

Walking In The Spirit

Workbook 2 – Studies 26-50

Communicating With God



25 brief studies plus 33 questions in the workbook section.
Please read all the studies before attempting the workbook questions

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How To Use This Workbook

This workbook can be used for personal study or in a group setting such as in a church or bible class.

It is in black and white, letter-sized format for easy reproduction & distribution.

This manual is designed for anyone who wants to learn about Walking In The Spirit. I have tried to avoid using any highly specialized theological language.

You may readily translate this manual into another language providing that you ask permission by sending me an email at: johned@aibi.ph

PERSONAL STUDY

Read one study per day and you will finish all 25 studies in just under a month. Then go on and do the exercises at the end of the manual. These 33 questions will help reinforce what you have learned.

WEEK-BY-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Do one or at most two studies per week in your group allowing plenty of time for discussion.

Check out the bible verses that are referenced.

Always ask what people are learning on an individual level from the study e.g. "Mary what was the point that struck you most today?"

Emphasize application to practical daily issues of life.

Each week collect prayer points from group members and close in prayer.

When you have completed the manual go right through all the exercises as a way of tying it all together.

AS A TRAINING COURSE

Send copies of the manual (by post or email) to the students and give them about one month to read the material and do the exercises (see personal study section above). Make yourself available as a mentor during this time.

Then gather all the students together for *at least* three hours, open in worship (30 minutes) and then review the manual and go through the exercise questions together.

Get the students to submit their answers to the exercises to you, then grade them. (There are 33 questions so each answer can be worth 3% with 1% given just for showing up!)

26: Entering The Kingdom Of God

In the next 25 studies we will be looking at the whole area of communication with God. This involves receiving direct personal communication from God through our spiritual senses (our spiritual ears and spiritual eyes) and receiving communication from God via other Christians e.g. through prophecy and through words of wisdom and knowledge. Of course any such communication must be tested against Scripture to make sure that it is both sound and biblical.

The framework for this discussion on heavenly communication is the biblical idea of the Kingdom of God, also known as the Kingdom of Heaven in the gospel of Matthew. The Kingdom of God is not a place such as a city, nation or island, nor is it an exclusive club such as a golf club that you can get a membership in if you are wealthy enough or sufficiently respectable. It is definitely not a physical kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom:

1 Corinthians 15:50 MKJV *(50) And I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.*

John 3:3 MKJV *Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

The Kingdom is entered into through repentance, humility and obedience:

Matthew 4:17 MKJV *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent! For the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

In the above verse Jesus tells us that repentance from known sin is an essential prerequisite. This is because the Kingdom of God is where God reigns in righteousness and truth and if we want to enter in we must be prepared to dwell in righteousness and truth. In fact a repentant person who obeys is better than a respectable person who pays only lip-service to obedience and does not actually go out and do the Father's will:

Matthew 21:28-31 MKJV *But what do you think? A man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work in my vineyard today. (29) He answered and said, I will not. But afterwards he repented and went. (30) And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and did not go. (31) Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you that the tax-collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*

Matthew 7:21 MKJV *Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven.*

This obedience involves a certain lowliness and humility of spirit:

Matthew 18:2-5 MKJV *And Jesus called a little child to Him and set him in their midst, (3) and said, Truly I say to you, Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. (4) Therefore whoever shall humble himself like this little child, this one is the greater in the kingdom of Heaven.*

Matthew 5:3 MKJV *Blessed are the poor in spirit! For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*

The kingdom is often opened to those who in this life have the least or suffer the most:

James 2:5 MKJV *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him?*

Matthew 5:10 MKJV *Blessed are they who have been persecuted for righteousness sake! For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*

On the other hand pride, riches and an independent spirit can be a real obstacle to entering the Kingdom of God:

Matthew 19:23-24 MKJV *Then Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven. (24) And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

The rich can become so satisfied with this world that they do not eagerly seek the Kingdom. Some end up trusting in their riches rather than God. Others even go so far as seeing themselves as 'little gods' in their own small kingdoms and fiefdoms. They do not need a god because they see themselves as demi-gods. It is hard for them to admit that without God they actually have nothing:

Revelation 3:17-20 MKJV *(17) Because you say, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, (18) I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire, so that you may be rich; and white clothing, so that you may be clothed, and so that the shame of your nakedness does not appear. And anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see. (19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; therefore be zealous and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with Me.*

One of the problems with the church in Laodicea (above verses) was a lack of spiritual perception – they needed healing of their spiritual eyes so they could see their situation and they needed to open their spiritual ears so they could hear the voice of Christ at the door! Their physical eyes only saw worldly goods: *I am increased with goods and have need of nothing*, however if they had possessed any spiritual perception they would have realized that they were in fact: *wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked*.

In fact Jesus deliberately limited entrance to the Kingdom of God to those who had some sort of basic spiritual perception:

Matthew 13:10-13 MKJV *And the disciples said to Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? (11) He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them. (12) For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whoever does not have, from him shall be taken away even that which he has. (13) Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not; nor do they understand.*

If Jesus had spoken in the normal terms of human philosophy then anyone with sufficient intelligence would have been able to enter the Kingdom of God. However by using parables and analogies Jesus mystified those who were wise in their own estimation while opening up the Kingdom to those who truly had some God-given ability to understand spiritual truth.

We need to grasp the principles of spiritual communication because we belong to a Kingdom that is spiritual in nature; and when it comes to spiritual realities the normal physical senses and normal human wisdom and the wealth and power of this world are of little or no use at all.

27: The Awakening Of The Conscience

The conscience is a very important part of our being that helps us to line our lives up with God's perspective on things. Conscience is from two Latin roots "con" meaning alongside/with and "science" meaning knowledge and it means to "know along with". The conscience operates along with our normal senses and a sort of sixth sense, a sense of what is right and wrong, good and evil.

In 1979 I read John Stott's exposition of the Sermon On The Mount and it changed me. My conscience went from being uninformed to informed and from unawakened to awakened. Jesus really woke me up to the fact that I dwelt in His moral Universe.

Hebrews 5:14 MKJV *But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, even those who because of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

When the conscience awakes the spiritual senses start working properly. I began to SEE the world differently and have a new perspective on issues such as materialism and competition. I began to HEAR God calling me to a different lifestyle and way of being Christian. I began to TOUCH the solid realities of the Kingdom of God, and to TASTE of the goodness of the Beatitudes.

A literary critic or a unbeliever could have read the same book (or even the Bible) and have been totally unaffected by it. While their eyes would read the book and their mind would understand the words, it would have been like a magazine article that was read one moment and ignored the next. Without an operational conscience the 'solid food' is not digested or understood. The moral sixth sense called conscience must be in working order for the comprehension of spiritual truth.

Let us go on to look at some bible verses about conscience:

The Operation Of Conscience:

John 8:9 MKJV *And hearing, and being convicted by conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the oldest, until the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

Romans 2:14-16 MKJV *For when the nations, who do not have the Law, do by nature the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law unto themselves; (15) who show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and the thoughts between one another accusing or even excusing one another, (16) in a day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

The Good Conscience

1 Timothy 1:5 MKJV *But the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned,*

Hebrews 13:18 MKJV *Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.*

Romans 9:1 MKJV *I tell the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,*

The Corrupted Conscience

1 Timothy 1:19 MKJV *holding faith and a good conscience, which some have put away and made shipwreck as to faith.*

1 Timothy 4:1-3 MKJV *But the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, (2) speaking lies in hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience, (3) forbidding to marry, saying to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

Titus 1:15 MKJV *To the pure all things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

From the above bible verses we find out that:

1. The conscience acts as a moral arbiter which convicts or excuses us of sin and is a common part of all humanity saved or unsaved (the Pharisees in John 8 and the Gentiles in Romans 2 were not Christians). Because of this inner judge we will be without excuse when we stand before God.
2. The conscience operates at its best and is most accurate when the person is filled with faith and the Holy Spirit and is living an honest and transparent life in obedience to Christ.

3. Christians can ignore their conscience, 'putting it away', and thus ending up in moral disaster so that they make shipwreck of their faith.
4. The conscience can be hijacked by the 'doctrines of demons' and become seared and unresponsive to moral truth. This leads to hypocrisy and deception.
5. The conscience can become defiled and impure so that every thought and every value is disgusting.

Many Christians now have very weak consciences and are barely conscious of their sin. Right and wrong seem to be regraded as unimportant. They are blind to their selfishness, and heedless of the needs of the poor or of the lost. In many churches even basic morality is lacking as couples 'live-in' together without shame or rebuke. This is unacceptable.

The Holy Spirit is holy and when He moves in revival He first convicts the consciences of church members to repent, to put away magic, witchcraft and idols, and to turn away from known sin.

There needs to be a giant shaking and reawakening of the conscience of the Western church if we are to see revival and if we are to enter into the Kingdom of God. We need to come to our senses and to be pierced inwardly over what we have become! We need to accept the Sermon On The Mount as our mandate for living and adopt the commandments of Christ with all seriousness and application. Moral apathy is not a valid Christian option.

Now I do not mean that we go back to the Law and to the ministry of condemnation and of death. Our role is to awaken the conscience so that God's Spirit may move into that person's life and bring love, joy, peace and power. But the Holy Spirit will not dwell in a moral garbage dump. Therefore we need to preach repentance, not so that we can condemn others but so that we can liberate them from sin and from its consequences.

We are allowing far too many believers to make shipwreck of their faith! We are not prodding them to stay away from sin. We are not activating the inner lamp of the conscience for them so that they have a healthy fear of God. Churches are full of ruined lives as a result.

We need to re-tune the consciences of Christians and renew their minds and hearts; repenting of the moral dullness of worldliness and advocating fervent Christ-like commitment to the values of Heaven. Because a good conscience is the one place where Heaven and Earth meet and agree.

28: Two Kinds of Conscience

The conscience is one way that God speaks to us and God's voice is heard most clearly when the conscience is undefiled and pure. Christians who are walking in honesty, integrity and truth will 'hear & see' God:

Matthew 5:8 MKJV *Blessed are the pure in heart! For they shall see God.*

John 14:21 MKJV *He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.*

John 7:17 HCSB *If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own.*

The pure in heart, those who love God, who desire to do God's will, and those who have the commandments and keep them – these are the people that God reveals Himself to. These are His flock and they hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:4,9,16,27).

On the other hand there is another darker kind of conscience. One that is demonic, seared and stubborn and which simply refuses to hear God's voice:

John 8:42-47 MKJV *Jesus said to them, If God were your father, you would love Me, for I went forth and came from God; for I did not come of Myself, but He sent Me. (43) Why do you not know My speech? Because you cannot hear My Word. (44) You are of the Devil as father, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it. (45) And because I tell you the truth, you do not believe Me. (46) Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me? (47) He who is of God hears God's Words. Therefore you do not hear them because you are not of God.*

John 10:25-28 HCSB *"I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me. (26) But you don't believe because you are not My sheep. (27) My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish--ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand.*

There are the ones who opposed Christ, who would not listen to His teachings or even consider the evidence of His miracles. God's words bounced off them. Miracles had no impact upon them. Jesus Christ himself, in the flesh, made no impression on their consciences. They shut Him out and crucified Him!

When Jesus calls the Pharisees 'sons of the Devil' He is maintaining that they had believed a lie and were children of the lie (or rather children of the Liar – that is Satan). Their inner nature was so hard and far from the truth that they were completely in the Devil's camp. This hardness seems to have led them to completely misunderstand the Scriptures even though they 'pored over them'.

Instead their defiled consciences turned godliness into a means of self-promotion:

John 5:38-47 MKJV *And you do not have His Word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He has sent. (39) You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are the ones witnessing of Me, (40) and you will not come to Me that you might have life. (41) I do not receive honor from men. (42) But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. (43) I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. (44) How can you believe, you who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from God only? (45) Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust. (46) For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me. (47) But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My Words?*

So when Jesus became popular their hearts were filled with hatred, rage and anger which kept them in darkness and blinded them to the Truth:

1 John 3:10-12 HCSB *This is how God's children--and the Devil's children--are made evident. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother. (11) For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another, (12) unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's were righteous.*

1 John 2:10-11 MKJV *He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no offense in him. (11) But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because darkness has blinded his eyes.*

And James talks of two kinds of inner wisdom:

James 3:14-18 MKJV *But if you have bitter jealousy and strife in your hearts, do not glory and lie against the truth. (15) This is not the wisdom coming down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. (16) For where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every foul deed. (17) But the wisdom that is from above is first truly pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. (18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Again we see a demonic kind of wisdom and a godly kind of wisdom. Paul adds some understanding to this in his epistle to Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:1-3 MKJV *But the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, (2) speaking lies in hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience,*

These lying, seducing spirits of demons aim to dull, damage and even sear the conscience so that it becomes totally unresponsive to God! Paul continues and tells Timothy that one of the attack points will be ascetic 'super-spirituality' :

1 Timothy 4:3-5 MKJV *forbidding to marry, saying to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (4) For every creation of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. (5) For it is sanctified through the Word of God and prayer.*

And the apostle Peter warns Christians of the opposite extreme – that of gross immorality and lawlessness the defiles the person and crushes the conscience so that the light of God goes out within them:

2 Peter 2:18-22 ISV *By talking high-sounding nonsense and using sinful cravings of the flesh, they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. (19) Promising them freedom, they themselves are slaves to depravity, for a person is a slave to whatever conquers him. (20) For if, after escaping the world's corruptions through a full knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled and conquered by them, then their last condition is worse than their former one. (21) It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to know it and turn their backs on the holy commandment that was committed to them. (22) The proverb is true that describes what has happened to them: "A dog returns to its vomit," and "A pig that is washed goes back to wallow in the mud."*

Your conscience is a spiritual battleground. You can choose obedience or disobedience. You can listen to God or you can listen to demons. You can be one of God's sheep who hear His voice or you can be stubborn and unbelieving. To this end we need to take our thoughts captive:

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 MKJV *(4) For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, (5) pulling down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ;*

29: Dwelling In The Light

What does it mean to be someone who walks in the light always having a good conscience before God and man?

Acts 24:16 MKJV *And in this I exercise myself, always to have a blameless conscience toward God and men.*

By saying *in this I exercise myself* Paul indicates that living in the light took some discipline. It involved him making clear choices about his lifestyle, thoughts and behavior and in his case about how he would carry out his ministry.

2 Corinthians 4:2 MKJV *But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor adulterating the Word of God, but by the revelation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

In these verse Paul gives us three verbs that give us a clue about how he disciplined himself: *renounced*, *not walking in*, *nor adulterating*.

Firstly, Paul put sinful and deceitful things far way from him, he *renounced* them. If he had once been doing them, he completely stopped doing them. Secondly, Paul also put his feet on the right track and refused to *walk* in the wrong track. He took control of his life's direction and did not walk in craftiness. Finally Paul chose purity – not *adulterating* (watering down) the word of God or mixing it with other teachings and philosophies. He chose to preach and teach the straight truth of God.

If we really want to have close fellowship with God the Holy Spirit, we must put away those things which harden our heart and defile our conscience. These include: rage, bitterness, aggression, hatred, foul language, gossip, and speaking evil of one another:

Ephesians 4:30-32 MKJV *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you are sealed until the day of redemption. (31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and tumult and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (32) And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*

We need to thoroughly cleanse our lives with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; consciously ridding ourselves of all sin:

Hebrews 9:14 MKJV *how much more shall the blood of Christ (who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God) purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

1 John 1:7-9 MKJV *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

The blood of Jesus is the powerful spiritual agent which scrubs us clean from sin as we admit and confess our sins. Jesus removes the guilt and penalty of sin, and he also removes the power of the sin nature - so that we no longer do 'dead works' - that is works or deeds which flow from sin and which lead to spiritual death (Romans 6:23).

This means we can 'have fellowship with one another' because the relationship obstructions caused by sin and jealousy are cleansed from our hearts. We are open, honest and transparent! True intimacy with God and man comes about as we choose to live in the Light!

In fact God takes us out of darkness and we become people of the light:

Ephesians 5:8-14 ISV *For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. (9) For the fruit of the light consists of every form of goodness, righteousness, and truth. (10) Determine what pleases the Lord, (11) and have nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness. Instead, expose them for what they are. (12) For it is shameful even to mention what is done by people in secret. (13) But everything that is exposed to the light becomes visible, (14) for everything that is visible is light. That is why it says, "Wake up, O sleeper! Arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."*

There is a very strong contrast here. The light must have nothing to do with the darkness. It is a binary choice. We cannot go back and have a little bit of sin on the side. There is to be a complete break:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 ISV *(14) Stop becoming unevenly yoked with unbelievers. What partnership can righteousness have with lawlessness? What fellowship can light have with darkness? (15) What harmony exists between Christ and Beliar, or what do a believer and an unbeliever have in common? (16) What agreement can a temple of God make with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said: "I will live and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people." (17) Therefore, "Get away from them and separate yourselves from them," declares the Lord, "and don't touch anything unclean. Then I will welcome you. (18) I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters," declares the Lord Almighty.*

When we make this break from the world of darkness, we will find God is right there welcoming us and calling us His sons and daughters. When we leave the darkness we head toward fellowship with the Lord and He will call us His people!

As we saw in the Ephesians verses above, those who dwell in the light are characterized by 'every form of goodness, righteousness and truth'. The Christian life is to be filled with good behavior, righteous behavior and truthful living. Living in the light is an entirely positive and honest lifestyle! It is solid and full of God-blessed integrity and love.

In direct contrast to the 'sons of the Devil' whose hearts are filled with hatred, rage, envy and selfish ambition (see yesterday's study) those whose dwell in the light have hearts which are filled with love:

1 John 2:8-10 MKJV *Again, I write a new commandment to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true Light now shines. (9) He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now. (10) He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no offense in him.*

If we love our brother we abide in the light and there is no offense in us! (1 John 2:10)
Such love indicates that we are born of God and are children of the Most High:

1 John 4:7 MKJV *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God.*

Luke 6:35 MKJV *But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return. And your reward shall be great, and you shall be the sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.*

So we see that the people who live in the light are people full of love. These are the pure in heart that behold the Lord (Matthew 5:5). Those who truly hear God are the spiritually soft, the unhardened, the meek and gentle and obedient, the ones filled with kindness, honesty, mercy and generosity. These are truly His sheep. Their conscience is awakened and undefiled. They walk in purity and truth.

We cannot be both receptive to God and also deliberately disobedient to the commandments of Jesus Christ. When God clearly speaks to us in our conscience we must obey that prompting. (Of course if we feel prompted to do something doubtful, foolish or sinful that is not our conscience speaking but rather our flesh or even the Devil). When God tells us to refrain from sin, we should stop right there and then. And when God tells us to let go of rage, or to apologize, or to show kindness to another we should immediately carry out that prompting of our conscience.

The conscience is a very sensitive instrument within you that was created so that you could always know what is right and what is wrong and download spiritual truth from Heaven. The conscience is made to dwell in the light and will lead you towards that Light. You should eradicate all moral compromise from your life right now before it further affects your conscience.

You must seek to live a spotless and blameless life in all holiness and love of the truth. God's forgiveness and grace will be available to you as you do this. God wants you to be holy as He is holy (1Peter 1:16) and the Holy Spirit will lovingly coach you as you accept the challenge of fully living in the light (John 14:26, 1 John 2:20,27).

30: The Conscience And The Word Of God

What is the secret of powerful, anointed biblical preaching? What did the prophets and apostles have in common? (And what is often lacking today..) They knew the constitution of mankind – and that the conscience is made to hear the Word of God. So when the prophets and apostles spoke they aimed their words at the consciences of their hearers:

2 Corinthians 5:11 MKJV *(11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. But we are revealed to God, and I trust also that we are revealed in your consciences. (see also 2 Corinthians 4:2)*

True preaching of the Word of God is sharp and to the point, going deep into people and judging the thoughts and intents of the heart:

Hebrews 4:12 MKJV *For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Preaching is not a cultural activity, it is a spiritual activity and the words we choose must line up with the way God wants things said:

1 Corinthians 2:13 MKJV *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

Thus preaching is not impressing people with the wisdom of the world - but is rather the application of the word of God to their hearts and minds and consciences:

1 Corinthians 1:20-23 MKJV *(20) Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the lawyer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom did not know God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. (22) For the Jews ask for a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; (23) but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.*

Paul's preaching was not in enticing words of human wisdom. Instead it was a practical demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

1 Corinthians 2:4-9 MKJV *(4) And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

This is because he wanted people's faith to rest on real evidence that they had observed and would remember - and not on words and arguments that could be forgotten or abandoned when a better orator came long.

Paul goes on to say that his preaching was a mystery to those who were worldly-minded:

1 Corinthians 2:7-9 MKJV *(7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God has hidden, predetermining it before the world for our glory; (8) which none of the rulers of this world knew (for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory). (9) But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard," nor has it entered into the heart of man, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

God has prepared wonderful things for us, for our glory, and we can only grasp these wonderful things through the Spirit who reveals them to us.

1 Corinthians 2:10-12 MKJV *(10) But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man within him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.*

The Holy Spirit is given to us so that we might know 'the things that are freely given to us by God'. In other words the Spirit reveals the full blessings of Christ! Growing in Christ includes a growing understanding of how much God has blessed us already, and how much He wants to abundantly bless us in the future.

Now how does this relate to preaching? Anointed preaching follows the Holy Spirit. If the task of the Holy Spirit is to reveal *the things that are freely given to us by God* then, logically, that also becomes the job of the preacher who speaks the words of the Spirit:

1 Corinthians 2:13 MKJV *(13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

The Spirit-led preacher reveals the things that are freely given to us by God and does so using plain words and Holy Spirit power comparing spiritual with spiritual.

Preaching like this may cause a division between the carnal listeners and the spiritual listeners:

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 MKJV *(14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged by no one. (16) For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

In fact true preaching, such as that of Jesus and the apostles, often created a reaction one way or the other as some people were convicted and yet others protested.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 HCSB (14) *But thanks be to God, who always puts us on display in Christ, and spreads through us in every place the scent of knowing Him. (15) For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (16) To some we are a scent of death leading to death, but to others, a scent of life leading to life. And who is competent for this? (17) For we are not like the many who make a trade in God's message for profit, but as those with sincerity, we speak in Christ, as from God and before God.*

So true anointed preaching:

- a) Asks God the Holy Spirit to reveal the blessings of Christ from the word of God.
- b) Receives this wisdom and understanding from God
- c) Preaches that revelation in the demonstration of the Spirit's power aiming for the conscience of the hearers and speaking words from God that pierce to the dividing of soul and spirit.
- d) Does not worry about the reactions of those who object
- e) Continues to preach in sincerity and truth, not watering down God's word or seeking personal financial profit

Now let me be clear that this process does not occur apart from the Bible. Anointed preaching is not some mystical expounding of personal notions. The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible as His primary source of instruction. The Bible is God's inerrant, infallible Word which speaks of Christ on every page. The Bible is the Holy Spirit's textbook and He is our tutor and coach. It is as we humbly and prayerfully study the Bible that the Holy Spirit reveals that which we can speak in order to convict the consciences of the hearers and turn them towards God.

31: Downloads From Heaven Part 1

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 HCSB *(9) But as it is written: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what has never come into a man's heart, is what God has prepared for those who love Him. (10) Now God has revealed them to us by the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the deep things of God.*

Now which things God has revealed to us by the Spirit? Things that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man. This is Heaven's true 'extra-sensory perception'! [The Devil's ESP is but a poor imitation] It is God's information, information that lies beyond the physical senses or even beyond our own deductive abilities. And it is information about our blessings! About *what God has prepared for those who love Him*. The 'deep things of God' (v.10) are His amazing and astounding blessings!

Ephesians 2:4-7 MKJV *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us (5) (even when we were dead in sins) has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved), (6) and has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, (7) so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

It seems that we are so blind to our blessedness that it needs an act of divine inspiration to reveal God's love that is freely given to us!

1 Corinthians 2:11-12 MKJV *(11) For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man within him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and the passage above tells us that He alone knows the things of God (though Jesus, being God, is also included John 16:13-15). The Holy Spirit alone is truly aware how much God loves us and cares for us and has given for us!

Only the Holy Spirit knows the amazing plans and power of God and how He will act on our behalf. Only the Holy Spirit knows the full nature of God and can reveal Him to our hearts. Only the Holy Spirit knows the fulness of our redemption and can show us what we will inherit in Christ Jesus.

Only the Holy Spirit knows the Glory and how God will receive us into that glory and transform us to be like Himself, an immortal, imperishable spiritual being full of the life of God. And only the Holy Spirit understands the full meaning of scripture, the promises, the prophecies and the covenants that are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus!

During the Last Supper Jesus explained how the Holy Spirit would reveal all truth to the apostles:

John 16:13-15 MKJV *However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will announce to you things to come. (14) He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will announce it to you. (15) All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and will announce it to you.*

So we see that the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ, which have been delivered over to Him by the Father, and He announces them to us. This includes the *things to come* – that is blessings that the apostles had not yet entered into (such as Pentecost) and the unfolding of God's plan. All these are: *the things that are freely given to us by God.* (2 Corinthians 2:12 above) These are things into which angels long to look!

1 Peter 1:12 MKJV *To them it was revealed that not to themselves, but to us, they ministered the things which are now reported to you by those who have preached the gospel to you in the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

No w no amount of logic or persuasive preaching on its own can convince you of how much God loves you. You will still have doubts. The human heart is like that. We are naturally guarded about things that 'seem to be too good to be true'. But when the Holy Spirit swoops down in revival power people KNOW – and they know that they know – that God loves them absolutely and completely. You need a download of God's love from Heaven if you are to understand such things!

Romans 5:5 MKJV *And hope does not make us ashamed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.*

Only God can open your eyes to His goodness so that you truly fall in love with Him!

Ephesians 3:16-19 MKJV *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; (17) that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, (19) and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.*

As the Holy Spirit goes to work in our inner man we receive power and strength to understand the love of Christ which 'passes knowledge' (Heaven's extra-sensory perception again!) and we begin to download the glory so that we are filled with all the fulness of God.

Downloads from Heaven come about when God's Spirit blesses your human spirit with the knowledge of God and of Christ and of all the good things that we will inherit. Downloads from Heaven may happen as we worship, as we study the Bible, as we discuss things with other believers or even as we look at the night stars. A divine 'Aha' moment will happen and we will understand a bit more than we did before.

Now some people make a false distinction between the Spirit and the Bible, as if a really Spirit-led person does not need the Scriptures. On the contrary even the most casual reading of the New Testament shows that Jesus and the apostles had a very high regard for Scripture (Matthew 5:17, 2 Timothy 3:16). Now if their priority as 'the ministry of the Word and prayer' (Acts 6:4) - that should be our priority also!

Downloads from heaven occur in conjunction with studying the Bible and do not, in any way, replace or over-ride the Bible. I teach exegesis and hermeneutics and take verse-by-verse bible studies in a local bible college. I also teach on the spiritual life in these devotionals. Both go together in a balanced Christian approach to revelation.

32: Downloads From Heaven Part 2

What are these downloads from Heaven like - and how can they help you to serve the Lord? How can you get in on the flow of God's personal revelation, direction and power?

Acts 10:19-20 MKJV *And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. (20) Therefore arise and go down and go with them without doubting, for I have sent them.*

As Peter was puzzling over his vision on the rooftop (Acts 10) he gets a 'download from Heaven' – the Holy Spirit speaks to Peter in a perfectly understandable sentence full of specific, present-moment instructions that Peter was to obey.

And things can get much more complex than that, especially when visions are involved:

Acts 9:10-16 MKJV *And there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias! And he said, Behold me, Lord. (11) And the Lord said to him, Arise and go into the street which is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold, he is praying, (12) and has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him so that he might receive his sight. (13) And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem. (14) And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your Name. (15) But the Lord said to him, Go! For this one is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before nations and kings and the sons of Israel. (16) For I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake.*

This brief vision include everything from specific street directions to theology! It even includes a two-way dialogue between Ananias and Jesus. Again it is something Ananias was to do in the present moment in order to advance the Kingdom of God.

Another instance occurred in the church at Antioch:

Acts 13:2-3 MKJV *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, So, then, separate Barnabas and Saul to Me for the work to which I have called them. (3) Then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they let them go.*

Again the instruction is straightforward and specific, names the people to be set aside for ministry and the church put it into action straight away, releasing Barnabas and Saul after some further prayer and fasting. Implementation was not delayed say three or four years into the future!

Phillip the evangelist gets both an angel and the Holy Spirit involved in his ministry:

Acts 8:26-29 MKJV *And the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, on the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is a deserted place. (27) And he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem to worship, (28) was returning. And sitting in his chariot he read Isaiah the prophet. (29) Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near and join yourself to this chariot.*

So we see that the Holy Spirit is continually involved in directing the ministry of those who are fully committed to God. This guidance tends to be clear and specific, is related to a particular situation in ministry, and is generally is to be applied sometime in the fairly immediate future. (Even the prediction of a famine by Agabus was possibly so the church could start making proper preparations).

Such guidance comes to a great variety of people including laymen like Ananias, as well as apostles, prophets and evangelists. In fact downloads from heaven are built in to the New Covenant and flow from the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel where all kinds of believers of all ages, genders and classes of society would have abundant access to revelation:

Acts 2:16-18 MKJV *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: (17) "And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy.*

Missionary biographies are full of testimonies to the fact that when ordinary people commit themselves to the Kingdom of God they will receive direction at every turn. Now does anyone give directions to a lamp-post or to a telephone pole? No – because we know that the telephone pole will always stay just where it is. Some people are so 'fixed' in their ways that God does not often direct them. It has been said that it is much easier to steer a ship that is moving – and so God steers His saints that are already involved in ministry (great or small). We see a good example of this "moving with the movers" in Acts chapter 16:

Acts 16:6-10 MKJV *And coming through the Phrygian and the Galatian region; and by the Holy Spirit being forbidden to speak the Word in Asia; (7) having come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia. But the Spirit did not allow them. (8) Then passing by Mysia, they came down into Troas. (9) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A certain man of Macedonia stood, begging him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us! (10) And after he saw the vision, we immediately tried to go into Macedonia, gathering that the Lord had called us in order to preach the gospel to them.*

Paul's missionary band first tried to enter Asia and God said "No" ; they then tried Bithynia and God closed that door. Finally at Troas they get a vision of the Macedonian call. Paul, Titus and Timothy were already listening to God and were seeking the next place to minister. They were prepared to obey, so they received the heavenly vision.

There is often a sense of stretching, risk, effort or personal cost associated with such instructions. Phillip could have said "Hey I am having a great ministry here in Samaria, do I have to go all that way down to Gaza just to stand in the desert?" Or Peter could have said "Oh no I will really be criticized if I go and speak to those Gentiles!" and of course Ananias had significant reservations about going to pray for Saul the violent persecutor of the early church. But in each of these cases obedience to the Holy Spirit brought a blessing that far outweighed the risk involved. Indeed some of these situations defied the common sense wisdom of the day and the instructions from God would have seemed 'just plain weird' to those involved. That is certainly how Peter felt after his rooftop vision and how many others have felt as they have obeyed the Lord.

The center of God's will may not be located within our comfort zone! Yet God's downloads may also be for our comfort and edification, for instance when God spoke to Paul after he was opposed in Corinth:

Acts 18:9-10 MKJV *And the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and be not silent. (10) For I am with you, and no one shall set on you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city.*

Or God's instructions to Cornelius:

Acts 10:3-6 MKJV *About the ninth hour of the day he saw plainly in a vision an angel of God coming to him and saying to him, Cornelius! (4) And he was gazing at him, and becoming terrified, he said, What is it, lord? And he said to him, Your prayers and your merciful deeds have come up for a memorial before God. (5) And now send men to Joppa and call for Simon, whose last name is Peter. (6) He is staying with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside. He will tell you what you must do.*

Or the deliverance of Peter from jail;

Acts 12:6-9 MKJV *And behold! An angel of the Lord stood by, and a light shone in the building. And striking Peter's side, he raised him up, saying, Rise up quickly! And his chains fell off his hands. (8) And the angel said to him, Gird yourself and put on your sandals. And he did so. And he says to him, Throw your robe around you and follow me.*

To summarize:

- a) God the Holy Spirit can give us specific, clear, plain language instructions
- b) These generally are related to ministry situations in the immediate or near future
- c) All Christians are entitled to receive them because of the New Covenant
- d) However those who are already involved and obedient receive them more often
- e) Obeying these instructions results in glory for God
- f) There may be significant risk or discomfort involved in obeying God's instructions
- g) Yet they may also be for our comfort, consolation, deliverance or blessing

33: Downloading Wisdom From Heaven

The Holy Spirit fills people with intelligence, wisdom and craftsmanship and can make an ordinary person possess extraordinary gifts:

Exodus 31:1-6 HCSB *The LORD also spoke to Moses: (2) "Look, I have appointed by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. (3) I have filled him with God's Spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and ability in every craft (4) to design artistic works in gold, silver, and bronze, (5) to cut gemstones for mounting, and to carve wood for work in every craft. (6) I have also selected Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be with him. I have placed wisdom within every skilled craftsman in order to make all that I have commanded you:*

Bezalel is the first person in the Bible to be called 'Spirit-filled'. Now notice the kind of wisdom here – craftsmanship, designing artistic works in gold, silver and bronze, working with gemstones and fine timbers. And this wisdom was not just restricted to Bezalel – it continued down the line to Oholiab and was given to 'every skilled craftsman' who would work with them on the tabernacle. This was practical wisdom and skill that was divinely imparted by God so that these men could carry out God's designs and do God's work.

The original design for the Tabernacle was given to Moses who received it directly from God:

Exodus 25:8-9,40 HCSB "They are to make a sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them. (9) You must make it according to all that I show you--the design of the tabernacle as well as the design of all its furnishings." *Be careful to make everything according to the model of them you have been shown on the mountain.*

Hebrews tells us that the Tabernacle was a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things:

Hebrews 8:5 HCSB *These serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, ... For He said, Be careful that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain.*

And later on, during the construction of the Temple, God gave the design of the Temple to David who then passed it on in intricate detail to Solomon (1 Chronicles 18:11-19).

1 Chronicles 28:11-19 HCSB *(11) Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule of the temple and its buildings, treasuries, upper rooms, inner rooms, and the room for the place of atonement. (12) The plans contained everything he had in mind for the courts of the LORD's house,(David concluded) "By the LORD's hand on me, He enabled me to understand everything in writing, all the details of the plan."*

God can impart wisdom about even the most practical details of life such as farming!

Isaiah 28:23-29 HCSB *Listen and hear my voice. Pay attention and hear what I say. (24) Does the plowman plow every day to plant seed? Does he continuously break up and cultivate the soil? (25) When he has leveled its surface, does he not then scatter*

cumin and sow black cumin? He plants wheat in rows and barley in plots, with spelt as their border. (26) His God teaches him order; He instructs him. (27) Certainly black cumin is not threshed with a threshing board, and a cart wheel is not rolled over the cumin. But black cumin is beaten out with a stick, and cumin with a rod. (28) Bread grain is crushed, but is not threshed endlessly. Though the wheel of the farmer's cart rumbles, his horses do not crush it. (29) This also comes from the LORD of Hosts. He gives wonderful advice; He gives great wisdom.

So we see God teaching and instructing the farmer on how to plant, harvest and process his crops! This is the opposite of the ideas of Greek philosophy - that would not deign to involve God in such mundane matters as wheat and barley. Yet Isaiah tells us that God willingly gives the farmer wonderful advice and great wisdom! God is practical.

Some people are much wiser than others. They are 'on the ball', they make the right decisions, they have a 'right spirit' or an 'excellent spirit' within them and they are full of good sense possessing a balanced perception of life. This is why Joseph and Daniel and Nehemiah and Ezra and Esther and many others rose to positions of power and influence. They were given wisdom from God. They got downloads of wisdom from Heaven.

How do we receive such valuable wisdom and insight to help us in our daily life? Like everything else in the New Covenant, wisdom is a free gift of God, given by grace in response to faith:

James 1:5 HCSB *Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.*

James 3:17 HCSB *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy.*

God wants you to ask Him for wisdom. He wants to fill you with wisdom and knowledge in every area of your life - both spiritual wisdom and practical wisdom. He can:

- a) Give you a vision of a divine pattern or way of doing things as He did with Moses
- b) Fill you with skill in your work as God did with Bezalel and the craftsmen
- c) Help you to figure out the right approach to different things as God did with the farmer
- d) Give you grace and inspiration to design something e.g. David & the Temple
- e) Give you wisdom in administration as God gave Daniel, Joseph and Nehemiah
- f) Impart a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 1:17)

Wisdom can also include knowing the times and seasons, discernment in relationships, skill in speech and anointing for ministry. God can download these things into your spirit just as He did for Solomon when Solomon prayed for wisdom.

1 Kings 3:11-12 HCSB *So God said to him, "Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to understand justice, (12) I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again.*

1 Kings 4:29-30 HCSB *God gave Solomon wisdom, very great insight, and understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore. (30) Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.*

God can download wisdom from Heaven into your spirit and into your mind and heart to face every situation in life from how to handle your children to how to design a circuit board. God is interested in every aspect of your life and wants to help you to succeed in your every endeavor. This includes ministry but is not restricted to ministry. If you abide in Christ the Holy Spirit will open and anoint your mind and teach you about all things:

1 John 2:27 HCSB *The anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. Instead, His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in Him.*

Practical Application: Write down three areas where you need wisdom in life and then pray for God to give you this wisdom according to His gracious promise in James 1:5.

34: Downloading The Supernatural Gift Of Knowledge

This morning I was driving back from dropping my wife off at the train station when the Lord told me to stop at a certain cafe and order a plate of bacon and eggs and hash browns. I hesitated to do this as I had only \$5 in my wallet and this cafe was not particularly cheap. Anyway I went to the cafe and found there was a Friday breakfast special – bacon, eggs and hash browns for \$3 - so I even got a cup of coffee thrown in as well! (And the special only applied to the bacon, eggs and hash browns!!)

Now that is not very earth-shattering. No revival, no one came to the Lord, no big deal. However that is precisely why I am sharing it! God is also concerned with the small things and even knows when I need a delicious breakfast. Now I did not get that idea 'on my own' – in fact I resisted the idea. I had no human knowledge of the 'special'. It was a small chunk of supernatural knowledge – a mini-sized heavenly download.

On a more significant level God can give divine information to solve very urgent problems such as the bitter waters of Marah:

Exodus 15:22-25 MKJV *And Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. (23) And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, because it was bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. (24) And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? (25) And he cried to Jehovah. And Jehovah showed him a tree. And when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a decree and a law for them, and there He tested them.*

Now God supernaturally imparted knowledge about a certain tree that would cure the bitter waters: *And he cried to Jehovah. And Jehovah showed him a tree. And when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.*

God can put His ideas in our brains. And if the idea is from God it will work, it will fix the problem, and it will sweeten the bitter waters.

God can tell you what doctor to go to for healing, what medicine or herb to drink, what stocks to buy or even how to fix your computer (this has happened to me more than once).

God can also tell you which person to witness to, or what to do next in your ministry or what is going on in the heart and life of a person that you are counseling. People may then say 'how could you have known that!' . That is the supernatural gift of knowledge.

Paul received revelation from God about what to do during the storm and the subsequent shipwreck:

Acts 27:21-26 ISV *After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete. You would have avoided this hardship and damage. (22) But now I urge you to have courage because there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. (23) For just last night an angel of God, to whom I belong and whom I serve, stood by me (24) and said, 'Stop being afraid, Paul! You must stand before the emperor. Indeed, God has given you all who are sailing with you.' (25) So have courage, men, for I trust God that it will turn out just as he told me. (26) However, we will have to run aground on some island."*

and a few verses later on Paul directs the ship's crew:

Acts 27:30-36 ISV *Now the sailors were trying to escape from the ship. They had lowered the lifeboat into the sea and pretended that they were going to lay out the anchors from the bow. (31) Paul told the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you cannot be saved." (32) Then the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and set it adrift. (33) Right up to daybreak Paul kept urging all of them to eat something, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting and going without food, having eaten nothing. (34) So I urge you to eat something, for it will help you survive, since none of you will lose a hair from his head." (35) After he said this, he took some bread, thanked God in front of everyone, broke it, and began to eat. (36) All of them were encouraged and had something to eat.*

God was turning Paul's situation around through supernaturally given knowledge. Instead of being a prisoner Paul was now the leader and commander. People were listening to Paul because he had information from God, and this information was proving to be highly accurate.

An extraordinary example of supernaturally given knowledge is in Daniel chapter 2. King Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing dream and had asked not just for an interpretation – but for the astrologers to tell the King the dream itself with no prior hints or information. The Chaldean astrologers were terrified as King Nebuchadnezzar was threatening to kill them all. They told the King that this was an impossibility, indeed that no one could know what the king had dreamed! But Daniel and his three companions went to prayer and received an answer from God that solved the problem:

Daniel 2:19-23 MKJV *Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. And Daniel blessed the God of Heaven. (20) Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. (21) And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. (22) He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. (23) I thank You, and praise You, O God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might, and have made known to me now what we asked of You. For You have now made known to us the king's matter.*

Daniel knew God as One who reveals the deep and secret things and who knew even what was in darkness. God is a giver of wisdom, might and understanding. And God can give us knowledge that is completely inaccessible to normal human reason (such as knowledge of what someone has just dreamed).

Later on Daniel would go on to say that such revelation belongs to God alone and did not flow from any wisdom that might be in Daniel:

Daniel 2:27-30 MKJV *Daniel answered before the king and said, The secret which the king has demanded cannot be shown to the king by the wise men, the conjurers, the horoscopists, or the fortune-tellers. (28) But there is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets and makes known to King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.... But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living man, but so that the meaning might be known to the king, and that you might know the thoughts of your heart.*

God reveals things to us not so that we might be prideful but so that we might serve God better: *so that the meaning might be known to the king, and that you might know the thoughts of your heart.*

God can reveal anything at all to you from how to fix a diesel generator on the mission field to how to preach a sermon next Sunday. As we saw with the farmer in Isaiah 28:23-29 God can even give knowledge about wheat and barley and dill and cummin!

This can include complex topics such as languages. I once had a teaching visit of a few months to a remote tribal area in Papua New Guinea. The local language was highly complex with 14 verb tenses yet in a few weeks I had grasped enough to be able to prepare my lectures and do handouts and outlines for the book of Isaiah. Now it was God who downloaded those language skills into me! It was His wisdom and not mine!

When you pray like Daniel and his three friends then God will give you a heavenly download of knowledge that will solve the problem. When you cry out like Moses by the waters of Marah then God will point out the solution that sweetens the bitter waters. And when you stand for God in the midst of the storm like Paul did then you will be taken from captive to commander through the specific information about the situation that God will impart to you.

Please believe that God can give you the knowledge that you require – and diligently and prayerfully seek Him for it!

35: Different Types of Heavenly Downloads

There are at least four kinds of downloads from Heaven that I can detect in Scripture:

1. Downloads that change the way we think at a deep level such as those that give us a much greater awareness of God's love or which give us a far deeper knowledge of Christ. Paul often prays for this kind of wisdom to be given to the early Christian churches (Ephesians 1:17-19; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:9,10)
2. Downloads that impart specific wisdom and skill such as building the Tabernacle or the wisdom given to Solomon about justice and various kinds of other matters
3. Downloads which impart knowledge that solves immediate problems: such as God telling Daniel what Nebuchadnezzar's dream was, or pointing out a tree to Moses that would turn the bitter waters sweet.
4. Prophetic downloads of the rhema word of God that expose the hearts and minds of people or which reveal the plans and purposes of God. (We will examine this in more detail in the next study)

All of these types of downloads are given by the one Holy Spirit, for the glory of God, for the edification of the saints, and for the building up of the Church.

Because they are from the same source they must all work together. It is not a matter of picking and choosing which kind of wisdom that you prefer. You must ask, seek and knock, in prayer, for the wisdom you need for the work that you are called to do.

Now some may feel that they have sufficient wisdom. Perhaps you have a M. Div. Or even a Ph.D. - and praise the Lord that you do! But that will not show you the answers to many of the situations that you will encounter in life. You may have to deal with a suicidal person, or with a demon or with some very complex ministry situation. When you get the feeling that you are 'swamped' and unable to cope, then you should cry out to the Lord for a heavenly download of wisdom that will turn everything around.

The first way that God may turn everything around is by changing you! In particular God may change your beliefs and perspective on things, renewing your mind so that you see situations through His eyes and with His love, grace and eternal patience. Most crises either disappear or become much smaller when viewed from the Lord's perspective. We learn that He is faithful and that His grace will be sufficient for us, even in our extreme weakness:

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 MKJV *(9) And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may overshadow me.*

The second way that God may change everything around is by giving you a new skill. By downloading something into your system that you can use over and over again. You may be a naturally shy person but God may turn you into a great preacher, or you may be unlearned but God may open up the Scriptures to you so that you 'have the Bible in your blood'.

The third way that God may change everything is by giving you specific, immediate knowledge that defies explanation but which solves the problem at hand. You may know what someone is thinking, or where they need healing, or what the desires of their heart are, or God may give you a piece of knowledge 'out of the blue' on how to fix something. You may 'just know' that someone is dangerous or you may be able to repair a marriage by suddenly knowing where the real problem lies.

Fourthly God may allow you to speak a prophetic word into a situation. God may give you the gift of New Testament prophecy for the building up of the church. This is the ability to speak His 'rhema word' into specific life and ministry situations. The 'rhema word' is a spoken word, utterance, or saying that is given by God the Holy Spirit. Rhema is used 40 times in the New Testament:

It is referred to by Jesus during the Temptation in the Wilderness:

Matthew 4:4 MKJV *But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word (rhema) that proceeds out of the mouth of God."*

Rhema includes the words that Christ spoke during His ministry:

John 3:34 MKJV *For He whom God has sent speaks the Words (rhemata) of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.*

Luke 7:1 MKJV *And when He had ended all His words (rhemata) in the ears of the people, He entered into Capernaum.*

and the words spoke by the angels to the shepherds at Jesus' birth:

Luke 2:17-19 MKJV *And seeing, they publicly told about the word spoken to them concerning this Child. (18) And all those who heard marveled about the things spoken to them by the shepherds. (19) But Mary kept all these sayings, meditating in her heart.*

And the rhema word brings eternal life:

John 6:63-68 MKJV *It is the Spirit that makes alive, the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life. ... Then Jesus said to the Twelve, Do you also wish to go away? (68) Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life.*

The rhema word can only be perceived by the spiritually receptive:

John 8:47 MKJV *He who is of God hears God's Words. Therefore you do not hear them because you are not of God.*

And listening to and abiding in God's rhema word opens up possibilities in prayer:

John 15:7 MKJV *If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done to you.*

Peter and the apostles then went and preached the rhema word that brought life:

Acts 5:19-20 MKJV *But the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors by night and brought them out, and said, (20) Go! Stand and speak all the words of this Life to the people in the temple.*

The 'rhema word' (when used in its theological sense which is the vast majority of the time) is the word that strikes home, the word that brings eternal life, the preached word of power and transformation. It is the anointed word of God, like the words that fell from the lips of Jesus and the apostles. It is the special word of spiritual wisdom that is downloaded directly from heaven. More on this in the next study.

BRIEF ADDENDUM FOR THOSE WHO LIKE GREEK

The very general word for "Word" or saying is logos. Logos (and its direct derivatives) are used around 302 times in the Greek New Testament. Logos is employed for all sorts of purposes. It can mean Christ as the eternal word of God, or it can mean a saying or teaching of Scripture. Logos can also refer to a spoken reply of Jesus or a statement by one of the bible characters. Logos is the all-inclusive umbrella term for communication and can even include some 'rhema words'. Thus rhema is a distinct sub-set of logos.

The written Scriptures are generally referred to by the terms gramma (as in letter writing) or graphe (specifically Scriptures) these words are used some 66 times in the New Testament - of which 52 refer to the Bible or portions thereof.

There is also considerable overlap and interaction - since Jesus is the logos and the Bible speaks of Christ and Christ speaks the rhema word into situations - and the rhema words of Christ when written down in the gospels became the Bible - and so on.

36: Prophecy In The New Testament

Last Thursday evening I was invited to a large conference at which various wild doctrines were propagated (including one that God had a physical body with DNA!!) and all of these new doctrines were justified on the basis of being 'prophetic revelations' to the head pastor of this group (which I now believe to have been a cult). Prophecy is being abused left and right by such unscrupulous people and often for considerable financial gain. Just because someone claims to have received something under the anointing does not mean that you should believe it.

In this study we will look at what is true and false, and what is right and wrong, regarding prophecy in the Church, particularly in the NT. I do believe that NT prophecy is for today, and has a place, but I want to look very carefully at what that place is.

First we need to understand New Testament prophecy is substantially different from Old Testament prophecy in that:

a) The OT prophets only prophesied up until the time of John the Baptist, who was the last of the line. There is no one like the OT prophets around today:

Matthew 11:11-14 MKJV *Truly I say to you, Among those who have been born of women there has not risen a greater one than John the Baptist.... For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. (14) And if you will receive it, this is Elijah who is to come.*

b) Prophecy in the New Testament does not, at any point, form the basis of Scripture. The New Testament was written by apostles, and not by prophets. For instance there is no 'book of the prophet Agabus' (Acts 11:28-30, 21:10,11). The grand exception is the book of Revelation, which was a prophecy given to the **apostle** (not prophet) John.

c) Prophecy in the New Testament is much more common and widespread : **Acts 2:17 MKJV...***"And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*

d) OT prophets were rare but in the NT there may be a number of prophets in the same church congregation (Acts 13:1-4, 1 Corinthians 14:29-31)

e) New Testament prophets are not powerful authority figures (like Moses, Ezekiel etc) but rather are 'judged' by the congregational leadership and their prophecies are weighed up (1 Corinthians 14:29-31).

f) Prophecy in the New Testament is never the basis for the development of doctrine. Doctrine proceeds from the knowledge of Christ, and from deep examination of the Scriptures - in a sensible and reasoned fashion.

This confusion has come about in part because there are two main words for prophecy in the Bible and they are very different. The word for OT prophecy is the Hebrew word nabi – which means someone who is inspired by the spirit of a god or demon (there were also false prophets). When authentic these nabi wrote Scripture, called own judgments and had enormous cultural influence.

The word for NT prophecy is the Greek word "prophetes" which is a very broad word that includes philosophers and mathematicians (the mathematician Pythagoras and the philosopher Epimenides were considered to be 'prophets' in the Greek world. Epimenides is even called a prophet in Titus 1:12) Such prophecy included scientific inquiry and the development of insight and understanding. There was certainly a spiritual component and the idea of inspiration was still important but it was not the same kind of majestic inspiration as that of the major Hebrew prophets.

Now, unfortunately, we have taken these two very different concepts (nabi and prophetes) and translated them by using the exact same English word. This has resulted in untold spiritual confusion in the area of prophecy. The OT "nabi" prophet is a very narrow specialized sub-set of the much broader Greek word "prophetes". We cannot import the authoritative nabi concept into every use of the word prophet in the New Testament. Instead we must look at each context to see what is appropriate.

What then are the functions of the normal congregational New Testament prophet?

- a) Edification, exhortation and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3,31) especially of the Church (1 Corinthians 14:4,
- b) Bringing about the conviction and repentance of unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:24,25)
- c) Imparting of spiritual gifts and the calling out of missionaries: (1 Timothy 1:18, 4:14, Acts 13:1-4)
- d) Warning about upcoming events of a rather immediate nature so that Christians can take the correct course of action – e.g the prophecies of Agabus about (i) the famine and (ii) the imprisonment of Paul (Acts 11:28-30, 21:10,11).

The NT congregational prophets 'prophecy in part' (1 Corinthians 13:9), as through a mirror dimly and as such inaccuracies may (and do) occur. Therefore prophecies were to be tested (1 Corinthians 14:29-31) and the good prophecies were to be sorted out, kept and held onto (1 Thessalonians 5:20,21) and they were not to be despised (1 Thessalonians 5:20). In fact all Christians were to seek to have the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1,5 39) so they could build up the Church.

The thing that strikes me about such prophecies is their immediate application. The person walks into the service and is convicted of sin and falls down before God or, in the middle of a prayer meeting, people sense that God is sending out Paul and Barnabas. Even the prophecies of Agabus do not relate to events centuries in the future but for the times that are immediately at hand.

Thus NT prophecies are for the present context. They relate to the immediate edification of the church and the equipping of those who serve in it.

NT prophecies are for edification, exhortation, and comfort; for the building up of the saints; for the conversion of sinners; and for the anointing and sending out of workers into God's vineyard and for the warning of the church about things in the immediate future.

NT prophecy operates only within the Church. It is not authoritative 'over nations' as some claim. Nor does it have a grand far future application; nor does it establish new doctrines; and it certainly does not create any body of revelatory work that is to be added to or compared with Scripture. The Bible must be the rule and the standard by which all prophecies are judged. Prophets are to be reverently submitted to the Scriptures, and to Christ, at all times.

If NT prophecy is kept within its proper biblical bounds then it can be a tremendous help in building up the Church – which is why Paul desired for all to prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:5 EMTV *(5) Now I wish you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you should prophesy; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edification.*

1 Corinthians 14:39 EMTV *(39) Therefore, brothers, seek to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.*

Even Moses desired the same thing!

Numbers 11:29 MKJV *And Moses said to him, Are you jealous for my sake? Would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them!*

So we are to seek to prophesy, so that we may build up the Church, with fitting words for each occasion, that come from the Spirit of God. Yet we must do so humbly and within the bounds of Scripture.

37: NT Prophecy Part 2

In the last study we found out that New Testament prophecy involves speaking an anointed word, given by the Holy Spirit, for the edification of the church. The general outpouring of the gift of prophecy is part of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:17,18).

NT prophecy nearly always applies to events that are immediately at hand, and is for the conviction and repentance of unbelievers and for the edification, exhortation and comforting of the saints. It is to be weighed up by mature believers and when so validated is so useful that Paul encouraged everyone to desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14: 1,5,31,39).

Prophecy is viewed as part of the normal package of spiritual gifts:

Romans 12:6-8 MKJV *Then having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, if prophecy, according to the proportion of faith; (7) or ministry, in the ministry; or he who teaches, in the teaching; (8) or he who exhorts, in the encouragement; or he who shares, in simplicity; or he who takes the lead, in diligence; or he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.*

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 MKJV *(7) But to each one is given the showing forth of the Spirit to our profit. (8) For through the Spirit is given to one a word of wisdom; and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; (9) and to another faith by the same Spirit; and to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; (10) and to another workings of powers, to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits; and to another kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues. (11) But the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing separately to each one as He desires.*

1 Corinthians 12:28 ISV *(28) God has appointed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who perform miracles, those who have gifts of healing, those who help others, administrators, and various kinds of tongues.*

And is given to the Church as a blessing that results from Jesus filling of all things with the Holy Spirit (which in turn flows from the the Ascension):

Ephesians 4:10-12 ISV *The one who went down is the same one who went up above all the heavens so that he might fill everything. (11) And it is he who gifted some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, and still others to be pastors and teachers, ...*

NT prophecy is a normal spiritual occurrence that arises when the Church is filled with the Holy Spirit. It is as normal as the gifts of faith, administration and teaching. When the Church is filled with the Holy Spirit and faith then anointing flows more readily giving rise to supernatural words of wisdom, knowledge and prophecy.

The difference between prophecy and teaching is that prophecy reveals hidden things such as the secrets of the heart, while teaching expounds known truth with clarity so it can be understood. Both are very valuable, but prophecy has the added bonus that it can also impart spiritual gifts:

1 Timothy 4:14 ISV *Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy, accompanied by the laying on of the elders' hands.*

Which is why it is involved in sending out God's workers:

Acts 13:1-2 ISV *Now Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius from Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. (2) While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set Barnabas and Saul apart for me to do the work for which I called them."*

And may sometimes be 'life-maps' that God's workers are to follow:

1 Timothy 1:18 ISV *Timothy, my child, I am giving you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may continue to fight the good fight*

Indeed many a Christian worker has had a "Macedonian Call" that has directed their entire life and ministry. Prophecy can also be used to encourage believers by exhorting them with words that carry a powerful anointing and which are specific to their particular situation:

Acts 15:32 MKJV *And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, exhorted the brothers with many words and confirmed them.*

Prophecy adds an extra depth to spiritual ministry within the congregation by bringing words from God to particular life situations. It is complementary to the teaching ministry which lays down general truths and principles to live by. For instance a person hearing a teaching sermon may be convicted about going overseas to serve as a missionary but be perplexed as to how and when and where and with whom. A reliable congregational prophet may be able to fill in some of these details as they pray over the person e.g. by saying that they can see them teaching in a bible college in Thailand.

The New Testament tells us to desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14;1,39), and not to despise it or to quench it (1 Thessalonians 5:19,20). We are to encourage the development of the prophetic gift – with the confidence that we will be able to sort out the wheat from the chaff as we go along. Starting people off in small groups is often wise as small groups allow everyone to have a turn at sensing what God is saying, give rapid feedback and are generally gentle in their approach to others.

38: NT Prophecy 3 – How Prophecy Should Be Used

In today's study I will focus on the proper use of anointed congregational-level prophecy. I am deliberately excluding the book of Revelation from the discussion since Revelation is not a model for the average Christian with the gift of prophecy in the local church. This is because Revelation is: (a) A prophecy by one of the Twelve founding apostles and such absolute spiritual authority figures no longer exist (b) The bulk of Revelation is given outside of the local congregational mode and (c) Revelation is not just prophecy it is also 'apocalyptic' – a different genre.

New Testament congregational prophecy was used for guiding, sending and gifting individuals and for the edification, exhortation and comforting of the Church and for the conviction of sinners. It was also used for 'short-range' predictions such as Agabus predicting a famine so the Church could prepare and react with compassion.

New Testament congregational prophecy was never used 'over the nations' e.g to prophesy with authority against Babylon, Rome or Israel, or to predict long-term events hundreds of years into the future. There are no collections of writings by NT prophets and they did not publish any books.

The NT prophets were not the untouchable spiritual giants of the OT, rather they were fallible men and women who heard from God and had their words evaluated by the local congregational leadership. They were submitted to an orderly system of church government.

I have no problem with prophecy that speaks with insight into someone's life or which exhorts a church in the things of Christ. I do have problems with people who make wild economic or political predictions or who prophesy over whole countries boldly claiming such authority from the Lord. Not only do such prophecies often fall flat and discredit the 'prophet' but, when made public, they can also discredit Christ and His Church. I believe that many such people are indeed well-intentioned and even godly but they are confusing NT prophecy with the line of OT prophets (see study 36).

A very disturbing modern practice is where some 'prophets' ask for a per-prophecy fee of say \$50 for a ten-minute prophetic session. This is similar to the sin of Simon Magus in Acts 8. While the laborer is certainly worthy of his hire their ministry support should come from a general source such as a church salary, gifts and tithes or from team support. We do not see Jesus or the apostles charging a per-service fee for spiritual ministry. When it comes to spiritual ministry such as miracles, healing, or prophecy the rule is 'freely you have received, freely give'. Financial support generally came from others in the area such as the worthy 'man of peace':

Matthew 10:7-13 MKJV *And as you go, proclaim, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand. (8) Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. You have received freely, freely give. (9) Do not provide gold nor silver, nor copper in your purses, (10) nor a bag for the journey, nor two coats, nor sandals, nor staves. For the workman is worthy of his food. (11) And into whatever city or village you enter, inquire who within it is worthy. And there abide until you go away from there. (12) And when you come into a house, greet it. (13) And if the house is worthy, let your peace come on it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.*

Luke 10:4-9 MKJV *Carry neither purse nor bag nor sandals. And greet no one by the way. (5) And into whatever house you enter, first say, Peace to this house. (6) And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest on it. If not, it shall return to you, (7) And remain in the same house, eating and drinking the things shared by them; for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Do not move from house to house. (8) And into whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. (9) And heal the sick that are in it, and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near you!*

In fact Paul could say at the end of his ministry:

Acts 20:33-35 MKJV *I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. (34) Yea, you yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my needs, and to those who were with me. (35) I have shown you all things, that working in this way we ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

There is much spiritual yearning in the heart of growing Christians and this is easily exploited. Everyone wants to 'hear a word from the Lord that is especially for them'. Even more so when it speaks to tough times and promises tremendous financial breakthrough or grand ministry results - or when it solves thorny political situations by offering a simple revelation of the future of the world.

Jeremiah contrasts true prophets who get a valid word from the Lord with false prophets who often just relate their dreams or who simply copy their ideas from each other:

Jeremiah 23:25-32 MKJV *(28) The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream. And he who has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says Jehovah. (29) Is not My Word like a fire? says Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? (30) So Jehovah says, Behold, I am against the prophets who steal My Words each one from his neighbor. (31) Jehovah says, Behold, I am against the prophets who use their tongues and say, He says. (32) Jehovah says, Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams and tell them, and cause My people to go astray by their lies and by their lightness. Yet I did not send them nor command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says Jehovah.*

The true Word of God is like fire or a hammer that breaks the rock. The true prophecy is the wheat while the false prophecies are light, dreamy, and insubstantial. The false prophecies are copied from one person to the next as the false prophets practice to deceive the people of God. One sign of a false prophecy is that 'it does not profit this people at all'. In my view most of the prophecies of 'financial breakthrough' fall into this category - they create an strong unfulfilled hope and damage the person's faith in God.

As I see it the valid uses of NT prophecy are:

1. Convicting sinners and bringing them to repentance by disclosing the secrets of their hearts
2. Edifying, exhorting and comforting the saints
3. Predicting situations that the Church or its leaders need to immediately respond to
4. Giving a personal word that acts as a guiding principle for those doing God's work

5. Prophetically imparting spiritual gifts at ordination or its equivalent
6. The proper sphere of operation is the church congregation
7. NT prophecy is submitted to Scripture, to the local church leadership and possibly also to the other prophets who may also be present

On the other hand I think we should be cautious when we observe:

8. Prophets charging per-service fees such as \$50 per prophecy
9. Prophets predicting economic times or telling you to stock up on goods they are selling (which happened with the AD 2000 computer bug scare)
10. Prophets claiming authority over nations, world events or even over the weather!
11. Prophets predicting end-time events, or identifying the anti-Christ, or making wild and rash political statements
12. Prophets writing books of their own prophecies, particularly if they give weight to them or imply they are authoritative for the church as a whole.
13. Prophets refusing to come under the headship and authority of the local church
14. Prophets adding to Scripture or, on the other hand, down-playing Scripture in favor of 'spiritual experiences' and 'revelations'
15. Prophets who tolerate idols, witchcraft, astrology or the occult or who turn people from the simplicity of Christ to bizarre philosophies and 'deep truths'.
16. Prophets who live lives of immorality or of vast material excess or who condone or encourage such things.
17. Prophets who are harsh, condemning and legalistic, or who seek to dominate individuals or a local church - often in an effort to sound like the OT prophets.
18. Prophets who seek to introduce new major doctrines and even heresies based on sudden visions and revelations (such as the well-known preacher who claimed a revelation that there were 'nine gods - a trinity of trinities')
19. Prophets who promote holy water, medical cures, herbs, and remedies or who promote the veneration of relics.
20. Prophets who claim revelations from saints or from the Virgin Mary

As you can tell my view is that there is little, if any, biblical justification for what is being done by some elements in the prophetic movement today. However this does not mean that there is no biblical validity to NT prophecy, or to the idea of the prophetic gift or to the role of the congregational prophet. There is still some wheat amidst the chaff!

39: NT Prophecy 4 – Who Can Prophecy?

When Peter stood up on the Day of Pentecost he answered the question of who is able to prophesy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 2:16-18 MKJV *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: (17) "And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy.*

Here we see sons, daughters, young men, old men, men-servants and maid-servants included in God's prophetic activity. Prophecy is a universal spiritual activity in the New Testament. It goes along with the general outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the believer. It is also part of the abundance of revelation given through the promised Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-16) and the writing of God's laws within our hearts (Hebrews 8)

In fact it seems that a whole congregation could participate in the prophetic:

1 Corinthians 14:31 MKJV *(31) For you may all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be comforted.*

And that even young women are not exempt:

Acts 21:8-9 MKJV *And the next day those around him going out, Paul came to Caesarea. And entering the house of Philip the evangelist, he being of the seven, we stayed with him. (9) And there were four virgin daughters to this one, who prophesied.*

Praying and prophesying seem to go together as twin activities available to all believers and which are exercised by both males and females:

1 Corinthians 11:4-5 MKJV *(4) Every man praying or prophesying (5) But every woman who prays or prophesies*

At Pentecost, Cornelius' house, and at Ephesus we find whole groups of completely new believers prophesying:

Acts 19:6-7 MKJV *And as Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (7) And all of the men were about twelve.*

Thus prophecy is so general and universal an activity that it must be very different from teaching and preaching.

Indeed while on one hand everyone is encouraged to desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1); yet on the other hand James warns that 'not many' should desire to be teachers:

James 3:1 ISV *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more severely.*

Thus the old argument that NT prophecy is "just the same as teaching and preaching" starts to fall apart. There are just too many differences:

- a) NT prophecy is for all believers, teaching is for a few mature believers
- b) Women could prophesy freely, while only men could teach in NT times (1 Tim 2:12)
- c) Brand new believers with little understanding still prophesied - while as yet they would have been completely unable to teach the Word.
- d) Young people 'sons and daughters' could prophesy whereas generally only elders would teach in the church

NT prophecy is simply reporting the spiritual impression that you are receiving from the Holy Ghost; using words which are given to you by God:

1 Corinthians 2:9-13 EMTV (9) *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (10) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. (11) For who knows the things of a man, except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we did not receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, in order that we might know the things granted to us by God; (13) which we also speak, not in words taught in human wisdom, but in words taught by the Holy Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

God can and does speak to anyone, and through anyone, that He wishes - and they can be young or old, male or female, slave or free. NT Prophecy is an immediate word from the Holy Spirit that comes to a believer because God wants it spoken in order to reveal something. Prophecy does not require age or education. However it does require spiritual openness and sensitivity. Prophecy is freely available to all whose consciences have been sensitized to the voice of the Holy Spirit (more on that later in this series).

If everyone can prophesy then what is the difference between 'someone who prophesies' and a prophet? A NT prophet is someone that the body of Christ recognizes in that role, whose prophetic utterances have been tested and found to be accurate, and whose prophetic gift is well developed and mature so that it is available for ministry at any time. Such prophets are only second to apostles in the body of Christ:

1 Corinthians 12:28 EMTV (28) *And those whom God has appointed in the church are: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, kinds of tongues.*

Ephesians 4:11-12 EMTV *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, (12) for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ,*

Because prophets can ordain others and impart gifts e.g. the gift of evangelism that Timothy had (2 Timothy 1:6, 4:5), they are essential to the development of other ministries and for the building up of the Church as a whole.

40: NT Prophecy 5 – The NT Prophet

Yesterday we saw that prophecy is for all Spirit-filled Christians. Does this therefore make all Spirit-filled Christians into NT prophets - a position second only to that of the apostles? The short answer is "No!" There is a difference between those who operate in prophecy as a mature ministry gift and those who prophesy from time to time as God graciously touches their lives.

There is a clear instance of this in the Old Testament, in the book of Numbers:

Numbers 11:24-25 MKJV *And Moses went out and told the people the words of Jehovah, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them all around the tabernacle. (25) And Jehovah came down in a cloud and spoke to him, and took of the spirit on him and gave it to the seventy elders. And it happened when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they never did so again.*

The 70 elders prophesied once in their lives, but there were not 'prophets'. Moses was the prophet, the elders were just ordinary people with a personal spiritual experience of prophesying. And in the New Testament we find something similar with the twelve rather confused disciples at Ephesus:

Acts 19:4-7 MKJV *And Paul said, John truly baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe into Him coming after him, that is, into Jesus Christ. (5) And hearing, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And as Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (7) And all of the men were about twelve.*

Here the disciples were prophesying as part of their initial Christian experience.

On the other hand a NT prophet is someone that the body of Christ recognizes in that role, whose prophetic utterances have been tested and found to be accurate, and whose prophetic gift is well developed and mature so that it is available for ministry at any time.

We observe apostles, prophets and teachers 'hanging out together' in the New Testament and using their gifts to edify the body of Christ by planting churches, equipping and gifting leaders and instructing the believers for their edification, exhortation and comfort.

Acts 13:1-2 MKJV *And in Antioch some among the existing church were prophets and teachers. (such as Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. (2) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, So, then, separate Barnabas and Saul to Me for the work to which I have called them.*

Prophets who are named as such in the New Testament include Agabus (Acts 11:27, 21:10), Judas & Silas (Acts 15:32), and possibly Barnabas and Paul (by inference in Acts 15:30-32 combined w. Acts 13:1-2 above). Silas later works with Paul as a team of an apostle (Paul) and a prophet (Silas) to raise up an evangelist (Timothy – Acts 16:1, 17:4).

In NT times someone with the title of 'prophet' worked as part of an apostolic team with the overall goal of mission, church-planting and strengthening of the brethren. For example after the dispute over circumcision a letter was written to the Gentile churches and sent to Antioch along with Judas and Silas:

Acts 15:30-33 MKJV *Then indeed they being let go, they came to Antioch. And gathering the multitude, they delivered the letter. (31) And when they had read it, they rejoiced at the comfort. (32) And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, exhorted the brothers with many words and confirmed them. (33) And remaining for a time, they were let go in peace from the brothers to the apostles.*

Judas and Silas delivered the letter from the apostles, then used their prophetic gift to exhort the brethren and when the mission was completed they returned to the apostles in Jerusalem (but Silas ended up remaining in Antioch). So the prophets worked with the apostles yet had the ability to do their own teaching and exhorting and also could make decisions about the direction of their ministry.

Here are the approximate categories of prophets that I observe in the New Testament:

1. People who prophesy just once or very infrequently, generally as part of the initial experience of Spirit baptism.
2. Congregational prophets who take their turn prophesying in a service and whose prophecies are weighed up by those present to sort out the wheat from the chaff
3. Prophets like Agabus and Silas who work with apostolic teams in order to strengthen the church and who operate in prophecy as a mature ministry gift.
4. False prophets who enter into the church in order to flatter, deceive and destroy.

Now we have no great concerns about categories 1 & 3 – one who prophesies very occasionally or the mature and recognized godly prophet. But categories 2 and 4 are a problem. What is the difference between a congregational prophet 'in training' who makes a genuine mistake in hearing God and a 'false prophet' that wants a personal following and tries to split and destroy the fellowship? How can we tell the difference between 'genuinely mistaken' and 'deviously deceptive'?

Every spiritual gift has a learning curve: evangelism, teaching, administration, healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, discernment of spirits – and prophecy! A spiritual gift may take five, ten or even fifteen years to become fully mature and in the process many unintended mistakes get made. We need to give those developing the gift of prophecy the same amount of leeway - while still holding them to biblical standards.

The godly congregational prophet, who is still on the 'learning curve' is open to correction by the elders and by Scripture and seeks after righteousness and truth. There is a desire to bless the body of Christ and not to tear it apart.

They will be content starting one on one or in a small group. They do not seek to have people follow after them personally but only after Christ. They respect the church eldership and there is a wonderful humility and graciousness as they seek to develop the gift of prophecy appropriately for the edification of all present.

On the other hand the false prophet is not seeking after righteousness nor are they open to biblical correction. They are ego-centric, carnal, boastful and flattering and often use swelling words to deceive the people of God. They are divisive and seek after a following and such false prophets can be greedy and even immoral (see Jude 1:10-16). False prophets will be judged by God and should be immediately removed from any church they attempt to join (2 John 1:9-11).

2 Peter 2:1-3 MKJV *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who secretly will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction. (2) And many will follow their pernicious ways, and because of them the way of truth will be evil spoken of. (3) And through covetousness they will use you for gain with well-turned words; for whom judgment from of old does not linger, and their destruction does not sleep.*

The false prophets can be discerned by the fruit of their lives (see also Study 38 – NT Prophets 3) and their lawlessness and iniquity (their inability to follow after holiness and God's righteousness). The false prophet will be arrogant and divisive and demonstrate evil fruit. Though they may work mighty miracles we are never to follow them:

Matthew 7:15-23 EMTV *"But beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. (16) You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grape clusters from thorns, or figs from thistles? (17) Thus every good tree produces good fruit, but a rotten tree produces evil fruit. (18) A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit. (19) Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. (20) Consequently, by their fruits you shall know them. (21) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name we cast out demons, and in Your name we did many mighty works?' (23) "And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you! Depart from Me, you who work iniquity!"*

Matthew 24:24 EMTV *For false christs and false prophets will be raised up, and they will show great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*

Yes we should all seek to prophesy. Yet if only a few should claim to be teachers (James 3:1), I think that perhaps even fewer should claim the title of the office of NT prophet. And we need to apply biblical correction and discernment to all who claim to move in prophecy.

41: The Spiritual Senses

There are physical senses that we use for detecting light, color, shape, sound, chemicals, pressure and so on and then there are spiritual senses which we use for detecting things such as good, evil, beauty, and truth, and for receiving communication from God.

Hebrews 5:14 EMTV *But solid food is for the mature, for those because of their practice have their senses trained for the distinguishing of both good and evil.*

The prophets often referred to these spiritual senses as spiritual 'eyes' and 'ears':

Isaiah 6:9-10 MKJV *And He said, Go, and tell this people, You hear indeed, but do not understand; and seeing you see, but do not know. (10) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn back, and be healed.*

Isaiah 29:9-10 MKJV *Stand still and wonder! Blind your eyes and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. (10) For Jehovah has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes; He has covered the prophets and your heads, the seers.*

Isaiah 32:3-4 MKJV *And the eyes of those who see shall not be dim, and the ears of those who hear shall listen. (4) And the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of those who stutter shall be ready to speak plainly.*

These spiritual senses are our ability to discern God's spiritual truth. When people are in spiritual decline it appears that their spiritual senses are dull, and when people experience revival it appears that their spiritual senses are awakened and made sharp.

The spiritual senses are distinct from the physical senses. The Pharisees seem to have had very good physical vision (particularly for noticing other people's faults) but they were blind to obvious spiritual truth:

Matthew 23:16-17 MKJV *Woe to you, blind guides, saying, Whoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. (17) Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold?*

In the next few studies we shall look at the various spiritual senses one by one - but here is a very quick summary:

Eyes: Scan the environment, see the future, see visions, perception of people & events

Ears: Hearing words from God, obedience, servanthood, knowing the will of God

Taste: "Taste and see that the Lord is good" - discernment via experience

Smell: Fragrance of holiness, rapid discernment, "smells funny" / avoids toxic teaching

Touch: Communication of holiness, healing, anointing and spiritual power, also 'touch not the unclean'

The opposite to the spiritual senses are conditions such as spiritual blindness, deafness, returning to one's vomit (dysfunctional taste / smell) and being so insensate that one is unable to know even when one is being beaten (dysfunctional sense of touch e.g. Proverbs 17:10, Isaiah 1:5,6). We also find the prophets referring to maladies such as spiritual drunkenness and spiritual sleep where people lose all judgment and discernment.

Returning to Hebrews 5:14 (above) we find that the spiritual senses enable us to: (a) digest solid spiritual food and (b) discern between good and evil - and that the spiritual senses require constant practice in order to become mature and effective.

So if we are to advance in the Christian life we must constantly exercise our spiritual senses. We cannot be slothful and apathetic. Nor can we be stubborn, hard-hearted or complaining. Rather we are to be alert, watchful, curious, constantly learning from God as eager disciples. In fact those disciples who 'see and hear' are called blessed:

Matthew 13:16-17 MKJV *But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. (17) For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear what you hear, and have not heard them.*

Matthew 16:15-18 MKJV *He said to them, But who do you say I am? (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. (17) Jesus answered and said to him, You are blessed, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but My Father in Heaven. (18) And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

So one of the keys to blessing in the spiritual life is to have spiritual senses that understand what God is saying and doing. If we are capable of receiving God's direct revelation then we will be like the apostle Peter: *You are blessed, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but My Father in Heaven.*

On the other hand those who fail to perceive obvious spiritual signs are wicked, adulterous, under judgment and headed for destruction:

Matthew 16:1-4 MKJV *The Pharisees and the Sadducees came to Him, tempting Him. And they asked Him that He would show them a sign from Heaven. (2) He answered and said to them, When it is evening, you say, Fair weather; for the sky is red. (3) And in the morning, Foul weather today; for the sky is red and gloomy. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky, but you cannot see the signs of the times! (4) A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. And there shall no sign be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah. And He left them and went away.*

The spiritual senses act as part of the conscience (discerning good and evil) and are part of our inner world rather than our outer world. A person who is physically blind may have a great sense of spirituality while a person who has 20/20 vision may be completely blind to spiritual truths. This was the case of Jesus' healing of the man born blind:

John 9:39-41 MKJV *And Jesus said, I have come into this world for judgment, that they who do not see might see, and that they who see might be made blind. (40) And those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, Are we also blind? (41) Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, We see. Therefore your sin remains.*

Note the puzzling phrase: *and that they who see might be made blind.* There is definitely a 'use it or lose it' aspect to each of the spiritual senses. Both Isaiah and Jesus said that their ministries would make some people spiritually blind and spiritually deaf. In other words, those people who ignore God's appeal in their conscience, over and over again, become hardened in their inner worlds and their spiritual senses become dull and unresponsive:

Matthew 13:9-15 MKJV *....He who has ears to hear, let him hear. (10) And the disciples said to Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? (11) He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them. (12) For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whoever does not have, from him shall be taken away even that which he has. (13) Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not; nor do they understand. (14) And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which said, "By hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and shall not perceive; (15) for this people's heart has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."*

To summarize today's study:

- 1) We have distinct spiritual senses which are part of our conscience / inner world
- 2) The spiritual senses are inner senses and are different from our five outer senses
- 3) The spiritual senses enable us to digest "solid food" and to discern good and evil
- 4) The spiritual senses require practice and constant use - "use it or lose it"
- 5) The spiritual senses enable us to receive direct revelation from God
- 6) Good spiritual senses are necessary for Christian maturity and blessing
- 7) The use of the spiritual senses is emphasized by the prophets and by Jesus.

42: The Spiritual Senses - Sight

The spiritual senses are normal parts of the conscience and are standard components of our God-given spiritual sensitivity. We use them for detecting good and evil and for discerning spiritual matters. Thus they are entirely different from occultic powers such as the 'third eye' which are amoral and often immoral. The Christian spiritual senses operate lovingly, ethically, morally and in line with the Word of God. God expects every obedient and mature Christian to have their spiritual senses trained and in good working order.

Hebrews 5:14 MKJV *But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, even those who because of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

In this study we will examine the spiritual sense of 'sight':

Matthew 5:8 MKJV *Blessed are the pure in heart! For they shall see God.*

As the conscience is washed by the blood of Jesus and our minds and hearts are purified we are able to 'see God' - not physically because that would kill us, but in our spirit with our spiritual sense of sight. It is the 'pure in heart' that see God and the 'impure' person is quite unable to do this. This is a good argument for holiness of life and conduct.

Indeed when our spiritual sense of sight is properly focused and beholds the Lord then we are transformed from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18 MKJV (18) *But we all, with our face having been unveiled, having beheld the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord Spirit.*

Our spiritual eyes can be filled with light or filled with darkness:

Matthew 6:22-23 MKJV *The light of the body is the eye. Therefore if your eye is sound, your whole body shall be full of light. (23) But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

The context of the above verse is the Matthew 6 passage on the love of money (Matthew 6:19-34). If the eye of the person is evil, greedy, materialistic and carnal the body will be 'filled with darkness'. But if the eye of faith is on the character of the Lord and His faithful, sovereign provision then the person will be filled with light and revelation. The spiritual sense of sight is aided by having the right objects in view, that is by focusing our lives on the spiritual and not on money or on worldly things.

Another source of spiritual darkness is a murderous spirit of anger, rage or unforgiveness which totally overwhelms our ability to see clearly (in the spiritual sense):

1 John 2:9-11 MKJV *He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now. (10) He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no offense in him. (11) But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because darkness has blinded his eyes.*

Angry, judgmental people have impaired spiritual vision. They think they can see clearly because they are so good at spiritual nit-picking - but Jesus tells them that they actually have a 'log in their eye'.

Matthew 7:1-5 MKJV *Judge not, that you may not be judged. (2) For with whatever judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with whatever measure you measure out, it shall be measured to you again. (3) And why do you look on the splinter that is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam that is in your own eye? (4) Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the splinter out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? (5) Hypocrite! First cast the beam out of your own eye, and then you shall see clearly to cast the splinter out of your brother's eye.*

In fact their judgment is so impaired that they miss the truly large issues while focusing on absolute trivia - they strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Matthew 23:23-24 MKJV *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and you have left undone the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith. You ought to have done these and not to leave the other undone. (24) Blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*

On the other hand Jesus spiritual sense of sight revealed the Father to Him so that He was able to know the Father's will and to 'see what the Father is doing' :

John 5:19-20 MKJV *Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do. For whatever things He does, these also the Son does likewise. (20) For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all the things that He Himself does. And He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel.*

John 8:38 MKJV *I speak what I have seen with My Father.....*

Jesus saw spiritual things so clearly that He was able to completely understand people:

John 1:46-51 MKJV *(47) Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile! (48) Nathanael said to Him, From where do You know me? Jesus answered and said to him, Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. (49) Nathanael answered and said to Him, Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel! (50) Jesus answered and said to him, Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. (51) And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*

Jesus was even able to see the future of cities He beheld - such as Jerusalem:

Luke 19:41-44 MKJV *And as He drew near, He beheld the city and wept over it, (42) saying, If you had known, even you, even at least in this day of yours, the things for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. (43) For the days will come on you that your enemies will raise up a rampart to you, and will surround you, and will keep you in on every side. (44) And they will tear you down, and your children within you, and will not leave a stone on a stone because you did not know the time of your visitation.*

The spiritual sense of sight is so valuable that Paul prays for the Ephesians to be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation, and for the eyes of their understanding to be opened:

Ephesians 1:17-20 MKJV *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength (20) which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,*

Why don't you pray that prayer for yourself, or for someone else, right now!

43: Spiritual Senses – Sight 2

In the last study we saw that the spiritual sense of sight enables the Christian to be perceptive of spiritual realities and truth and to discern good from evil. The pure in heart behold God (Matthew 5:8) and as they do so they are transformed from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17). This leads Paul to pray for the Ephesian Christians:

Ephesians 1:17-20 MKJV *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength (20) which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,*

Now what does Paul mean when he is praying for the 'eyes of their understanding to be enlightened'? The Ephesians are already Christians - so Paul is not just talking about conversion (though that could also be included). Paul is praying for a growth in spiritual understanding by people who are already believers.

Contrary to popular wisdom our minds are not perfect receptacles of knowledge. They are fallen, darkened and in need of redemption (Romans 8:7, Colossians 1:21, Ephesians 4:17) . Many highly intelligent people have tried to study Scripture and come away baffled because the unenlightened natural mind cannot comprehend the things of God:

1 Corinthians 2:14 MKJV *(14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Something amazing has to happen if we are to ever be able to grasp spiritual truth! We need to be 'enlightened in our understanding' - even long after we become believers, and this process is called the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 4:23).

Our mental faculties are renewed as we deliberately admit the Holy Spirit to them. Consecration and devotion lead to renewing of the mind. We need to be 'living sacrifices' devoting time to prayer and meditation and setting our minds on things above. The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace but the mind set on the flesh is death (Romans 8:4-6).

It is not just a matter of knowing more Greek and Hebrew and having better bible knowledge, there needs to be a deliberate opening of the inner mind to God or else it will all just turn into dry scholasticism and arguing over theological sub-points.

Paul tells us that the 'eyes of our understanding' are opened by the Holy Spirit who gifts us with a 'spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him' . So the spiritual gift of sight is related to the gaining of wisdom, revelation and knowledge in the inner portion of a person. The spiritual gift of sight leads to those 'Aha moments' when we exclaim "I see that! I understand that now!" - particularly with regard to Christ and to things of God. The spiritual gift of sight makes the Bible into a living book for the believer.

The word for 'understanding' is the GK. Word "dianoias" . This word means 'deep thoughts' or 'imaginings' or can even indicate the spiritual part of one's inner being. It is when the deepest part of us comes into possession of the Truth.

Paul mentions three things that are the direct result of this being spiritually enlightened by the Holy Spirit and they are:

- a) Knowing the hope of His calling
- b) Knowing the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints
- c) Knowing the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe

You will not learn the hope of God's calling on your life without the Holy Spirit showing it to you! And you cannot behold the benefits or glory of being a Christian unless they are revealed to you from Heaven! And only God can speak quietly to your spirit to show you the greatness of His power and all that He wants to do on your behalf!

On the other hand if the Christian life seems to be hopeless, unprofitable, inglorious, and powerless it is because you have been listening far too much to the spirit of this world and far too little to the Spirit of God! The eyes of your understanding need to be enlightened!

Enlightenment is what happens when you light the lamp, or flick on the switch, or open the shutters, blinds or curtains and finally let light into the room. It is also what happens when dawn comes and ends the dark night. Thus there are two kinds of enlightenment – an external one where God shines light in like the dawn, and an internal one where we finally open the shutters of our previously darkened minds. There is a place for us exercising our will. Which is precisely the point of the commands about living in the light:

Ephesians 5:8-14 ISV *For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. (9) For the fruit of the light consists of every form of goodness, righteousness, and truth. (10) Determine what pleases the Lord, (11) and have nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness. Instead, expose them for what they are. (12) For it is shameful even to mention what is done by people in secret. (13) But everything that is exposed to the light becomes visible, (14) for everything that is visible is light. That is why it says, "Wake up, O sleeper! Arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."*

1 John 1:7 ISV *But if we keep living in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The spiritual sense of sight is an essential prerequisite to 'living in the light' – that is living an obedient Christian life that is on track with God.

Just to clarify – while some of these terms may sound rather "New Age" it is because they have borrowed Christian vocabulary and not the other way around. I am not advocating New Age mysticism, or hallucinatory ecstatic states, or initiation ceremonies or 'the third eye' or seeing auras around people.

I am saying that we need to develop our spiritual sensitivity, our ability to 'see' spiritual truth, and that this is related to the gaining of wisdom, revelation and knowledge through the direct personal ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual sense of sight is not independent of the Scriptures. Rather our spiritual sense of sight works together with our bible study in order to enable us to behold wonderful truths out of God's Law:

Psalms 119:18-19 MKJV *Open my eyes, so that I may behold wonderful things out of Your Law. (19) I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Your Commandments from me.*

When the spiritual sense of sight is absent the Bible is a 'closed book' even to the religious leaders of the day:

Isaiah 29:9-14 MKJV *Stand still and wonder! Blind your eyes and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. (10) For Jehovah has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes; He has covered the prophets and your heads, the seers. (11) And the vision of all has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which they give to one who knows books saying, Please read this; and he says, I cannot, for it is sealed. (12) And the book is delivered to him who does not know books, saying, Please read this; and he says, I do not know books. ... For the wisdom of their wise ones shall perish, and the understanding of their intelligent ones shall be hidden.*

Paul knew that the Ephesians needed both the Scriptures and also the spiritual eyes to understand them. Every Christian needs wisdom, revelation and knowledge. Every Christian needs to know Jesus more deeply. Every Christian needs the Holy Spirit to make the Scriptures come alive to them. Every Christian needs the eyes of their understanding to be enlightened.

44: Spiritual Senses – Hearing – Part 1

When Jesus finished teaching a parable or group of parables he would often say:

Matthew 11:15 MKJV *He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Jesus is not simply referring to the physical sense of hearing but to the spiritual sense that enables people to understand God's truth in the inner man - thus grasping the meaning of the parable and treasuring its spiritual content.

During Isaiah's vision and call he was called to preach until the people no longer listened. When the spiritual sense of hearing is finally non-functional it is a sign of a terminally ill nation that will soon be plunged into a destructive judgment (Isaiah 6:8-13)

Isaiah 6:8-13 MKJV *And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me! (9) And He said, Go, and tell this people, You hear indeed, but do not understand; and seeing you see, but do not know. (10) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn back, and be healed. (11) Then I said, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities are wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land laid waste, a desolation, (12) and until Jehovah has moved men far away, and the desolation in the midst of the land is great. (13) But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and be consumed like the terebinth and like the oak being felled, yet has its stump; the holy seed is its stump.*

Jesus applies this exact same devastating prophecy to those who could not grasp His parables:

Matthew 13:10-15 MKJV *And the disciples said to Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? (11) He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them. (12) For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whoever does not have, from him shall be taken away even that which he has. (13) Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not; nor do they understand. (14) And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which said, "By hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and shall not perceive; (15) for this people's heart has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."*

And indeed Israel was destroyed and left devastated by the Romans because of this national failure to listen to Jesus!

Luke 19:41-44 MKJV *And as He drew near, He beheld the city and wept over it, (42) saying, If you had known, even you, even at least in this day of yours, the things for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. (43) For the days will come on you that your enemies will raise up a rampart to you, and will surround you, and will keep you in on every side. (44) And they will tear you down, and your children within you, and will not leave a stone on a stone because you did not know the time of your visitation.*

On the other hand those who listen to God and grasp the teachings of Jesus are blessed:

Matthew 13:16-17 MKJV *But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. (17) For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear what you hear, and have not heard them.*

So vital is our spiritual sense of hearing that Jesus warned His disciples:

Mark 4:24-25 MKJV *And He said to them, Take heed what you hear. With that measure which you measure, it shall be measured to you. And to you who hear, more shall be given. (25) For he who has, more shall be given to him; and he who has not, from him shall be taken even that which he has.*

Jesus is telling them that those who truly harken to God will receive more and more revelation while those who are disobedient will lose any knowledge of God that they have. Paul reinforces this when he says to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:3-4 MKJV *For a time will be when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they will heap up teachers to themselves according to their own lusts, tickling the ear. (4) And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will be turned to myths.*

People will not want truth but will instead want teaching that 'tickles the ear' and gratifies their lusts. Instead of listening to God and the Bible they will turn aside to myths. The harder the heart, the worse the person hears God. Defiantly disobedient people will literally 'stop their ears' (as they did with Stephen) in order to resist God's truth:

Acts 7:51-58 MKJV *O stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so you do. (52) Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you have now been the betrayers and murderers; (53) who received the Law through disposition of angels, and did not keep it. (54) And hearing these things, they were cut to their hearts. And they gnashed on him with their teeth. (55) But being full of the Holy Spirit, looking up intently into Heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (56) And he said, Behold, I see Heaven opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. (57) And crying out with a loud voice, they stopped their ears and ran on him with one accord. (58) And throwing him outside the city, they stoned him. ...*

Jesus even rebuked His disciples severely when they did not understand His teachings:

Mark 8:14-21 MKJV *And the disciples had forgotten to take loaves, and they did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. (15) And He charged them, saying, Take heed! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod. (16) And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no loaves. (17) And knowing it, Jesus said to them, Why do you reason that it is because you have no loaves? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Have you still hardened your heart? (18) Do you have eyes and do not see? Do you have ears and do not hear? And do you not remember? (19) When I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many hand baskets full of fragments did you take up? They said to Him, Twelve. (20) And when the seven among four thousand, how many lunch baskets full of fragments did you take up? And they said, Seven. (21) And He said to them, How do you not understand?*

Thus the spiritual sense of hearing has to do with understanding the things of God. The disciples were expected to 'get it' when Jesus spoke about the leaven of the Pharisees. The fact they did not understand this mini-parable concerned Jesus so much that He wondered if they had hardened their heart. Jesus was astonished that after the feeding of both the five thousand and the four thousand they would say 'it is because we have no bread'. This is similar to what the Israel in the Wilderness failed to do so when they kept grumbling even after God had performed many miracles on their behalf:

Hebrews 3:7-11 MKJV *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear His voice, (8) do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, (9) when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. (10) Therefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They always err in their heart, and they have not known My ways. (11) So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest."*

If we look at the last two examples of the disciples and the people of Israel we find that the lack of 'hearing' came about because they were unable to spiritually connect the dots. They always looked at their current circumstances instead of learning from their spiritual experiences and from the faithfulness of the Lord. They were unable to say "hmm Jesus is easily able to supply bread so bread is not the problem, He must mean something else" or "God brought us this far from Egypt, He will supply water as well."

So hearing God involves arriving at the correct spiritual conclusions – about God, about parables and about life's circumstances, after being given adequate evidence for reaching those conclusions. This is what is called the hearing of faith:

Galatians 3:2-5 MKJV *This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing of faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, do you now perfect yourself in the flesh? (4) Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it is even in vain? (5) Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, is it by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?*

Romans 10:17 MKJV *Then faith is of hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*

The hearing of faith is powerful and results in miracles and in salvation. It connects us with God's transforming power!

The goal of the spiritual sense of hearing is a saving faith that results in holy obedience. We receive the word of God, believe the word of God then build our lives upon the word of God:

Matthew 7:24-25 MKJV *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock. (25) And the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. And it did not fall, for it was founded on a rock.*

To summarize things so far:

- 1) There is a spiritual sense of hearing
- 2) It enables us to grasp spiritual truth such as parables
- 3) Its absence is a sign of impending doom for the nation (or church)
- 4) We are to be very careful how we hear or we can lose the knowledge we have
- 5) It involves reaching proper spiritual conclusions from available evidence
- 6) When we fail to do this we 'harden our hearts' and this is serious
- 7) People can go astray listening to myths or blocking out God out all together
- 8) Proper hearing results in godly faith
- 9) Such faith results in salvation and miracles and God's transforming power!
- 10) As we hear God in faith we can build strong spiritual lives 'on the rock'.

45: Spiritual Senses – Hearing - 2

Do you want to grow in faith? Then switch on your spiritual sense of hearing:

Romans 10:17 MKJV *Then faith is of hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*

Galatians even refers to a miracle working 'hearing of faith':

Galatians 3:2-5 MKJV *This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing of faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, do you now perfect yourself in the flesh? (4) Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it is even in vain? (5) Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, is it by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?*

So we see that salvation, receiving the Spirit, the supply of the Spirit and "working miracles among you" all result from this hearing of faith. This is a key to Christian living if ever there was one! Everything we receive in the New Covenant lifestyle comes through the hearing of faith. We live 'from faith to faith':

Romans 1:17 MKJV *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

It is not just knowledge of God's Word that saves us, it must be combined with faith:

Hebrews 4:2 MKJV *... But the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

The hearing of faith is a simple heart response to God and is not a new legalism:

Romans 10:4-9 MKJV *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes. (5) For Moses writes of the righteousness which is of the Law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." (6) But the righteousness of faith says this: "Do not say in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven?" that is, to bring Christ down; (7) or "Who shall descend into the deep?"; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. (8) But what does it say? "The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart"; that is, the Word of Faith which we proclaim; (9) Because if you confess the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.*

And is available to all: **Romans 10:12-13 MKJV** *For there is no difference both of Jew and of Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call on Him. (13) For everyone, "whoever shall call on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Hearing with faith is believing what God says so that you respond in some way such as calling on God or acting in obedience to a command. Jesus does a miracle and you give glory to God and ponder on what the miracle means. Jesus speaks a parable and you ask for the interpretation and 'get it'. The hearing of faith is having the inner conscience tuned to God's wavelength and ready to believe what God says.

When the word of the Lord comes to us (via preaching, the Scriptures, our conscience etc) we can respond in a number of ways including the following:

Faith = fully believing what God says will come to pass, and being obedient to it

Doubt = being unsure about the factuality, safety or wisdom of what God has just said

Unbelief = a flat out refusal to believe what God says, foolish mocking, scoffing etc.

Rebellion = deliberately doing the opposite of what God has said

Torpor = being totally asleep spiritually so that God is never heard or perceived at all

Abraham is the preeminent example of the hearing of faith:

Romans 4:18-22 EMTV *who, contrary to hope, on hope believed, so that he should become a father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." (19) And not weakening in faith, he did not consider his own body, already having been worn out (being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb, (20) he did not waver at the promise of God in unbelief, but was empowered by faith, giving glory to God, (21) and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to do. (22) And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

Abraham believed God despite all the circumstances around him. He did not waver at the promise of God. God was everything and the difficulties and 'impossibilities' were as nothing. When God spoke Abraham heard deep within his being, so deep that nothing else mattered at all!

Now most of us do not hear God so deeply and absolutely. Like Peter we see the wind and the waves, or like Phillip at the feeding of the five thousand we ask 'what are these few among so many'. Abraham must have been totally unguarded with God. Abraham pinned all his dreams, all his hopes, and even the life of his precious son Isaac on the faithfulness of God.

The hearing of faith is not just intellectual assent to theological propositions. The patriarchs, prophets and apostles were not formally trained theologians. The hearing of faith is believing what God says even when the world, common sense and reason says precisely the opposite. It is deeply agreeing with God in your inner being, in your conscience, in the most fundamental part of who you really are.

The hearing of faith is the sure knowledge that God is true, no matter what appearances might be. It is hearing with your heart. It is staking yourself on the nature and character of God because something tells you, in an undeniable way, that this is where the true Truth is.

Satan tries all that he can to destroy this – through doubt, fear, apathy, hardness of heart, distraction, anxiety and making us forget God's goodness to us in the past.

The parable of the sower - and the seeds that fell on the the stony ground, the shallow soil, among the weeds and on good soil give us a clue to the difficulties here.

The seed is the word and the soils represent our ability to receive it by faith (the hearing of faith) and hardening, persecution and worldly distraction seem to take out $\frac{3}{4}$ of the seeds. Only the seeds sown among the good soil bear much fruit.

We need to be determined to listen to God with faithful hearts, putting aside all worldly distractions and not being discouraged by life's circumstances. We need to remember God's goodness to us in the past so that we put today's troubles in the perspective of God's forever faithfulness. We need to meditate on His Word and His promises and we need to follow the example of those who have gone before us in the faith.

We need to abandon legalistic striving 'do this, do that' and simply open up to trusting God in all things. Instead of trying to do a bunch of things to please God or to be spiritual we need to just trust God's character moment by moment each day, believing that all things are possible with God. O Lord, help us to hear You and to truly believe!

46: Spiritual Senses – Taste & Smell

Hearing and sight are remote senses but tasting is an immediate experience. You actually put the food or drink in your mouth. You may only put a little in at first to test it out, but if it is good you then consume it all. Thus taste has two aspects a) discernment of what is good to 'consume' spiritually and b) full participation in a spiritual reality:

Discernment Of That Which Is Good

1 Peter 2:2-3 MKJV .. *desire the sincere milk of the Word, as newborn babes, so that you may grow by it; (3) if truly you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

Psalms 34:8 Webster *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

The new believer 'tastes' God in order to ascertain if the Lord is good. When this is of course found to be true then he or she will lap up the milk of the Word. This then results in the new believer increasing in their trust of God and being blessed by Him.

Full Participation In A Spiritual Reality

Hebrews 6:4-6 MKJV *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, (6) and who have fallen away; it is impossible, I say, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify the Son of God afresh to themselves and put Him to an open shame.*

Hebrews 2:9 MKJV *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for all.*

Jesus did not just dip His toe into death. He actually died. He tasted death for all. He was immersed in death. His 'tasting' of death was the full experience of death.

Those who 'tasted of the heavenly gift' and who 'tasted the word of God' are also partakers of the Holy Spirit and know the powers of the world to come. They are immersed in Christian spiritual experience and are fully in the faith. And when they taste it and reject it they are 'spitting God out' – which is an unforgivable sin. After losing all taste for God they cannot be renewed unto repentance. Thus taste is like the other spiritual senses in that when it is inoperative it results in damnation for the person concerned.

Training Our Tastebuds

The 'spiritual palate' has to be trained to feed on the right food such as the pure milk of the Word. Our spiritual sense of taste needs to desire that which is truly desirable.

Psalms 119:103 MKJV *How sweet are Your Words to my taste! More than honey to my mouth!*

Psalms 19:9-11 MKJV *(9) The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of Jehovah are true and righteous altogether, (10) more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (11) And Your servant is warned by them; in keeping them there is great reward.*

John 4:34 EMTV *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.*

What the soul enjoys and desires, it seeks to acquire. If we enjoy spiritual things we will go after them. On the other hand if they bore us and are 'tasteless' to us then we will run after the things of this world and this always results in spiritual catastrophe:

Psalms 78:26-31 MKJV *He caused an east wind to blow in the sky; and by His power He brought in the south wind. (27) and He also rained flesh on them like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the sea; (28) and He let them fall in the middle of their camp, all around their tents. (29) So they ate, and were filled to the full; for He gave them their own desire. (30) They were not turned away from their lust, but while their food was still in their mouths, (31) the wrath of God came on them and killed the fattest of them, and struck down the chosen of Israel.*

Taste is important, even in the things of culture. If we enjoy the base and vulgar we will go in that direction. On the other hand we enjoy the good, the noble and the pure, our soul will be lifted up:

Philippians 4:8 MKJV *Finally, my brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are right, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think on these things.*

Colossians 3:1-3 EMTV *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.*

It takes time to acquire the taste for spiritual things. Television can seem much more interesting than prayer and intercession and a day at the beach much more appealing than going to church. This is why we need to gather together so that we encourage one another to love and good works:

Hebrews 10:24-25 EMTV *And let us consider one another for the stirring up of love and of good works, (25) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, just as is the custom for some, but exhorting one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

The Sense of Smell

The sense of smell is related to the sense of taste in that the nose is placed directly over the mouth to control what goes into it. If the milk is off your nose should detect it first and save your mouth from a terrible experience. Just as taste and smell are related in the human body so they are related in the spiritual body. In fact there seems to be a "ministry of sniffing things out..."

1 Corinthians 12:17-18 EMTV *(17) If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? (18) But now God has set the parts, each one of them, in the body just as He desired.*

Hounds (such as bloodhounds, basset hounds etc) have exceptional senses of smell and can track people and animals for miles. And few machines can beat a dog at detecting bombs or drugs. Wine connoisseurs can sniff and taste a wine and know which vineyard it came from and which year it was grown. Thus the people with the gift of spiritual discernment could be equated with the 'gift of smell' in the body of Christ.

When the gift of smell is damaged in some way people lead impeded lives and can even poison themselves or make them selves sick on food that should not have ever been consumed in the first place. Thus the spiritual gift of discernment / smell is a protective function that keeps the Church from being sickened by false teaching. People with the gift of discernment help us to spot the 'rotten egg' or the 'rotten apple' before we 'eat' it!

To those with a properly functioning sense of smell Christ is the wonderful aroma of God:

Ephesians 5:2 EMTV *And walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma.*

The spiritual sense of smell operates differently depending on whether you are a person of faith who is seeking after God or a person who wants their own way at all costs. To those who are hungry for salvation the gospel smells good, but to the proud and narcissistic the cross smells like the 'death' that it is:

2 Corinthians 2:14-17 EMTV *(14) Now thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and making known through us the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. (15) For we are the fragrance of Christ to God among those being saved, and among those perishing. (16) To some we are the fragrance of death leading to death, but to others the fragrance of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? (17) For we are not as the rest, corrupting the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*

To sum up – the spiritual senses of taste and smell are used to discern good from evil so that our Christian lives become focused on the truly worthy things such as the pure milk of the Word. They help us to 'pick and choose' between alternatives in life just as the corresponding physical senses help us to choose in matters of food and drink. The spiritual senses of taste and smell can assist us in avoiding spiritual catastrophe and help us to refine our souls so that we truly desire the things of God.

47: Spiritual Senses - Touch

The spiritual sense of touch is quite different from the other spiritual senses in that it is not so much used to receive heavenly information or as an aid to discernment but rather as a means of transferring spiritual power. In biblical terms to 'touch' has the sense of 'to link up with'. If the eye is like a camera, and the ear like a microphone then the spiritual sense of touch is more like a cable or a USB port that transfers spiritual energy!

Matthew 14:35-36 MKJV *And recognizing Him, the men of that place sent to all that neighborhood, and brought to Him all who were diseased. (36) And they begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His robe. And as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

Luke 6:19 MKJV *And all the crowd sought to touch Him, for power went out of Him and healed them all.*

The sense of touch operates by faith (just as all the other spiritual senses do). One day many people were pressing around Jesus but only one was 'touched':

Mark 5:25-34 EMTV *Now a certain woman, suffering from a flow of blood twelve years, (26) and who had suffered many things under many physicians, and who had spent everything at her disposal, and was no better, but rather having become worse, (27) when she heard about Jesus, she came from behind Him in the crowd and touched His clothing. (28) For she was saying, "If only I may touch His clothes, I will be healed." (29) And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she knew in her body that she had been healed from the affliction. (30) And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, He turned in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" (31) But His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing against You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " (32) And He was looking around to see her who had done this thing. (33) But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. (34) And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."*

This incident shows us that there was a substantial change in the nature of the spiritual sense of touch between the Old Testament and the New Testament. To touch a woman with an issue of blood in OT times would have made Jesus unclean until evening (Leviticus 15:19) but instead Jesus was not made unclean – rather the woman was healed! Jesus was also able to touch lepers (Matthew 8:3), and even dead bodies (Matthew 9:25) without being defiled. The sense of touch in the OT was not able to transmit holiness but rather transmitted uncleanness (Haggai 2:11-13). However in the NT the spiritual sense of touch transmits God's power.

Because ritual uncleanness no longer has any power to affect us the whole category of physically unclean objects, things that we are not to eat, drink, taste or touch - is revoked:

Mark 7:18-19 ISV *He said to them, "Are you so ignorant? Don't you know that nothing that goes into a person from the outside can make him unclean? (19) For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and is expelled as waste." (Thus he declared all foods clean.)*

Colossians 2:20-23 ISV *If you have died with Christ to the basic principles of the world, why are you submitting to its decrees as though you still lived in the world? (21) "Don't handle this! Don't taste or touch that!" (22) All of these things will be destroyed through use because they are based on human commands and teachings. (23) These things have the appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion, humility, and harsh treatment of the body, but they have no value against self-indulgence.*

Jesus' power over ritual (external) impurity healed the sick, cleansed the lepers and raised the dead and was passed on to the disciples:

Matthew 10:7-8 MKJV *And as you go, proclaim, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand. (8) Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. You have received freely, freely give.*

The spiritual sense of touch seems to lie behind the doctrine of the laying on of hands which Hebrews considers one of the Christian basics:

Hebrews 6:1-2 MKJV *Therefore, having left the discourse of the beginning ... of the baptisms, of doctrine, and of laying on of hands,*

The laying on of hands imparts the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 8:17 EMTV *Then they (the apostles Peter & John) laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 9:17 EMTV *And Ananias departed and entered the house; and putting his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, the One who appeared to you in the way which you were coming, so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."*

The laying on of hands (accompanied by faith) also can impart spiritual gifts:

1 Timothy 4:14 EMTV *Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.*

2 Timothy 1:6 EMTV *For which cause I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

Jesus give us victory over outward impurity such as blood, leprosy or death – but we need to be very careful about people who are inwardly, spiritually impure.

In the same discourse that Jesus removes outer defilement He says that some people are inwardly defiled: :

Mark 7:20-23 ISV *He continued, "It is what comes out of a person that makes a person unclean. (21) For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil thoughts come, as well as sexual immorality, stealing, murder, (22) adultery, greed, wickedness, cheating, shameless lust, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness. (23) All these things come from within and make a person unclean."*

Indeed there are some people whom we are not to lay hands on, perhaps because they are impure or sinful:

1 Timothy 5:22 ASV *Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.*

Even Jesus did not lay hands on demon-possessed people but instead used verbal commands 'casting them out with a word' (Matthew 8:16). Thus it seems that we are not to establish a close physical connection with people who are spiritually impure. We also have to be very careful about how we use our bodies, which have become temples of the Holy Spirit:

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 EMTV *(15) Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! (16) Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." (17) But he that is joined with the Lord is one spirit with Him. (18) Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits fornication sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (20) For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

So we see that joining with the harlot makes us one flesh and joining with God makes us 'one spirit with Him'. In many ways our spiritual connections define who we are and are to be monitored carefully. There are things we are permitted to reach out and touch and these will heal us, bless us and empower us in ministry. And there are things we should not touch, things which will damage us, defile us and destroy our ministry. These are things which we should be separated from.

These include idolatry, immorality, and heresy in the Church:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 MKJV *(14) Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship does righteousness have with lawlessness? And what partnership does light have with darkness? (15) And what agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever? (16) And what agreement does a temple of God have with idols? For you are the temple of the living God, as God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (17) Therefore come out from among them and be separated, says the Lord, and do not touch the unclean thing. And I will receive you (18) and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.*

2 John 1:9-11 MKJV *Everyone transgressing and not abiding in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. (10) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, nor speak a greeting to him. (11) For he who speaks a greeting to him is partaker of his evil deeds.*

Following Christ may even mean leaving some very close relationships behind:

Matthew 10:37-39 MKJV *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (38) And he who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. (39) He who finds his life shall lose it. And he who loses his life for My sake shall find it.*

And of course we are only to marry 'in the Lord':

1 Corinthians 7:39 MKJV *...she is at liberty to be remarried to whom she will, only in the Lord.*

To summarize: The spiritual sense of touch transmits spiritual power and through the laying on of hands we can receive healing, the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. In the NT we no longer have to worry about touching blood, lepers or dead bodies or about what to touch, taste, eat or drink. On the other hand we do have to beware of those who are inwardly defiled. We are not to lay hands on them, and we are certainly not to enter into close physical relationships with them. This especially applies to the immoral, idolaters, heretics, those who are spiritually destructive and to anyone who tries to turn us away from Christ.

48: The Deception Of The Spiritual Senses

You have probably heard of various New Age practices such as 'channeling' or seeing auras around people - or of occult practices such as divination, soothsaying and such. These are abuses of the spiritual senses. Christians are NOT called to develop a 'Third Eye' or to participate in seances or to engage in astral travel. I have spoken to Christians who had once engaged in these practices prior to conversion and they testified that for years afterward their lives were filled with fear, dread and unusual manifestations.

The final and last verse, after all the curses in Deuteronomy (for worshiping idols, engaging in witchcraft etc) is:

Deuteronomy 29:29 MKJV *The secret things belong to Jehovah our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our sons forever, so that we may do all the words of this Law.*

We are to walk in God's open revelation and not in the hidden, secret and occult things. There is enough that is known. There is plenty enough to obey. As Mark Twain once said:

It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.

There are two main ways that the spiritual senses can be deceived:

- i) Not functioning at all: spiritual blindness, deafness, having a seared conscience
- ii) Tuning into Satanic sources e.g. listening to 'doctrines of demons'

The following verses shows how these are related:

1 Timothy 4:1-5 MKJV *But the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, (2) speaking lies in hypocrisy, being seared in their own conscience, (3) forbidding to marry, saying to abstain from foods which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (4) For every creation of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. (5) For it is sanctified through the Word of God and prayer.*

A seducing spirit convinces someone to believe a demonic lie which they adopt as their own teaching. They then speak this out hypocritically, eventually searing their own conscience, so that they can neither believe or know the truth, and so they depart from the faith.

What are some of the demonic lies that people are seduced to believe? In these verses it is the lie of asceticism, forbidding marriage, and certain foods and holding Creation in disdain. This ancient idea sees the material and sexual as evil and the 'spiritual' as good. It is life-denying rather than life-affirming. As someone has said 'Evil is just live spelled backward'. It is evil because it stops people appreciating each other in marriage and stops people appreciating God's Creation and even such basic activities as eating food.

Spiritual deception often has a beguiling, seductive, 'overly sweet' atmosphere to it. It compels the person capturing their will and eventually bullies them into submission. The person is eventually tyrannized by legalism and by spiritual obsessions and compulsions.

Asceticism is the lie the Devil tells to those who want to 'be spiritual' and is one of his main snares for Christians. But the Devil tells lies in both directions. He also tells lies to the pagan world. These lies concern lack of restraint, lawlessness, immorality and idolatry:

Romans 1:22-25 MKJV *Professing to be wise, they became fools (23) and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping things. (24) Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. (25) For they changed the truth of God into a lie, and they worshiped and served the created thing more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

(In Scripture 'the lie' is idol worship). Of course the ultimate demonic liar is the Devil:

John 8:44 MKJV *You are of the Devil as father, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

In the End Times the lawless one will unleash a torrent of lies and false signs and wonders so as even to deceive the Elect - if possible (Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22).

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 MKJV *(8) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming, (9) whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, (10) and with all deceit of unrighteousness in those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, so that they might be saved. (11) And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, (12) so that all those who do not believe the truth, but delight in unrighteousness, might be condemned.*

These false signs and wonders will assault both the physical senses and the spiritual senses. Only those who firmly hold to the love of the Truth will be saved. Those who are apathetic will believe the lie and those who delight in unrighteousness will be condemned. We must be on our guard.

Colossians also warns us against possible deception via dreams and visions:

Colossians 2:18 ESV *Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,*

To sum up:

- a) We can be lied to via our spiritual senses (just as we can be lied to via our physical senses).
- b) These lies come from the Devil and his seducing demons who try to lead us astray.
- c) One of the main ways that the Devil lies to Christians is through super-spirituality and asceticism, through false visions and legalism and the worship of angels.
- d) The main way the Devil lies to the world is through lawlessness, immorality and idolatry.
- e) The ultimate lie is the worship of idols.
- f) These lies cause the person to become a hypocrite and to harden their conscience.
- f) These lies will increase in the End Times, and will be accompanied by false miracles.
- h) We must love the Truth if we are to be saved from this flood of deception.

49: Tongues & The Interpretation of Tongues

The gift of tongues came at Pentecost (Acts 2:3), during the revival at Cornelius' house (Acts 10:46) and also at Ephesus (Acts 19:6). It is discussed at length in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 and it would be a good idea to read those chapters in addition to this study.

Tongues is also a fulfillment of a prophecy by Isaiah that indicates judgment on Israel, who despite the clearly supernatural nature of tongues, will not believe (Isaiah 28:11,12 ; Mark 16: 17-18 and 1 Corinthians 14:21).

There seems to be two sides to the gift :

- a) The tongue itself which may be a tongue of men or of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1) and
- b) the interpretation of that tongue, which is not a natural gift but a gift of the Spirit that can be prayed for (1 Corinthians 14:13) - you don't learn Spanish by just praying for it.

When the gift of tongues operates alone it edifies only that person (1 Corinthians 14:4) in their spirit but not in their mind (1 Corinthians 14:14). But when interpreted it can become a revelation gift and edify the whole church (1 Corinthians 14:5, 12, 13,26,27).

Paul's main point in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is that the gift of tongues is not to be used merely as a semi-pagan ecstatic experience but rather as a gift that can edify the Church. It is to be used in love (1 Corinthians 13). If tongues is not used in love it is a mere 'noisy gong or clanging cymbal' (1 Corinthians 13:1). Part of using the gift of tongues in love is to use it as a 'team player' in the body of Christ, combining it with the other gifts as God directs (1 Corinthians 12:14-30).

This means using the gift of tongues in an orderly fashion in the congregational meeting with a strong emphasis on making sure that it is always interpreted in such a setting (1 Corinthians 14:5, 26-28).

Apparently the spiritual gifts are distributed so that we each have a function in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Not all speak in tongues and not all can interpret the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30). If there is no one present who can interpret then the person should be quiet in the meeting and simply speak to himself and to God (1 Corinthians 14:26-28). Paul seems to place no restrictions on using the gift of tongues on your own or in a small group setting. In fact he says that he 'speaks in tongues more than you all' (1 Corinthians 14:18) and that tongues was not to be forbidden (14:39).

Thus the problem in Corinth was not tongues itself, which is good, and is a spiritual gift from God; but rather how that gift was being used in a disorderly and confusing way in the church meeting; so that time was being taken up with extensive uninterpreted tongue-speaking and no one was getting any wiser in God as a result.

There are three main benefits to tongues. Firstly tongues edifies the individual Christian in their spirit (1 Corinthians 14:4,14) and is associated with major spiritual events such as being baptized in the Spirit (Acts 2:1-3).

Secondly tongues when interpreted becomes a revelation gift similar to prophecy and can edify the whole church (1 Corinthians 14:5)

Thirdly it is a 'sign for unbelievers' (as it was on the day of Pentecost) that clearly indicates that saving and refreshing supernatural activity is taking place:

Isaiah 28:11-12 MKJV *for with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people. (12) To whom He said, This is the rest; cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing. Yet they were not willing to hear.*

Mark 16:17-18 KJV *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; (18) They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

1 Corinthians 14:21-22 KJV *(21) In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. (22) Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.*

So we see that tongues is for a) personal edification and impartation b) revelation to the congregation when interpreted and c) a sign of God's presence and action for unbelievers.

The gift of tongues is our personal prayer language with God and a means whereby we can be strengthened in the inner man and receive revelation from God. Those who speak in tongues should pray that they may interpret so their minds can be fruitful as well as their spirit. While tongues is a minor gift and it comes last on the lists of gifts it is not to be forbidden, discarded or despised. It has a place in our prayer life and in helping us to communicate with God.

If you pray in tongues it can be helpful to sit down with a spiritual journal and to record the impressions that you receive from God while praying in tongues. These may be cries of praise and worship, revelations about the glory of God and the excellencies of Christ or groans of intercession and travail for the Church and the work of the Lord. Do not criticize or evaluate such impressions at first (that can wait until afterward) just jot them down as they come to you. Also do not act on them or share them until you have tested and confirmed them against the Word of God and given them time to mature within your spirit. Bring startling words and bold courses of action before other mature Spirit-filled Christians to see if they also feel a witness of the Spirit.

God intended tongues to be a spiritual blessing to His Church and yet it has been an incredible source of controversy in recent years. Let those who speak in tongues, speak in tongues, but in an orderly fashion, so that we can all be blessed by their gift.

50: Words of Wisdom & Knowledge

We have previously discussed how to receive wisdom and knowledge from God at a personal level, for 'our own consumption' so to speak. Now we will study how we can receive supernatural wisdom and knowledge so we can bless others and build up God's Church.

Firstly we need to note that the purpose of spiritual wisdom and knowledge is not 'showing off' (1 Corinthians 8:1) but rather so that we can admonish and encourage one another and build one another up in love.

(Romans 15:14 MKJV) *And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brothers, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*

Colossians 3:16 MKJV *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

Secondly that this kind of wisdom and knowledge is a divine 'spiritual gift' :

1 Corinthians 1:4-7 MKJV *(4) I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God given you in Jesus Christ, (5) that in everything you are enriched by Him, in all speech and in all knowledge; (6) even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; (7) so that you come behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 12:7-8 MKJV *(7) But to each one is given the showing forth of the Spirit to our profit. (8) For through the Spirit is given to one a word of wisdom; and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit;*

And thirdly that this gift is listed among the revelation gifts that operate in a congregational setting:

1 Corinthians 14:6 MKJV *(6) But now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you, except I speak to you either in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or in teaching?*

It seems that the 'word of wisdom' is a spiritually given rhema word from God that operates to solve a problem in a wise, righteous and understanding way. And that the 'word of knowledge' is a spiritually given rhema word that brings certain facts to light or sheds knowledge on a particular area of life or doctrine. The two seem to be associated and so may overlap somewhat in function.

Words of knowledge are sometimes used in healing situations where God gives the prayer warrior knowledge that a person has a certain affliction. The revealing of the affliction is a sign that God wants it healed (otherwise He would never have revealed it in the first place). And the 'word of wisdom' can be used during counseling sessions to shed light on problems or even in difficult church meetings to bring resolution to an issue.

Words of wisdom can have a huge impact if they are implemented. Joseph's word of wisdom to Pharaoh, interpreting his dream and advising on how to handle the famine, saved many lives. As did Paul's revelation and word of wisdom aboard the ship. The prophets often spoke words of wisdom but were often ignored. When the word of wisdom is ignored disaster often results, either in the individual life or the nation:

Jeremiah 6:19 MKJV *Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil on this people, the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not listened to My Words, nor to My Law, but have rejected it.*

Hosea 4:6 MKJV *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the Law of your God, I will also forget your sons, even I.*

God can teach us what to say:

Matthew 10:18-20 MKJV *And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the nations. (19) But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. (20) For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

Note the verse 20 above: *'for it is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who is in you'*. In other words God Himself can speak, via us, into life's situations (even the most harrowing of them). Christians with the spiritual gift of speaking 'a words of wisdom' or 'a word of knowledge' are not speaking from themselves but from the Spirit of the father, who is in them. This wisdom is not based on human wisdom but on Christ Himself so that very ordinary folk can be filled with true wisdom:

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 MKJV *(27) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) and God has chosen the base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, in order to bring to nothing things that are; (29) so that no flesh should glory in His presence. (30) But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; (31) so that, according as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."*

Acts 4:13-14 MKJV *But seeing the boldness of Peter and John, and perceiving that they were unlearned and uneducated men, they marveled. And they recognized them, that they had been with Jesus. (14) And beholding the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.*

This spiritual wisdom is a 'heavenly download' can be received by believing prayer (James 1:5-8). It is imparted by God's Spirit, to our spirit, and then to our minds and out of our mouths. At times it may seem risky as we may not know if what we are saying is relevant or even if it is true. For instance a friend of mine went up to a woman in a restaurant and said "God says that you have pain in your hand and He wants to heal it now' .

At first the lady denied it, then eventually she went over to his table, requested prayer, was healed and broke down in tears. God did a mighty work through a supernatural "word of knowledge". Such words have impact because the person realizes that it had to come from God and therefore that God was watching over them and caring for them.

Words of wisdom and knowledge can bring much needed repentance and be used for admonition, encouragement and edification of the Church and for healing, problem-solving and counseling in the midst of life.

As with all spiritual gifts this takes practice and they are best developed in an affirming small group setting. All such 'words' should be tested by Scripture and a godly sense of inner peace.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the Kingdom of God?
2. What is the conscience and what is its function in our lives?
3. How is the conscience awakened?
4. What types of conscience are there?
5. What is the relationship between the Word of God and the conscience?
6. What does it mean to live in the light?

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