



"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein"
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT LEAD, GUIDE, AND DIRECT US TODAY?

Rod Rutherford

The subject of the Holy Spirit and how He works today is controversial. Those of the **Charismatic Movement** (Neo-Pentecostalism) maintain that the Spirit dwells in believers *personally* and *directly*. As a result of this "indwelling," they believe the Spirit gives the gift of working miracles to God's people today just as He did to the first century Christians who had hands laid on them by the apostles. Others, such as **Calvinists**, believe the Spirit is sent by God into the hearts of the elect (those whom God chose before the foundation of the world to be saved) to instill faith miraculously so that they will confess Christ. In both the Charismatic and the Calvinistic viewpoints, they claim the Spirit is working directly in the child of God today.

That the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians is clearly affirmed in God's Word. The apostle Paul wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*" (Rom. 8:9-11). Further, the Bible clearly teaches: "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they*

are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

Christians generally agree today that the age of miraculous gifts is over. The argument is frequently and correctly made that only the apostles who had been baptized with the Spirit had the ability to confer miraculous gifts to others by the laying on of their hands (Acts 8:4-25; 19:1-7; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6). It logically follows that when the last apostle died, and the last of those upon whom an apostle had laid hands died, then the age of miraculous gifts ended. This is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 13:10. When that which was "perfect" (Greek: *teleios*: complete, mature: *Vine's*), i.e. the completed written New Testament had come (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3), then the various tongues (languages), prophesying, revelations, etc. were no longer needed and therefore ended.

How then does the Holy Spirit lead, guide, and direct us today? A fundamental and universally accepted rule of interpreting the Word of God is to allow one passage to interpret another. A difficult passage may be understood when a plain passage which addresses the same subject is laid alongside it. For example, the books of Ephesians and Colossians are sometimes called "twin epistles." They were both written by the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They were both written to churches in the Roman province of Asia. They also were written in the

same time period while Paul was a prisoner in Rome awaiting a hearing before the emperor. Therefore, passages in them are similar and can be used to explain one another.

In Ephesians 5:18-19, Paul wrote: "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess [rioting, reckless living, dissolute life]; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Eph. 5:18-20). A similar passage to this is Colossians 3:16-17: "*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. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*" (Col. 3:16-17).

How, when, is one "filled with the Spirit?" One is filled with the Spirit when he "lets the Word of God dwell in him richly." Does it not logically follow that one is led, guided, directed by the Spirit when he is led, guided, and directed by the Word of God? In Ephesians 6:10-17, the apostle Paul describes the armor that we as Christians must wear as we do battle

(Continued on page 45)
The Holy Spirit...



Editorial...

GOD FORBIDS WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES #3

Garland M. Robinson

THOSE WHO TWIST THE SCRIPTURES HATE GOD'S WORD

Those who pervert the Scriptures do not like the connection faithful saints have to God's holy word. They want something more and/or something less — something different. Denominations want an experience. Liberal brethren want to have their ears tickled by fair speeches and feigned, empty words (cf. 2 Tim. 4:4; Rom. 16:18). They are gullible and easily deceived! "...Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Peter 2:3).

The means of salvation is the simple Gospel of Christ, not the doctrines, traditions and commandments of men (Matt. 15:8-9), not the words of the educated elite who lull unwary souls to their destruction. This is nothing new. This practice has always been around. The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily [secretly, craftily] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1-2). This is exactly what liberals are doing today! They destroy people's confidence in the inspired word. They tell their unsuspecting hearers that they can't really know the Scriptures and that if they want to know, they need to ask "them" what it means. They are very good at twisting and perverting the word. In fact, they are the ones who are "unlearned and unstable" who distort and corrupt the scriptures "unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

Because of the precious Word and the warnings it gives to not depart from it, it is incumbent upon us to get

the saving Word out to the whole world. Therefore, Jesus said, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). Preaching the Gospel is urgent! Without it, men cannot be saved.

Because men's hearts are often turned away from the pure Gospel, Paul exhorted Timothy to "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2). When was the last time you heard the forcefulness of the Gospel preached in its fullest like this verse demands? I've heard brethren comment that they have not heard the whole Gospel preached since they were a child! Shame on those who won't preach it!

To "preach the word" means preach it without fear, favor or compromise. Paul told the elders at Ephesus that he had "...kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house..." (Acts 20:20). "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26). Dear fellow preacher, can you honestly say your preaching is like that? If so, great, if not, shame on you! You need to repent and preach the word!

To preach the word "in season and out of season" means to preach the whole counsel of God at all times, not just when its popular and favored. When there's sin in the camp, that's the time to sharpen your sword and proclaim the word. One of the great principles of preaching is to preach to the needs of the people. That means when they like it and when they don't — especially when they don't. Your labor in preaching the whole counsel of God is to save a soul from death (cf. James 5:20).

Preaching involves *reproving, rebuking* and *exhorting*. "Reproving" is to show one their fault, convince one

of sin, expose the error, call the wayward to account. "Rebuking" is to warn, charge, censure. "Exhort" means to invite, beseech, call for, desire. Ideally, every sermon would include all three elements:

1) Point out sin and one's guilt regarding it,

2) Convince and convict those involved, shame them regarding it, and

3) Call upon them to repent, change their thinking and life by obeying the Gospel in baptism or coming back to the fold as wayward Christians.

The word of God is the power that changes people's lives — not philosophy or opinion. I don't know why God chose to save the world by the means of preaching/teaching, but He did. The task of preaching/teaching was not given to angels. It was not, is not, spread through the means of dreams, visions or feelings. A so-called "salvation experience" does not come upon one in the corn field, at the factory, in the "still of the night" or in any other place or method of man's imagination. Salvation comes about through the means of the simple teaching of the Gospel. The power of God is in the Gospel. Take away the preaching of the Gospel and God has no power to save (Rom. 1:16). God has always used "words" that will save sinful man.

Without the hearing of God's "word" there is no salvation. Cornelius was told to send for Peter, who would come and tell him "words" by which he and all in his house would be saved when they believed the "word" and obeyed it (Acts 11:14). This is exactly what Jesus said, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 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*" (John 6:44-45).

Liberals despise the Word of God. Appealing to the Scriptures to learn God's will is what they call "proof texting." They can't handle it. Their appeal is to human wisdom. Since they have no love of the truth, their words cause division and thereby offend God. The Holy Spirit tells us what to do with those who turn away people's hearts from the truth. "*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause*

divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18).

The word “mark” in Romans 16:17 means to call attention to, look toward, fix one’s eyes upon, to take aim at, regard, consider, take heed. We look to one in order to evaluate/judge their teaching and practice. The context tells us whether our judgment of one’s life is to be imitated or avoided. For example, in Philippians 3:17 it is used in a good sense, showing we are to follow one’s good example. “Brethren, be followers together of me, and **mark** them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.” We also look at ourselves to make sure we’re on the right path. Jesus said, “Take heed [mark] therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness” (Luke 11:35). Paul wrote, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering [mark] thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

In Romans 16:17 the word “mark” is used in a bad or negative sense. In this case, we are to observe one’s life in order that we make sure we don’t follow them. There are good examples and there are bad examples. Obviously, we imitate the good and do not imitate the bad. Some brethren cause division in the local church. Their disruptive doctrine and behavior spills over into area churches. Sometimes they cause division in the entire brotherhood! Such brethren are targeted by God for destruction. They are on God’s “hate list” because God hates those who sow discord — division (Prov. 6:19). No wonder the Lord tells us “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” So few today are obeying Romans 16:17. Instead of pointing out their error and warning brethren about them, they are praised and encouraged. False teachers and their supporters (sowers of discord) try to shift the blame onto the faithful who do what God said do. They play the “sympathy card” to drum up support. The weak in the faith fall in line.

The Lord’s church is pure. Those who disrupt that purity have a sad day awaiting them unless they repent.

Titus 1:10-11,13 says, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: **Whose mouths must be stopped**, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. ... This witness is true. Wherefore **rebuke them sharply**, that they may be sound in the faith.”

Liberals tell us we must not call attention to those who are sowing discord. They say, don’t call their names, don’t specify who they are, what they’re teaching or where they’re located. If I were one of them I would not want to be exposed either. But expose them we must. It’s not pleasant to do, but God says do it. Now, do we seek to please men or God? If we seek to please men, we are not faithful servants of God (Gal. 1:10).

If you’re a preaching brother, who are you trying to please, God or man? Elders, the same is true for you. Deacons, Bible teachers, members, it’s the same for you. Make up your mind who you follow, God or man.

THE TENTACLES OF LIBERALISM

Every generation has its share of those who pervert the word of God. Our generation is no different. This very day, many are working feverishly to destroy the unadulterated word of God. Perhaps many are unaware they are doing so, but that is exactly what they’re doing. Others are deliberately tearing down the walls of everlasting truth — at least in the hearts of many.

Men’s attitude toward the Bible and respect for God’s word is waning, digressing, more and more. This is not new. The Bible warns us about it. Jesus said, “...many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt. 24:11-12). Note these words, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Paul tells Timothy there will be those who “...will not endure sound doctrine; but after their

own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

When Jesus said false prophets would come in sheep’s clothing, he was not just taking up space. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15). Notice the words of the Lord to Jeremiah, “...The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart” (Jer. 14:14). “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. ... Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD” (Jer. 23:14,16).

It’s not popular today for one to “contend for the faith” and demand a “thus saith the Lord.” All kinds of ridicule and scorn is thrown at God’s loving warriors who care more for God’s praise than man’s praise. The cry for many years has been to “tone down the preaching, you can’t win people with doctrine.” We are told our business is to “win friends and influence people.” But for what purpose and to what end? Our job is to proclaim the Gospel in its entirety, expose sin for what it is, rebuke the erring, proclaim salvation through faithful obedience to God’s word. We need to heed the words of God to Ezekiel (3:8-9): “Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.” Isaiah 50:7 says, “The Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”

It’s high time for the faithful to STAND UP AND BE COUNTED! We

are at war! We are in a desperate battle for the souls of men. It's time we drew forth the sword of the spirit and threw the scabbard away. It's time we keep the spiritual sword, the holy Bible, in full and constant use until the Lord removes it from our grasp in death. If we don't, the church will continue its head-long rush into apostasy. It will continue to split and splinter and be unrecognizable in comparison to the first century church. *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"* (2 Tim. 4:2).

Some have said it takes only one generation for the church to go into apostasy. But in many cases it doesn't take that long. When an eldership does not demand "sound words" to be taught in the classroom and pulpit, it won't take five years! Such a congregation will quickly drift away to the point that the truth sounds "strange" to them. Strange in the sense that they haven't heard it in so long. I don't know how many times I've preached in places where someone told me after the services that they have not heard that kind of preaching since they were a child. I don't take that as a compliment, I just preached simple Bible

truth. I'm saddened by such comments because it reveals the fact that the preacher hasn't been doing his job and the eldership hasn't been demanding it! It's incredibly tragic when people witness our manner of behavior and *"...think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot..."* (1 Peter 4:4; cf. Hosea 8:12).

CONCLUSION

When the Word of God is twisted and perverted and made to say and teach what it does not say nor teach, souls will be condemned. False beliefs and hopes will bring about the damnation of their souls.

Denominational doctrine teaches the Lord Jesus will leave heaven soon and come to dwell on the earth for a thousand years. There are false brethren among us that have modified that doctrine and extended it to last for eternity. They make God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit to leave the realm of heaven that Jesus went to prepare (cf. John 14:1-3) and have him come to earth to dwell with saints for eternity. That makes the kingdom of Christ a material, worldly, kingdom instead of a spiritual one. Jesus told Pilate his

kingdom was not a worldly kingdom (John 18:36).

God's will is for his Word to be *"rightly divided"* — handled correctly, used wisely and appropriately (2 Tim. 2:15). That's the only way sinners can be saved from their sins and that's the only way saints can continue in the Lord's way. Isn't that your desire this very hour? Repent and be baptized if you're not a Christian, or repent and pray to be restored among the faithful.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"* (Gal. 5:1). *"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved"* (Phil. 4:1). *"For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord"* (1 Thess. 3:8). *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle"* (2 Thess. 2:15). *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:58).

QUESTIONS

Tracy Dugger

I am a simple person. I like simple things. I like common sense, honesty, truth, and straightforwardness. I do not like manipulation, deception, pomp, lies, and insincerity. I like noble causes, sacrifice, faith, loyalty, honor, courtesy, and respect. Sometimes it is uncomfortable for me, but I want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I would rather not be coddled and petted but, in love for my best interest, be told the truth. I respect our military, our emergency workers, and our law enforcement agents. I love God, His Word, this country and this community. I love the beauty of God's creation, His handiwork, and I am at awe of His creative design. I love His church and I want what is best for His people.

I am absolutely convinced that the Bible is God's Word — His divinely

inspired, infallible, non-contradictory, revelation to mankind. And, I believe there are people who agree with me on this and want to serve Him in the way that He has prescribed. I have learned that a Christian communicates with God through prayer (1 Thess. 5:17) and that God communicates to us through His written, preserved, all-sufficient Word (Heb. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). I am not surprised but shaken by the fact that there will be a universal judgment day in which all people will appear before God to give an account of their lives (Matt. 25; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Heb. 9:27).

I am awe-struck at our eternal souls (Matt. 25:46). The most precious possession we own is our eternal, non-physical soul/spirit. It is our most valuable property because it is the only thing that I have that others

cannot steal or kill — it will survive the death of our physical bodies (Matt. 10:28; 2 Cor. 5:1). The soul (aka, spirit) will live eternally in one of two places after this life is over: heaven or hell. And so, it behooves us to prepare for that great Judgment Day which seals our eternal destiny! Oh yes, God is serious!

It matters what we believe and practice. Jesus said that "truth" can make us free (John 8:32). He got my attention when He explained, *"He that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16b). Paul, His great apostle to the Gentile world, in His divinely inspired letter to Rome, connected agreement with and obedience of the Gospel message to human salvation (Rom. 1:16-17; 2:6-11). Thus, when I see seemingly sincere people believing and doing things in the name of the Lord that I

cannot find in the complete and final Word of God, the Bible, I am puzzled. More than puzzled — I am bothered. And, I have been bothered for a number of years. And so, I want to ask a series of random questions, unorganized as they may seem. These questions arise from a true concern for the souls of men and women and a love for God and His Word. Jesus asked many questions. I humbly have a few.

If you are a religious person and you believe the Bible to be the Word of God, please ponder the following:

1. How can all the division among those who claim Christianity be okay? The Bible says: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **all speak the same thing**, and that there be **no divisions among you**; but that ye be **perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment**”* (1 Cor. 1:10). Also, in Jesus’ prayer he said: *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”* (John 17:20-21).

2. How can many say there is, a) More than “one body” or “one church” when Paul wrote in Ephesians 4 that there is **“one body”** (v.5); b) More than “one faith” when Paul wrote in Ephesians 4 that there is **“one faith”** (v.4); c) More than “one baptism” in effect today when Paul wrote in Ephesians 4 that there is **“one baptism”** (v.5).

3. How can many believe that a Christian cannot fall from grace when the Bible affirms to Christians in Galatians 5:4 that some Christians had fallen away: *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”*

4. How can many teach that baptism does NOT save us when Peter says: a) *“The like figure whereunto even **baptism doth also now save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:21); b) Why did Peter command, *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

5. How can many refuse or think that assembling for worship is optional, not essential, when the Bible says in Hebrews 10:25, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* Why write in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”*

6. How can many say that we are saved by grace alone when Paul says in Ephesians 2:8, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”*

7. How can many say that we cannot do anything to be saved when Peter says in Acts 2:40: *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”* Peter later says: *“But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”* (Acts 10:34-35).

8. How can many believe heaven is eternal but hell is not, when Jesus uses the same term to describe the duration of both: *“And these shall go away into **eternal punishment**: but the righteous into **eternal life**”* (Matt. 25:46, ASV).

9. How can many teach we are saved or justified by “faith only” when James 2:24 says, *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only.**”*

10. How can many say that we are waiting for the kingdom of God to come when Jesus said it came in the lifetime of some living in the first century? *“That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power”* (Mark 9:1).

11. Why do many use 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 to justify the giving of money to the church every first day of the week (Sunday) but ignore the same terminology regarding the Lord’s Supper in Acts 20:7: *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...”*

12. How do many justify women preachers when Paul said, *“But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness”* (1 Tim. 2:12, ASV).

13. How do many justify infant

baptism when the New Testament teaches a believer is to be baptized? *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16).

14. How can many claim to follow the Bible, and be like the church of the Bible, when they are not organized with Elders (Pastors or Shepherds, Bishops or Overseers) and Deacons who meet the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?

15. And how can many say there is no way we can be wrong when the Bible frequently warns, *“Take heed lest ye fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12).

These are just some of the questions that come to my mind as I observe the religious world around me and then compare that with the New Testament. Do not take my word for it! Read for yourself and rightly interpret and reason from the Scriptures. Something is wrong, but the Bible is right!

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The Holy Spirit...

(Continued from page 41)

against the forces of evil in the world. The description of the armor is that worn by Roman soldiers who had conquered much of the known world in Paul’s day. A Roman soldier wore armor to protect himself against the onslaught of his enemy. He usually carried an offensive weapon with which to do battle against his enemy — his sword.

Suppose a Roman soldier came in from battle at the close of the day and boasted “I killed ten soldiers of the enemy’s army today?” How did he kill them? With his bare hands? No! He used a weapon. The enemy soldiers were killed by a sword. The Roman soldier killed ten soldiers of the enemy’s army. He did not do it directly, but by a *means* (an instrument). In this case, the *means* (instrument) was a sword. In the same way, Christians are led, guided, and directed by the Holy Spirit, but it is not directly or personally, it’s through a *means*. The *means* (instrument) is the Word of God!

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WINE IN JUDGES 9:13

Carl O. Cooper

***“Then the trees said to the vine, ‘You come and reign over us!’
But the vine said to them, ‘should I cease my new wine, which cheers both
God and men, and go to sway over trees?’”***

When I first read the words “which cheers both God and men,” it caused me to stop and question what this could possibly mean? Could this be referring to alcoholic, fermented wine? If it is, then it literally flies in the face of all the Bible has to say about wine in many other Scriptures that condemn drinking alcoholic drink.

But a closer inspection of the verse reveals another mystery as well. Did you notice when you read this verse that the “wine” referred to here is specified as “new wine?” You see, that presents a problem if you want this “wine” to be fermented, alcoholic wine. “New wine” is always referring to fresh squeezed grape juice and is not “aged and fermented” to produce alcoholic wine.

So that is the first mystery solved. But even that is not the end of the explanation here. I did a search of the original translated text used here to see how this was written before it was translated into English. And you can do this yourself. All it takes is a Bible program that gives you the “Strong’s” numbers and the definition of the original words. Here is a sample from the Gospel Advocate’s Bible Program.

12 Then said <H559> the trees <H6086> unto the vine <H1612>, Come <H3212> thou, and reign <H4427> over us. 13 And the vine <H1612> said <H559> unto them, Should I leave <H2308> my wine <H8492>, which cheereth <H8055> God <H430> and man <H582>, and go <H1980> to be promoted <H5128> over the trees <H6086>?

Where is the words “NEW WINE”?

Notice that the word translated “wine” by the English translators is Strong’s #H8492. The question is; what is the real definition of this word?

Most of you will be familiar with Strong’s Concordance. It was first published in 1890. It is an index of every word in the King James Bible. Each

word carries a corresponding number to identify it and it gives the definition of the word as used in the original Hebrew or Greek language.

Let’s look at these words again in Judges 9:13. What does this word “wine” mean in this Scripture? ‘should I cease my **new wine**, which cheers both God and men, and go to sway over trees?’ Is this “wine” alcoholic?

Many people have already made up their mind about what this means. But the majority have made their decisions based only on their emotions. I don’t have to tell you that is no way to interpret Scripture. There is a better way, and it does not include making a guess.

With all the study aids we have at our fingertips we can learn what these Scriptures mean. We see that the word “wine” in this Scripture is Strong’s number 8492. So, what does that word mean?

Hebrew Strong’s Number: 8492. Hebrew Word (transliteration) *tirôsh*. Phonetic Pronunciation: tee-roshe’. Root: from <H3423> in the sense of expulsion. Cross Reference: TWOT — 2505. Part of Speech: n m Vine’s Words: None. Usage Notes: English Words used in KJV: **wine** 38 [Total Count: 38] or **tiyroshe, tee-roshe**; from <H3423> (yarash) in the sense of expulsion; **must or fresh grape-juice** (as just squeezed out); by implication (rarely) fermented wine :- (new, sweet) wine. — Strong’s Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

A proper definition of the Hebrew word used here, translated “wine”, is “must or fresh grape-juice (as just squeezed out).” No wonder the text refers to this juice as “new wine.” Another mystery solved!

But just to point out the context here, let’s back up in the text to Judges 9:8-9: “*The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us!’ But the olive tree said to them, ‘Should I cease giving my oil, With which they honor God and men, And go*

to sway over trees?’”

These statements are a literary form of poetry which allows inanimate objects the ability to take human characteristics to drive home a point. We sometimes refer to this as “personification.” These statements with the olive oil and the grape juice are showing the great value of the products already being produced by the trees and the vines and how foolish it would be to take on a new type duty which they obviously were not created to do. God gave these trees and vines the ability to do what they do. And to continue doing what God created them to do honors both God and men.

And, while we are at it, consider the logic of what is said again in verse 13: “*Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?*”

Now, anyone can see how men can get high and cheerful drinking alcoholic wine. But **how would God get high and cheerful if men drank alcohol?** Well, that causes us to take another look at Strong’s #H8055. This word has many meanings but it is translated 95 times in the Bible as “rejoice.” Just suppose the translators had used the word “rejoice” rather than “cheereth”? How would this have influenced your decision about this “new wine” being alcoholic?

Consider the word “rejoice” written in “personification style” like the “olive oil.” “**Should I leave my ‘new wine’ in which both God and Men ‘re-joyce?’**”

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Habakkuk 2:15 “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to [him], and maketh [him] drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!” Isaiah 5:22 “Woe unto [them that are] mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink.”

SOCIAL DRINKING: IS IT A PROBLEM?

Rick Owens

What did the Holy Spirit intend for us to know concerning drinking alcohol in “moderation?” The very subject has the potential to produce heated and passionate debate between even the best of friends. To come to an understanding of any Bible topic, one must go about it in a logical manner without allowing emotion to bring him to the conclusion he wants, instead of the one God wants. That is the intent of this article, to come to the proper understanding of the Holy Spirit’s commandments concerning the idea of “social drinking.” When one engages in a discussion, the goal must be to determine truth, not to “win” an argument! Therefore, it must be done in love (Eph. 4:15), and then accepted if it is proven to be doctrinal and scriptural.

The term “social drinking” is not found anywhere in the Bible, so we must consider the terms used to come to an understanding of the subject matter. The Bible student will see the terms *wine*, *drunk*, *drunkards*, *revelings* (revelries), and *banqueting* (drinking parties) (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Peter 4:3; Rev. 17:2).

First, it is helpful to understand the word “wine” is a generic term, having different meanings. 1) Wine can refer to alcoholic wine which will cause one to become intoxicated (Eph. 5:18). 2) It can mean the juice squeezed from a grape which makes a sweet drink and is non-alcoholic (John 2:1-10). Or, 3) it can mean the grape itself (Isa. 65:8). Regarding the wedding feast in Cana (John 2:1-10), if the Lord had created intoxicating wine, He would have violated the Law of Moses (Prov. 23:31-32; Habakkuk 2:15). So, when the word wine is read, it must be defined in view of the context under consideration.

In the Old Testament when wine is mentioned in the alcoholic form, it is always condemned. Solomon warned, “*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*” (Prov. 20:1; cf. 23:31-32). Isaiah also condemned its use, “*Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked*

for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!” (Isa. 5:22-23; cf. 28:7).

The Holy Spirit not only condemned the use of alcohol in the Old Testament, but He also condemned it in the New Testament. He said, “*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat*” (1 Cor. 5:11; cf. 5:13; 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 5:4-8; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8; Luke 12:45).

One principle often used by those who accept “social drinking” is that “drunkenness” is condemned, but simply “drinking” is not condemned. Drunkenness is certainly condemned in the Bible, but notice more closely a statement recorded by Peter, “*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries*” (1 Peter 4:3). “Excess of wine” comes from a Greek word meaning “overflowing” and is the state where one is “falling down” drunk. “Revelings” is interpreted from a Greek word meaning “carousel or rioting,” indicating drunkenness, but not “falling down” drunk. “Banqueting” comes from a Greek word meaning “drinking parties,” which is the “social” setting for the consumption of alcohol. Once a study has been done, it becomes clearer, the use of drinking alcohol is forbidden in the Bible.

However, the Holy Spirit did not want searchers for the truth to be confused, so He also stated, “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit,*” which is a commandment written to the Ephesian brethren from the apostle Paul (Eph. 5:18). The word “drunk” in this verse is translated from the Greek word *methusko* meaning “**do not begin to be softened with wine**” (Young’s Analytical Concordance). According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary, it means “**to make drunk or to grow drunk with wine**” (Young’s, p.333). The phrase “wherein is excess” is defined as: “leading to, gives way

to, an abandoned, dissolute life.” Thus, God has condemned the very beginning stages of becoming intoxicated, which starts with the first drink. It is apparent the “social” use of alcohol is considered excess by the Holy Spirit and is a problem for those who desire to be faithful.

With prayer and diligent study, it can be confirmed “social drinking” is a problem God has condemned and one that will cost many their souls. When the faithful strive to be like Christ (Eph. 5:1-2; 1 Peter 2:21), then it becomes easy to stop living as the world and to begin living faithfully for God. It is also true; many are not aware certain activities are sinful but when they learn, they readily comply with God’s standards. Thanks be to God because He has blessed us with His inspired Word for our learning (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3).

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IF I REFUSE TO ASSEMBLE

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Faithfully assembling with other members of the Lord's church in one's area is commanded and demanded by God (Heb. 10:23-31; cf. Acts 2:42; 20:6, 7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

There are times when Christians are unable to attend, but if I could be there and choose not to attend, I am:

- Denying God the kind of worship He desires and deserves (Psa. 18:3; John 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 11:17-20, 33; 14:23; Rev. 4:11).
- Disobeying God's command to assemble, thereby disassembling the body of Christ (Heb. 10:25).
- Disobeying God's command to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23).
- Disobeying God's command to encourage other children of God who have assembled (Heb. 10:25).
- Disobeying God's command to provoke others to love (Heb. 10:24).
- Disobeying God's command to provoke others to do good works (Heb. 10:24).
- Disobeying God's command to sing with the other saints to the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- Disobeying God's command to teach and admonish other saints in song (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- Disobeying God's command to give on the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7; cf. Luke 21:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9).
- Declining to declare the Lord's death in the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week with the local body of Christ (Matt. 26:26-27; Acts 20:6-7; 1 Cor. 11:17-20, 24-26, 33; 14:23; cf. 16:2).
- Depriving and weakening the local church by removing my talents, money, and encouragement (Matt. 25:24-30).
- Displaying a sinful example for others to follow (1 John 2:10; cf. Matt. 5:16).
- Discouraging faithful Christians who are trying their best to get to Heaven and bring others with them (Num. 32:6-7; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 5:9; James 5:19-20).
- Displaying an attitude of ingratitude (Matt. 26:28; Luke 17:11-18; Col. 3:15).
- Displaying a lack of love for God (Matt. 22:37; 1 John 2:3-6, 15-17; 5:3).
- Displaying a lack of love for others (Matt. 22:39; John 13:34-35; Phil. 2:1-4; 1 John 2:9).
- Depriving myself of the best opportunities for spiritual growth (Matt. 5:6; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Eph. 4:14-15; 2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2-3; 2 Peter 1:5-13; 3:15-18).
- Depriving myself of invaluable encouragement and support (Gal. 6:2, 10; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:23-25).

- Depriving myself of Heaven and eternal happiness! (Heb. 10:25-31; Rev. 2:10).

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A question we sometimes ask of others, especially if we haven't seen them in a while, is, "Where are you attending services now?" But, have you ever asked, "Why do you attend services at that place?" Here are some reasons why people attend services at a particular place.

- The LOCATION of the church building.
- The LOOKS of the church building.
- The LARGENESS of the attendance.
- The LENGTH of the services (especially if they are short).
- The LOVED ONES attend there.
- The LET ALONE ATTITUDE prevails there.

These should not be the determining factor(s) in deciding where we attend services if we are concerned about our soul.

Jerry Joseph

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