

REACHING REAL FULFILLMENT AS A CHRISTIAN

"Part VI: Peace Through Obtaining God's Truth"

(1 John 2:20,27; 2 Tim. 3:13-4:2)

Introduction: (To show the need for the message . . .)

Republican-American complaining about moral relativism in Protestant churches in America. He cites a major denomination's church committee report on sexual conduct as a case-in-point: They are suggested that "Rather than inquiring whether sexual activity is premarital, marital or postmarital, we should be asking whether the relation is responsible, the dynamics genuinely mutual, and the loving full of joyful caring..." The committee actually "condemns 'heterosexism,' defined as the 'oppression of homosexuals'" Thus, if you believe in sex only in marriage, you are judged by this committee to oppress homosexuals!

Well, since this committee of a major Protestant group thinks so, are we Nepaugers oppressive for standing against homosexuality?

Dear Abby newspaper column, lists these major religious groups in America that support a woman's right to choose abortion: Quakers; Christian Scientists; Conservative Judaism; the Episcopal Church; Islam (for the first 40 days after conception); the Presbyterian Church; Reformed Judaism; the Unitarian Universalist Association; the United Church of Christ (which includes most Congregational Churches in New England); the United Methodists; Zen Buddhism and the American Baptist Churches. (Register-Citizen, September, 1991)

Well, since these 12 known religious groups in America support a woman's right to choose abortion-on-demand, are we in the wrong for taking a stand as a church against abortion?

Opposes fundamental Protestant beliefs. It taught that truth is found not only in the Bible, but in the Bible plus tradition. This group also believes that only the Church through the priest can interpret the Bible accurately. This belief states of the pope: ". . . (he is) the supreme teacher of the universal Church, as one in whom the charism of the infallibility of the Church herself is individually present . . ." (Abbott, The Docs. of Vat. II, p. 48-49).

Well, do we even have the right to interpret the Bible for ourselves as we believe at Nepaug Church? How can we tell?!

Need: I want to believe and to do what is right, but I'm not SURE what is truth, nor HOW to discern it! MAY I discern it myself, or must I rely on another party?! What is the right interpretation of Scripture?! How do I know if the Bible applies for today's world?!"

I. **1 John was written that Christians might be happy, 1 John 1:4.**

II. **Basic to happiness is knowing for SURE what IS God's truth! 1 John with other Scripture passages provide insight as follows:**

A. There are two vehicles of discerning God's truth as follows:

1. **Subjectively**, even infant Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit of God that they might **identify** God's truth:
 - a. John writes to immature Christians in 1 John 2:18-27 by addressing the *paidia* of God's flock, the "little babies," cf. J. Mitchell, Fellowship: Three Letters From John, p. 70ff.
 - b. Though these believers are so vulnerable to deceivers, they have the Holy Spirit so that they can "discern between truth and error," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn. to 1 Jn. 2:20,27!
 - c. Thus, all Christians possess this subjective Guide to equip them to tell **if** they are being fed truth or error!
2. **Objectively**, believers have the written Word of God as their source to **define** God's truth, 2 T. 3:13-4:2:
 - a. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about his need to face increasingly deceptive foes in the ministry, 2 Tim. 3:13.
 - b. To face this deception, Paul urged Timothy to rely on God's written Scriptures for equipping to face every need he had, 3:15-17: Timothy was to find written Scripture able to offset the challenges of deceivers (v. 13) so that he could be mature, thoroughly equipped unto all good works until at least the time when Jesus Christ returned to rule the earth, cf. 4:1-2!

B. Scripture even tells us on how we **all** must **interpret** Scripture:

1. The Apostle Peter commands **every** Christian to be able to give an apologetic (literally, *apologia*, UBS Gr. N.T., p. 798) to **every** man who questions our beliefs, 1 Pet. 1:1 with 3:15. (Note Christ's use of the

literal, grammatical, historical contexts to interpret Ex. 3:6 to counter errant Sadducean doctrine, Mk. 12:18-27!)

2. To answer this way to **every** man, we **all** must use the normal (litero-grammatico-historical) method of interpreting Scripture!

III. **Besides possessing these vehicles to discern reality, 1 John adds the following practical insight against our being deceived:**

- A. We can offset the evil deception of **other people** as follows:
 1. We can discern saved from unsaved people by testing them with the "Incarnation Confession" test: those who never confess as their belief that Christ is the Creator God come in the body are unbelievers where those who make this confession are Christians, 1 Jn. 4:1-3 & 2:22-26; 1 C. 12:3.
 2. We can discern saved from unsaved people by the test of the lifestyle we see, 1 John 3:7-10: though all Christians at times sin (1 John 1:10), true Christians cannot habitually live that way ("committeth," etc. = **prasso** that focuses on production as opposed to an act or process, Trench, Syn. of the N.T., p. 361-364) where the unsaved sin as a **lifestyle**!
- B. We can offset **self deception** as follows:
 1. **Negatively**, if we claim to fellowship with God, saying that we love fellow believers, but we fail to show it by deeds of provision, we are deceiving ourselves, 1 John 3:14,17-18.
 2. **Positively**, when we show love by meeting needs in others, we are assured that we fellowship with God, 3:18-21!
 3. **Neutrally**, when we fellowship with God, we find His rules not to be "difficult to fulfill," 1 Jn. 5:3 (*barus*, A. & G., A Gr.-Eng. Lex., p. 133). Failure to find Bible rules "easy" means we are legalistic: (a) either we do not rely on the Holy Spirit to obey God (Ro. 7-8) or we've (b) confused man's rules for God's, and must recheck Scripture, cf. Mtt. 15:1-9!
- C. We can offset deceptions of the **whole world system** as follows:
 1. Christians may wonder if they are too narrow in their views as majority opinion often differs from their outlook!
 2. John writes that the entire world system is under Satanic domination, 1 John 5:18-19.
 3. **Thus, we must not be intimidated by having a minority opinion in this present, evil world!**

Lesson Application: To be sure of the truth, (1) become indwelt by God, the Holy Spirit by believing on Christ for salvation from sin, Jn. 3:5-8; Ep. 1:13. (2) Then, relying on this Helper, use Written Scripture to identify and discern respectively all truth or error in an issue, 2 Tim. 3:13-4:2. (3) As questions arise concerning what others claim is reality, or where we doubt our own views in any way, use Scripture with the Holy Spirit and divinely supplied common sense for determining truth!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message's lesson . . .)

Scripture: ". . . Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire." (NIV) Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty of homosexuality according to Genesis 19:4-9. According to Scripture, the major Protestant denomination is in error in defending homosexuality as a virtue. Otherwise, **God owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology for destroying them!**

(2) Regarding abortion-on-demand, a position defended by the 12 major religious American groups named by Abigail Van Buren, we read in Psalm 51:5: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (NIV) King David admits that he was guilty of sin at the point of conception, so that he must have been a person at conception to bear such guilt! Thus, the taking of the life of a human fetus at any point after his conception is the taking of human life. Abortion-on-demand is murder according to the rational understanding of Psalm 51:5 regardless of the opinion of 12 major religious American groups. We must side with Psalm 51:5 and not with majority opinion on the evil of abortion-on-demand!

Faith of Our Fathers, p. 95) However, Peter himself charges us to have no hierarchy in the Church, but that elders lead as examples rather than by lording it over God's flock, 1 Peter 5:1-3! Since he also commands every believer to be ready to answer every man the reasons for his beliefs in 1 Peter 3:15, and to desire God's Word for personal growth (1 P. 2:2), **Peter** expects every Christian to interpret Scripture on his own without the jurisdiction of human masters in the Church! Since **Peter** says so, we interpret Scripture individually as God leads!