

TRY THE SPIRITS

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. I John 4:1.

Interesting thought, {as hinted upon in my brief exposition from Saturday night, on 1st Thessalonians chapter 1,} which I was going to attach a link to, but it's really not worth listening to, but regardless I did touch upon something that I thought might be worth elaborating on a bit. I mentioned in that message about how some professing Christians, perhaps, and most likely unknowingly, sort of use or look upon a local church, and its chief proponent, otherwise known as the minister, the pastor, the reverend, the father, etc., depending upon what branch of the so-called Christian religion one attaches himself to, as the person whom they hired/selected to explain the truth of God's word to them, and as their only source of information regarding the holy scriptures, and the manner in which they are to be expounded. To a large extent they have basically hired someone to do the thinking for them. After all, it's not their job!

Let me try to illustrate this if possible. I know very little about money, {apart from the fact that we need it to live, and the Lord has blessed all of us with an overabundance of everything that we stand in need of in this physical world,} but when it comes to investing money, I'm a complete fool, so I entrust my investments, {the little we have left,} to a financial advisor, he being someone who has all the necessary qualifications to guide us in this matter. After all, he has gone to school, and specialized in this particular trade; he essentially lives this life of investments, etc., or in other words, he is an expert in this field, and can be trusted with such an important matter, as that of our financial stability in this world. Okay, I entrust this person with my finances, mostly because I do not want to take the time to research these things myself, so I leave it to an expert! Now, think about this in the spiritual realm, so to speak.

Regarding the church, I sometimes fear, that people attend these places of worship, in order to fill some sort of an obligation, to silence some inward persuasion that this is the right thing to do {and please, this is nothing against the local assembly, as I feel it's essential to join ourselves to a body of believers who confess Christ,} perhaps to persuade themselves, or have others think about them as believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they are somehow different from the rest of the world, {and rightfully so - John 17:14-16;} after all they are identifying themselves, that is at least those of the Christian persuasion, with the Christian religion, and consider themselves followers, in whatever capacity their consciences allow them to still call themselves by that name whilst pursuing their own personal lives and particular interests, which in accordance with their religious mindset may be very good in and of themselves.

Would it be far-fetched to say, that most who consider themselves Christians, and who attend a church on a regular basis, do so with the impression, {though they may not even realize it themselves,} that the person who is preaching from the Scriptures to them is telling them the truth! Let's hope so, or else why would they attend there? Perhaps a bigger question would be to ask ourselves, why indeed do we attend a local church? Let's hope that the word truth is part of your answer! "What

is truth," asked Pilate, but in the manner of his asking, he was despising the truth, as he was saying, in essence, "truth, who cares anything about truth, how is truth going to help me in this life." Christ said, "I am the way, **the truth**, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6. {Note the exclusivity of that statement!} He also went on to say, "and this is life eternal, that they might **know** thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. There is unquestionably someone we need to know, there is something about him that we need to know, there is something about the work he accomplished which we need to know. Yes, there is something that we desperately need to know, as to how an ungodly sinner can find acceptance by a GOD that is so immeasurably glorious in holiness, and who will in no wise clear the guilty, Exodus 34:7, without a full and suitable satisfaction to HIS holy & righteous justice, which is provided only in and by the LORD Jesus Christ. There is indeed, so much to know! But, do we really care? Do we have anything beyond some general persuasion that we need salvation, and that this salvation is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ? Doesn't the scripture speak somewhere about hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Matthew 5:6. Wasn't it David who expressed his inmost desire, when he said these words, "as the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Psalms 42:1. Does David's incapacity of being satisfied with anything short of this living God find an echo in our own hearts? The apostle Paul says, "oh that I might know HIM." Phil.3:10. There is so much to know concerning HIM! The scriptures speak of the "unsearchable riches of Christ." Eph.3:8. John concludes his epistle with these words, "and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." I John 5:20. Do we know this for ourselves? Has this been personally unfolded and revealed to us by the Spirit of Truth, who guides each and everyone who belongs to Christ into all truth, John 16:13, so that in knowing HIM who is the TRUTH, they in the truest sense know everything that is worth knowing. "Ye know all things," I John 2:20, and by this revelation of sheer grace, Matt.13:16, they abide in HIM. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." I John 2:27. I ask again, what do we know? Has the Christ of scripture made HIMSELF known to you? Perhaps a more important question would be to ask ourselves, do we really care?

Back to my original thought, and a few more heart-searching questions. Do we hear some minister and believe everything he says? Do we just assume that because some person is reading from the Bible, that his thoughts are in harmony with the gospel of Christ? Have we even given this much thought? Have we given the scriptures themselves any consideration? Have we investigated with a hungering and a thirsting disposition of mind to know more of Christ, to know more about his saving mercy, his abundant grace, our acceptance, and the basis of our acceptance in Christ, to know more about his offices as the only PROPHET, PRIEST and KING of our profession, and how he carries us from the cradle to the grave, etc., I could go on and on, as all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells in the Lord Jesus Christ, Col.2:9; and as we read throughout the Scriptures, and as we have been brought to recognize by faith, {amongst other things by which our "cup runneth over," Psalms 23:5,

that it is the direct hand of the LORD who orchestrates and maintains our lot, Deut.33:27 & Psal.16:5,} that there are so many immeasurable mercies that we do not even perceive; in fact, so many things which our HIGH PRIEST accomplished, {when he offered up himself, Heb.7:27,} so many wonderful words which our PROPHET has spoken and opened our understanding to, Luke 24:45, and so many ways in which our KING maintains, governs and sustains our lives, "the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." John 21:25. How true that is! Christ is all in all, but what do we know about him? Are we entrusting our souls, so to speak, to some man on a podium, because we don't have time to look into these things ourselves? Oh, wait, could it be that we do not really care about truth, and that is why we are not making any time to consider it? We are just going to pay this expert to tell us the truth, because that's his job, and that is what he's getting paid to do! Can you see the sad parallel between trusting a person with our finances, and trusting some hireling, {John 10:12-13, if not sent directly by the LORD,} to show us the way of salvation? A verse in Hebrews comes to mind, where the Lord speaks to us and says, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!" Heb.2:3.

In that same message I made mention of the fact that the elect in first Thessalonians chapter 1, were known to Paul by the truth which they professed, where he says, "knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How could Paul know that these believers in Thessalonica were numbered amongst the elect, or that Christ died for these in particular? He tells us as we read on, "for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost." These confessed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and from that bare fact he recognized their standing in Christ, even in accordance with Christ's own words to the Jewish leaders in John 6:45, where he quotes the words of the prophet Isaiah, Isa.54:13, "it is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." We come as we are irresistibly drawn to Christ, even as our LORD himself tells us, "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," John 6:44, but what a mercy that once the Father draws a lost and hopeless sinner outside of himself, to find everything he stands in need of in Christ, {who of God is made unto him all his wisdom, all his righteousness, and all his sanctification and redemption, I Cor.1:30,} the LORD never stops drawing him, and in that drawing he is taught something, something tangible, something all-together glorious, something so wonderful that it seems really too good to be true, inasmuch so that he can scarcely believe it for joy, Luke 24:41, as in sheer wonderment he rejoices in that which seems almost too sacred to be revealed, and too hallowed to be contemplated by his awe-struck mind, and too special to be made known unto him! As the LORD told his disciples as he opened their understanding, Luke 24:45, "blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Matt.13:16-17. Yes, those in Christ are taught something, and in that teaching they abide, {"if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you," John 15:7,} coming unto Christ every moment of their lives, and in that perpetual state of coming they leave behind them both their unholy life of sin unto condemnation, and their 'holy' life of 'righteousness' unto self-justification, in full recognition of the unqualified fact that there is no difference

between the 'holy' and the 'profane' for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, Rom.3:23, and unless we possess a righteousness entirely outside of ourselves, we have absolutely no hope of eternal life! Have we been brought to that realization – to that essential understanding? That whatever life is, or however we may conceive of it, our life in this world considered apart from Christ is really no life at all! John expresses it this way, these words are written, these truths are made known, these facts are asserted, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John 20:31. This certainly implies to that which I just hinted at, namely that our life in this world considered apart from Christ is really no life at all! "That you might have life through his name." What an expression, and what a wealth of gospel glory this expression contains! No life outside of Christ! Paul speaks of such as live their lives to the fullest, as it were, and states that one doing so is DEAD even though he/she lives! I Tim.5:6. The dead know nothing! The dead don't care! How very solemn! "Oh Lord, may we never be left content with the portions of this life, which like Esau's bowl of lentils was traded for eternal interests." Heb.12:16. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt.16:26.

A bit more about this life of a believer, this life of faith, which he lives by the faith, or by the faithfulness of the Son of God, in whose name, {which name implies all his glorious attributes,} he lives! Gal.2:20. The Lord himself established the vital importance of Truth when he told the woman at the well that her and her idolatrous kinfolk, {aka, the Samaritans,} though apparently worshipers of God, were worshiping in ignorance, and if in ignorance, they were worshiping an unknown god, just like those at Mars Hill. Acts 17:23. That's a fearful thought, that even amongst those, who like ourselves, "perform some acts of worship." {Wow, I just realized what a terrible expression that is! Perform and act? I sure hope that in our worship of him who alone is worthy to be worshiped, who not only deserves our innermost affections and thoughts, but even more so, our entire life also, that we are more than performers or actors!} The Lord says to her, "ye worship what you know not," and that God who is pure Spirit, and "they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Or in other words, he must be worshiped in the precise manner of how he reveals himself through the holy scripture. When is the last time we searched the scripture? Our Lord says in another place, "search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." John 5:39. Again, just to emphasize the importance of Truth!

And, if the truth shall make you free, as the Lord tells us in, John 8:32, then error shall enslave us for the rest of our lives unless the Lord sends forth his light. Psal.43:3. If the truth shall make you free from all your preconceived notions of what you think the Lord should be like, or how he should orchestrate his holy and sovereign will in any given situation; free from those blind traditions that you received from those who instructed you from an early age; {if instructed at all,} free of ignorance concerning our own state of complete alienation and helplessness outside of the Lord showing mercy, and that perpetually; free of the undervaluing the work and worth of Christ in undertaking our salvation from first to last; free concerning ignorance regarding the difference between law and gospel, grace and works, Christ and Moses; and free to serve the Lord in newness of spirit, our eyes fixed upon Christ, and our hearts opened to receive his words; and "free from the law of sin and death" by "the

law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," &c., free indeed - {"if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36} Furthermore, it goes without saying that "if the truth shall make you free," then error will enslave your mind to such an extent that even with a basic understanding of some scriptural truths, you find no intrinsic beauty, you find no inestable value, you have no affection of mind and love to the truth of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, as unfolded in the holy scriptures of truth, and as unsealed by the spirit of truth, &. Paul, in II Thessalonians, speaks about a spirit of deception in those that are perishing, and the cause is the fact that such "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." II Thes.2:7-11. They were simply indifferent or not interested! Let me briefly add, that if a perception & understanding of God's absolute sovereignty in the affairs of men, and in the complete salvation of all those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph.1:4, invokes a sense or spirit of indifference in relation to our valuation of the truth of the Gospel on our part, then it most likely a solemn indication that we have not learned Christ aright, Eph.4:20, as the very nature of a soul quickened into a newness of life in Christ will be an anxiousness to know HIM, and a restlessness until HE be revealed.

As we consider this a bit more, we read in another place, of a believer's life being hidden in Christ Jesus, and it's this hidden life, hidden from the gaze of a religious and irreligious world, and secured in the bosom of that ONE who is the resurrection and the life, John 11:25, which in every sense of the word is the believer's only life, because in Christ only, and in Christ alone, doth he possess all which overcomes the world, even our faith, as it is expressed in 2nd Peter, our faith as it abides in the life of Christ, and lives exclusively upon his merits, and glories only in this, that their life is one with Christ, and to them there is nothing more glorious than to be emptied of themselves in order to be poured into Christ, that to be found only and exclusively in him, as he is found by the Father, to be that one in whom alone, the Father is well pleased! Matt.3:17. Those blessed with a newness of life in Christ Jesus, have indeed all their life, {as they have lost their life, only to be found in him} wrapped up in a bundle that is so secure, that no one, and nothing can open it! The souls of all those who belong to Christ are blessed beyond measure in being "bound in the bundle of life with the LORD their God." I Sam.25:29. To them, to live, is Christ Jesus! As Paul expresses it, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil.1:21. They alone know the abundant nature of that life which they have received from the Lord! John 10:10. They alone have any sense of what it means to reign in this life. "Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ," Rom.5:17, as "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom.5:21. Oh, this glorious "path of life," Psal.16:11, by which they can truly reckon themselves to be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ their Lord," Rom.6:11, who is our life! Christ says to Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" John 11:25-26. The LORD now says to us, believest thou this? Believe what? How can we believe or confess something or more importantly someone that we do not know? That we take no time to investigate, that we have no genuine regard to? Christ told his disciples in regards to the religious Pharisees to, "let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matthew 15:14. It's both that

emphatically are brought to destruction – the teacher and his pupil, the instructor and their followers. Ignorance is not bliss, and ignorance of Christ is fatal!

We profess to have faith, but true faith has to be built upon something, it has to be built upon truth, and although we're not saved by the truth, we cannot be saved without the truth, the Lord himself stating in answer to Pilate, "thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." All those who consider themselves Christians would also say that they consider the LORD their King, but have we heard his voice? For this end said Christ was he born, for this reason was he sent by the Father, to bear witness unto the truth. I would say truth is pretty important! But what a mercy, as we read on, that everyone that is of the truth will indeed hear his distinctive voice and follow him, {" my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John 10:27,} as our only way unto the Father, as our only acceptance before God, all based upon the merits of his blood and righteousness! Are we interested in this? Is it an all-consuming interest? To know nothing but Christ, and HIM crucified? "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." I Cor.2:2. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." II John 1:9. The doctrine of Christ = the gospel of Christ. What do we know? How important is our salvation to us? Oh, that the Lord would indeed open our hearts, that he might give us a desire to know him, to worship him, but to be found in him, and to rejoice in him daily as all the hope of our salvation. **Amen!**