



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

PROTECTION FROM DECEPTION

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Navigating Through The Minefield Of Signs And Wonders

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Chapter 1

Signs and Wonders Do Not Determine Truth

There has been in recent years a worldwide explosion of signs and wonders. Some have been biblical and helpful. Others have been bizarre and unbiblical. Signs and wonders are not new. They are recorded in various passages of the Bible and in different periods of church history. However, the current explosion extends more widely than any particular church or denomination and has attracted widespread attention in both the religious and the secular media.

I want to make it plain that I have no personal prejudice or anxiety concerning unusual manifestations. In actual fact, I have in my own lifetime experienced quite a number of them. They do not frighten me. I am not negative about them. As I recorded in my booklet "Uproar in the Church", my own personal encounter with Jesus in World War II began in a very unconventional way. In the middle of the night, in a barrack room of the British Army, I spent more than an hour on my back on the floor, with my body first racked by convulsive sobs and then filled with a river of laughter which grew continually louder.

Next morning, I found myself a completely different person, changed -not by any act of my will but by yielding to the supernatural power that had flowed through me. I then looked up various passages in the Bible that speak about laughter. To my surprise, I discovered that – for God's people – laughter is not primarily, as we imagine, a reaction to something comical, but rather an expression of triumph over our enemies.

In Psalm 2:4, David actually depicts God Himself as laughing: He who sits in the heavens shall laugh: The Lord shall hold them in derision, Here, God's laughter is not a reaction to some comedy that is being enacted on earth. Rather, it is His response to the ridiculous human midgets who have the effrontery to oppose His purposes. It is His expression of triumph over all the forces of evil.

Sometimes, God fills us with His own laughter that we may share in His triumph over those who are both His enemies and ours.

Later I pastored a fellowship in London that met on the top floor of a five- story building. One evening a lame man was miraculously healed and threw away his crutches. We all burst into spontaneous praise. At that moment the building began to tremble and shake with the power of God. The praise and shaking continued for about thirty minutes.

I realized that something similar was recorded of the early church in Acts 4:31: And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

At that particular time, our fellowship was conducting several evangelistic meetings each week in the streets of London, and we certainly needed more than natural boldness.

But with regard to any kind of manifestation, there are two questions that I always want to ask. Number one: Is it a manifestation of the Holy Spirit of God? Or is it a manifestation from some other source? And number two (and this is related to it): Is the manifestation in question in harmony with Scripture? In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul says, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the author of all Scripture, and He never says or does anything to contradict Himself. Every genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit will, in some way, Harmonize with Scripture.

Now, I want to begin with some warnings of Jesus, particularly related to the end time period in which I believe we are living. These are warnings against deception. They are found in Matthew chapter 24, verses 4, 5, 11 and 24. In other words, four times in 21 verses, Jesus specifically warns us against deception in this period of the close of the age. The first thing Jesus said about the events leading up to His return, in Matthew 24:4: "Take heed that no one deceives you." Verse 5: "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Messiah (Christ),' and will deceive many." Verse 11: "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." And then in verse 24: "For false messiahs (christs) and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." So, Jesus warns us four times against deception. Anybody who shrugs off that warning or treats it lightly does so at the risk of his own soul. The greatest single danger in this end time is not sickness, nor poverty, nor persecution. It is deception. If anybody says, "It could never happen to me," it has already happened to that person, because that person is saying something could never happen that Jesus said would happen. That is a sufficient indication that such a person is deceived.

Next, I want to say something important about signs and wonders. They do not determine truth. It is very essential to understand that. Signs and wonders do not determine truth! Truth is already determined and established, and it is the Word of God. In John 17:17, Jesus is praying to the Father, and He says, "Your word is truth." And in Psalm 119:89, the psalmist said, "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven." Nothing that happens on earth can ever change the smallest little sign or letter of the Word of God. It is forever settled in heaven.

Now, the Bible speaks about signs and wonders. It says some things about them that are good, and some that are very frightening. I want to turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and read a few verses there, beginning at verse 9. The coming of the lawless one [that is the title of the Antichrist] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

So, Paul says here there are such things as lying signs and wonders. There are true signs and there are lying signs. True signs attest the truth. Lying signs attest lies. Satan is fully capable of supernatural signs and wonders. Unfortunately, many in the Charismatic movement have the attitude that if something is supernatural, it must be from God. There is no scriptural basis for that assumption. Satan is perfectly capable of producing powerful signs and wonders to attest his lies, and the reason such people are deceived is because they did not receive the love of the truth. On such people God will send strong delusion. That is one of the most frightening statements in the Bible. If God sends you strong delusion, you will be deluded. I think that is one of the most severe judgments of God recorded in Scripture, sending these people strong delusion. They will be condemned, these people, because they did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (Note: Most churches these days are pleasurable. They have pleasant entertainments and soothing preaching despite the appalling sinfulness in the lives of those in the padded pews. ES)

Therefore, signs and wonders are not a guarantee that something is the truth. There is only one sure way to know the truth. It is in the Word of God. Jesus said in John 8:32, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." There is no other way to be sure that we can escape deception in these days except that we know and apply the truth of God's Word, the Scripture.

In 1994, for the first time, I was brought into fairly direct contact with one of the groups where those manifestations were occurring. A group of leaders went to some of their meetings and returned all excited, saying they had

experienced something wonderful and we all needed to experience it. They said, “Now, you don’t test it. You don’t try it out. You don’t examine it. You just open up to it and receive it.” That was the first time that I really began to be suspicious of some of these things, because such a statement is directly contrary to Scripture.

In I Thessalonians 5:21, Paul says to Christians, “Test all things: hold fast what is good.” So, if we do not test things, we are disobeying Scripture, and anybody who tells us not to test things is, himself, not in harmony with Scripture. Our hearts cannot be relied upon to give us the truth. Proverbs 28:26 says, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.” So do not be a fool. Do not trust your own heart. Do not rely upon what your heart tells you, because it is not reliable. Again, in Jeremiah 17:9 the prophet says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

That word *deceitful* in the Hebrew is a very interesting word. In 1946, I was attending the Hebrew University in Jerusalem as a guest student studying the nature – or the law – of the Hebrew language. I was listening to the head professor in this field at that time talking about this verse: Jeremiah 17:9: The heart is deceitful above all things. He gave reasons which I cannot carry over from Hebrew to show that this form of the word *deceitful* is active, not passive. It does not mean that your heart is deceived. It means that your heart *deceives you*, so you cannot trust your own heart.

The professor gave a very vivid picture of what it means to find out the truth about your own heart. He said it is like someone peeling an onion. You peel off skin after skin, but you never know when you have reached the last skin – and all the time your eyes are watering. So that has remained with me now for 50 years – such a vivid, scriptural warning against relying on my own heart to tell me the truth. There is only one source of truth, and that is the Scripture.

Mixture Produces Confusion and Division

Now, I would like to give briefly my summation of this whole phenomenon /movement/whatever-you-want-to-call-it, based partly on personal observation and partly on what I believe to be reliable reports. My summation is very simple: it is a mixture of spirits, both the Holy Spirit and unholy spirits. They are mixed together.

In Leviticus 19:19, God warns us against mixture. He is opposed to mixture. God says this, “You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.” So, God warns against three things: breeding mixed livestock, sowing with mixed seed and wearing a mixed garment.

We could say that sowing with mixed seed represents the message that we bring, when it is partly truth and partly error. Wearing a mixed garment would be like a lifestyle that is partly scriptural and partly of this world. And letting livestock breed with livestock of an incompatible kind would be equivalent to a Christian ministry or group aligning itself with a group or ministry that is non-Christian.

It is an interesting thing about such breeding; its product is always sterile. For instance, you can mate a horse with a donkey and the product is a mule. But a mule is always sterile; it cannot reproduce. I think that is one reason why there are so many “sterile” operations in Christendom – they are being bred with the wrong mate.

Now, I have observed this carefully, and I have had grievous experience of this condition of a mixture of spirits. I find that it is something which the Scripture warns us against. For instance, there is a character in the Bible, King Saul, who had a mixture of spirits. At one time, he prophesied in the Holy Spirit; at another time, he prophesied in a demon. His career is really a warning. He was a king who ruled for forty years. He was a successful military commander. He had a lot of successes. But mixture was his undoing, and his life closed with tragedy. On the last night of his life, he went to consult a witch, and the next day he committed suicide on the battlefield. Surely that offers no encouragement to any of us to cultivate any kind of spiritual mixture in our lives.

I have observed that the result of mixture is two things: first of all, confusion; and then division. For instance, we have this mixed message, part of which is true, part of which is false. People can respond in two ways. Some will see the good and focus on it, and therefore accept the bad. Some will focus on the bad, and therefore reject the good. In either case, it does not accomplish God’s purposes.

Once upon a time I was a pastor, a long time ago, but I remember that the most difficult kind of people to deal with

were people who were a mixture. I will give you a little imaginary example. We have Sister Jones in our congregation. One Sunday she gives a beautiful, prophetic message and everybody is uplifted, excited. But two Sundays later, she stands up and gives a revelation which she had in a dream. The further she goes with this revelation, the more confused and confusing it becomes. Eventually, as pastor, I have to say to her, "Sister Jones, I thank you, but I really don't believe that is from the Lord," and she sits down – but that is not the end. After the meeting, Sister White comes to me and says, "Brother Prince, how could you talk to Sister Jones like that? Don't you remember that beautiful prophecy she gave two Sundays ago?" And when Sister White is gone, Brother Black comes to me, and he says, "If that's the kind of revelation she has, I won't listen to any more of her prophecies!"

So, you see what we have? Confusion, and out of confusion, division. I believe that is exactly what is happening in the church: confusion resulting in division. Certainly there is tremendous division! I believe confusion will always produce division.

The Bible gives us no liberty to tolerate the incursion of evil into the church. We are not to be passive; we are not to be neutral. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." It is sinful to compromise with evil. It is sinful to be neutral toward evil. In John 10:10 Jesus spoke about the thief, "the devil, who comes: to steal, to kill and to destroy". We always need to remember, whether it is in an individual life or in a congregation, the devil only comes with three objectives: to steal, to kill and to destroy. I can remember many times I have been speaking with a person who needed deliverance from an evil spirit, and I have said to that person, "Remember, the devil has three reasons for being in your life: to steal, to kill and to destroy. You need to take a stand against him, not be neutral – you must drive him out." What is true of an individual is true of a congregation. It is true for the body of Christ, worldwide.

Some of these unusual manifestations have been compared with unusual manifestations that accompanied the ministry of John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney. Undoubtedly there were unusual manifestations in the ministries of those four men, and I have studied some of them myself, but I think the differences are greater than the similarities with the present situation. Let me point out to you three differences:

First of all, all those men majored on the strong preaching of God's Word. They hardly did anything until they had preached the Word of God, or apart from the preaching of the Word of God. Finney, himself, commented somewhere about his ministry, "I usually spoke an hour or two." I do not know how many contemporary Christians in the West would listen to a two-hour sermon, but Finney gave the Word in its purity and in its power.

Second difference: All those men made a strong call for repentance. That was their primary demand on the people to whom they ministered. Some people call what we are seeing today "a refreshing," but in Acts 3:19 Peter says that refreshing must be preceded by repentance. Any refreshing that bypasses repentance is not scriptural. The third difference is that in the ministry of those men, there is no record as far as I know that any of them laid hands on people. I am not saying that it is unscriptural to lay hands on people, but there is a difference. There is a situation in which people receive directly for themselves from the preached Word and another situation in which people have hands laid on them by others. If I could take a simple example. It is like rain. If you are out in the open and the rain falls upon you, you have received your rain direct from heaven. But, on the other hand, if rain is caught and stored in some kind of a cistern, then you are not receiving that rain direct from heaven. You have to take into account the cistern and the pipes through which you receive the rain. This is very vivid for me, because my first wife, Lydia, and I lived in Kenya for five years in a house where our water came from rain caught on the roof and channeled into concrete cisterns. Although the water came from heaven, we quickly learned by experience that if it stayed for any length of time in the cistern, worms developed in it and, consequently, we always had to boil our drinking water. There was nothing wrong with the rain as it came down, but something happened in the channel through which the rain came to us, and it was no longer pure. I think this can be true of laying on of hands. It is a channel which is not always pure.

Recently some ministers have moved from actually laying on hands to some other action of the hands – such as waving or pointing. However, this does not change the fact that something is being transmitted through the hands. Otherwise, there is no reason to use the hands at all. The important question still remains: Are those hands pure channels through which only the Holy Spirit can flow?

For instance, Ruth and I were in a meeting fairly recently where ministers deeply involved in the current move were speaking. We were sitting about two rows behind a woman who was having a terrible experience. She was like

somebody continually trying to burp or trying to vomit, and she just went on and on and on. Eventually, I said to Ruth, "I think we ought to try to help her." So, although it was not a meeting for which we were responsible, we went over quietly and started to talk to her. We discovered very quickly that she was speaking in a tongue, but for both of us it was evident that it was a false tongue; it was not a Holy Spirit tongue. We challenged her to confess that Jesus is Lord, and she was not willing or able to say that. So I conclude that she had a false spirit.

Later on, the people who were with her came over and talked to us and asked us what they should do about it. I asked them, "How did it happen?" And they said, "Well, she went to a church that's involved in this move and somebody laid hands on her and this is the way she has been since then. But," they said, "she's convinced it's from God. We can't help her." That is just an example of "rain" that came through a "cistern" that was not pure.

Also, in the present move, there is a great deal of emphasis on love. I agree that love is the greatest thing. But the trouble is that people are not always clear about the nature of love as it is described in the New Testament. First of all, love in us is expressed by obedience to the Lord. Any kind of love that does not result in obedience is unscriptural love.

In John 14:15, Jesus said to His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," or, in a perhaps better text, "You will keep My commandments." In other words, what is the evidence that you love Him? The evidence is keeping His commandments. Then in verse 21a, Jesus says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them. It is he who loves Me." And in 1 John 5:3, it says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Therefore, any kind of love that does not result in obedience to the will of God revealed in His Word is not scriptural love. It is a counterfeit: a substitute for the real thing. Then, we need to consider the way that God expresses His love toward us. True, God is our Father, and He loves us. But as a Father, if necessary, He is prepared to discipline us. In the messages to the seven churches depicted in Revelation, I would say that Laodicea is probably the one that corresponds most closely to the contemporary church in the West. And to that church the Lord said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

So, God's love is not sloppy. It is not sentimental. It is right down-to-earth. If we are straying from His ways and if we are disobedient, His love is expressed in rebuking us and chastening us, and He commands us to repent. Once again we have the problem of trying to get what God promises, but bypassing the basic condition of repentance – which is a deception.

I recently read the following comment by a British Bible teacher: Some Christians take the text "God is love" and turn it around to mean "Love is God." In other words, nothing can be wrong if it is rooted in love. However, any love that comes between us and God is an illegitimate love ... Likewise any love that diverts us from obedience to God's Word is illegitimate.

The Identity of the Holy Spirit

In all of this that we are speaking about. This worldwide phenomenon, I believe there is one, central, underlying issue, which is often obscured. In fact, very seldom do we come really to grips with this issue. This issue is the identity of the Holy Spirit. How do we recognize the Holy Spirit? How do we know what the Holy Spirit is like? And how do we distinguish the Holy Spirit from other spirits? I read a statement recently by some New-Ager in which she said about the "New Age," "When the holy spirit comes, then the New Age will be here." Of course I am sure most of you would understand that when she talks about the holy spirit, she is not talking about the same Holy Spirit that the Bible speaks about. This is one of various indications that there is a counterfeit holy spirit. It is nothing new for Satan to produce a religious counterfeit. Since the time of Jesus, history records a whole series of counterfeit messiahs who have risen among the Jewish people. All of them had a following. Some like Sabbetai Zvi, had a widespread and enduring influence. The latest of them died in 1994.

Another religious counterfeit is the being titled the "blessed virgin Mary." With all the claims that have been made for her and all the titles that have been ascribed to her, she bears no resemblance to the humble Jewish maiden who became the mother of Jesus, and later of His brothers and sisters. Yet over the centuries this counterfeit has claimed the devotion of millions of sincere Christians. We need to be on our guard, therefore, that we do not entertain a counterfeit "holy spirit." I want to suggest to you three ways to identify the Holy Spirit, to recognize who the Holy Spirit is.

The first way I refer to in my little booklet “Uproar in the Church”, which I wrote about two years ago. I will just quote a few paragraphs: Another danger that threatens those who minister in the supernatural realm is the temptation to use spiritual gifts to manipulate or exploit or dominate people. At one period in my ministry I found myself casting spirits of witchcraft out of church-going people. Eventually, I asked the Lord to show me the true nature of witchcraft. I believe the Lord gave me the following definition: Witchcraft is the attempt to control people and get them to do what you want by the use of any spirit that is not the Holy Spirit. After I had digested this, the Lord added: And if anyone has a spirit that he can use, it is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, and no one uses God. That is very important. The Holy Spirit is God, and no one uses God. Then I went on to say, Today I tremble inwardly when I see or hear of a person who claims that he has spiritual gifts which he is free to use just as he pleases. It is surely no accident that some of those who have made such claims have ended in serious doctrinal error.

It is important to see that there is a difference between the Holy Spirit Himself, as a Person, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 11:29, Paul tells us that the gifts ... of God are irrevocable. In other words, once God has given us a gift, He never takes it back. We are free to use it, not to use it, or to misuse it. But even if we misuse it, God does not take it back. Otherwise it would not be a genuine gift, it would only be a conditional loan.

It is a fact that people do misuse gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul provides a clear example in I Corinthians 13:1: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. Obviously the Holy Spirit Himself does not become a clanging cymbal. But the gift of speaking in tongues – when misused – can become an empty, discordant noise. Unfortunately this often happens in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles.

I believe it is possible to misuse other spiritual gifts – such as a word of knowledge or a gift of healing. This can happen when a person uses a spiritual gift to achieve a result or promote a movement which is not in harmony with the will of God. One obvious misuse would be for personal gain. In such a situation, our safeguard is to be able to recognize the Holy Spirit as a Person and to distinguish between Him and His gifts. This, then, is the first and most important fact about the Holy Spirit: HE IS GOD. And we need to relate to Him and treat Him always as God.

The second fact about the Holy Spirit is that He is the servant of God the Father and God the Son. This is an exciting revelation because it gives such a high value to servanthood. Many people today despise the idea of being a servant. They feel it is demeaning and undignified to be a servant. But I think it is wonderful that servanthood did not begin on earth. It began in eternity and it began in God. God the Holy Spirit is the Servant of the Father and the Son. This does not demean Him or make Him less than God. But it is a fact that we have to recognize about Him, which directs His activities and the things He does. In John 16:13-14 Jesus gives us a glimpse of the Holy Spirit’s ministry and activity: “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth: for He will not speak on His own authority [literally: from Himself] but whatever He hears He will speak: and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” So we see: the Holy Spirit does not speak from Himself; He has no message of His own. Isn’t that remarkable? He only reports to us what He is hearing from the Father and the Son. Secondly, His aim is not to glorify Himself, nor to attract attention to Himself, but always He glorifies and focuses attention on Jesus. That is the second important way to identify the Holy Spirit.

Now, I want you to listen to this carefully, because it is revolutionary. Any spirit that focuses on the Holy Spirit and glorifies the Holy Spirit is not the Holy Spirit. It is contrary to His whole nature and purpose. Once you have grasped that, it will open your eyes to many things which are going on in the church that are otherwise difficult to understand. For example, we have a very beautiful chorus that we sing about the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The first verse says to the Father, “Glorify Thy name in all the earth.” The second verse says to Jesus the Son, “Glorify Thy name in all the earth.” The third verse says to the Spirit, “Glorify Thy name in all the earth.” I love to sing the first two verses, but I decline to sing the third verse, because I do not believe it is scriptural. The Holy Spirit never does glorify His own name. His purpose is to glorify the One who sent Him.

Let me make another statement which may surprise you. I have not found in the Scripture anywhere an example of a prayer addressed to the Holy Spirit. So far as I can understand, no one in the Scripture ever prayed to the Holy Spirit. You probably would do well to check that for yourself, but I have looked carefully and have not found one example. You might ask, “Why so?” And I would give you this answer: It is a question of heavenly “protocol.”

There is so little respect nowadays for protocol on earth that we sometimes do not realize that there is protocol in heaven. It is protocol relating to a master-servant relationship. In such a relationship, when you are dealing with a servant, you do not speak to the servant, but to the master. You ask the master to tell his servant what to do. It is wrong to directly address a servant when his master is available for you to speak to. I believe that is heaven's protocol. When you recognize the relationship of the Holy Spirit to God the Father and God the Son, you understand that we never give orders to the Holy Spirit. When we want the Holy Spirit to do something, we address our request to the Father or to the Son.

When I was looking through this, I found a passage in Ezekiel chapter 37 which I thought, at first, was an exception. It is part of Ezekiel's well-known vision of the valley full of dry bones with no life in them. First of all, he prophesied and the bones came together, but they were still lifeless corpses. Then, in verses 9 and 10: Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

So, I thought that the "breath" is really a picture of the wind – or the Holy Spirit – and so Ezekiel was praying to the wind. But he was not praying. He was prophesying. And it did not come from himself. He merely passed on to the wind a command that he had received from God Himself. Therefore, as far as I have been able to discover, there is not a single example anywhere in the Scripture of praying to the Holy Spirit. Now, I am not seeking to make a big issue out of that. On the other hand, I think it is very important as we try to discern the nature and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. You would say to me, "Well, doesn't God hear our prayer when we pray to the Holy Spirit?" I think He does. But we are not praying in full accord with heaven's protocol. If we really want to please the Lord and show respect for Him, we will show respect for His protocol.

The third important fact about the Holy Spirit is what is indicated in His name: He is Holy. This is His primary title: the Holy Spirit. In Hebrew it is the Spirit of Holiness. He has many other titles: for instance, the Spirit of Grace, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Power, and so on, But they are all subsidiary. His name and His primary title is the Holy Spirit. Anything that is unholy does not proceed from the Holy Spirit.

The Scripture also speaks of the beauty of holiness. There is a beauty in holiness when it proceeds from the Holy Spirit. It is not necessarily external. It may be internal beauty. For instance, in I Peter 3:4, Peter speaks about the hidden person of the heart, and he speaks about the adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. This is not external beauty. It is internal beauty, which comes from the Holy Spirit. I want to say, however, with the utmost emphasis: Anything unholy or ugly does not proceed from the Holy Spirit.

I will give you a list of 12 adjectives, all of which I believe cannot be applied to the Holy Spirit or to anything that is the product of the Holy Spirit. As I go through the list, I suggest you check mentally and see if you agree with me. Here, then, are words that would never apply to the Holy Spirit:

- self-exalting
- self-assertive
- degrading
- flippant
- rude
- sham
- vulgar
- indecent
- insensitive
- stupid
- silly
- degraded

Holiness is Not Optional

I have in my heart, if God wills and I live, to write a book at some time of which I have already chosen the title. The

title is this: “Holiness Is Not Optional”. Only God knows whether I will ever succeed in writing the book, but I want to say, in any case, that the title states the exact truth. In the Christian life, holiness is not optional. Many Christians seem to think about holiness as if it is like something added to a car, such as fancy leather upholstery instead of the normal kind of plastic. But that is not true. Holiness is an essential part of salvation. In Hebrews 12:14 the writer says, Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no man will see the Lord. What salvation do we have that does not bring us to see the Lord? But without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

We have in our contemporary Western Christianity a very incomplete picture of salvation. “If I get saved and born again, and then I want to go on and be holy. I can do it – but it is an option.” I want to tell you that your salvation depends on your being holy. And holiness comes only from the Holy Spirit.

There are many features of purported moves of the Holy Spirit that I could pick out and hold up as examples of things that are not holy. But I will only deal with one, and that is: animal behavior in human beings attributed to the Holy Spirit. There are many such examples, some I have witnessed and some have been reported.

First of all, there is no passage in Scripture that I know of where the Holy Spirit causes any human being to behave like an animal. There is the example of Balaam, but that is a strong contrast. God caused Balaam’s donkey to speak like a man – but He never caused Balaam to bray like a donkey!

There was one man whom God caused to behave like an animal: Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. (Daniel 4:33) But that was God’s judgment, not His blessing! Revelation 4:6-8 depicts four living creatures that surround the throne of God. Three are there as representatives of the “animal” kingdom: a lion, a calf and an eagle. But none of them make noises that express their “animal” nature. All of them alike proclaim the holiness of God in pure and beautiful speech. It is important to understand that there is an order in God’s creation.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God to exercise authority over the animal kingdom (see Genesis 1:26). Man is, in fact, the highest order of the creation described in the opening chapters of Genesis. This has a bearing on the way the Holy Spirit blesses us. He uplifts those whom He blesses. He will at times cause an animal to act in some ways like a human being. But He will never degrade a human being by causing him to act like an animal.

I have a certain amount of experience in this area because I have encountered animal spirits many times in Africa. I recall one particular deliverance service that I held in Zambia with about 7,000 Africans present. When I had finished the teaching and began to command the evil spirits to manifest themselves and come out of the people, there were all sorts of animal spirits that were let loose. By “animal spirits” I mean evil, demonic spirits that enter human beings and cause them to behave like animals. The first thing that happened was that a man with a “lion spirit” tried to charge me. But someone tripped him up and he did not reach me. You need to know that the reason these Africans in this part of Africa have so many animal spirits is because many of them are hunters of animals. They have this superstition that in order to hunt an animal successfully, you have to get the spirit of the animal in you. So a man tends to have the spirit of the animal which he seeks to hunt. For instance, the man who is hunting a lion, will get a lion spirit.

There are many others. We dealt with spirits of wild boars that caused people to burrow in the earth with their noses like a wild boar rooting for something. Then there were many snake spirits. These were mainly in women, and when they were manifested, the women were flat on their bellies slithering around like snakes. All these I actually witnessed myself.

There was one other spirit that I did not witness, but heard about from the missionary couple who organized the meeting. Later I met the lady concerned. She was a very sweet Christian lady – a school teacher – but her husband was an elephant hunter. When she came to the missionary couple for deliverance, they commanded the elephant spirit to come out. Immediately she dropped on her hands and knees, crawled out through an open door, put her forehead up against a small tree, and began to try to push it down. Wasn’t that remarkable? Perhaps some well-meaning Western Christian might have said, “Our sister is pushing a tree down for Jesus,” but that was not the explanation. The elephant spirit in her was causing her to do what elephants regularly do, which is push down trees with their foreheads. As soon as she was delivered from that spirit, she no longer had any urge to push trees down with her forehead. In the West, we sometimes tend to speak about the people in Africa as unsophisticated and to

consider ourselves more sophisticated. However, I think in this realm of animal spirits it is we, in the West, who are unsophisticated and the Africans who are sophisticated. They have lived for generations with such spirits, but until the gospel came, with the power of the name of Jesus and the Word of God, they had no way to deal with them. Thank God that many of them now know how to deal with them!

Another example of which various reports have been given is people behaving like dogs. I am a dog lover, but I think dogs should be kept in their rightful place. I do not believe that the Holy Spirit ever causes anybody to bark or to run around like a dog.

Where such manifestations of animal spirits have occurred, there are certain steps that we need to take. We cannot tolerate or encourage such manifestations. Nor can we merely sweep all this under the carpet and go on as if nothing had happened.

In Matthew 12:33, Jesus instructs us: "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit." Wherever there is bad fruit, it comes from a bad tree. It is not enough to get rid of the bad fruit. We must also cut down the bad tree that produced it. If we fail to do this, the bad tree will go on producing more bad fruit. Undoubtedly the tree that produces animal behavior of this kind is some form of occult or pagan practice. For instance, there are frequent manifestations of animal behavior in some parts of Africa and India.

To cut down the tree requires that the leaders responsible identify the problem, confess it as sin and repent of it. Nowhere in the Bible is there any ground to suppose that God will forgive sins that we are not willing to confess. Somebody has said, "The confession must be as wide as the transgression." If leaders have tolerated these things in the presence of their people, then in the presence of their people they need to confess it as a sin and cancel it. Otherwise, if the bad tree is not cut down, it will go on producing bad fruit.

In closing, I want to give a little "parable" of my own construction, which is about my relationship with my wife. In this parable my wife represents the Holy Spirit and I represent God. Now please understand, this is a very simple little parable and I am fully aware that the Holy Spirit is not the wife of God. But with those cautions, let me relate the parable.

A friend comes to me and says, "I saw you and your wife together on the platform the other evening and she looked so beautiful, so fresh, so full of the Holy Spirit." So I say, "Thank you. That's really how she is." Then, a little later, the same man comes to me and says, "You know, yesterday I saw your wife in a bar with a man drinking." And I say, "That was not my wife! My wife is a pure and godly woman. She does not go to bars and she does not drink with strangers. My wife was right here with me all day yesterday. Don't speak that way about my wife!"

But a little later, he comes to me and says, "You know, I saw your wife yesterday sunbathing topless on the beach." Then I get really angry. I say to him, "My wife was nowhere near the beach yesterday, and she would never expose herself like that! If you want to remain my friend, you've got to come to the place where you don't identify that loose, immoral woman as my wife, because that's an insult to her and to me, If you want to remain my friend, you've got to change the way you speak about my wife."

The application, of course, is this: if you want to remain a friend of God, you cannot afford to identify His Holy Spirit as something that is loose or immoral or ugly or unholy, because that angers God intensely.

Now we come to one final Scripture, which is in Matthew 12:31-32. Jesus says, "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

That is a very solemn and frightening warning. We are warned by Jesus Himself to be very, very careful how we speak about the Holy Spirit, how we represent the Holy Spirit.

Jesus uses the word blasphemy, and I decided to look it up in my big Greek lexicon. The primary meaning of "to blaspheme" is given in the lexicon as this: "to speak lightly or amiss of sacred things". So when you speak lightly or amiss concerning the Holy Spirit, or misrepresent the character of the Holy Spirit, by definition you are close to blaspheming.

If you have ever done that, or been prone to do it, or been associated with those who do it, I want to offer you some sincere advice: You need to repent. You need to settle that matter once and for all with God and never again be guilty of misrepresenting God's Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is holy and He is God.

Chapter 2

Earthly, Soulful, Demonic

Our proclamation this morning is I Thessalonians 5:23-24:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify us completely; and may our whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls us is faithful, who also will do it. Amen.

We will carry on from yesterday evening, when I did my best to analyze what I consider to be a problem. This morning I purpose to analyze how this problem arises in terms of Scripture. This is very important because the problem continues to arise. I will give you five examples of the same problem arising in the last fifty years in the Charismatic movement. I feel that if we can analyze the problem, then the next step is to avoid it. So, what I have to say is entirely practical, I hope.

Understanding the Human Personality

Today I want to deal with the total human personality. And particularly, two elements of human personality. If we don't understand ourselves and how we are made up, we have a problem. The total human personality, I believe, is unfolded in the verse that we quoted: *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify us completely, and may our whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless.* So *completely* means *our whole spirit, soul and body*.

It says in Genesis chapter one that God decided to create man in His own image and in His likeness (Genesis 1:26). His *image* would refer to His outward appearance. There is something in the outward appearance of man that reflects the outward appearance of God. Let me point it out this way: it was appropriate that the Son of God should be manifested in the form of a male human being. He could not have come in the form of an ox or a beetle, because the male human being, in a sense, represents the *image* or the *outward appearance* of God. *For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God ...* (1 Corinthians 11:7).

The other phrase that is used is not *image* but *likeness*. *Likeness*, I believe, represents the inner structure of the Godhead. The structure of the Godhead is triune: Father, Son and Spirit. In that likeness man was created a triune being - spirit, soul and body. So man, in a unique way, represents God to the creation over which God set him as a ruler: in his outward appearance and in his inner composition. We are not going to deal with the outward appearance, but with the inner structure of human personality, which is threefold: spirit, soul and body.

If we go back to the creation, we can trace the origin of each. The spirit came from the in-breathed breath of God. When God breathed into Adam, that produced *spirit* in Adam. Incidentally, the words for *spirit* and *breath* are the same both in Hebrew and in Greek.

The body was clay infused with divine life. The soul came about through the union of spirit and body. The soul is the part that is difficult to understand. It is the unique, individual ego - the thing in each of us that can say, "I will" or "I won't." It is usually defined as consisting of the will, the emotions and the intellect. So, very simply, these are represented in three verbal statements: "I want," "I think," "I feel." That is the nature of the soul. Those who are separated from God by sin are dominated by their soul. You will find, if you analyze it, that the life and actions of the natural man are controlled by those three things: "I want," "I think," "I feel."

Now, let us consider what happened to Adam and Eve through sin. First of all, the spirit died. God said in Genesis 2:17 to Adam, *"The day you eat of that fruit you will die."* Adam did not die physically for more than 900 years, but he died spiritually the moment he disobeyed God.

At the same time, Adam's soul became a rebel. We have to bear in mind that every descendant of Adam, male or

female, has in him or her the nature of a rebel. That is our biggest single problem. For that reason, it is not sufficient merely to have our sins forgiven, though that is wonderful. But the rebel has to be put to death, and that is part of the provision of the gospel.

Let me just look at two passages in Ephesians which deal with both of these conditions: the death of the spirit and the rebellion of the soul. In Ephesians 2:1-3, speaking to believers who have come alive in Christ, Paul says:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, [They were not physically dead, but they were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. And it was the new birth that brought them back to life. Then it says about these sins:] in which you once walked according to the course of this world. according to the prince of the power of the air [that's Satan], the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all [that includes the apostle Paul] once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

There is a picture of the whole human race in rebellion against God and, because of the rebellion, dead in trespasses and sins. That is the outcome of sin. The spirit dies; the soul becomes a rebel in rebellion against his Creator.

What happens to the body? It becomes what the Bible calls *corruptible*. That means it is subject to sickness, aging and ultimately death. But, as I pointed out, the death of Adam did not take place physically for more than 900 years. The death that Adam experienced when he disobeyed God was probably what the Bible would call the *first death*. Then the New Testament speaks of *the second death* (Revelation 20:6,14), which I believe is the final separation of the rebellious spirit and soul from God forever.

From Rebellion to Salvation

Now, what happens when we get saved? To our spirit? It is made alive. We have become alive again in spirit, in Christ. Let me read Ephesians 2:4-5:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus....

So, God made us alive. That is not all He did. We do not have time to analyze this, but He also resurrected us, and then He enthroned us. All that is in the past tense. So, if we can accept it, spiritually we are seated with Christ upon the throne. But the thing that I want to emphasize now is: we have been made alive!

Now, the soul, through repentance, is reconciled to God. It is very important to emphasize repentance. A rebel cannot be reconciled to God as long as he remains a rebel. So one of the things that is involved in salvation is that **we lay down our rebellion**. Lots of people who claim to be born again and saved have, in actual fact, never renounced their rebellion. They have an outward form of Christianity, but the inner reality is not there. Let us look in Romans chapter 5 for a moment. Romans 5:1:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

We were at war with God. Now we have been justified by faith - we have peace with God. Then in verse 11 it says:

And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

We were at war with God; we have been reconciled.

Then, what happens to the body through salvation? It becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit. I think this is very important. A lot of believers do not realize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and that we have to treat them with reverence. In I Corinthians 6:19-20 Paul begins, *Do you not know ... ?* a phrase that he must use at least a half a dozen times. My observation is that every time he says, *Do you not know ... ?* most Christians do not know.

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price: therefore glorify God in your body ...

Let us sum up what happens at salvation:

Our spirit is made alive.

Our soul is reconciled with God

And our body is made a temple for the Holy Spirit and also becomes eligible for the first resurrection.

In Philippians 3:10-11 Paul says that our body is made eligible for the first resurrection and that this is the goal of his Christian life:

... that I may know Him [that is, Jesus] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The word used means the *out-resurrection*, not the final, complete resurrection, but the resurrection which is only of true believers. I am always impressed by the fact that Paul did not take it for granted. He said, "My purpose is so to live that I may qualify for the first resurrection." I really do not believe we can take it for granted. It depends on how we live,

Now, what are the functions of these three elements? First of all, the spirit. The spirit is capable of direct communion with God and worship. It is the part of man that originated from God and can return to God in fellowship and worship. This is stated in 1 Corinthians 6:17, a very important verse:

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

In my opinion, it would be completely incorrect to say *one soul*. It is *one spirit*. If you take that in its context, Paul is talking about a man being joined to a prostitute and he says that is a physical union, but what he is talking about is a spiritual union. If you take that picture, it becomes clear that it is a very real union. But it is only the spirit that can be united with God. The soul cannot, the body cannot. Because of that, the spirit, and the spirit alone, I believe, is capable of true worship. In John 4:23-24 Jesus says:

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. [That to me is a staggering statement. Almighty God, who created the universe, is looking for people who will worship Him. And then it says:] God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The spirit is the element in us which is capable of worship. The soul is capable of praise and thanksgiving. But only the spirit, I believe, can offer to God the worship which is acceptable.

What happens to the soul? The soul is the decision-making element, and through regeneration, the soul is able to make right decisions. David said in Psalm 103: *Bless the Lord, O my soul*. He was talking to his soul. What part of him was talking to his soul? His spirit! His spirit sensed the need to bless the Lord, but his spirit could not do it until his soul activated his body. So the spirit in this present creation moves upon the body through the soul. We will come back to that in a moment because the New Testament speaks about a *soulish* body and a *spiritual* body.

To take a very crude example. I think the soul is like the gear lever in the car. You sit in the driver's seat, switch on the engine, but to get the car moving, you have to use the gear lever. The gear lever is the soul. The spirit is there, but it can not move the car without the soul.

My purpose in all of this is to come to the place where we can distinguish between the spirit and the soul, but that is not easy. In fact, there is only one way we can do it effectively, which we find in Hebrews 4:12:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Notice the word *even*. The Word of God is the only instrument which is sensitive enough and sharp enough to penetrate, to divide, between soul and spirit. In no other way can we understand the different functions of soul and spirit, and the relationship between them, except by the Word of God. You cannot rely on your own understanding, your own feelings. They are not reliable. The only reliable discerner is the Word of God. But, to use the Word of God as a discerner, two conditions are set. They are found in Hebrews 5:13-14, where the writer is talking about the difference between mature and immature Christians.

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. [Those who can only feed on milk are still babies. Then he goes on to say:] But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [or who are mature], that is, those who by reason of use [but the margin says "practice"] have their senses exercised to

discern both good and evil.

In other words, discernment is not something we can take for granted. It only comes by practice, and it only comes as we take in the whole counsel of God through His Word. If we are living like babies on milk, we do not have the ability to discern. If we have grown beyond that, we still cannot discern unless we practice.

I would like to challenge you and ask you: Are you practicing discernment? I think I can say of myself that, to a certain measure, I do practice discernment. When I walk into a situation, I put up my "spiritual antennae" and I ask myself, "What are the spiritual forces at work in this situation?" When I listen to a sermon, I not only listen to the words, I try to discern the spirit that is coming through the words.

But this only comes by practice. If you just walk around carelessly and casually, you will not have the ability to discern. I believe we need to practice discernment in every situation. I believe discernment should be as regular a part of our spiritual life as prayer. Otherwise, we will be in trouble.

Discerning Between Soul and Spirit

Now I want to talk about the difference between the spiritual and the soulish, which I will illustrate from the following table:

Language	Noun	Adjective
Greek	<i>pneuma</i>	<i>pneumatikos</i>
English	spirit	spiritual
Greek	<i>psuche</i>	<i>psuchikos</i>
English	soul	soulish

To understand this you have to go behind translations. I will try to explain why. In this table we have the Greek and then the English, the Greek and then the English. We have the noun and then the adjective. When you see them in writing, the relationship is obvious.

The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*, from which we get the English word pneumatic - that is a drill that is operated by air. That is because *pneuma* means "breath," "wind" and "spirit." Now the adjective from *pneuma* is *pneumatikos*. How do we translate that into English? We know that *pneuma* is "spirit." Obviously, the English adjective from *pneuma* is ... what? *Spiritual*. That's right. There is no choice.

Now we come down to the Greek word for "soul," and here is the problem: the Greek word for soul is *psuche*, from which we get countless different words like *psychological* or *psychiatrist* or *psychosomatic*. A psychiatrist is a doctor of the soul, because *iatros* is the Greek word for doctor.

All right, we have *psuche* and the adjective is *psuchikos*. Now, there is no hesitation about the translation of the noun - it is "soul." But what about the adjective? The problem is that English does not have a word "soulish." I believe, therefore, that we have to create a word to translate the Bible correctly. According to my understanding, in German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian - in all those languages there is a word for "soulish." But English is limping along without the necessary word to convey this very important distinction.

Now I will take all the places in the New Testament where the word *psuchikos* or "soulish" is used and I will try to draw out the difference between *spiritual* and *soulish*.

First of all, we will take three cases where the word "soulish" is applied to the physical body, which is perhaps a little hard to understand. I looked at five translations, and I found various different words that are used in different versions to translate this word *psuchikos*. In the original King James they use "natural" or "sensual." In the New King James they also use "natural" or "sensual." But in the margin in the last case, they use "worldly." In the New American Standard they use "natural" and in the margin "unspiritual." and finally, "worldly minded." In the New International Version they use "without the spirit," "natural," "unspiritual," and then they use the phrase "follow their natural instinct." You see, then, that unless we get behind the English translations, we really cannot grasp this

vital distinction between that which is spiritual and that which is soulish.

Now we will look at the three cases where *soulish* is applied to a body, in I Corinthians 15:44 (twice) and 46. I have never heard anybody else discuss this, but I will give you my understanding and you can accept it or reject it, as you see fit. But it is an exciting issue, because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:44, referring to the resurrection: *It is sown a natural body [that is, a soulish body], it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural [soulish] body, and there is a spiritual body.* You will notice there is always the contrast between the soulish and the spiritual. There is a soulish body and there is a spiritual body.

Then in verse 46, Paul says: *However the spiritual is not first, but the natural [soulish], and afterward the spiritual.* So our present body is soulish; our resurrection body will be spiritual. I understand that means we will no longer need the "gear lever." Our spirit will simply decide where to go, what to say, what to do, and it will happen! It will be a body controlled by the spirit.

We do have, in Ezekiel chapter 1, a picture of some creatures which could be represented as having spiritual bodies. To me, this is exciting, because in the resurrection we will have a body like Jesus. We will just go where we want. No problems about dealing with the soul.

In Ezekiel 1:12, talking about the cherubs, it says, *Each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.* They have spiritual bodies; they just go wherever the spirit wants to go. And in the same passage. in verse 20: *Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, because there the spirit went.*

So, this is how I understand it. A spiritual body is a body which is directly motivated and controlled by the spirit. It is like a car in which you just switch on the engine and it goes wherever you want, at whatever speed. You don't have to bother with the gear lever.

Those are the three cases where the word *psuchikos* is used of a body. No English translation that I know of uses the word *soulish*. Consequently, the distinction is obscured.

Now, let us look at the other places where this word *psuchikos* is used. Here we come to a point where there is a clear conflict between the soulish and the spiritual. I Corinthians 2:14-15:

But the natural man [but it's the soulish man] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged by no one.

So, the *soulish* man is not in harmony with the Spirit. He cannot receive the things of the Spirit; he cannot understand them. You can talk to the most highly-educated intellects and they have no ability whatever to understand the things of the Spirit, because they are operating in the realm of the soul. This is important because it brings out that there is, in a certain sense, an opposition between the *spiritual* and the *soulish*

Then we go on to the epistle of Jude, verse 19, which is a rather illuminating verse. Talking about people who have made trouble in the church, the NKJ says: *These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit [capital "s"].* But very obviously, they are part of the church because they cause division. So we have in the church both those who are spiritual and those who are soulish.

From Earthly to Soulish to Demonic

Then, the most significant passage of all is James 3:15, which I will deal with at length. Talking about a certain kind of wisdom, James says:

This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

By now, you have arrived at the conclusion that *sensual* is *soulish*. So there is a kind of wisdom that is soulish. And there is a decline, descending in three stages: first, earthly; second, soulish; third, demonic. I believe this is the main way in which demons get in to the work of God ... the people of God ... the church of God. It is through this decline from the earthly to the soulish to the demonic.

Now let us consider what is implied. What does it mean to be *earthly*? For a Christian I believe it means our vision is completely limited to this earth. We cannot see beyond this earth. All we are expecting from God through

salvation are things that belong to this life: prosperity, healing, success, power - who knows what? I believe all of that is soulish.

I will take a few examples of people who were not earthly. You can find a whole list of them in Hebrews 11. In fact, you could really sum up the saints of Hebrews 11 as those who were not soulish, who were not earthly. Here are just two examples.

In Hebrews 11:9-10, speaking about Abraham, it says:

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham was in the Promised Land, he knew it was promised to him, but he did not own it and he never lived there as if he owned it. He never bought a house. He always lived in a tent, which is something movable. Note the contrast with Lot, who separated from Abraham and turned his face toward Sodom - the men of Sodom were sinners before the Lord, and exceedingly wicked - and he went where his face was turned. So the next time you read about Lot, he is not just looking toward Sodom, he is in Sodom, and he is living in a house - no longer in a tent. I think Lot, in a sense, is a type of the earthly man of God.

But Abraham had a vision which extended beyond time into eternity. He was waiting for a city that he had never seen but he knew one day it would be his home. I think that is how God expects us to be as Christians. We are not at home in this world. When we become at home in this world, we become soulish.

My second example is Moses in Hebrews 11:27:

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Let me suggest to you that this is the key to endurance. It is looking beyond time, looking beyond the level of this life where we often will have a very hard time, many frustrations, many disappointments. What will cause us to endure? A vision that takes us beyond time.

There are many other examples. Those two are just examples - Abraham and Moses - of people who were not earthly. Then there is also a remarkable statement by Paul which we would do well to ponder in 1 Corinthians 15:19:

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable [or the most to be pitied].

That is a very remarkable statement. If all our Christian faith provides for us is things in this life, we are pitiable, we are to be pitied. And I have to say, I want to say it graciously, there is a good deal of teaching in the church which only focuses on what God will do for us in this life. Such people often consider themselves prosperous and successful; God considers them pitiable.

This is a very, very basic truth. Christians of previous generations - up to World War I - were basically conscious of this fact: the world is not our home. But since that time, many, many Christians have lost this perception and live as if we really belonged here. Our thoughts and our ambitions and our plans are focused on the things of time. We are earthly.

When we become earthly, what is the next step down? Soulish. What is the essence of the soul? The ego. What is it to be soulish? It is to be ego-centric; to be absolutely concerned with number one, as they say. The soulish person says, "What's in this for me?" The spiritual person says, "How can I glorify God?" I think you will agree - I hope I am not being cynical - there is a great deal of soulishness in the contemporary church, defined this way.

Then the soulish opens up for the demonic. When you get into the realm of the soulish, you are exposed to the demonic. This, I believe, is primarily what permits demons to infiltrate the people of God, the work of God. A little later I will give you five examples of what has happened in this century.

Let us consider for a moment two Old Testament patterns of people who moved out of the earthly into the soulish and from the soulish to the demonic. They were very distinguished people. The first one is Aaron. If you turn to Exodus 32, you will find something that always astonishes me. Here was the anointed and appointed High Priest making a golden calf. I want to analyze what it says in Exodus 32:1-10.

Moses at this time is up on the mountain. They have not seen him for something like forty days. So it says:

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

The very significant phrase there is "the *man* who brought us up out of the land of Egypt." They had lost sight of God. They were focusing on human leaders. And I believe, almost inevitably, that will lead to idolatry. When we lose our vision of God and focus on God's servants we are in great danger. So,

Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

So when Aaron saw it [this is an amazing description - when Aaron saw his own calf], he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord" [to Yahweh. I mean, I find it hard to understand how Aaron could do that. But if Aaron could do it, you and I can do it. We are no better than Aaron. Probably most of us are not nearly of his caliber.

Then it says:] Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

That is the essence of idolatry: play. When our worship becomes play, we have moved out of the spiritual into the soulish and, ultimately, into the demonic. I do not want to appear critical, but I have to say, to my understanding, most of what is called worship in the Charismatic movement is not worship at all. Often it is very self-centered: "God heal me. God bless me. God, make me feel good. God do this and God do that." It is ego-centric; it is soulish. Only the spirit can focus directly on God.

Much of the music that we have in church today appeals to the soul, stimulates the soul, It is very much the same kind of music as is used in the world to stimulate the soul.

I am no expert in music, absolutely not at all. I cannot sing a note in tune. But I have a certain sensitivity to the impact of music. Having lived five years in Africa, I am aware that certain repetitive themes and rhythms can deaden your sensitivity. If you sit under that long enough, especially when it is very loud, you lose the capacity to discern. And in Africa those rhythms are used to call up demons.

What is amazing about the scene of Israel's idolatry here described is the total difference between the attitude of the people when God spoke from heaven and their attitude perhaps two months later. There had been the most amazing shift. In Exodus 20 when they had a unique revelation from God such as no other nation has ever had, their response was awe, fear, reverence. In Exodus 20:18-21, after God had pronounced the Ten Commandments from the mountain:

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

They were so impressed by the holiness and the majesty of God that they said, "Moses, we can't listen to that voice any more. Will you please hear for us and we'll listen to what you say to us." Yet in less than two months, they had come from that attitude to the place where they wanted a golden calf to worship, where they saw not God, but Moses, as the person who had brought them out of Egypt.

Paul takes this up in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 10:5-7. Speaking about the experiences of Israel when they came out of Egypt, Paul says:

But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

What had happened? Their physical needs had been met. Their stomachs were full, their bodies were warmly clothed, so, what next? Well, let's have a little excitement! Let's play! I am so concerned when worship becomes play. And today much of it is. Worship has nothing to do with entertainment. Entertainment says, "Excite me. Thrill

me. Satisfy me." That is all for the benefit of the soul. The spirit is excluded.

My second example of the transition from the spiritual to the soulish to the demonic is even more frightening. You will find it in Leviticus 9:23 - 10:2. This is a glorious moment. The people had done everything that God required in the form of sacrifices, and, when their obedience was complete, God sent His glory and burned up the sacrifice on the altar.

And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. [A manifest demonstration of God's glory and a fire that actually consumed the sacrifice on the altar. Now, the next two verses are some of the most tragic in the Bible:]

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron [and Nadab was the eldest son - he was scheduled to become high priest in place of Aaron] . . . Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

The same fire that consumed the sacrifice burned up the worshipers! What is "profane fire"? I understand it is fire that is not taken from the altar that God has commanded. What is "profane fire" in our experience? I would say it is worship in any spirit other than the Holy Spirit. And the penalty was death.

We read in Numbers 16:1-35 about an insurrection against Moses in the wilderness when some of the leaders took 250 censers, filled them with fire and said, "We're just as good as Aaron. We've got as much right to be priests as he has." And Moses said, "All right. We'll try this out." He told them to assemble with their censers with fire in them. Then the fire of the Lord came out and consumed 250 men. The lesson for me is this: You are responsible for what is in your censer. You are responsible for the spirit in which you approach God.

I am not saying that you will be consumed with fire, but God's judgments are often exemplary. In other words, God did not judge every city where there was homosexuality as He judged Sodom and Gomorrah. But His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah was exemplary: it showed forever God's estimate of homosexuality.

Again, when Ananias and Sapphira tried to cheat the Lord with their offering, they both died - because they claimed to be giving God more than they actually were. Not everybody who does that dies. I think if that happened, there would be fewer people in the church. But God's estimate of it never changes.

Here we have this demonstration of the danger of approaching God with what is called "profane fire": any spirit that is not the Holy Spirit. This has become so very real to me.

Now, let us turn to Hebrews and see the New Testament application. (You know, one of our problems is that we often read the Epistles as if they were written to unbelievers. They were not. They were written to Christians.) Hebrews 12:28-29:

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

The NIV uses the word "awe." I ask myself, and I ask you: How much awe do you find in the church today? How many meetings do you go to where there is a sense of the awesome presence of God?

When we were in Britain last summer, I encountered a minister friend who made this comment: "I meet people who talk about God as if He were someone they'd met in the pub." We have got this buddy-buddy relationship with Jesus. He does invite us for fellowship, for communion, but we must never, never lose our sense of awe. I think that is the root of the problems we have been talking about.

To go back for a moment to the contemporary spiritual movements I have been describing. I could easily believe that somewhere in the beginning there was a genuine spontaneous move of the Holy Spirit. Part of what comes out is the Holy Spirit, but it has become mixed. Some things are from God, but others are not.

Why? What is the problem? My answer is **soulishness**: an undiscerned downward slide from a focus on God to a focus on self, from objective scriptural truth to subjective personal experience.

All too often a sense of awe and reverence for the holiness of God has been replaced by unscriptural frivolity and flippancy. In fact, I would say that flippancy has become an epidemic disease in the contemporary Charismatic movement. If we have been guilty of it, we need to repent.

God has convicted me more than once of being flippant. I have confessed it as a sin and repented. We have to set a watch on our tongues.

Charles Finney once commented, "God never uses a jester to search consciences." One characteristic ministry of the Holy Spirit is to *convict of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment* (John 16:8). Where people remain unconvicted of sin, we must question whether the Holy Spirit is at Work.

Is There a Way to Protect Ourselves?

Has God provided any protection against this kind of error? Yes! But first we must understand that error primarily attacks the area of the soul - though the spirit may also be affected later. It is the soul, therefore, that must be protected.

The protection which God has provided for the soul has one unique and all-sufficient basis: **the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.**

In Matthew 16:24-25 Jesus says:

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life [literally, soul] will lose it, and whoever loses his life [literally, soul] for My sake will find it."

Here is the divine paradox: to save (protect) our soul we must lose it.

Before we can follow Jesus, there are two preliminary steps. First, we must deny ourself; we must say a resolute and final "No!" to our demanding, self-seeking ego. Second, we must take up our cross. We must accept the sentence of death which the cross imposes on us. Taking up our cross is a voluntary decision that each of us must make. God does not forcefully impose the cross upon us.

If we do not apply the cross personally in our own life, we leave a door open to demonic influence. There is always the danger that our uncrucified ego will respond to the seductive flatteries of deceiving demons. Pride is the main area in our character which Satan targets and flattery is the main lever he uses to gain entrance.

We must each apply the cross personally to ourselves. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live....* We each need to ask: Is that true of me? Have I really been crucified with Christ? Or am I still motivated by my soulish ego?

Many Christians today would feel that this solution is too radical. They would question whether this is really the only way to be secure from deception. They tend to regard Paul as some kind of "super saint" whom they could never hope to imitate.

Paul, however, does not see himself this way. His ministry as an apostle was unique, but his personal relationship with Christ was a pattern for all to follow.

In 1 Timothy 1:16 he says:

However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says, *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*

The only alternative to the cross is to put self in the place of Christ. But this is idolatry and opens the way for the evil consequences that invariably follow idolatry.

The cross is the heart and center of the Christian faith. Without the cross proclaimed and applied, Christianity is left without a foundation and its claims are no longer valid. It has become, in fact, a false religion. As such - like all false religions - it is inevitably exposed to demonic infiltration and deception.

Five Movements that Went Astray

So now, having said that much, let me give you five examples of movements within the Charismatic movement that have all gone the same way. In some way or other I have had some kind of association with each of them.

Going back to the period shortly after World War II: in Canada, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Saskatchewan which came to be called the "Latter Rain." It made a very powerful impact, and a lot of people went from different areas of North America to Saskatchewan. I would say the essence of this movement was a full restoration of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Later I knew a man who was a president of the Full Gospel Businessmen in Chicago, a fine Christian. He described what happened to him when he went there. He said the meetings lasted nine hours, and they were so exciting that he didn't even want to get up and go to the bathroom. But what happened? The leader became proud, self-assertive, and fell into immorality and thereby discredited the gifts of the Spirit.

Later on, from 1957-1962, I was a missionary with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada - dear people, but practically no exercise of spiritual gifts at all. So one day I said to them, "Why don't we ever exercise spiritual gifts?" The answer was, "The 'Latter Rain' had them." In other words, that has made it impossible for us; we might go the same way. You see, one of Satan's tactics is to discredit that which is good by its misuse.

Then there was the "Manifested Sons" - I'm sure some of you can remember these. They were a very powerful group of men who took the Scripture that all creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. They had a really powerful ministry, particularly in casting out demons. But, in casting out demons, they entered into long conversations with demons and sought revelation from them. I believe it is totally wrong ever to seek revelation from demons.

They ended up with an exaggerated theology which said some of them had already received their resurrection bodies. The next thing that happened was two of them were killed in an airplane crash. So God said, "Where's your resurrection body now?" But they were fine men at the first.

Then there were the "Children of God." How many of you have heard of the "Children of God"? Later they changed their name to "The Family." A woman named Linda Meisner exercised a powerful ministry among them. I had two or three encounters with her. She was a very dedicated, powerful woman and she had a great burden for the young people of America. But when she was taken over by pride, she became manipulative and dominating. Many of the young people in the "Children of God" came under her control. She cut them off from their relationship with their parents and their families and it became a disaster. But I believe that when she started she was right.

Then there was William Branham. I had a little association with William Branham at the closing period of his ministry. I was on the same platform with him two or three times with the Full Gospel Businessmen. William Branham had, in some ways, one of the most remarkable ministries that I know of. He was a very gentle, humble, loving man. His ministry of the word of knowledge was absolutely legendary. No one ever heard Branham give one false word of knowledge.

I was with him in a meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. He was on the platform and he picked out a woman in the audience and he said, "Now, you're not here for yourself. You're here for your grandson." And then he told her her name and her exact street address in New York City. They were about 2,000 miles away from New York City at the time.

Unfortunately, after exercising his gift two or three times, he just collapsed and his men came and gathered him up and carried him away. He explained that by the statement of Jesus that "power has gone out of Me." But Jesus did not collapse. I do not believe that was the Holy Spirit. I believe it was demonic.

Later on I was close friends with Ern Baxter who was, for quite a considerable period, the Bible teacher in Branham's evangelistic meetings. Ern loved Branham dearly, but his heart was broken over what happened. One day he gathered a small group of us and said, "I want to tell you about Branham. I don't want you to talk to anybody about it, I just want you to know."

Now, since all the people concerned have passed from the stage of time, I feel free to share what Ern said about Branham. He said, "Branham had two spirits; one was the Spirit of God, one was not." At one point they were

together and Branham pointed to a light bulb hanging from the ceiling and said, "The power I have can make that bulb move."

I believe Branham remained in Christ to the very end, but he was taken over by people who wanted to exploit him. Although he did not call himself "Elijah," he permitted his followers to do so. He was killed through an automobile crash when his car was run into by a drunk driver. His followers embalmed his body to keep him there until Easter Sunday, being convinced that he would be resurrected. He was not.

When he was in the Spirit, under the anointing, he was almost unchallengeable. At one time, a demonized man came to attack him in a meeting. Branham commanded the man to kneel down and stay there until he finished his message. The man stayed kneeling in the same posture for the whole period of Branham's sermon. But I would have to say his end was ... perhaps the best you could say, disappointing.

And then we have "Discipleship" - or the "Shepherding Movement." Now, I was personally, closely involved and I can tell you that it began with a supernatural intervention of God. I was there when it happened. Three other preachers besides myself - Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, and Don Basham and I - were all speaking in a convention. In the middle of it we discovered that the man who was leading and organizing the convention was an actively practicing homosexual. So we thought, "What are we to do about this?" We agreed to meet together in someone's room in the motel - not my room. The four of us knelt down and prayed and when we stood up we all knew, without any process of reasoning, without praying for it, without even wanting it - that God had joined us together.

Yet, in spite of that, I don't think the thing went a year before it started to go off. This is my personal impression: the problem was primarily personal ambition ... in different forms. One wanted to be the leader of a movement, another wanted to appear on a platform, etc., and I was one of them. From my experience I would say there is no greater problem in the church today than personal ambition in the ministry.

Another problem was that we were not renewed in our minds. We still thought in the old church categories. Everybody who disliked us said, "Well, you're really a denomination." Our leader said, "Oh, no. We're not a denomination. We never will be." But the logic of spiritual principles is inexorable. He and his group have become a denomination.

Our root problem was that we were not renewed in our minds. We still thought in the terms of the way the church traditionally does things. And I do not believe the church does things right. I believe there has to be a revolution in our thinking before we can line up with God's purposes.

Let me just list these five examples:

The Latter Rain

The Manifested Sons

The Children of God

William Branham

The Discipleship/Shepherding Movement

Finally, let me point out two elements that were common, I think, to all these movements. Number One: Pride. Pride is the most dangerous of all sins, in my opinion. I heard a fellow preacher say once, "Pride is the only sin about which the devil will not make you feel guilty." Proverbs 16:18, a very short little verse:

Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Now, you will notice that people usually say, "Pride goes before a fall." That is not what the Bible says. The Bible says, "Pride goes before destruction." So, turn around! Do not continue in that way. Because the end of it is destruction. And I am talking to myself as much as to you.

The second feature which I believe was common to all five was what I have already spoken about: a mixture of spirits. There was truth and there was error. There was the Holy Spirit and there were other spirits. And the way the other spirits got in was through a downward slide: from the earthly, to the soulish, to the demonic.

Remember, the soulish is essentially self-centered. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Paul describes what the condition of humanity will be like at the close of this age, and I believe we are living in that time. He lists eighteen sins or moral blemishes:

But know this [and that's the only time I can recall that Paul was so emphatic. He says, now be absolutely sure of this ...], that in the last days perilous times will come....

The Greek word translated *perilous* is only used in one other place, in Matthew 8:28, where it describes two demonized men who came against Jesus. And notice the English word there: *fierce*. So, there are going to be *fierce* times, and they are here! You can pray as much as you like, but you cannot change it. Because God says, *Know this ... there will be fierce times*. You cannot change it, but you can ask God to prepare you for it.

Then Paul gives a list of these eighteen moral blemishes:

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God....

Notice, it begins and ends with the things that people love. Love of self, love of money and love of pleasure. But I want to point out to you: the root of it all is the love of self. That is what lets evil in. Souliness. Being focused on **me**. What is God going to do for **me**? What do **I** get out of this?

And then it goes on in verse 5:

... having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

So these people, with these eighteen horrible moral conditions, have a *form of godliness*. They are not unbelievers; they are not atheists. I do not believe, myself, that Paul would ever use the word *godliness* outside the Christian context. So these are professing Christians. And what is the problem? **Self love**. Self-love is what opens the way to every one of these other problems. Self-centeredness. That leads in turn to mixture.

Just one more thing and we close. The way that mixture works is this: it causes confusion and then division. Because some of what is provided is good, some is bad. Some is truth and some is error.

This means there are two ways people can respond: some people will focus on the error and reject the truth; others will focus on the truth and accept the error. And therefore there comes confusion - and out of the confusion, division. People become aggressively committed to one or other of the alternatives. What causes it? Mixture. We cannot afford to tolerate mixture.

What is the answer to mixture? Truth! The pure, undiluted truth of God's Word!

It happened once in the U.S.A. that I was the only witness to an accident in the street outside our home. As a result, I was required to testify in court.

Before I gave my testimony, I was required to affirm that I would speak *the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth*.

That was the standard set by a secular court. How much more should we, as Christians, take our stand for **the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!**

Chapter 3

Four Safeguards

Our proclamation this time is the last three verses of Psalm 19:

Who can understand his errors?

Cleanse me from secret faults.

Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;

*Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.*

In the first session I described what I consider to be a serious problem, and in the second, I sought to give a scriptural explanation of how the problem arises. In this final session I want to offer four scriptural safeguards to protect us from such problems.

No. 1: Humble Ourselves

The first safeguard is contained in 1 Peter 5:5-6

*"God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble."*

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. . . .

I believe the first essential requirement is that we **humble ourselves**. The Bible says, *God resists the proud*. So, if we are trying to come into the presence of God but we are proud, we may push but He pushes against us - and He pushes harder than we can. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God will make us humble. God always puts the responsibility upon us to humble ourselves. It is a decision we have to make. No one can make it for us. People can pray for us and preach to us, but we have to make the decision to *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time*.

I have already said that I believe pride is the greatest single problem, the most common problem and the most destructive problem. We saw earlier that *pride goes before destruction*. If we do not turn back from the way of pride, our end will be destruction. However, I find a very helpful and inspiring passage in Psalm 25:8-9:

*Good and upright is the Lord;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice.
And the humble He teaches His way.*

It is the grace of the Lord that He is willing to teach us sinners at all. But God enrolls His students, not by their intellectual qualifications, but by their character. A lot of people may go to a Bible school or a seminary, or whatever else, but never be enrolled in God's school, because God only enrolls the humble. *The humble He guides in justice ... the humble He teaches His way*.

The King James says, *the meek*. I find that *meek* has dropped out of the modern translations. What is the difference between *humble* and *meek*? As I see it, *humble* describes your inner attitude; *meek* describes the way you express it. Perhaps we do not need the word *meek* very much nowadays because there are very few people to whom it applies! There is usually a reason when words drop out of contemporary usage.

No. 2: Receive the Love of the Truth

The next safeguard is in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12:

The coming of the lawless one [the antichrist] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders ...

So bear in mind that Satan is capable of producing power and signs and wonders. I have frequently commented that one obvious place for the antichrist to arise would be in the Charismatic movement, because most Charismatics seem to think that anything supernatural must be from God. But that is not so. Satan is capable of great supernatural signs and wonders. So how do we protect ourselves? It goes on:

... and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish. because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

So, what is our protection against deception? **Receiving the love of the truth**. And again, it is something we must do

for ourselves. God will offer it to us; we have to receive it.

Now, of those who do not receive the love of the truth, God says this:

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

That is a frightening verse. *God will send them strong delusion.* If God sends you strong delusion, you will be deluded!

In 1994 - this is a personal, subjective comment - in Jerusalem I got up one night to go to the bathroom and as I was walking back to my bed, God impressed upon my mind, very clearly, that He had sent strong delusion to the Israeli government then in power (elected in 1992). I think everything that has happened since amply confirms that. It is a very significant statement because, if God has sent strong delusion, it is useless to pray for such people not to be deluded.

In such a situation there are two ways that we can pray. First, that God will work through the delusion to accomplish His purposes. (In the outcome, it seems that one purpose was to set aside that government.) Second, that God will protect us from coming under the delusion ourselves.

There are two words that are used in a soulish way to manipulate people: one is *peace*; the other is *love*. So, the people of the Middle East, and I think probably the people of the world, are being manipulated by the offer of peace. By implication, if you are against that, you are wicked. Obviously, anybody who is against peace is a bad person. So you will feel guilty if you do not go along with it.

But there are conditions for peace. In Isaiah 48:22 the prophet says, *There is no peace for the wicked.* And Romans 14:17 says, *The kingdom of God ... is righteousness, peace and joy....* You cannot have peace apart from righteousness. I meet many Christians who are seeking for joy. But if they do not meet the condition of righteousness, joy is not available to them. Politicians who use the word *peace* to manipulate people are deceiving them, because peace will not come to the unrighteous.

The other manipulating word is *love*, which is used in the church. They talk a lot about the love of God: be loving, God is so loving, He is so kind. That is all true, but God is also a very strict God. I have personally come to this conclusion (on the basis of my own experience and observation of people close to me): you cannot get away with anything with God. Nothing! You may think you have gotten away with it, and God may indeed forgive you, but you may still have to face the consequences. You see, God forgives but He does not automatically release us from all the consequences of what we have done.

So don't have any sentimental picture of God. He is not a Father Christmas, doling out candy to little children. He is very just, very righteous, very loving - but, in a sense, very severe. You cannot get away with anything with God. It is better not to try!

I feel that love is being used to manipulate people at the present time. People are talking about the love of God and God is so loving - and it is all true. But God's love is expressed in surprising ways. As I quoted earlier, Jesus said to the church at Laodicea, *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* That is love. God is our Father and He loves us, but He also disciplines us.

There are two wrong ways of responding to the discipline of God. We will look in Hebrews 12:5-7 for a moment. This is addressed to Christians:

You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.*

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

There are two wrong ways of responding to God's chastening. First we are warned: *Do not despise the chastening of*

the Lord. Do not just shrug your shoulder and say, "Well, so what?" My observation is that many Christians who have become mature do not believe that God will discipline them any longer. The truth is He never stops disciplining.

This was brought home to me so vividly when I was reading the account of Moses. At the age of eighty, God chose him, commissioned him to be the deliverer of Israel from Egypt and sent him back to Egypt. But on the way, the Lord met him and tried to kill him (Exodus 4:24-26). Extraordinary!

Why? Because he had not circumcised his son. He had disobeyed the sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham and his descendants. So God would rather have seen Moses die than go through with his ministry in disobedience. Sometimes we say, "Satan is resisting me." But often the truth of the matter is, it is not Satan, it is God. *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (1 Peter 5:5b).

The other wrong reaction is to be *discouraged* when you are rebuked by Him. Don't say, "This is more than I can take. God, why do You let this happen to me? I can't stand this! I'm not going to take it." Those are the two wrong reactions: to despise chastening or to be discouraged.

What about the love of the truth? The Greek word for love there is the one we're all familiar with: *agape*. It is a very strong word. It is the strongest word for love in the Greek language. It does not mean just reading your Bible every morning, or going to church and listening to sermons. It is a passionate commitment to the truth of God. That is what we must cultivate if we are to escape delusion. *God will send strong delusion to those who have not received the [agape] love of the truth*. That means more than just having a "quiet time" or reading your Bible at weekends. It is a passionate commitment to the truth of God.

I think I can say, without being boastful, God has given me that. I think God has given me a passionate commitment to the truth. Every time I hear anything that I do not feel is truth, there is something in me that rises up. God can do that for you, too, but you have to let Him do it. That is the second safeguard: *receive the love of the truth*.

No. 3: Cultivate the Fear of the Lord

The third safeguard is to **cultivate the fear of the Lord**. Many Christians say there is no more fear in the Christian life, but that is not true. Certain kinds of fear are excluded, but not all. I will give you a list of Scriptures that Ruth and I have memorized: at least a dozen different passages about the fear of the Lord. The promises are so exciting that I cannot understand why anybody would not want the fear of the Lord.

Here are some of them. Psalm 34:11-14:

*Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
Who is the man who desires life,
And loves many days, that he may see good?
Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.
Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.*

The implication is that the fear of the Lord will cause God to give you many days of good life. What is the first area that God deals with? The tongue. *Keep your tongue from evil ... your lips from speaking deceit*.

Psalm 19:9:

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever ...

The fear of the Lord will never cease; it endures forever.

Job 28:28:

*Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
And to depart from evil is understanding.*

Notice that the primary requirement for wisdom and understanding is not intellectual, it is moral. It is to *depart from evil*. There are many clever fools around.

Proverbs 8:13:

*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate.*

Notice, you cannot be neutral about evil if you have the fear of the Lord; you have to hate it. And what is the first thing you hate? *Pride. Arrogance.*

Proverbs 9:10-11:

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
For by me your days will be multiplied,
And years of life will be added to you.*

So, you want a long life? Cultivate the *fear of the Lord*. However, it is not enough to live long; it is possible to live long in misery. But *in the fear of the Lord*, God offers us a long and blessed life.

Proverbs 14:26, 27:

*In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence,
And His children will have a place of refuge.*

So the fear of the Lord does not make you timid, it gives you *strong confidence*. And it provides a *place of refuge* for your children, which in these days, I think, is very important. And the next verse says:

*The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,
To avoid the snares of death.*

That is a very vivid picture. Satan has set *snares of death*. How can we avoid them? Through the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 19:23 is almost incredible. I can hardly believe it, but it is in the Bible:

*The fear of the Lord leads to life,
And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;
He will not be visited with evil.*

How can you turn down a promise like that? *Abide in satisfaction. Not be visited with evil.* It doesn't necessarily mean you will have an easy life.

Proverbs 22:4:

*By humility and the fear of the LORD
Are riches and honor and life.*

You will find that at least 50 percent of the time the fear of the Lord is directly connected with life. It is one primary condition for a good life,

And then, I think, most important of all is the prophetic picture of Messiah in Isaiah 11:1-2.

*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
[All the New Testament Scriptures confirm that this is Jesus. Now, listen:]
The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him;
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

It is interesting to see that the Spirit that rests on Jesus is sevenfold - seven is always the number of the Holy Spirit. It says in Revelation 4:5 that before the throne of God there are seven lamps of fire which are the seven Spirits of God.

Personally, I understand this passage in Isaiah to reveal to us the seven spirits of God. The first is the Spirit of the Lord: that is, the Spirit that speaks in the first person as God. Then they all come after that in pairs:

*the Spirit of wisdom and understanding;
the Spirit of counsel and might;
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

It is important to see that knowledge must be balanced by the fear of the Lord - because knowledge puffs up, but the fear of the Lord keeps us humble. It speaks volumes to me that the Spirit of the fear of the Lord was resting upon Jesus. Though He was the Son of God, He had the fear of the Lord; it rested upon Him. It never lifted from Him.

Continuing with the fear of the Lord: the fear of the Lord is a counterbalance to joy. It is very important that when we get excited we are anchored by the fear of the Lord. Again, I consider this a tremendous weakness in the Charismatic movement. People get all excited and happy, clap their hands, dance around - which is wonderful - but not without the fear of the Lord.

Psalm 2:11 says:

*Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.*

That may seem to be inconsistent, but it is the balance. You rejoice, but with trembling. You stand in awe while you are rejoicing. This is carried over into the New Testament where it describes the growth of the church in Acts 9:31:

Then the churches [or the church] throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified [or built up]. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

Again, notice the balance: the Holy Spirit comforts us, but we have to walk in the fear of the Lord. We can be encouraged, we can be built up, but that must be balanced by the fear of the Lord.

You might say, "Well, Brother Prince. I've been redeemed. I'm a child of God. Surely I don't need to fear God any more." On the contrary, you should fear all the more because of the price that God paid to redeem you. That is stated in 1 Peter 1:17-19.

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work [and "each one" includes you and me], conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay [or sojourning] here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

So the very fact that we have been redeemed is the reason to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear - because God invested so much in us, He paid for us with the blood of Christ. This leaves no room for flippancy, which is really a denial of the fear of the Lord.

No. 4: Make and Keep the Cross Central

Now, the fourth and the final safeguard is: **make and keep the cross central**. I looked at the example of Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony [or the mystery] of God. [You have to bear in mind that in that culture the highest achievement was oratory. If you were anything, you were an excellent speaker. Otherwise you were probably despised. So Paul, when he says, "I laid aside excellent speech," in a sense was saying, "I'm not bowing to this culture."] For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

I pointed out in a previous meeting that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. When we have all the strength we need of our own, we no longer need God's strength. God has to bring us to the place where we do not have strength. I have seen this in my own experience in ministry continually. If God is going to use me in any significant way, He has to bring me to the place where I know I cannot do it; to the place where I know I am totally dependent upon Him, that I am weak. Then His strength is made perfect in my weakness.

Let me say something else in this connection: I have discovered that the opportunities to serve God seldom suit our convenience. Generally speaking, if God gives you an opportunity to serve Him, it will be inconvenient in some way. That is to test the sincerity of your motives.

But if we want God's strength manifested in our lives, in our ministry, in our congregations, we have to cultivate the

fear of the Lord. We have to cultivate a sense of dependence, an acknowledgment of our total dependence upon God.

This is very personal, but every time before I preach I tell God, "I know I don't have the ability. I'm totally dependent upon You. If You don't anoint me, if You don't inspire me, if You don't strengthen me, I cannot do it." Every now and then, I may stand up to preach and forget to do that. Then mentally, in my mind, while I am preaching, I say, "Lord, please remember, I'm dependent upon You. I cannot do it in my own strength."

Then Paul goes on to say:

And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The key to releasing the power of the Holy Spirit is to be focused on the cross. There is a hymn that says,

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

When we really see the cross, we have nothing to boast of.

It is interesting that the original version of that hymn, which was written by an Englishman, was:

*When I survey the wondrous cross
Where the young Prince of Glory died.*

The writer was pointing out that Jesus was cut off in His prime. He died in His very best age.

I believe one of our greatest needs is to focus on the cross. I have seen people become very ambitious, striving for success, wanting to build a large church or ministry. Sometimes they succeed, but unless the whole message is focused on the cross, they have only wood, hay and straw.

I am reminded of a well-known English preacher of a previous generation, Charles Spurgeon, a Baptist. He was continually emphasizing to his students the importance of focusing on the cross. One day he said something like this: "To preach the principles of the Christian life and make no mention of the cross is like a drill sergeant giving orders to a squad of soldiers who have no feet. They can hear his orders and understand him, but they lack the ability to carry them out. Remember, it is only through the cross that we get the ability to do what God tells us to do."

Now let us turn again to the first five verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 2. These have always been among my favorite verses because I came to the Lord sovereignly from a background of Greek philosophy. When Paul speaks about wisdom, as he does, he is talking about Greek philosophy, so I think I am particularly able to appreciate the impact of what he says about wisdom.

We need to understand when we read these verses that Paul is speaking about a certain part of his ministry journey. In Acts chapter 17, he was in Athens, which was the intellectual center, the university city, of the ancient world. There he preached a sermon unlike any other that is recorded. It was a somewhat intellectual sermon. He adapted himself to his audience and even quoted from a Greek poet (which I do not think he ever did at any other time). I wonder whether Paul was really led by the Holy Spirit. At any rate, the results were disappointing. Only a few people believed.

So, Paul went on to Corinth. Now, Corinth was a port city, somewhat like the major port cities of our present world - a very wicked city, where every kind of sin flourished. Somewhere between Athens and Corinth, Paul made a decision, which is recorded in these verses:

And, I brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the mystery of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

So, Paul made a revolutionary decision. He would not preach the kind of message in Corinth that he preached in

Athens. He said something here which, for a Jew, is remarkable. He said, *I determined not to know anything*. Basically, the Jews are people who know a lot and often their confidence is in what they know.

What an amazing statement! "I determined not to know anything. I'll forget everything I've ever learned at the feet of Gemaliel, in all my studies - forget it all! I'm only concerned with one thing: Jesus Christ - and not just with Jesus Christ, but with Jesus Christ crucified - that is the center and the focus of my message." And I believe it should be the center and the focus of our message. If we ever get away from the cross as central, we are in danger.

I notice that Paul expected the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power. I find today in our contemporary church, if you preach about power, everybody gets excited - and if you appeal for people who want to receive power, many will come forward. Personally, I believe this emphasis on power can be extremely dangerous. I have observed over a good many years that people who focus on power end in trouble. They often end in error.

Power is something that appeals to the natural man. Some psychologists have said that the desire for power is the number one desire of the human personality. Paul said, "I want power, but I want it on a different basis from that which the world understands. I want to forget all my wisdom, all my knowledge, all my theological qualifications and I want to focus on only one thing: Jesus Christ crucified." And then he said, in effect, "When I do that, I can be sure that the Holy Spirit will come in power."

Now I will close with another of my favorite Scriptures, Galatians 6:14:

God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Let me just recapitulate my four suggested safeguards:

Number 1: **Humble ourselves**. In that passage Peter says, *our adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8). The devil is very powerful and very active. Any theology that tells you differently is a deception.

I was meditating on this yesterday evening. Suppose an announcement was made that a lion was loose on the ground floor of this hotel, and you needed to get out. I do not believe you would stroll through the lobby, humming a cheerful little chorus. You would be very circumspect in making your exit. And you would be very careful to close the door behind you.

That, I believe, is a picture of how we need to conduct ourselves, because our adversary, the devil, is walking about like a roaring lion. We cannot change that. But do you know why lions roar? It is to terrify their prey, to paralyze them. So, do not be paralyzed by the lion's roar. Be very cautious, but do not give way to fear.

Number 2: **Receive the love of the truth**.

Number 3: **Cultivate the fear of the Lord**.

Number 4: **Make and keep the cross central**.

Finally, let us quote Galatians 6:14 together. I don't expect you all to know it by heart, so I'll say it phrase by phrase, and you say it after me.

God forbid that I should boast / except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ / by whom the world is crucified to me / and I to the world. Amen.