

BIBLICALLY TESTING THE SPIRITS
"Part VII: Reaching People Who Are Swayed By Errant Beliefs"
(Acts 1:8 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Following last Sunday's sermon on the beliefs of Roman Catholicism, I spoke with several people who relayed to me the concerns they or others in our body had for reaching unsaved friends and relatives they have who are still in erroneous groups:

(1) One party shared his deep concern over a gathering of 100,000 people who listened to the Pope in Saint Louis a few weeks ago, and how they all seemed to view him almost as God on earth! He was really bothered by the fact that those who hold to the truth on salvation seem to be in a little tiny cell as compared to the huge numbers of those who hold to error. He said, "Pastor, I had the feeling that you bit the head of a lion today!"

(2) Another shared his insight that a believer in our church is having regarding living up to the cultural expectations of a relative whose expectations demand his involvement in a religious ceremony of an errant Church group! This one, as so many of our body here at Nepaug have experienced before, was caught between the pull of family ties and those ties of conscience and the Word of God!

(3) Several years ago, I witnessed the Gospel to a young woman in a home with other believers present. After carefully going over the Gospel with her, she responded, "I know what you are telling me is the truth! However, if I accept Jesus as you say now, it will crush my grandmother who is a strong Catholic. I want to wait until she dies and then I'll accept Christ!"

I was astounded! Why wouldn't she want to accept Christ and lead her grandmother to Christ before she died so she could go to be with Christ in heaven?! I couldn't understand it!

In view of the need, and in view of the spiritual blindness of so many dear friends in groups where they do not hold to the truth, (a) how can we REACH these people effectively for Christ?! (b) What should we do when a number of extended family members are involved in anti-biblical groups, and they want us to attend special family-related services in these churches with them?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Now that we know the **ERRORS** of major religious groups, **HOW do I EFFECTIVELY reach those I know who are IN them?!**"

- I. **Jesus told His followers to disciple others BASED ON their being ENABLED to do so BY God's indwelling HOLY SPIRIT, Acts 1:8.**
- II. **The REASON FOR this ENABLING is clarified in Scripture:**
 - A. There is an **overwhelming, superhuman opponent** to such discipling:
 1. Satan blinds **all** the lost against the Gospel, 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:19.
 2. Thus, **no** believer can **himself** evangelize **anyone else!** (John 15:5c)
 - B. Yet, there is an **all-powerful Resource** the believer may use to do this:
 1. The Holy Spirit, who indwells the believer (Rom. 8:9) is **greater** than **Satan** (1 Jn. 4:4b), for the Holy Spirit is **God** (Acts 5:3-4).
 2. Through the **Holy Spirit, believers can** disciple **all** men, (Acts 1:8)
- III. **We view Scripture to see the details of effective spiritual outreach:**
 - A. At the **worldwide** level, we must **REST** in the **Holy Spirit's** work to prod **every unbeliever** in the **WORLD** to **thirst** for Christ's salvation:
 1. John 16:8-11 says the Spirit prods the world on its need for Christ.
 2. We know from Acts 17:24-28a that God arranges events and even world geo-political boundaries to create this thirst in **all** men!
 3. God nudges the most **alienated** folk to have a thirst for Christ!
 - a. Paul spoke the words of Acts 17:24-28a to Athen's Areopagus, the city's "board of education", cf. Ryr. St. Bib., KJV fn. to v.19
 - b. This group of Stoic and Epicurean philosophers were very estranged from a personal relationship with the God of the Bible.
 - c. Yet, Paul informed them that God was not far from **every one of them** so that **they** could "**reach out** for **him**", Acts 17:27 NIV.
 - d. Thus, the individual believer must **rest** in the Bible's revelation that the Spirit is at work to prod **all** the lost to thirst for Christ.
 - B. **Locally**, the Spirit uses the believer **thru his church** to disciple men:
 1. The Church as a **body** is God's light to the world, Revelation 1:20.
 2. Now, God uses "starter" **messengers** like evangelists and pastors to **equip** the **body** to be a witness as a **GROUP**, Rev. 1:20, 13, 16. These "starter" ministers equip the body by presenting God's Word so their hearers can be edified to serve God **themselves**. This provides a **group** discipling effect, Eph. 4:11-12.

3. Thus, each believer is to **react** to such "starter" efforts by using his gift to edify and thus help keep the **body's witness** going, Ep. 4:16!
- C. At the **individual** level, the Spirit uses believers to disciple individuals:
1. Individual believers are armed with the Gospel that contains the power of God to save those who hear and believe it, Romans 1:16.
 2. As individual believers trust God to create **opportunities** for them to testify, they are equipped to disciple other individuals, Col. 4:2-3
 3. As they trust God for the **words**, God equips believers to witness well to other individuals they are to reach, Col. 4:4; Mtt.10:18-20.
 4. As individual believers lean on God, they are given **boldness** to give their witness to other individuals as they should, Eph. 6:18-20.
 5. Note: in witnessing, believers should reach across all boundaries toward the lost **except** if doing so makes the believer himself to **sin** (see amplified notes in the "Application" and "Conclusion" parts).*
 6. Note: God may let **hardships** rise to make us **trust** Him **more** to make our **witness stronger**, 2 Cor. 12:7-10. So, **expect hardships!**

Application: *To be effective in witnessing for Christ, (1) we must receive the enabling Holy Spirit by trusting in Christ for our own salvation, Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:9. (2) Then we must STAY in RIGHT and USEFUL relation to the Spirit by (a) confession of sins done as a believer (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) rely on the indwelling Spirit to do and say what we should, Gal. 5:16-23. (3) This will involve (a) trusting the Spirit's worldwide work to convict and prod all unbelieving men to thirst for Christ. (b) It will include fitting into our local church role to keep the BODY witness burning bright before the lost. (c) It will include leaning on God so that when He sends us individuals to whom we are personally to witness, we will ((a)) see God's opportunities, ((b)) have the right words and ((c)) be bold enough to direct the lost to Christ. (4) Note: NOT ALL those we address will believe (Ac ts 22:17-22), but stay fervent as our job is to TESTIFY, not to MAKE men BELIEVE! *(5) Note: in outreach toward the lost, (a) God wants us to reach across all bounds EXCEPT where doing so causes US to SIN: ((a)) see 2 Kings 5:18-19 where GOD let Namaan enter an idol temple so he could do his job of helping his king walk, BUT see ((b)) 2 Chr. 19:1-2; 20:35-37 where God opposed Jehoshaphat's joining evil kings in evil "joint-ministry" efforts! (6) Note: Don't be amazed if hardships rise in witnessing: GOD may allow them to make us trust Him more for greater POWER!*

Lesson: *We believers WILL be EFFECTIVE witnesses IF we AVOID trying to author our OWN effort and JOIN GOD'S program FOR us!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

I have often been asked by fellow Nepaug Church attenders what they should do about **family**-related events to which they are invited in churches where theological error abounds! They want to be a witness to these loved ones, and not unnecessarily and painfully be alienated from them, but not at the cost of compromising their stand!

To respond on this issue, I can **quote** a conservative Evangelical, T. A. McMahon. Mr. McMahon writes in Dave Hunt's newsletter, The Berean Call. Mr. Hunt wrote the landmark book against Evangelical doctrinal compromise entitled The Seduction of Christianity. Mr. McMahon's quote is taken from the "Question and Answer" section of the November 1977 issue of Hunt's newsletter as follows:

Question: [By a letter from a reader] There are many Catholics on my wife's side of the family, and most of them know that we believe that Roman Catholicism is a false religion. However, we find ourselves in a dilemma when an important family situation comes up which takes place in a Catholic church, such as weddings, funerals, etc. We know T. A. McMahon is a former Catholic. What does he do?

Answer: [T. A. McMahon's response] In order to keep lines of communication open with unsaved relatives, I recommend doing **whatever** one **can without compromising** one's **faith**. It's particularly important to be available to minister to loved ones at the death of a family member, even if that means attending a requiem Mass. The same would apply to a Catholic wedding, even though a Mass may be involved.

For those unfamiliar with Catholic sacramental rituals, all are unbiblical and most are a denial of the finished work of Christ regarding salvation. Nevertheless, **as long** as a believer is **not worshipping** in a Catholic church, but **attending** as a **service** to **others** -- as did Namaan in the pagan temple of Rimmon (2 Kgs 5:17-19) -- there is no compromise."

Thus, (1) we should try to honor family members by our involvement with them when they have special events in churches where error exists PROVIDING we can stay true to what is right in the process! (2) Also, for hard decisions along this line, claim 1 Corinthians 10:13 for God's guidance and comfort!