

Message #5 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

“Do You Really Know God?”

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about knowing God. Let's start out with a scripture. It's 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. In this verse the apostle Paul, is explaining the Christian's responsibility in being separated from the fellowship with evil. It says, "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."

This scripture simply says that the things in a Christian's life must not be entwined with things which are apposed to God. In the church today, many people live lives that are entwined with evil things. But the Bible clearly explains that our service to God must be pure. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, it says that we are to come out from among those who do not serve the God of Heaven, and that we should not let ourselves touch that which is, in the eyes of God, unclean, that which is evil. But the concept of being separate from all the things of the world has been mostly lost by today's church. The message you hear from pulpits around the world DOES tell Christians to be separate, and not to touch that which is unclean. But the witness that Christians actually give, the testimony that the world hears and SEES, is radically different. The testimony of Christians may be spoken with their mouth, but the testimony of their actual lives does not correspond to their words.

Am I talking about you? No, of course not. You're perfect, right? But then, maybe you're NOT perfect. It's at least a possibility that you're one of these people. In fact, we're all, to some

extent, one of these people. We say one thing with our mouths, but we say another thing with our actions. And the people who don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior need desperately to hear the gospel, and if they do hear it, it's going to come from us. No, not just from the preachers behind the pulpits, but from the whole body of Christ. In fact, people who come to Jesus are drawn by the Holy Spirit, but the decision they make to accept or reject Jesus, is based on knowledge they have of who Jesus is. They find this knowledge by both listening to us, and also by watching us. In fact, there are people watching you every day of your life. They may not have yet heard about Jesus, and may not have any idea that salvation is possible, but they are learning what Christians are by watching them every day. When the salvation message finally comes to them, they will compare it to what they already know about Christians. Then they will either reject Jesus or choose Jesus, based on what they can comprehend at that time.

It is the Christian's responsibility, therefore, to give a proper testimony each day, so that when the preacher preaches the word of God to the unsaved person, the unsaved person can recognize the character and love of God, and therefore accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

But Satan is working hard to destroy the witness of the body of Christ on the earth. We're the body of Christ, and it is our witness that must not be destroyed. When Jesus was on earth, he gave PERFECT witness to the Father. He didn't do his own works, and he didn't talk his own words, but only spoke the words and only did the works of God. That's why he was perfect. He never got into himself. He was always 'about his Father's business'. We should be too. But we aren't. We've got this problem of being human, without the power to completely suppress the fleshly desires, as Jesus did. Jesus was the only one who could perfectly suppress all the earthly desires so that his witness of the Father would be 100% perfect. We fall far short of that. But then, that's not so startling. None of us can resist all earthly desires as Jesus did. If we could, then we wouldn't need Jesus to die in our place. We could be perfect. We're not. However, this doesn't give us the right to apply God's grace, his goodness, to every situation in our lives. We're still supposed to be the body of Christ, and we're still supposed to give witness of Him. If we don't, we give witness of Satan.

In Amos 3:3 it asks the rhetorical question, "How can two walk together unless they are in agreement?" It's an easy question to answer. They can't. If you want to walk together with someone, you both have to have the same destination in mind. If you want to walk with Christ in this life, you must have the same destination in mind. Many in the church today say they want to walk with Christ, but don't have the same destination in mind. No, I'm not talking about the destination of heaven. All Christians claim to want to go to heaven. I'm talking about the destination we want to go to here on earth.

On earth, our destination should be Calvary. The next life is heaven, this life is Calvary. We know that Jesus, after finishing his life on the earth, went to heaven. But in his life on earth, his daily destination was determined by what the Holy Spirit led him to do. He went to Jerusalem at the direction of the Holy Spirit, so that he could do the Father's will. He went to Capernaum as the Holy Spirit led him, so that he could accomplish the Father's will. He went to Bethany as the

Holy Spirit led him, so that he could accomplish the Father's will. He went to Calvary as the Holy Spirit led him, so that he could accomplish the Father's will.

We, now, are the earthly body of Christ. Jesus isn't here in the flesh anymore. We are. We're supposed to carry on the work of Jesus in the earth, in the same manner that He did the Father's work when He was on the earth. And we aren't supposed to decide for ourselves, but are to follow the leading of God's Holy Spirit to accomplish the work. As it says in Romans 8:14, "As many as are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

We are now the body of Christ. Jesus, however, is still the head of his body. We're the body, He's the head. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, it says that the head of man is Christ. This simply means that the authority over the man is Jesus. The head is where the authority of a body rests. All decisions come from the head. Just as it says that the head of Jesus Christ is God, the head of man is Jesus. This means that the we, the body of Christ, should have our head separated from our body and put Christ's head in place of it. This is what is referred to in Revelation 20:4, where it talks about being beheaded for the witness of Jesus Christ. We are to choose to be beheaded, so that Christ's head will be on our shoulders and he, not us, will direct us in our words and in our actions.

Yes, I know what the Bible scholars have said about that passage, but Revelation 20:4 isn't referring to punishment for being a witness of Christ, but is referring to being a willing sacrifice for Christ by refusing to be led of our own earthly desires, and to accept the direction of Jesus Christ for our lives. It should be the desire of every Christian on this earth to be beheaded for Christ sake. We need to be the body of Christ, and stop trying to be the head of that body too. The authority over our bodies should rest in Jesus Christ, not in man. This is where evil gets its foothold. Because we're so human, and unlike Jesus, we're too weak to overcome the flesh in our own strength, we need to let Christ be our authority so we can be what we're were meant to be; a true witness of the Father in heaven. It is only when we are a TRUE witness of the Father, that the world will see the Father in us. As long as we keep our own head as our authority, our witness will testify of ourselves. We will display traits and desires that are not pure and holy. Sure, we may make a good show at it on the outside, but sooner or later our true witness will show through. What was that old saying, "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and you can fool all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time."

But fooling others is not the biggest problem we face. It is fooling ourselves that really will do us in. If we refuse to be a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ on this earth, if we refuse to take up his cross and follow him to Calvary, then one day we will die the final death, the second death in the lake of fire and brimstone. Jesus was referring to this second death in Matthew 16 and Luke 9, when he said that there were some there who would not taste of death until they saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. This means that there are people who will not give themselves to being a living sacrifice while living on this earth, but when Jesus comes again, they will suffer a death then. Only the death they will suffer then will be the second death, the final destructive death of hell.

There are many in the church today who profess to be good upstanding Christians, but who are really caught up in their own sinful lives. They claim one thing, but don't do it. Isaiah spoke of these kinds of people in chapter 29, verse 13. In the new testament we find the same thing in Matthew 15:8 and Mark 7:6. It says, "These people draw near to me with their mouths, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." We refer to people like this as those who give just lip service. There's a lot of people who attend church, but do not really know Christ. Nor does Christ know them. We read in Matthew 7:21 where Jesus says that there will be people in the judgment day who will claim to know Christ, but who will be told that he did not know them. It even says that these people seemed to be the upstanding ones of the church while on earth, but in actuality they weren't serving the God of heaven, but were serving the God of this world. In fact, the scripture points out that these people even claimed to have prophesied in the name of the Lord, and maybe to even done many wonderful works for Jesus while in their earthly life, but which in actuality were not words or works of God at all. The fact that these people were supposed to be ones who prophesied, indicate those who are not just the Christians on the fringe of the church, but would include those who are looked upon by others as major pillars of the church. In short, the scripture is referring to those who are, in essence, just Pharisee types. No real service to God, just lip service. Many of the people think they're godly, and they are in a sense, but what god are they really like?

I've written, as an example, a little narrative of what might be quite common in today's Christian social circle. Follow with me in this for a moment as we witness a very diabolical and insidious, but possibly a very real situation that may be occurring in some form every day.

The initiate stood before Satan. It was time to make his vows. Blackness encircled him, and demons flitted here and there, brushing up against him and sending shivers coursing through his body. Chains rattled somewhere in the distance, and screams of agony rose up through the hard rock floor of the chamber. The man was ready to make his commitment to serving the grand master of the demonic world. He didn't even quiver at the ugliness of those around him, for he had long since lost any feeling of cleanliness or purity of heart. All he knew by now was that he wanted all forms of hatred, strife, and agony to be a part of his consciousness.

He felt the power surge through him; that false sense of strength that people get when they think they are being empowered in the strength of their own selves. The surge of power felt good to him, for he cared for no one else but himself. Even the vows he was about to make would not be for the welfare of his master, but only in acknowledgment of his own carnal desires, knowing that his master didn't require, neither wanted, a caring heart, but only a swearing of allegiance to him, and a promise to be opposed to anything considered heavenly. The initiate was ready to make just that kind of commitment. He cared for nothing good, or righteous, but was already envisioning the power he would be able to wield against others for the purpose of fulfilling his own lustful desires.

Suddenly there was a hush within the chamber, and the initiate spoke boldly and confidently. "I do swear before you, that in exchange for power to fulfill my lustful desires, I will destroy all that is called good, all that is called righteous. I will do this in every situation without exception, whether it is with total strangers, father and mother, sister and brother, or even with my own wife

and children. I will attempt to subvert them from the truth by encouraging their participation with worldly wants and endeavors, until such time that I destroy even my own wife's faith in the God of heaven, even as I sit in church with her. I will destroy my children's understanding by the lies of television, movies, loud raucous music, brand name clothes, and lots of cool toys. And when they look to me as a roll model, questioning which path they should follow in life, I will stand idly by and smile approvingly at their ignorance."

The vows continued for a time, and then the initiate returned to his home. But neither the chamber experience, nor the demons that had brushed against him, were a part of his conscious memory. No demons could be seen around him by others, and the rattling of the chains that bound him securely could not be heard. Few who knew him suspected the selfishness that pervaded his life, and which god he really served. He didn't even suspect it himself. And to most people he was just John Q. Christian; attender of church, average husband, and average parent, average deacon. But to the master of the black chamber, he was, My Deceived One. And if you listen with discerning ears, you might even hear the brush of the demons whenever John Q. Christian says, "Amen, brother."

Well, . . . do you know, or suspect you know, someone in the church like that? I'm pretty sure we're all surrounded with these people. They talk the talk, but don't know what it means to walk the walk, for the walk they should walk goes to Calvary, and they have no intention of going there. They think they are destined for heaven, but their chosen destination for this current life has chosen their eternal destination.

I'd like to give another example, one not quite so devilish. You might be able to identify this type of Christian even more than John Q. Christian. I've named him, George, and he's having a little conversation with God. Follow me if you will.

"Well, George, I hear from your conversation from others that you have accepted the call to being my servant."

"Oh. Yes, God. I certainly have. I don't mind being a servant at all. Makes me feel good when I can tell others about being a servant."

"Well, George, that's not exactly the way I see it. My version would be a little bit different."

"Huh?" says George, kinda getting a little bit shaky in the legs. "What do you mean?"

"Well, George, I hear you talking to others about being the Lord's servant, but as I remember, I called you to this about five years ago. Since then, you've told lots of people about your service, but I can't really remember any time you've actually put it into practice."

George starts to sweat a little now, and clears his throat a couple of times, and says, "But God, remember how that widow woman asked me to help her clean out her garage after her husband died? I did it, and never asked her for a dime."

"Yes, George," says God. "You really cleaned it out, alright. How much did you get for all that stuff you sold after telling her it was just junk that you needed to haul away?"

George doesn't answer this one, but just lets his jaw hang open a bit.

"George," God continues, "I have sent many people to you that needed desperately to be served, but not one of them received help from you. You found some excuse in every situation

for turning them away, just because you felt they might take unfair advantage of your time, or you might come up missing some of the money you have padlocked in your pocket. In every situation you either would not help, or you found a way to get more from them than they got from you.”

George is completely silent now. He’s shaking so bad that he’s not even sure his bladder won’t betray him. God speaks again in conclusion.

“George, you always want me to serve your needs, but when it comes to others, you’re more concerned about how much you can get, but never concerned with how much you can give. So I’m going to do something for you that will make me feel better. I’m going to start giving you more and more money and goods, and I’m not going to send anyone to you ever again that needs help. I’m going to erase this conversation from your mind, and I’m going to let you go on thinking that you are a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. In essence, I’m putting you on the shelf until judgment day, then I’ll decide what to do with you.”

It’s quiet now, and George wakes up from his nap. God is gone. George shakes his head a little, and then smiles, and says to himself, “Hmmm, looks like a good day for a little game of golf. I think I’ll call Tim and see if he wants to go with me. He’s always good for a few bucks. Ha! What a sucker!”

Well, of course we know that George is the real sucker. He has fallen for the lies of Satan and he thinks he is a good upstanding Christian. But an upstanding Christian must first learn to bow to the God of heaven instead of his own flesh. Luke 16:13, says, “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” George wanted the mammon, the earthly things of life, the things that appeal to the flesh. He didn’t want the glory of God to shine in him. He didn’t want to follow Jesus to Calvary. His destination for this life was one that pleased his flesh.

When the Bible says, “Come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing,” many so called Christians immediately begin to defend their worldly pursuits by quoting the other verse, that says we must be in the world but not of the world. This gives them a platform to defend their selfish lives. But being in the world doesn’t mean to be conformed to the world. But Romans 12:2 says we are not to be conformed to this world. When it’s difficult for the unsaved to accurately see the witness of Jesus Christ in our lives, this means we aren’t really serving God, but are serving ourselves. Serving ourselves is what Satan wants us to do. Serving God, is what we are called by God to do. It is also what servants are supposed to do. If we’re going to call ourselves servants, then the first thing we had better do is to study on the scriptures which give a proper definition of the term, ‘servant of God’. If we’ve got the definition wrong, then our service will be wrong too.