

Why the Spirit and Word Must Always Agree

He was the perfect example of what happens when we neglect the Word of God in our pursuit of spiritual experiences. Without the ballast of God's Word, we may well float away into a la-la land of false spirituality, and this was the case of this individual.

My two friends and I encountered this strange little man while going door-to-door, offering to pray with people and inviting them to revival services we were conducting in Kiowa, Oklahoma, in 1972. We knocked on his door, and he invited us into his home.

We immediately noticed that his living room wall was papered with numerous pictures and letters from well-known preachers of that time such as Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn, R.W. Schambach, W.V. Grant, Rev. Ike and others.

Almost immediately, he began telling us about his sensational, spiritual experiences, including visions and out-of-the-body experiences. He told us that he had been to both heaven and hell. He also said he saw Jesus in hell, whom he said was still there suffering for our sins.

This was so contradictory to what the New Testament says about Jesus ascending on high and sitting at the right hand of God that we immediately knew it was a lie. My friend, Ruel, interrupted him and said, "Jesus is not in hell; He is in heaven." This individual angrily retorted, "Don't you call me a liar; I will kill you. I was there. I saw him."

We did not need any special revelation to know that this man was not of God. We were young, but we knew enough of the Bible to know this man was totally deceived. His spiritual experiences did not line up with God's Word, and the Spirit of

God will always agree with the Word of God.

Martin Luther Learned This Lesson

Martin Luther was open to dynamic workings of the Holy Spirit, and he testified to miraculous healings and personal spiritual experiences. However, he was adamant that all spiritual experiences must align with the testimony of God's Word, and he lived this out in his own life.

One day, for example, while in intense prayer, he saw a shining vision on the wall of Jesus, with the wounds of His passion, looking down at him. Luther thought at first it was a heavenly vision but changed his mind when he noted that the person in the vision was not compatible with the Christ he knew from God's Word. He said:

"Therefore, I spoke to the vision thus: 'Begone you, confounded devil. I know no other Christ than He who was crucified, and who in His Word is presented unto me.' Whereupon the image vanished, clearly demonstrating from whom it came."

Luther also used God's word in challenging false prophetic revelations. While hiding in the Castle of Wartburg after his excommunication and condemnation at the Diet of Worms, two men from Zwickau, known as the Zwickau Prophets, visited his hometown of Wittenberg.

These men claimed to have had divine visions, dreams and visits from the angel Gabriel. They wowed the people with their prophetic revelations and began taking the reform movement in Wittenberg in a radical direction that was not compatible with God's Word.

When Luther heard what was happening, he put his life at risk and returned to Wittenberg. He preached eight sermons on eight consecutive days, challenging with God's Word the visions and dreams of the prophets from Zwickau. The noted historian,

Philip Schaff, said, "In plain, clear, strong, scriptural language, he refuted the errors without naming the errorists."

It soon became obvious to the people that the two men were in error because their revelations did not agree with God's Word. The prophets, realizing they had lost their influence, left Wittenberg and never returned. One of Luther's colleagues wrote to the Elector of that region:

"Oh, what joy has Dr. Martin's return spread among us. His words, through divine mercy, are bringing back every day misguided people into the way of truth. It is as clear as the sun, that the Spirit of God is in him, and that he returned to Wittenberg by His special providence."

The Leaders at the Azusa Street Revival Understood This

The Azusa Street Revival (1906-09) is well-known as the place from which the Pentecostal revival spread around the world. Gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of prophecy, were common occurrences and were encouraged. What is not so well known about the revival is that God's Word was central, and every teaching and activity had to measure up to the standard of biblical truth.

For example, the June-Sept. 1907 issue of *The Apostolic Faith*, the official paper of the revival, carried a statement that read:

"We are measuring everything by the Word; every experience must measure up to the Bible. Some say that is going too far, but if we have lived too close to the Word, we will settle that with the Lord when we meet Him in the air."

William Seymour and the leaders at Azusa believed that the diligent study of Scripture was the only way that fanaticism and spiritual pride could be avoided. The January 1908 issue carried a page of questions and answers. One person had asked, "Do we need to study the Bible as much after receiving the

Holy Ghost?" The response was:

"Yes, if not we become fanatical or many times will be led by deceptive spirits and begin to have revelations and dreams contrary to the Word, and begin to prophesy and think ourselves some great one, bigger than some other Christians. But by reading the Bible prayerfully, waiting before God, we become just humble little children, and we never feel that we have got more than the least of God's children."

The Berean Approach

Those at Azusa remind us of the Bereans in Acts 17:11. Before arriving in Berea, Paul and Silas had escaped an angry mob in Thessalonica that opposed their gospel message. The Bereans, by contrast, were open to their message but first compared it to the revelation of Scripture. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Luke says:

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, daily examining the Scriptures, to find out if these things were so."

In other words, the Bereans would not accept the message of Paul and Silas before evaluating it in the light of God's Word. They were commended for this by the Holy Spirit and described as being "noble" in their attitude and actions.

The Bereans were open, but they were not naïve. They evaluated everything Paul and Silas said in the light of the revelation of Scripture. They believed that the Word and Spirit would always agree.

Final Thought

In this post-modern era when personal, mystical experiences are valued over reason and common sense, we as Spirit-filled followers of Christ have an important role to play. We value spiritual experiences, but we recognize that there is a

fleshly and demonic realm and that the validity of our experiences must be measured by the truth of Scripture. We must demonstrate to the church and the world our firm belief that the Spirit and Word will always agree. {eoa}

*This article was derived from **Dr. Eddie Hyatt's** latest book, Prophets and Prophecy, available from Amazon and his website at . If you are concerned about America's future and wonder if we might see another Great Awakening, check out his book 1726, also available from Amazon and his website.*

For the original article, visit .

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.