

## Spirit-Filled Orthodoxy

Jesus said, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). In the work of God I see two camps and Christians are choosing sides. One side is motivated to worship in the spirit and should anything, even truth of Scripture, interfere with this, then rejection of the interference must take place. I recall reading many years ago from the pen of A. W. Tozer that the cross that Christ gives us will be an "overwhelming interference" in our life. Much of our worship is an "anything goes" atmosphere. Many of our worship services have become a production rather than an audience with God. If the tempo of the music is just right and the sermon is short enough, then for many this can be an opportunity for the Spirit to move. Have we forgotten that the Bible says, *"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (I Corinthians 1:21)? Whenever we consign the spoken word to the back-burner of public worship, we are softening the blows of Holy Spirit conviction and relegating salvation and Christian growth through the Word to a less important place than God intended. The Scripture says, *"...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching...."* When we take issues against preaching, we are in truth, taking issue with God. Preaching pleases God; does it please you? The Word of God says, *"Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings"* (I Thessalonians 5:19,20). We are not to quench the spirit! In the modern church many look at preaching as a spirit-quenching work. While the exact phrase is not said, by innuendo or statements made it is understood that preaching is expendable. Yet right after God says not to quench the Spirit, He declares that we should not despise prophesying. The definition of prophesying is: *a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden.* When we preach, we are aware that our words must be anchored in the inspired Scriptures and, God willing, as we pray, seek God's face, study to show ourselves approved and then by faith deliver what God has laid upon our hearts, we shall by God's grace, strike the fire for dedication and call forth the lost to salvation. When preaching is emphasized, the door of heaven is opened and a little of heaven is released on earth. *"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"* (Luke 15:10). *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10).

The other group to which I refer is driven and dominated by their quest and interpretation of truth only. The orthodoxy in this group should be admired, but goes one step beyond orthodoxy, often into idolatry. The idolatry is setting up the dogma and interpretation of Scripture, much like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, into equality with Divine inspiration. In this group we are memorized, catechized, and anyone who does not conform is chastised. In this group the Church fathers are honored, while the Heavenly Father is often ignored. The label is more important than the deeper truth that changes us in to the image of Christ. The enemy of this side is emotionalism. If someone displays the joy of the Lord, they are taunted and deemed not mature. The Bible says, *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"* (II Corinthians 3:5,6). To attempt to worship in truth without spirit is to use the Word of God as a lethal weapon rather than a life-giving fount. Rather than the Bible being the sharp, two-edged sword that does the fine details of a spiritual scalpel operating in the hands of a kind physician, it becomes a butcher knife that lacerates, mutilates, deforms, and leaves half-dead. Jesus said, *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you"* (John 16:13-15). So, we see under the Divine instruction from the Holy Spirit, we shall learn accurately, the Scripture and be balanced by the Spirit's leadership. Being truly filled with the Holy Spirit is not the enemy of orthodoxy; it is in fact, the surest way to safeguard against heresy.

So, my beloved membership and friends, here is the two-fold blessing of biblical worship. We are grounded deep in the Word of God: *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). Everything we believe and speak must be filtered through the Word of God! We speak where the Bible speaks; we are silent where the Bible is silent. Then we are dependent on the moment-by-moment infilling of the Holy Spirit, who guides us into the understanding and application of the Word: *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:18). To have spirit without truth is wild fire. To have truth without spirit is no fire. God desires spirit-enflamed, absolute truth. We should never have to sacrifice one for the other. When this happens we lose in both areas. Let our aspiration be spirit-filled orthodoxy!

- Pastor Pope -

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