

A large rectangular area with a vibrant blue, starburst-like background. The background consists of numerous thin, white, radiating lines that create a sense of depth and movement, similar to a light trail or a starburst effect. The text is centered within this area.

Order
in the
Court of the King!

Volume II

By

Mark McGee

Welcome to Volume II of our special series, *Order in the Court of the King!* You can download a free copy of Volume I [here](#) or begin reading the series online [here](#).

We are searching for solutions to those things that divide Christians from one another. Our goal is simple – to see the Church unified for the glory of God and to finish the work He has given us to do.

The Problem

The ‘problem’ the Church faces today is ‘us.’ Here’s why I say that.

God has done everything for us. He created the heavens and the earth. He created an orderly system. We have water to drink, food to eat, light to see, and dark to rest. The sun rises every morning and sets every evening. The moon goes through its phases every month. The stars ‘come out’ at night. Seasons move from one to the other, year after year, century after century. Babies are conceived, grow in their mother’s womb, are born, and grow into adults who are able to produce more babies – generation after generation. Plants grow and produce food we can eat. Animals are born and grow. We are surrounded by order.

However, we also see disorder. Family conflicts. Personal attacks. Pride. Evil intent. Wickedness. Wars. Why? What causes this and what does God think about it?

The Cause

We don't have to look far to find the cause. God's Word makes it clear that the problem is 'us.' Despite the beautiful planet with all its order, people turned against God and against each other –

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord ... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. Genesis 6:5-8, 11-12

God chose Noah and his family to ride out the great Flood that ‘cleansed’ the earth of the wickedness, violence, and corruption. Once the waters of the Flood receded Noah, his wife, three sons, their wives, and many animals, birds, and creeping things left the Ark to begin ‘filling’ the earth again. However, God knew something about the human heart that continues to be our problem to this day – “the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21b). God told the prophet Jeremiah, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)

The Apostle John wrote this about how Jesus responded to people who believed in Him “when they saw the signs which He did.”

But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. John 2:24-25

Okay, you might say, that's the heart of the unsaved person – the unbeliever. Christians, members of the Church, the Body of Christ, are made new through faith in Christ. Their hearts have changed. Right? Well ...

The Transition

If you are a Christian and reading this article right now, you're still alive on earth. God has done a marvelous work in your heart through Christ. However ... you are in a 'transition' period. The Apostle John explained it this way –

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 1 John 3:2

There's no question John was writing to believers because he called them 'beloved' and 'children of God.' However, he said that 'it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.' What did he mean by that? John continues – 'but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' And there you have it. We are in a transitional period. We aren't what we used to be (unsaved), but we also aren't yet what we will be (like Jesus – immortal and incorruptible). That's a future event, as the Apostle Paul explained –

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are

alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Those of us who are God's children and still alive are 'waiting' for Christ to return for us. Until then we live in bodies of flesh and blood. That means we are still affected by sin. I know many Christians believe that we no longer have the 'sin nature,' or never were sinful by 'nature.' I know many Christians who believe in the doctrine of 'sinless perfection.' They believe a Christian can reach a point where they no longer 'sin.' That's fairly easy to disprove – Scripturally and personally.

New Testament Evidence

There are so many portions of the New Testament that are in opposition to the teaching of ‘sinless perfection’ that I would have to write more articles just to hold all the verses. Here’s a small sampling, starting with Jesus, then moving to the apostolic writings –

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:19

*And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.
Matthew 6:12*

[The word ‘forgive’ is *aphiémi*, which means ‘send away from, remit, release, forgive’ ... ‘debts’ is the Greek word *opheiléma*, which means ‘that which is owed, offense, trespass, sin’]

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:15-25

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 1:1-2

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt

word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:17-32

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10

I'll stop here for space, though it would be easy to keep quoting New Testament Scriptures that refute the teaching of 'sinless perfection.' Much of what you read in the apostolic letters address the problem of sinfulness by church leaders and members. If church leaders and members didn't sin, why so many letters addressing so much sin by 1st century churches? Simple. Christians continue to sin until Jesus returns for us. As Paul wrote the Philippians – "... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

When Jesus dictated His letter to John for delivery to seven churches in Asia Minor, five of them pointed out 'serious' areas of sinfulness among leaders and members. Jesus said that church leaders and members had 'left their first love,' 'held to the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality, 'held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans,' which Jesus said He 'hated. Some church leaders and members 'committed sexual immorality' and ate things 'sacrificed to idols.' Jesus

told one of the churches that “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” Whoa! Jesus told another church that “because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.’ Yikes!

This is Jesus Christ – King of kings, Lord of lords – telling His people that they are sinning against Him. He tells them to ‘repent’ (*metanoieó*, ‘change one’s mind or purpose, think differently after’). Jesus did not say they had to be saved again (for those who were truly saved), but He told them to change their mind and think differently after hearing what He said. What they were doing was wrong in His sight and He wanted to see them change their thoughts and behavior.

Was Jesus serious about their sinful behavior? Read this and tell me what you think –

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. Revelation 2:5

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Revelation 2:16

Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Revelation 2:22-23

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Revelation 3:3

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Revelation 3:18-19

Hopefully, we can agree that Jesus was serious by what He said to the 'churches.' The Lord was addressing the leaders and members of real churches located in Asia Minor. Christians heard these words read to them about them. Their Master commanded change. Why? Because they were transitioning, as are we. What letter do you think Jesus Christ would dictate to the leaders and members of your church?

Hebrews 12:3-11 – read it. It’s about how God disciplines those He loves –

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? Hebrews 12:6-7

These words are not out of meanness. It’s part of raising ‘children.’ That’s who we are – children of God. Why is this important to understand, accept, and embrace?

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:11

If we as God’s children have reached ‘sinless perfection,’ then why the need for discipline and chastening?

Personal Evidence

Anyone who says they have reached 'sinless perfection' can be shown to be wrong with a simple action. I don't recommend doing this because I don't want to ask any Christian to sin themselves just to prove that a Christian is wrong in what they're teaching, but it is worth considering what would happen 'if' you did this.

The story is told of a famous preacher in England in the 19th century by the name of C.H. Spurgeon. He attended a conference where another preacher taught 'sinless perfectionism' to the assembled crowd. Spurgeon didn't challenge the speaker at that time. Instead, he poured a pitcher of milk over the man's head the next morning. Witnesses said the 'sinless perfection' man responded with the kind of anger and rage that any sinner would recognize as sinful. So much for 'sinless perfection.' Sinners are going to sin, even sinners who have been forgiven by grace through faith in Christ.

Any of us could do the same type of thing to someone who says they are 'sinless,' though I don't recommend it. I've attempted to use Scripture and logic with 'sinless perfectionism' believers and teachers before and seen how angry they became because I wouldn't submit to their 'authority.' That's how they put it. They believed they had 'authority' over me because they were 'sinless.' Sorry. That won't work on me unless you can back it up with Scripture. They can't, so they get angry. Isn't anger a sin? Jesus called it a sin. The apostles called it a sin. Yes, I do believe that anger is a sin. You could point that out to a 'sinless perfectionism' teacher or believer when they get angry with you, but that's probably not the correct heart attitude we should take with them. I'd prefer teaching the truth in love and praying God would show them His truth.

Not Under Law

The Apostle Paul gives us an important ‘key’ or ‘clue’ to this **transitional period** we go through as Christians.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Galatians 6:16-18

Do Christians sin? The teachings of Jesus and the words and writings of the apostles make it clear that we do sin. Thankfully, the New Testament also teaches that the blood of Christ covers us from all iniquity.

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” Romans 4:5-8

Christians sin, but their sins are covered. That’s the wonderful meaning of God’s mercy and grace. God forgives us because of the faithfulness of the Son of God who volunteered to die for my sins.

Next question. In light of these Scriptural facts, should Christians go out and paint the town with their sin since the blood of Christ covers them and they are not under the law? Here’s how the Apostle answered that question –

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:1-4

Even though God's children (the Church on earth) sin, we shouldn't want to live that way. We should want to walk 'in newness of life.' That's what Paul meant when he wrote about dying to sin and not living in it any longer. We need to "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." The word 'reckon' is *logizomai* and comes from the root word for the English word 'logic.' It's logical and reasonable to 'consider, count, conclude' ourselves as being 'dead to sin' (*nekros men tē hamartia*).

The Church as Family

Jesus Christ came from Heaven to earth to destroy the works of the devil. One of those ‘works’ is ‘deception.’ Another is ‘division.’ There are others, but I mention deception and division because even though Christians are saved and have the Holy Spirit of God living in them they can still be deceived and divided. We see that in the Church today. Tens of thousands of denominations. Hundreds of divisions within many of those denominations. What a mess!

There’s only one cure – obey Christ our King. Do what He says. Repent when He says repent. Do when He says do. Go when He says go. Jesus is our ‘peace.’ He broke down the middle wall of separation between Jew and Gentile ‘in His flesh.’ Jesus created ‘in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.’ He reconciled us to God ‘in one body through the cross.’ We are ‘family’ because of what Jesus accomplished on the Cross.

Jesus gave His Church, the Church He is building, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4)

The problem in today's Church is 'us' – our disobedience, our pride and selfishness, our greed and sinful desires. The solution is also 'us' – our obedience, our humility and caring for others, our giving hearts and holy desires. The solution is easy to describe, but hard to do. Read carefully the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God –

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on

the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:17-24

Church – we have a lot of work to do.

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. John 17:4-5

Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians 14:40

Our objective as God's people should be the same as our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ – to glorify God on the earth and finish the work He has given us to do. How do we do that when there are tens of thousands of denominations within the Church? How do we accomplish this magnificent desire of our Lord when Christians are divided on so many fronts?

I would recommend beginning at the beginning. What is God's Eternal Plan? How can we cooperate with His Plan? What might we need to change in our life, in the life of our church, the life of our denomination, to cooperate with God's will? That is the purpose of our series.

God's Plan for Order

The first two chapters of the Bible and the last two chapters of the Bible present an orderly society of God's people. The 1,185 chapters in the middle present a serious disorder in society, even among God's chosen people. We saw why in [Volume I](#).

Jesus Christ gave His followers a unique understanding of this when He taught them how to pray. He began with the 'relationship' they have with God as 'Father,' then moved on to the three stages of 'order, disorder, and re-order.' You'll find the prayer in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. These words come from Matthew 6 –

- Order – “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.”
- Disorder – “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.”

- Re-Order – “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

God's Chosen People

I'd like to explore a phrase that I used earlier in this article – 'God's chosen people.' God obviously makes choices about people according to His Eternal Plan.

- Adam and Eve were God's 'choice.' He created them.
- Noah was God's 'choice' – "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8).
- Abraham was God's 'choice' – "Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you'" (Genesis 12:1).
- Isaac was God's 'choice' – "Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him" (Genesis 17:19).
- Jacob was God's 'choice' – "And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: 'I *am* the Lord God of Abraham your

father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you” (Genesis 28:13-15).

- Joseph was God’s ‘choice’ – “Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:19-20).
- Moses was God’s ‘choice’ – “So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am” (Exodus 3:4).
- The people of Israel were God’s ‘choice’ – “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may

bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10).

- Joshua was God’s ‘choice’ – “After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: ‘Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses” (Joshua 1:1-3).
- Samuel was God’s ‘choice’ – “Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel answered, ‘Speak, for Your servant hears” (1 Samuel 3:10).
- David was God’s ‘choice’ – “And the Lord said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this *is* the one!’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:12-13).

God 'chose' people to do specific tasks for Him (e.g. Bezalel the son of Uri, Aholiab the son of Ahisamach). God 'chose' all of the prophets who would speak His Words to Israel and other nations. God 'chooses' people to do His will on earth.

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, continued to 'choose' people when He became 'flesh' and lived among humans. Those included His 'apostles,' 'disciples' and His 'church' (Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Jesus spoke of gathering His 'elect' (Matthew 24; Mark 13). Jesus spoke of the 'elect' again when He told His disciples – “Then the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’” (Luke 18:6-8)

The Apostle Paul used the terms ‘chose,’ ‘chosen,’ and ‘elect’ about 20 times in his statements and letters. The Apostle Peter used the terms ‘chose,’ ‘chosen,’ and ‘elect’ almost ten times. Here are some examples from each, beginning with the Apostle Paul speaking about how God ‘chose’ Him for special service –

The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. Acts 22:14-15

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. Ephesians 1:3-5

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Romans 8:32-34

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger. Romans 9:10-12

But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.
Romans 11:4-6

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.
Colossians 3:11-13

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.
1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 2 Timothy 2:10

Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness. Titus 1:1

The Apostle Peter also wrote about God's choosing people for Himself and calling them the 'elect' –

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace be multiplied. 1 Peter 1:1-2

She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. 1 Peter 5:13

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:10-11

Chosen and Elect

Even though the words ‘chosen’ and ‘elect’ (including ‘election’) are biblical terms, many Christians are wary about using them. Some church leaders don’t want to even discuss or teach on the subject of God’s ‘choosing’ (‘electing’) people. Why not? Why would any Christian be afraid of Ephesians 1 or 1 Peter 2? It’s in the Bible!!

Unfortunately, the unfounded fear to hear and believe and the reluctance or refusal to teach the plain truth of Scripture concerning God’s making ‘choices’ has caused deep divisions in the Church for almost two thousand years. The reason I say ‘unfortunately’ is because God choosing people for Himself and the pleasure of His will is part of His Eternal Plan. I’ve already proven from multiple Scriptures that God chooses people, so what’s the problem? Maybe it’s a misunderstanding of terms? Maybe it’s a refusal to accept that God does what He wills? Whatever the reason, the Church needs to get past this problem if it is to glorify God and finish the work He has given us to do.

You may wonder why I believe as I do about this subject. It's really quite simple. I'm a former atheist and journalist who became a Christian through the process of research and analysis. That means looking up stuff to determine whether a claim is true or not. I still do that. I look up stuff. I check out both text and context in its original time and location. I discover the definition of words from original languages. I've done my best for more than 50 years of Bible study to follow Paul's advice to Timothy – "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). 'Right division' of God's Word simply means handling it correctly. That takes time and effort, but it's well worth it to get it right.

So, what are the original words for 'choose,' 'chosen' and 'elect'? Keep in mind that in addition to definitions, we also will want to look at the grammatical aspects of each word as it's used in the text and context –

Hebrew

- **choose** – *bachar*, to choose ... *barar*, to select ... *Yibchar*, He chooses ... *qabal*, to receive, take
- **chosen** – *bachir*, chosen ... *yada*, to know ... *qari*, called ... *segullah*, possession ... *chotham*, seal ... *cheleq*, portion ... *shear*, remnant ... *maan*, purpose, intent
- **elect** – *bachir*, to select, chosen ... *tamak*, grasp, attain

Greek

- **choose** – *eklegó*, to select, elect, pick out for myself ... *haireó*, to take, choose ... *hairetizó*, to select, choose as one's own ... *epilegó*, choose for myself, call or name ... *katalegó*, choose out, register, enroll ... *procheirizó*, to appoint, determine, elect, take into hand ... *eklogé*, selection, choosing out, choice (by God) ... *procheirotoneó*, choose or appoint beforehand, extend the hand before ... *cheirotoneó*, appoint, choose by vote

- **chosen** – *eklektos*, select (by implication favorite), chosen out, elect, choice ... *eklegó*, to select, elect, pick out for myself ... *suneklektos*, chosen together with, fellow-elect ... *eklogé*, selection, choosing out, choice (by God) ... *haireó*, to take, choose ... *hairetizó*, to select, choose *as one's own* ... *haireó*, to take, choose ... *procheirotoneó*, choose or appoint beforehand, extend the hand before
- **elect** – *eklektos*, select (by implication favorite), chosen out, elect, choice ... *eklogé*, selection, choosing out, choice (by God) ... *cheirotoneó*, appoint, choose by vote ... *suneklektos*, chosen together with, fellow-elect ... *eklegó*, to select, elect, pick out for myself

I wanted you to see the Hebrew and Greek words so you'd notice that whether you read 'choose, chose, choice, chosen, or elect,' they come from the same origin. Christians are, in my opinion, unnecessarily concerned about the words 'elect' and 'election.' They simply mean that God made a choice.

Why? I could say it's because He's God and can do anything He wants, but it's more than that. God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – conferred and considered the best way to create the heavens and the earth and the best way to manage creation. What we see around us is the best plan. It may not be your plan. It may not be the plan you would have made if you were God. However, it is God's best Plan.

God's Plan is also good for Christians. Think about these words that the Lord spoke to the Apostle Paul about preaching the Gospel in Corinth –

Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Acts 18:9-11

I find this and many other Scriptures encouraging. When God said He had ‘many people in this city,’ He was not talking about people who were saved and members of a church. He was talking about people He had chosen to hear the Word of God, believe in Christ, and become members of a church that Jesus was going to build in Corinth. Notice that God did not say to Paul, ‘for there are many people in this city.’ God said, “for I have many people in this city.” God used the ‘possessive pronoun, first person singular’ *egó*. The people were His people and there were many in Corinth. Paul preached and taught the Gospel and planted a new church in one of the largest cities of Ancient Greece.

God had (possessive) many people in many cities of the ancient world. Jesus Christ said of Paul (Saul of Tarsus) – “he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15) Paul was a ‘chosen vessel’ (*skeuos eklogé*) of Christ’s to ‘bear’ His name to people across the world.

That's why the Holy Spirit told leaders of the church in Antioch to 'separate' Paul and Barnabas for the 'work' which He had called them. That work was to preach the Gospel of Christ –

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:1-3

When a Christian senses God's leading to preach the Gospel in a rural area, a town, a city, or another country, follow God's lead. He has 'many people' across the nation and the world and will lead you to them. Preach the Word with confidence, relying on the Plan of God. Our responsibility is to glorify God and finish the work He has given us to do.

God's Ways

I think the problem many Christians have with God's Plan, that includes His making particular choices about people and events, is that we either don't understand God's 'ways' or don't like God's 'ways.' If you don't like God's 'ways,' and you're a Christian, I recommend you spend time alone with God and ask Him what he thinks about your attitude towards Him. That's pretty much between you and God. If you are a member of God's chosen family, but you don't understand why God would make the choices He's made – we can discuss that.

Isaiah 55 is one of the great chapters of the Bible. It contains awesome verses like, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price," "Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near," and "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall

accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.”

Right in the middle of this amazing work of the Holy Spirit are these important words –

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

Key in on the word ‘ways.’ God’s ‘way’s are not our ways. His ‘ways’ are higher than our ways. His ‘thoughts’ than our thoughts. Those ‘thoughts’ include the thoughts God had as He designed His Eternal Plan for the angels, the earth, and the human race. God’s ‘thoughts’ are intrinsically linked to His ‘ways.’ The Hebrew word for ‘ways’ is *derek* (דֶּרֶךְ). It means ‘journey, road, manner.’ It comes from the word *darak*, which means ‘to tread, to march.’

[I've been writing another series on GraceLife titled, *The Great Reveal: Our Epic Journey Through Time, Space and Eternity*. It's about God taking along with Him on a great journey through time, space, and eternity. You can read the first part [here](#) and follow the series through the first 3 parts (I'm still adding parts to the series, so watch for new ones) or the first five eBooks located [here](#).]

When God speaks about His 'ways,' He's referring to the journey He is on with us based on His infallible 'thoughts.' God's 'ways' are 'perfect.' He 'chose' us to go on. his journey with Him, so how do His 'ways' and 'thoughts' affect us? I'm reminded of something King David wrote –

For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? Psalm 18:29-31

There is so much we can do during our time on earth, but we must trust His choices –

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6

The Need for Unity

We must also be unified as God's people. It is the desire of our Lord and Savior and His apostles –

Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. John 17:11b

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Ephesians 4:1-6

The Church's obvious lack of unity is a serious problem for bringing glory to God and finishing the work He has given us to do. We must trust and obey God. We must.

Everyone in the world has problems and struggles to one degree or another because of the Adamic curse after Adam and Eve sinned against God –

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.” Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:16-19

The Human Struggle

We all 'struggle' in this world because of sin and the curses that followed. We struggle with family relationships. We struggle financially. We struggle with our health and the health of our loved ones. Struggle, suffering as it were, seems to be part of everyone's life. However, we have a Savior who 'bore' our suffering and pain. His Name is Jesus –

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the

punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and

was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:1-12

There is great suffering and pain in this world, and God has provided a way 'out' for those who will believe –

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by

the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. John 3:14-21

God has provided salvation to people who will look to Christ and believe. That is a primary function of God's Eternal Plan. God the Son (also known as the Son of Man) came from Heaven to earth to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). One of Jesus' first sermons is found in Luke 4 and it demonstrates the concern God has for those who struggle in this world –

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:18-19

Jesus was reading from the prophet Isaiah who lived centuries before the birth of Christ. Again, we see God's Eternal Plan. Struggle is an integral part of that plan. Look at the words Isaiah wrote and Jesus read –

- preach the gospel to the poor
- heal the brokenhearted
- liberty to the captives
- recovery of sight to the blind
- set at liberty those who are oppressed

Each one of those words describes an aspect of the 'struggle' humans experience in life. When God told Adam that he would 'surely die' if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the Lord knew that death would include far more than the physical death people would experience at the last moment of their life on earth. He knew they would struggle throughout their lives.

God sent His Son into the world to share in the struggles we all have in this life –

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. Hebrews 4:15

Jesus Christ, our King and High Priest, ‘sympathizes’ with our weaknesses. The Greek word is *sumpatheó* and means ‘have compassion on, to have a fellow feeling with, sympathize with.’ It comes from the word *sumpathés* (sympathetic, compassionate) which is made up of the words *sun* (together with, association with) and *paschó* (to feel heavy emotion, to suffer, to experience ill treatment, endure suffering). Jesus certainly did all of that for all of us –

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Matthew 16:21

Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:26-27

But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Acts 3:18

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:21-25

This was God's Eternal Plan for His Son –

“who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philipians 2:6-11

The Christian Struggle

Those who are ‘followers’ of Jesus Christ have many of the same struggles that unbelievers have in this life, but believers also have the extra challenge of suffering persecution and affliction for believing in Jesus –

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. Luke 9:23-24

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. John 15:18-20

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. John 16:32-33

Some English translations use the word “trouble” to describe the idea of “tribulation” –

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. NIV

However, the Greek word means more than “trouble.” It’s the word *thlipsis* and means ‘affliction, distress, persecution.’ The meaning of the word is of ‘pressure’ in a narrow place that causes difficulty for the person in *thlipsis* to get out. It comes from the word *thlibó*, ‘to press, afflict, make narrow by pressure.’

Another way of explaining what Jesus told His disciples was that they would find themselves ‘persecuted’ and ‘afflicted’ because they were His followers. Jesus first told them how tough things would be for them –

All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. John 16:1-4

However, He also gave them hope when he said –

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. John 16:32-33

Keep in mind that Jesus came from Heaven to earth for a specific purpose –

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8

Christians are involved in God's Eternal Plan to destroy the 'works' of the devil. We must be 'resolute' in finishing the work God has given us to do.

One person who understood being 'resolute' was the Apostle Paul. At the beginning of his discipleship, God told Ananias –

Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake. Acts 9:15

I've always found that statement interesting, that Jesus would show Paul how much he would suffer 'for My name's sake.' Suffering was a big part of Paul's life as a disciple –

... in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

Paul also spent many years in various prisons because of his discipleship and preaching of the Gospel. May we be able to say with the Apostle Paul –

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Defining A Heresy

Part of our ‘struggle’ as God’s people is ‘against heresies.’ Standing up against heresies is an important part of glorifying God and finishing the work God has given us to do.

The words ‘heresy,’ ‘heretic,’ and ‘heretical’ are often used in churches, online, and in academic venues. First, question to answer is whether they are words used in the Bible. The short answer is, yes. The longer answer is that ‘they’ are not always used the way we might think.

The Greek word αἵρεσις (*haireisis*) is used nine times in the New Testament. However, English translations vary on whether to use a transliteration (heresies) or a translation (sect, faction). So, let’s look quickly at the nine uses of the word from two translations: the NKJV and the NIV. The reason for that is to demonstrate how a literal translation (NKJV) and a dynamic translation (NIV) translate the Greek word *haireisis*. If you use a different New Testament

translation, you can look up the verses in your Bible to see how the word is translated.

Acts 5:17

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation – NKJV

Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy – NIV

Acts 15:5

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses – NKJV

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘The Gentiles must be

*circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses' –
NIV*

Acts 24:5

*For we have found this man a plague, a creator of
dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and
a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes – NKJV*

*We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up
riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a
ringleader of the Nazarene sect – NIV*

Acts 24:14

*But this I confess to you, that according to the Way
which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my
fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law
and in the Prophets – NKJV*

*However, I admit that I worship the God of our
ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a*

sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets – NIV

Acts 26:5

They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee – NKJV

They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee – NIV

Acts 28:22

But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere – NKJV

But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect – NIV

1 Corinthians 11:19

For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you – NKJV

No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval – NIV

Galatians 5:20

idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies – NKJV

idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions – NIV

2 Peter 2:1

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction – NKJV

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves – NIV

It's interesting how the same Greek word is translated differently depending on context and English translation.

The English word ‘heresy’ is defined as “adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma” (Merriam-Webster), “**(the act of having) an opinion or belief that is the opposite of or against what is the official or popular opinion, or an action that shows that you have no respect for the official opinion**” (Cambridge Dictionary), and “**Heresy** is a belief or action that most people think is wrong, because it disagrees with beliefs that are generally accepted” (Collins English Dictionary).

Those are examples from just three dictionaries. You can check your favorite English dictionary to see how it defines ‘heresy.’

A Strong Opinion and Choice

The Greek word *hairesis*, from which we get the English ‘heresy’ and ‘heresies,’ means “choice, strong opinion.” It comes from the word αἰρέω (*haireó*), which means “to take, choose, prefer.” The idea of a ‘sect,’ for example, is that of people who made a choice based on a strong opinion. People with opposing and strong viewpoints may refer to people of that ‘sect’ as ‘heretics.’ Calling someone a ‘heretic’ means you are claiming that they have made a ‘choice based on strong opinion’ that differs from yours.

The words ‘heresy’ and ‘heretic’ are usually found within opposing religious groups. Christians may view Jews and Muslims as heretics. Jews may view Christians and Muslims as heretics. Muslims may view Jews and Christians as heretics. All three have made religious choices based on strong opinions. Those strong opinions differ from people with different opinions.

False Teachers and Prophets

I've already addressed false teachers and prophets in many other [articles and eBooks](#), so I'll look at just a small number of examples for the purpose of understanding 'heresies.'

Moses taught the children of Israel how to know the difference between a true prophet and a false prophet (Deuteronomy chapters 13 and 18). Jeremiah addressed the issue of false prophets several times in Jeremiah and once in Lamentations. Ezekiel also mentioned false prophets. 'Lying spirits' in the mouths of prophets is mentioned in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. The lies told by false prophets could be regarded as 'heresies.'

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15). Jesus Christy said that at the end of the age – “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many” (Matthew 24:11). The Apostle Paul dealt with a 'false prophet' in Paphos (Acts 13). The Apostle Peter

mentioned ‘false teachers’ or ‘false prophets’ in his second letter. The Apostle John addressed ‘false prophets’ in his first letter and ‘the false prophet’ in Revelation.

The idea of ‘false’ teachers and prophets would certainly fit with the idea of heretical beliefs, practices, and teachings. One of the best examples of that is in 2 Peter 2:1-3 –

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

Notice some key words that help us understand ‘heresies’ as pertains to Christian churches, denominations, Bible colleges, seminaries, and conferences. We need to be cautious to use the term correctly as it relates to other people and their preaching, teaching, or writing.

1. First, the words ‘secretly bring in’ (παρεισάγω). Heretics often present themselves as ‘brothers in Christ.’ They may be members of a church, a pastor, a worship leader, a youth director or children’s leader, a denominational leader, famous author, or seminary professor. They have an appearance of being ‘trustworthy,’ but ‘secretly bring in’ false teachings. The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2 that some people in the church were ‘cheating’ the believers by subjecting them to false ‘regulations.’ Paul wrote in verse 23 – “These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”
2. Second, the words ‘destructive heresies’ (αἵρεσις ἀπώλεια). The idea of the Greek word ἀπώλεια is that

heretical teaching would bring about ‘destruction, ruin, loss.’ It comes from the word ἀπόλλυμι, which means ‘cut off completely, sever completely.’ That is why heresy is so dangerous in the Church. It can cut people off from the saving truth of the Gospel. That leads to spiritual ruin and destruction.

3. Third, the words ‘even denying the Lord who bought them’ (καὶ τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην ἀρνούμενοι). That last word, ἀρνούμενοι, is translated as ‘denying.’ It means to say ‘no’ to something or someone or ‘refuse’ them. In this context it is the saying ‘no’ to or ‘refusing’ Jesus Christ in some way. The word was used for denying a statement or repudiating a belief or person. Paul wrote this to Titus – “They profess to know God, but in works they deny *Him*, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Notice that these people in churches on Crete, some of them church leaders, professed to know God, ‘but in works they deny Him.’ They were ‘abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.’ Just because someone in a church or denomination or

seminary says they believe in God, doesn't make their statement true. 'Secret heretics' are known by their 'works. They won't fool Christians who are watching and listening carefully and comparing every word to the Word of God.

Heretics are Apostates

What Peter wrote about these ‘secret’ heretics fits well with what Paul wrote to Timothy and the Thessalonians –

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 1

Timothy 4:1-3

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of

perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

The words ‘falling away’ come from the Greek word ἀποστασία (*apostasia*). The word means ‘defection, revolt, departure, apostasy.’ It’s the idea of ‘deserting’ something or someone. That’s what happens when false teachers and prophets ‘deceive’ people in churches across the world.

Paul said “some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy.” Notice the wording carefully. Some will ‘depart from the faith.’ The Greek word for ‘depart’ is *aphistémi* and means ‘to lead away, to depart from, to desert.’ The ideas of ‘falling away’ (apostasy) and ‘departing from the faith’ are similar in meaning.

Paul addressed heretics and apostates powerfully in his letter to the Galatians –

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:6-9

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the

flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Galatians 3:1-4

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain ... They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. Galatians 4:8-11, 17

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. I could wish that

those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

Galatians 5:7-12

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a great example of how to deal with 'heresy' in a church or denomination. Notice that Paul, Peter, John, and other apostles did not give an inch to heretics. Neither did Jesus Christ. Jesus called people to 'follow' Him, not be 'led away' from Him.

Led Away From Truth

How are people ‘led away’ from the truth of God’s Word? By false teachers and prophets who promote ‘deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy.’ A true ‘heresy’ most likely came from false teachers and prophets, so it would seem important that we learn how to tell the difference between a real ‘heresy’ and a difference of opinion that does not rise to being ‘doctrines of demons.’

We first need to know what’s true and what’s false. That means ‘rightly dividing the word of truth’ (2 Timothy 2:15). If you don’t know how to study God’s Word and handle it correctly, you are in no position to determine what’s heresy and what’s not. One concern I have is that the words ‘false teacher,’ ‘false prophet,’ ‘heretic,’ and ‘apostate’ are thrown out against the wrong people and teachings, and not used against the people who are the real ‘heretics’ in the Church. Heretics and apostates should be called out, but we need to be sure that we are right in calling them out. Otherwise, we

may cause deep divisions within churches and families that are unnecessary and hurtful.

As I've written for many years, churches, denominations, Bible colleges and seminaries are filled with false teachers and prophets. If you are a careful student of the Bible, you will recognize them or at least have some questions or concerns about their teachings. They walk among us, often unrecognized as the heretics that they are. As Paul told the elders of the Ephesian church –

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Acts 20:29-30

Some of the worst offenders are pastors and other church and denominational leaders who either allow heresies to abound among them, or even promote ‘doctrines of demons.’ As Paul wrote to Titus, church leaders – “must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9).

Too Close to the Edge

One of the things that parents do is protect their children from harm. I remember when our sons were little and our grandchildren were young, my wife and I would keep them from getting too close to the edge. It might be too close to the edge of a drop-off, too close to the edge of a road, too close to the edge of a fire, too close to the edge of a hot stove, etc. Children tend to wander (or even run) toward dangerous things. Parents have to be vigilant to keep their children from getting too close to the edge of danger to keep them safe.

Pastors and other church leaders 'should do' the same thing. The word 'pastor' comes from the Greek word ποιμήν (*poimén*), which means 'a shepherd.' The job of a shepherd is to protect his flock from danger and keep them fed. The Bible uses the term many times to describe the work of 'overseers' in churches. The Psalmist called God the 'Shepherd of Israel' in Psalm 80:1. The Apostle Peter called Jesus Christ the 'Chief Shepherd' in 1 Peter 5:4. That's insightful given what

Jesus said to Peter in John 21. The Apostle Paul said that Jesus Christ gave ‘pastors and teachers’ to the Church –

... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:12-16

The 'gift' and position of pastoring and teaching is to protect and feed the flock. That means keeping God's children from getting 'too close to the edge' of heretical teachings – “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” If your pastor and teachers are not doing that for you and other members of the church, find out why. Not protecting the people of God's pasture is a serious dereliction of duty.

So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, Will give You thanks forever; We will show forth Your praise to all generations. Psalm 79:13

The theme of our series is “Order in the Court of the King.” God created the heavens and earth in an orderly fashion. Disorder entered through the devil. Order is restored through Christ destroying the works of the devil and re-establishing the order He had created.

A major part of the ‘dis-order’ the Church experiences today is heretical teachings. We need to look carefully at God’s Word to determine which teachings are ‘heresies’ and which teachings are differences of opinions on spiritual matters that do not rise to the level of ‘heresy.’ Fortunately, the Bible already gives us a lot of help in that area.

Heresies Identified

I emphasized in the last part that Christians should be careful and aware about real heresies in churches, denominations, conferences, writings (e.g. books, articles, websites, etc), private schools, Bible colleges, and seminaries. I also wrote –

One concern I have is that the words ‘false teacher,’ ‘false prophet,’ ‘heretic,’ and ‘apostate’ are sometimes thrown out against the wrong people and teachings, and not used against the people who are the real ‘heretics’ in the Church. Heretics and apostates should be called out, but we need to be sure that we are correct. Otherwise, we may cause deep divisions within churches and families that are unnecessary and hurtful.

The key is how to know the difference between false teaching and honest differences of opinion among Christians. That's where careful Bible study is important. The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture and He lives in true disciples of Christ. He will use His Word to guide us in knowing the difference between a heretic and a real brother or sister in Christ.

God's Guide Through the Ages

God began guiding people by telling the first humans not to eat from a particular tree. They did anyway. God then guided their firstborn son not to be angry with his brother and that he should 'rule over' sin. Cain allowed sin to rule over him as he murdered his brother. Centuries later God guided Noah to build an Ark to save humanity and wildlife from a destructive flood. God also guided Noah and his family to worship Him, obey Him, and rule wisely. Noah's family decided not to worship God, not to obey Him, and to rule unwisely.

God was not surprised by their disobedience. Even as God was making a new covenant with Noah and his family, God knew that "the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth." Humans have a 'sin nature' that will cause them trouble throughout their lives. They need God's guidance to make it through life successfully.

God called a man who worshipped pagan gods to go where He sent him and to worship only Him. Abram obeyed and became the father of many nations. God guided his son Isaac and grandson Jacob (Israel). God guided Jacob's twelve sons. God guided the twelve tribes of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, across the Red Sea, across the desert, and into the 'promised land.'

God prepared the tribes of Israel to live among pagan people by guiding them to know the difference between right and wrong, holiness and unholiness, righteousness and unrighteousness. God guided Israel through a series of commandments that addressed everything from who to worship (God) and what not to worship (other gods, idols), to how to offer sacrifices acceptable to God, how to live sexually moral lives, how to know a true prophet from a false prophet, how to deal with illnesses, to how to treat family members and strangers. This guide (the Law of Moses) also taught people that they cannot live up to God's commands and would always fall short of God's glory. That's why God sent His Son to sacrifice Himself on the Cross for people's sin.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. John 3:16-20

God's desire from the beginning of was to guide humans away from the 'practice' of evil. That's why God planted a tree in the Garden of Eden called 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' Good existed because God is good. Evil existed because the devil is evil. God gave humans the choice by planting the tree and guiding them not to eat from it – "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall

surely die” (Genesis 2:17) We know what happened. The devil tempted Eve to eat from the tree and she did, then gave the fruit to Adam who also ate from the tree. The process of ‘death’ began immediately.

When you read the many commandments and warnings in the Bible, understand that God is guiding His people toward a ‘promise’ He made to Abram – “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). That blessings would come through the ‘Seed’ God promised to Eve, Abraham, and all who would follow them. Jesus Christ, God’s Only Son, is that promised Seed.

God’s commandments are a ‘clue’ to modern heresies. Even though Christians have been ‘liberated’ from the law of sin and death in Christ (Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1), we still contend with the ‘flesh’ (Galatians 5:19-21). Paul wrote that “the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Galatians 3:24-25). However, that does not mean we can live any way we want just because of God’s love and grace (Romans 6:1-4). God has called us to deny

ungodliness and worldly lusts, and “live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:12).

Heresies in the Church conflict with the plain commandments of God as described in Scripture. The number of heresies in the Church is so long, that I am able to only share a short list in this post. Every one of these heretical teachings is supported by the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of God’s Word. Keep in mind as you read this short list that I am addressing the ‘teaching’ of heresy in the Church, whether it be individual churches, denominations, conferences, or schools. Many Christians may believe or practice some of these heresies because it’s what they were taught. The true heretics are those who teach heresies. They are the ones who should be banished from teaching in a Christian environment. Those with itching ears who are drawn to the heretical teachings of these heretics must repent of their beliefs and practices. If they don’t, the truth/reality of their ‘faith’ in Christ comes into serious question. God will judge that.

- If someone teaches that it is permissible or even preferable that Christians live in sexual immorality (e.g. homosexuality, adultery, bestiality, pedophilia, incest, multiple sexual partners, sex outside of marriage, etc), that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that it is permissible or even preferable that Christians confer with demonic forces through New Age practices, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that it is permissible or preferable to practice witchcraft, soothsaying, interpreting omens, performing sorcery, conjuring spells, conferring with demons through automatic writing (a type of demonic possession), or calling up the dead to seek guidance about life's choices or the future, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that portions of God's Word are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ did not die on the Cross, that is heretical teaching.

- If someone teaches that someone other than Jesus Christ was crucified on the Cross (a replacement in appearance, someone made to appear as Jesus on the Cross), that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ is a creation of God (Arianism), that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ is not equal with God, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that God operates in different forms or modes at different times—sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Holy Spirit ((Modalism/Oneness Theology), that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ‘separate’ Gods (Tri-Theism), that is heretical teaching.

- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ was only a spiritual apparition, an illusion, and not flesh and blood (Docetism), that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ was born from the union of a human father with a human mother, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ was the illegitimate son of a man and Mary, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ 'became' the Son of God at His baptism or any time after that, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Jesus Christ will not return from Heaven to the earth, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches there is no hell and everlasting punishment for the wicked, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches God will save everyone in the end no matter what they believed or did (universalism), that is heretical teaching.

- If someone teaches that the sin of Adam (original sin) does not affect the nature of his descendants negatively to this day (Pelagianism), that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Christians should return to Torah obedience (obeying the Mosaic Law) and the practice of circumcision for spiritual salvation, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Christians can earn, work for, merit or deserve their salvation, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches they have the same 'creative power' as God and can speak into existence health, wealth, and their own reality by manipulating the 'faith-force', that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that Christians will not rise from the dead, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches that God speaks to them privately, either on earth or in Heaven, and gives them 'secret' knowledge that no one else knows and that people must

come to them for that secret knowledge, that is heretical teaching.

- If someone teaches that an angel spoke to them and gave them a gospel message different than the Gospel Paul preached, that is heretical teaching.
- If someone teaches ‘false words’ and calls them ‘true,’ that is heretical teaching.

As I wrote earlier, we could continue with the massive number of heresies being taught in churches, denominations, conferences, Bible colleges, and seminaries today, but this should give us something to consider as look to God to live Christian lives based on ‘truth’ rather than ‘lies.’

Heretical teachers should be ‘called out’ and ‘put out’ of churches, denominations, conferences, Bible colleges, and seminaries. Why? Because they are ‘heretics’ and there is no place for heretical teaching in Christianity.

If they repent of their heretical teachings, then church or denominational leaders who are ‘sound’ in their knowledge of God’s Word (‘sound doctrine’ – unsullied by heresy) should spend much time with the former heretics to ensure that they are saved, humbled, and truly repentant. Those ‘former heretics’ should publicly confess their sin of heresy to churches, denominations, and schools where they had taught, and not be allowed to teach again until a group of biblically solid elders determines that the individual would teach only the truth of Scripture and not return to their previous heretical teaching or any new heretical teaching. Even after a former heretic is saved and trained, church, denominational, or college/seminary leaders should watch over them carefully. Once someone has been involved in teaching heresies, it’s easier to fall back into previously bad beliefs and practices. Heretical teachers taught ‘doctrines of demons,’ so they need to be careful not to allow demons to control their thinking and teaching again. Jesus words in Matthew 12:43-45 are helpful in understanding how and why this might happen to a former teacher of heresies.

Crazy Runners

As crazy as it may seem, Christians are running to hear the teachings of heretical teachers. Crazy, yes, but not unexpected –

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

1 John 1:1-3

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. Colossians

2:8-10

In Secret and the Dark

According to God's Word, heretics do their best work in secret –

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies ... 2 Peter 2:1a

And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage). Galatians 2:4

Heretics remind me of cockroaches .. turn on the light and they head for cracks in the wall so they won't be caught. I remember walking into a rented house at night and turning on a light in the kitchen. Hundreds of cockroaches were all over the floor and on top of the cabinets. They ran for cracks and holes in the wall as soon as the light came on. It reminded me of the forces of evil who can't stand the light of God's Word. It also reminded me to call for an exterminator.

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. John 1:5

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. John 3:19

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. John 12:46

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. Ephesians 5:8-11

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12

Identifying Heretics

There are many ways to identify a real heretic, but we need to begin with the basics –

- know the Word
- live the Word
- use your spiritual giftedness
- pray for God’s guidance

When I say ‘know the Word’ I mean it in two senses: know the Bible (the Word of God) and know Jesus Christ (the Word of God). Those are usually the first two targets of heretics. They will question God’s Word (“Has God indeed said” – Genesis 3:1) and question the Person of Jesus Christ (“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” – Matthew 16:13). Heretics attack what they view as vulnerabilities in Christian defenses. That’s why the Apostle Paul wrote –

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
Ephesians 6:10-11

The ‘whole armor of God’ begins with girding “your waist with truth.” Some translations use the phrase “the belt of truth.” The first thing ancient Roman soldiers did was put on a belt around their waist. They were already wearing a tunic, so why wear a belt? The belt was the connection to the breastplate and metal apron where soldiers attached their weapons (e.g. sword, dagger, etc).

Paul made it clear that a Christian was to put on the ‘whole armor of God’ for the purpose of standing against the ‘wiles’ (tricks) of the devil. Experienced Roman soldiers knew the tricks of their enemies and used their armor and weapons to fight effectively in the physical realm. Experienced Christians know the tricks of the devil and use their armor and weapons to fight effectively in the spiritual realm.

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Luke 12:35-40

The idea of having your waist ‘girded’ is being ready – for everything from work, to travel, to fighting. Christians must be ready for whatever God asks us to do. That’s the idea of having our waist ‘girded’ and our ‘lamps burning.’ We need to be “like men who wait for their master.” Think about that – waiting for our Master. Whoever the Master wants us to do, we need to be ready to do it. We need to always have on the ‘armor of God’ in order to fight against the devil’s tricks, and whatever else the Master asks us to do.

We know that Jesus came from Heaven to earth to ‘destroy’ the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). It is because of the victory that Jesus won on the Cross and from the tomb that we have the spiritual power to ‘resist’ the devil (1 Peter 5:9). What happens when we ‘resist’ the devil in the power of our victorious Lord?

Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble. ‘Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. James 4:6-7

God gives grace to the humble. 'Therefore submit to God.' As we submit to God in a spirit and attitude of humility we can resist the devil 'and he will flee from you.' That doesn't mean he won't return to fight another day, because he will. The devil is like "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). If you resist him from a position of humility and submission to God he will flee from you. However, the devil is not done with you or your church or your denomination. You may win one battle, but the devil will return and try something else. The devil plays the 'long game,' looking for another opportunity to attack –

Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. Luke 4:13

That's why a Christian must never let down their guard. Always be prepared for battle. Put on the whole armor of God and keep it on. We never know when the devil and his forces of wickedness will attack –

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
Ephesians 6:12-13

Christians should live out the Christian life, not just talk about it. That's another way we can determine the difference between a true believer and a heretic –

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Matthew 7:15-16

Use your spiritual giftedness to help address identify and the problem of heresy in your church or denomination. God gave His people spiritual gifts to build up each other and equip each other for the work God has given them to do. Identifying ‘heretical’ teachers in churches is an important part of that work. Whatever your spiritual gift (e.g. Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12), use it.

Pray for God’s guidance in how to proceed in identifying, disciplining, and dismissing ‘heretical’ teachers in your church. If leaders will not do it, shake the dust off your shoes and leave your church or denomination.

And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Mark 6:11

It’s time for Christians to obey their Lord. We have allowed, even welcomed ‘teaching heretics’ into our churches, denominations and schools long enough. The time to put a stop to this is NOW!

Look for Clues

God has not left His people 'clueless.' He told the children of Israel how to know a true prophet of God from a false prophet from the devil (Deuteronomy 13 and 18). We see true prophets and false prophets throughout the Old Testament. Look at what each group said and did. Notice that the true prophets do their work in the light, while the false prophets do their work in secret and darkness. True prophets tell the truth. False prophets lie. Those are clues for you today.

New Testament clues began with Jesus pulling the veil off the children of Israel, showing them that their spiritual leaders had been lying to them. That's one reason the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to kill Jesus. Look closely at what lies Jesus pointed out and how He did it.

The same is true with the apostles of Christ. They called out the liars and deceivers as they traveled throughout Israel and into the other countries of the Roman Empire preaching the Gospel. Look for what I call 'flag words' or 'clue words.' Those include words like 'lies, lying, deceive, deceiving, deception.' There was a lot of that going on in the 1st century and it has continued all the way into the 21st century.

As I mentioned earlier, the enemy goes after the Word of God, the Character of God, and the Person of God. That's how the serpent tempted Eve. He questioned God's Word, God's character, and God's purpose.

- Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?
- You will not surely die.
- For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

God spoke of the 'resurrection' of the dead in the Old Testament, but the Sadducees (the priestly class) didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead (e.g. Mark 12:18). They called God a liar by that teaching. Daniel clearly said –

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Daniel 12:2

The prophet Isaiah wrote –

Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead. Isaiah 26:19

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me. Psalm 49:15

You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Psalm 71:20

Jesus Christ and His apostles tackled the problem of ‘heretical’ teaching in the 1st century Church head-on. They did not mince words. They did not try to place nice with heretics. Examples –

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! Matthew 7:15-23

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. 2 Peter 2:1-3

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21

Jesus said that ‘heretics’ will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Apostle Peter wrote that the ‘destruction does not slumber.’ The Apostle Paul also wrote that ‘heretics’ would ‘not inherit the kingdom of God.’

I’m not sure how much plainer I can make this. Heretics have no place in God’s Kingdom, so they no place preaching and teaching in churches, at conferences, in Bible colleges and seminaries, and they have no place as leaders in denominations. Also, no Christian should read books or articles, or watch videos made by ‘heretics.’ Many of the more popular authors and speakers in churches today are heretics. They should be banned from pulpits and any position of leadership in Christianity. If a heretic wants to sit in a pew and keep his or mouth shut as they listen to the ‘true Gospel,’ that’s fine. If they want to open their mouth to spew their ‘heresies,’ they need to be dismissed from the church.

Discipline or Dismissal?

We need to use the terms ‘discipline’ and ‘dismissal’ carefully. Heretical teachers should be ‘dismissed’ (removed) from their teaching responsibilities, but that’s not everyone in the Church. Some people are the ‘sheep’ that heretics seek to devour. How should they be treated by church leaders?

God will ‘discipline’ those He loves – His children (e.g. Hebrews 12). An important task of church elders who are ‘sound’ in the faith is to ‘rebuke’ Christians who fall for the lies and perversions of heretics. Paul’s letters to the Corinthian church (1 and 2 Corinthians) and to Titus who had oversight of all the churches on Crete address how to discipline God’s people effectively. We’ll deal more with that in Volume III of this series.

God's 'children' need to be rescued from ungodly teaching – from heretics. That's why Jesus gave the 'gifts' to the Church that He did: apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors and teachers. All of the gifted leaders in churches can and should learn how to defend (apologetics) God's people from the wolves that attempt to devour the flock. The fact that many pastors oppose apologetics has told me that the forces of evil have convinced the 'shepherds' of God's flock to leave God's people to be devoured. Pastors wonder why hundreds of thousands of people are leaving churches to live secular lives, hundreds of thousands more are following the teaching of obvious heretics, and that thousands of churches are closing their doors for good every year. The answer is staring them in the face. They did not do what God told them to do.

Jesus warned the Church centuries ago that He would 'remove' their 'lampstand' if they did not repent, and that's exactly what He's doing. Leaders of God's people did not listen to the warnings of the Lord of the Church. That was extremely unwise on their part. Did they think the King of kings was bluffing? Jesus never lies and He never bluffs. He does what He says He will do. The modern Church is reaping what it has sown.

Whether it is the 'loveless' Church, the 'compromising' Church, the 'corrupt' Church, the 'dead' Church, or the 'lukewarm' Church, the Lord of the Church is fulfilling His promises. He will bring the 'Church' to its collective knees –

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. Revelation 2:5

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Revelation 2:16

Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Revelation 2:22-23

I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Revelation 3:1-3

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Revelation 3:15-19

Unfortunately, even pastors have fallen under the spell of heretics. How do I know? I listen to the authors they quote and see who they invite to speak in their churches and denominations. They are under the sway of heretics spewing 'doctrines of demons.' They need to 'wake up!'

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.' Ephesians 5:3-14

Early Church Fathers and Heresies

The early years of the Christian Church witnessed an onslaught of heretical teachings. We looked at some of them in the last part of this series that came from the New Testament and 1st century AD. The Apostle James was a member of Christ's 'inner circle' of disciples, along with the apostles Peter and John. James was the first apostle to die a martyr's death, possibly about 44 AD based on historical information (Acts 12:2). The apostles Paul and Peter are believed to have been martyred in Rome in the middle part of the 60s AD, based on both New Testament and historical information. The dates and types of death of the other apostles are based on a variety of traditions.

One apostle stands out for the purpose of this story because he lived to the end of the 1st century AD. The Apostle John lived a long and full life, having preached the Gospel in many countries of the world and making many disciples. Many of his disciples are known as Apostolic Fathers. They knew John, heard him preach and teach. They carried on the Gospel ministry having knowledge gained from a member of Christ's inner circle of followers. What they preached and wrote are important for us to know.

[Polycarp of Smyrna](#) studied with the Apostle John and may have known other apostles. [Ignatius of Antioch](#) knew John and the Apostle Peter, and possibly other apostles. [Clement of Rome](#) knew Paul, Peter, and possibly other apostles. [Linus of Rome](#) is believed to have known Paul. [Papias of Hierapolis](#) is believed to have known the Apostle John.

Disciples of the Apostolic Fathers are sometimes known as the Early Church Fathers. They may not have known an apostle personally, but they were discipled by men who did know an apostle (usually John because of how long he lived). Irenaeus of Lyons is believed to have been a disciple of Polycarp, a disciple of John who died at the age of 87. Both John and Polycarp lived long, long lives, which meant that the Church had access to accurate Christian teaching.

Against Heresies

Even as Jesus and His apostles opposed the heretical teachers of their time on earth, the Apostolic and Early Church Fathers did the same. They had to because the attack on the Church became even stronger after the last of the Lord's apostles died. Those men who had studied with the apostles and the men who had studied with the men who had studied with the apostles became very important in defending 'against heresies.'

I have written extensively about these men in a series titled ‘A Reading Plan For Christian Apologists,’ so I will share a brief synopsis of their defense in this series. You can read about them in more depth in these free eBooks –

A Reading Plan For Christian Apologists

– Part 1

A Reading Plan For Christian Apologists

– Part 2

A Reading Plan For Christian Apologists

– Part 3

One of the strongest apologetics (defense) after the death of the Apostle John was written by Irenaeus of Lyons (a city in what is now part of France). Irenaeus, like other Church Fathers, had to deal with many, many heretical teachings during his lifetime.

Irenaeus was born in Smyrna about 120-130 AD, which is why he was able to meet Polycarp. It's believed that the Apostle John ordained Polycarp as Bishop of Smyrna about 70 AD. Polycarp served as Bishop until he suffered a martyr's death about 155 AD. Polycarp was also a friend of Ignatius of Antioch. They both fought many spiritual battles with the heretics of their day, as you can read in the eBooks listed above.

It's believed that Polycarp ordained Irenaeus as a Bishop, which would make an important apostolic connection for him (Apostle John ordained Polycarp who ordained Irenaeus). Irenaeus traveled from Asia Minor to the city of Lyons in about 177 AD to become the Bishop there after Pothinus was martyred. Irenaeus may have done missionary work in the southern part of Gaul prior to that, which is why he may have been known to the Christians of Lyons and a good candidate for the position of Bishop. The fact that Irenaeus had a direct connection to the Apostle John through Polycarp would also have been important to church leaders and members in Lyons.

Though Irenaeus was known as a ‘peacemaker’ within the young Church in areas of non-heretical issues, he would not tolerate true heretics. The discovery of the gnostic library near Naj‘ Hammādī (in Egypt) in the 1940s demonstrated the strength of Irenaeus’ arguments ‘against heresies.’

Irenaeus wrote five books titled ‘Against Heresies.’ Here are several quotes from his writings that will give you some idea of what the early Church faced from heretics. I’ll include a link to each book for your further reading –

Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, “minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith,” and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.] These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by

drawing them away, under a pretence of [superior] knowledge, from Him who rounded and adorned the universe; as if, forsooth, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions respecting the Demiurge; and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth. [Book I](#)

In the first book, which immediately precedes this, exposing “knowledge falsely so called,” I showed thee, my very dear friend, that the whole system devised, in many and opposite ways, by those who are of the school of Valentinus, was false and baseless. I also set forth the tenets of their predecessors, proving that they not only differed among themselves, but had long previously swerved from the truth itself. I further explained, with all diligence, the doctrine as well as practice of Marcus the

magician, since he, too, belongs to these persons; and I carefully noticed the passages which they garble from the Scriptures, with the view of adapting them to their own fictions. Moreover, I minutely narrated the manner in which, by means of numbers, and by the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, they boldly endeavour to establish [what they regard as] truth. I have also related how they think and teach that creation at large was formed after the image of their invisible Pleroma, and what they hold respecting the Demiurge, declaring at the same time the doctrine of Simon Magus of Samaria, their progenitor, and of all those who succeeded him. I mentioned, too, the multitude of those Gnostics who are sprung from him, and noticed the points of difference between them, their several doctrines, and the order of their succession, while I set forth all those heresies which have been originated by them. I showed, moreover, that all these heretics, taking their rise from Simon, have introduced impious and irreligious doctrines into this life; and I explained the nature of their “redemption,” and their method of initiating those who are rendered “perfect,” along with their invocations and their

mysteries. I proved also that there is one God, the Creator, and that He is not the fruit of any defect, nor is there anything either above Him, or after Him.

In the present book, I shall establish those points which fit in with my design, so far as time permits, and overthrow, by means of lengthened treatment under distinct heads, their whole system; for which reason, since it is an exposure and subversion of their opinions, I have so entitled the composition of this work. For it is fitting, by a plain revelation and overthrow of their conjunctions, to put an end to these hidden alliances, and to Bythus himself, and thus to obtain a demonstration that he never existed at any previous time, nor now has any existence. [Book II](#)

Thou hast indeed enjoined upon me, my very dear friend, that I should bring to light the Valentinian doctrines, concealed, as their votaries imagine; that I should exhibit their diversity, and compose a treatise in refutation of them. therefore have undertaken-showing that they spring from Simon, the father of all heretics-to exhibit both their doctrines and successions, and to set forth arguments against them all. Wherefore, since the conviction of these men and their exposure is in many points but one work, I have sent unto thee [certain] books, of which the first comprises the opinions of all these men, and exhibits their customs, and the character of their behaviour. In the second, again, their perverse teachings are cast down and overthrown, and, such as they really are, laid bare and open to view. But in this, the third book I shall adduce proofs from the Scriptures, so that I may come behind in nothing of what thou hast enjoined; yea, that over and above what thou didst reckon upon, thou mayest receive from me the means of combating and vanquishing those who, in whatever manner, are propagating falsehood. For the love of God, being rich and ungrudging, confers upon the suppliant

more than he can ask from it. Call to mind then, the things which I have stated in the two preceding books, and, taking these in connection with them, thou shalt have from me a very copious refutation of all the heretics; and faithfully and strenuously shalt thou resist them in defence of the only true and life-giving faith, which the Church has received from the apostles and imparted to her sons. For the Lord of all gave to His apostles the power of the Gospel, through whom also we have known the truth, that is, the doctrine of the Son of God; to whom also did the Lord declare: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and Him that sent Me." [Book III](#)

*By transmitting to thee, my very dear friend, this fourth book of the work which is [entitled] *The Detection and Refutation of False Knowledge*, I shall, as I have promised, add weight, by means of the words of the Lord, to what I have already advanced; so that thou also, as thou hast requested, mayest obtain from me the means of confuting all the heretics everywhere, and not permit them, beaten back at all points, to launch out*

further into the deep of error, nor to be drowned in the sea of ignorance; but that thou, turning them into the haven of the truth, mayest cause them to attain their salvation.

The man, however, who would undertake their conversion, must possess an accurate knowledge of their systems or schemes of doctrine. For it is impossible for any one to heal the sick, if he has no knowledge of the disease of the patients. This was the reason that my predecessors-much superior men to myself, too-were unable, notwithstanding, to refute the Valentinians satisfactorily, because they were ignorant of these men's system; which I have with all care delivered to thee in the first book in which I have also shown that their doctrine is a recapitulation of all the heretics. For which reason also, in the second, we have had, as in a mirror, a sight of their entire discomfiture. For they who oppose these men (the Valentinians) by the right method, do [thereby] oppose all who are of an evil mind; and they who overthrow them, do in fact overthrow every kind of heresy.

For their system is blasphemous above all [others], since they represent that the Maker and Framer, who is one God, as I have shown, was produced from a defect or apostasy. They utter blasphemy, also, against our Lord, by cutting off and dividing Jesus from Christ, and Christ from the Saviour, and again the Saviour from the Word, and the Word from the Only-begotten. And since they allege that the Creator originated from a defect or apostasy, so have they also taught that Christ and the Holy Spirit were emitted on account of this defect, and that the Saviour was a product of those Aeons who were produced from a defect; so that there is nothing but blasphemy to be found among them. In the preceding book, then, the ideas of the apostles as to all these points have been set forth, [to the effect] that not only did they, “who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word” of truth, hold no such opinions, but that they did also preach to us to shun these doctrines, foreseeing by the Spirit those weak-minded persons who should be led astray.

For as the serpent beguiled Eve, by promising her what he had not himself, so also do these men, by pretending [to possess] superior knowledge, and [to be acquainted with] ineffable mysteries; and, by promising that admittance which they speak of as taking place within the Pleroma, plunge those that believe them into death, rendering them apostates from Him who made them. And at that time, indeed, the apostate angel, having effected the disobedience of mankind by means of the serpent, imagined that he escaped the notice of the Lord; wherefore God assigned him the form and name [of a serpent]. But now, since the last times are [come upon us], evil is spread abroad among men, which not only renders them apostates, but by many machinations does [the devil] raise up blasphemers against the Creator, namely, by means of all the heretics already mentioned. For all these, although they issue forth from diverse regions, and promulgate different [opinions], do nevertheless concur in the same blasphemous design, wounding [men] unto death, by teaching blasphemy against God our Maker and Supporter, and derogating from the salvation of man. Now man is a mixed

organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God, and moulded by His hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, "Let Us make man." This, then, is the aim of him who envies our life, to render men disbelievers in their own salvation, and blasphemous against God the Creator. For whatsoever all the heretics may have advanced with the utmost solemnity, they come to this at last, that they blaspheme the Creator, and disallow the salvation of God's workmanship, which the flesh truly is; on behalf of which I have proved, in a variety of ways, that the Son of God accomplished the whole dispensation [of mercy], and have shown that there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, and those who possess the adoption. [Book IV](#)

In the four preceding books, my very dear friend, which I put forth to thee, all the heretics have been exposed, and their doctrines brought to light, and these men refuted who have devised irreligious opinions. [I have accomplished this by adducing] something from the doctrine peculiar to each of these men, which they have left in their writings, as well as by using arguments of a more general nature, and applicable to them all. Then I have pointed out the truth, and shown the preaching of the Church, which the prophets proclaimed (as I have already demonstrated), but which Christ brought to perfection, and the apostles have handed down, from whom the Church, receiving [these truths], and throughout all the world alone preserving them in their integrity (bene), has transmitted them to her sons. Then also-having disposed of all questions which the heretics propose to us, and having explained the doctrine of the apostles, and clearly set forth many of those things which were said and done by the Lord in parables-I shall endeavour, in this the fifth book of the entire work which treats of the exposure and refutation of knowledge falsely so called, to exhibit proofs from the rest of the Lord's

doctrine and the apostolical epistles: [thus] complying with thy demand, as thou didst request of me (since indeed I have been assigned a place in the ministry of the word); and, labouring by every means in my power to furnish thee with large assistance against the contradictions of the heretics, as also to reclaim the wanderers and convert them to the Church of God, to confirm at the same time the minds of the neophytes, that they may preserve stedfast the faith which they have received, guarded by the Church in its integrity, in order that they be in no way perverted by those who endeavour to teach them false doctrines, and lead them away from the truth. It will be incumbent upon thee, however, and all who may happen to read this writing, to peruse with great attention what I have already said, that thou mayest obtain a knowledge of the subjects against which I am contending. For it is thus that thou wilt both controvert them in a legitimate manner, and wilt be prepared to receive the proofs brought forward against them, casting away their doctrines as filth by means of the celestial faith; but following the only true and stedfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who

did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself. [Book V](#)

Many of the heresies Irenaeus addressed continue to this day. That's one of the reasons his writings and the writings of other Church leaders and apologists of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD are so important for us to read. We learn how Church leaders living close to the time of Christ and His apostles defended the 'faith.' We can learn much from their arguments and personal strength of conviction.

In Summation

Heresy has long been with the Church and that will not change. It is the devil's work that Jesus came to destroy (1 John 3:8), and destroy He will. Don't lose heart, Christian. Don't lose heart, pastor. Don't lose heart, evangelist. Don't lose heart, preacher. Don't lose heart, pastor and teacher. We win because Jesus wins!

Jesus won when He was born to a virgin – God in flesh and blood. Jesus won when He rebuked Satan in the wilderness. Jesus won when He lived a sinless life. Jesus won when He died on the Cross. Jesus won when He rose from the dead. Jesus won when He ascended to His Throne in Heaven. Jesus is winning now as He 'builds His Church.' It may not seem that way at times, but Jesus wins. He is the Victor and He is returning to take His rightful Position of King of kings and Lord of lords over all the earth. As the apostles wrote –

Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust.

Matthew 12:18-21

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the

strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1

Corinthians 15:50-58

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1

John 5:3-5

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the

armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:11-16

Next eBook

Once Christians remove the heretics from pulpits, denominational leadership, and teaching positions in Bible colleges and seminaries, there are still differences among us. How do we solve them? I believe we do that as we come together around God's Word, putting aside our pride and selfish desires. We should desire only two things in this life: to glorify God and finish the work He sent us to do. If we all accept that as our greatest desire, we can solve anything.

We'll look at how to do that in the next part of our series, *Order in the Court of the King!*

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