requires. Chapter and verse. I saw it for myself right there in the Bible in black and white. Repent and be baptized.

Right there it is. in black and white. How can you argue with that? You talk about adding to confusion. That really adds to the confusion. So we're not even talking about confusion among dispensational or non-dispensational teaching.

We're talking about in a more general way. But let me tell you something. Confusion exists in every area. Now I'll tell you why that is. Because, understand me now, there is a lot more error out there than there is truth.

You need to understand that. There's a lot more error than there is truth. And every time truth compromises with error, truth always loses.

Always. Truth always loses because error doesn't have anything to lose. Truth is the only thing that has something to lose. truth is, when you're talking about a right answer, if you were to die today and stand before God and God asked you why should I let you come into my heaven, what would you tell Him?

[50 : 34] How many wrong answers are there to that question? Boy, there's a ton of wrong answers. There's only one right one.

Just one. Just one. In the midst of all of the wrong answers. The right answer is you should let me come into your heaven because Jesus Christ died for my sin and my trust and my hope of heaven and my confidence is in Him.

It's not in anything I've done. That's the only right answer. But do you see the opportunity for confusion? Sure is. Well, it's 1130.

I'd like to keep you but I must let you go. Otherwise, I would be manipulating you. I don't want to do that. So, let's stand and we'll be dismissed. Gracious Father, we thank you for what we have considered this morning.

We know that it has not been without flaw and difficulty. We know that we have not understood any of these issues as clearly as we would like to.

[51 : 41] but we trust that each of us now understand them well enough to be able to identify them and to beware of them. Thank you for the presence of each one here this morning.

Thank you most of all for yourself who has provided truth that we might know it, love it, embrace it, walk in it, and defend it.

We only want to do a better job of it. and we deliver ourselves to you for your grace and your power and your wisdom in Christ's name.

Amen.