

A Word of Caution

For the past 48 years of ministry I've been in love with  the Word of God and the **Spirit of God**. Some of you are familiar with the old saying, "If you have too much of the Word you will dry up. Too much of the Spirit and you will blow up, but if you have the Spirit and the Word, you will grow up."

Though I'm sure one could pick apart that saying, it does nevertheless contain some great wisdom, insight and common sense. Some churches that major on the Spirit have become overly intoxicated and plain weird, while those majoring on the Word have a tendency to become dead, pharisaical and proud.

When questioned by His disciples as to when the end would come, Jesus warned them that first there would be wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes and pestilence, etc. He also spoke about an increase of supernatural activity by saying that there would be many **false prophets** that would mislead many. He went on to say; "False christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

My immediate response to such a warning is: This could never happen to me. No man is going to fool me into believing that he is "the Christ." No way! I'm too mature and well-grounded than to believe some stranger is going to convince me he's the Son of God.

I'm sure you have had the same response. Right? Well, allow me to explain to you how this could happen, and then maybe you will change your mind as I did. The word Christ can accurately be translated as "the anointed." Now let's look again at the statement Jesus made. "False christs and false prophets will arise ... and deceive [many]." Couple this with "show great

signs and wonders” and you have all the ingredients for deception.

Over the years I’ve watched in amazement as God’s people flock to sit under the “anointed” ministry of some man or woman who operates in the **supernatural** realm. Christian television stations quickly air these meetings, thereby conveying that all is well.

What troubles me the most is that their hunger for the **supernatural** causes them to hang on every word they are told, regardless of the person’s character. These days, anyone who operates in the supernatural is given a free pass when it comes to his or her personal life. Jesus said, “By their fruits you will know them ... Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, **cast out demons** in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’” (Matt. 7:20-22).

When I see more talk than walk, more time given to money than the message, more jokes than Jesus, more convulsions than conviction, more “holy” laughter than holy fire, more carpet time than **prayer** time, more hype than holiness, more about mantles than the Master, and more liberality with their morals than their miracles, then I have a right to be cautious, regardless of the miraculous.

Another area of concern I have is for the “new thing.” By this I mean some spectacular occurrence that we haven’t seen in any previous generation. Take for example gold dust, angel feathers or precious gems appearing. What are we to make of such phenomena? Do we blindly buy into the belief that this is from God simply because it’s spectacular? While I don’t claim to have all the answers, I have reached a personal decision that I’m satisfied with. At least until I have some further insight.

Years ago when these things began to take place, I was reading

from the book of Acts where the Lord poured out His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. As the people observed the 120 speaking in tongues, they accused them of being drunk. Peter stood to defend what was happening by reminding them that what they were observing was the fulfillment of what Joel had prophesied. Peter declared, "This is that" (2:16). As I read those words, it suddenly occurred to me that for many of these "new signs" there was no "this." What I mean is, these things were not what had been prophesied would happen, and must therefore be taken with a great deal of caution.

I hope you understand what I'm saying. If for instance, the Old Testament **prophets** had prophesied in the last days I will pour out gold dust, etc, than I could say, "this is that." It seems like wisdom to me to be cautious if there is no that to the this. Take for example what Isaiah said would take place when the Lord came. "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Is. 35:4-5).

You recall when John was in prison he sent his disciples to enquire of Jesus whether or not he was the "Expected One" (Luke 7:19, NASB). Jesus said, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up" (Luke 7:22). Jesus was sending a message to John that what He was doing was confirmed through His prophets. His this was preceded by a that.

Luke summed up the ministry of Jesus this way: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38, NKJV). I'm always somewhat skeptical when I see the saving and healing power of God replaced by sensationalism.

Jesus justified His own ministry by referring to what Isaiah prophesied when He stood in the Temple and declared "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Here is what He was referring to: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Is. 61:1-2).

Jesus wasn't going around making gold dust appear on everyone's clothing while the sick lay all around Him. Nor was He causing gems to appear in the hands of those in the crowd while lepers went away the same way they came. Am I saying that these things are a work of the devil? No, not necessarily, I'm just saying that we need to be cautious regarding any new thing that borders on the sensational rather than the practical, and has little or no foundation in Scripture.

When we focus on the this without having a that, we have a wrong focus and need to return to the tried and true Word of God. The Word without the Spirit can be deadly and the Spirit without the Word can be deceptive. Just as a bird cannot fly with only one wing, so likewise we need to maintain a balance between the Word and the Spirit and the Spirit and the Word if we are to avoid deception.

I long to see an increase of God's **supernatural** work in and through His Church. Hardly a week goes by that I don't find myself longing for greater demonstrations of God's presence and power. I'm also deeply conscious of the fact that because Jesus "loved righteousness and hated lawlessness" (Heb. 1:9). He ministered under God's **anointing**. We hear a great deal these days about the anointing, but so little about God's holy hatred of sin.

One final word of caution: When discerning the source of the

miraculous or supernatural, we need to ask ourselves, who does it bear witness to? Jesus said: "The works which the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36).

If the miraculous doesn't magnify and glorify Jesus or create in us a hunger for more of God, then something is terribly wrong. If our appetite is simply for the spectacular, and we find ourselves captivated by the messenger rather than the Master, then we are prime candidates for deception.

If **false anointings** are a sign of the last days, we had better take seriously the words of Jesus when He said; "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matt. 24:4-5).

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