

Reality Check (Oct. '25)

Because of some things that have come up recently, I'm going to move our next study of 2 Cor. to next week. For tonight, I've tied several principles together to counter a serious problem that is moving against the Church, especially in our country. I'll start with laying a foundation for what I'm concerned about.

After over twenty centuries of a combination of stagnation and spiritual apostasy, the Church has drifted as far away from God's purpose for the Church as revealed to us in the writings of the apostles as Israel had departed from Moses by the time of the coming of the Messiah. In both cases, the true nature of God's original intent was (and is) unrecognizable in the generations that represented the end of each Age.

The Church (the spiritual body of Christ) is meant to be the means by which the indwelling Christ can find visible expression to all creation; whether human or angelic.

(2 Cor. 4:11) . . . in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested through our mortal flesh.

(Col. 1:18) Christ is the head of the Church, which is his body.

(Eph. 3:10) . . . to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

The Church is not an organization people join in order to discover "WWJD" and then do their best to follow His example. The Church is meant to be no more, and no less, that Christ Himself in visible expression.

In eternity past, prior to the creation of humanity, one of God's angelic creatures (Lucifer) challenged the Lord's sovereign rule over His creation. God's response was to sentence Lucifer, and all those who followed him, to hell (Matt. 25:41) " . . . hell was created for the devil and his angels." But the timing of this judgment was not revealed. There are several reasons for the delay, but one of those reasons is that God determined He would not carry out this sentence by Himself. His plan was to include a new race of creatures initially made a little lower than angels to be the instruments of His judgment on the fallen angelic race.

(Heb. 2:5-7) He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

(1 Cor. 6:2-3) Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Do you not know that we shall judge angels?

(Gen. 1:26) Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion . . ."

As this author describes it;

It shows us all the ways and means of God for securing, not only the kind of inhabited world to come upon which He has set His heart, but the government of that world. What is being spoken of is the dominion of the inhabited world to come, and we are being spoken to as related to that in God's purpose. That was God's intention. That was what was in the eternal counsels of God; to have a race of humanity in dominion over the creation, the inhabited world. That was God's original purpose. It will be a good thing to be in that world, but that is not all that is here; it is the government thereof, which is something more, and not everybody who is on it will be in the government of it. It is the people of this particular dispensation who are being called out for the government of the inhabited world to come. It is the Church which is to be the governmental instrument of that world.

For the past 2000 years the Church has been in a time of "testing" to determine who would, and who would not, share in the reign of Christ over His creation. This has been the Age of the development of those within the Church who are to carry out God's judgment against His enemies.

Those who were faithful, would be allowed this honor;

(Rev. 2:26-27) He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—"He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels"—as I also have received from My Father.

(Rev. 3:21) To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

(2 Tim. 2:12) If we endure, we shall reign with Him.

The Christians who become qualified for this are called “overcomers” (lit. “those who conqueror”). In each of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, the overcomers are identified and designated as those who remain faithful in the pursuit of God’s true purpose for the Church.

These next comments are from Watchman Nee; he’s addressing 1 Cor. 9:24 which says; “Know you not that they that run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Even so run; that you may attain.”

Soon after a person is saved, he is set by God on a specific course that lies ahead of him. The entire life of a Christian can be likened to running a race. Yet this is not a racing towards the goal of eternal life. On the contrary, only the person who has eternal life is qualified to run. No, the result of this race is that some of the participants are to be crowned while others will not be. What is meant by the crown? The crown represents the kingdom. It signifies reigning, having dominion and glory. And thus, to obtain the crown means to reign with the Lord Jesus. For a Christian, having eternal life is already a settled matter, but sharing the throne of Christ depends on how that Christian runs.

In the Old Testament, this conquering group of God’s people were called the “remnant”. Some examples would include;

(1 Kings 19:18) (During the time of Elijah)- I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.

(Isa. 1:9) Unless the LORD of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah.

(1 Chron. 12:32) The sons of Issachar had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do . . .

Here are some extended comments on this theme that runs throughout the Bible (Old and New Testament). I'm hoping that reading what this author wrote will help us get a feel for the importance of this;

The idea of a remnant is found throughout the whole Bible, it is not confined to the prophets, though they say much about it. In the story of the flood, Noah and his family constitute a remnant in whom the Divine creative purpose is concentrated and preserved. The blessing promised to Abraham and his seed was limited to one of his sons, Isaac. In the time of Elijah, we read of a righteous remnant of seven thousand which had not bowed the knee to Baal. This idea is found in Isaiah, in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, in Amos, in Micah. Wherever it appears, the remnant is, for that moment, the heirs of the promises and the revelation of God's purpose.

Carry that over here and see it gathered into the overcomers at the end of the Church Age. See on one side what a responsibility rests upon them, what a need the Lord has for them! What a tremendous thing is bound up with them: no less an issue than God's eternal intention concerning His Son, concerning the Church, in the government of this universe.

It seems, perhaps, presumption to think that we here, a little company of insignificant people in this world, might, as a part of others in the larger, be in that line of Divine purpose. It might be, dear friends, I put it this way: it might be that that is why we are here at this very time. If we were to speak of the conflict that has preceded this time, the raging of the forces of evil, and all the determination as are seen to make the continuance of this testimony and ministry possible, we are driven to ask one question: what can it mean?

And the answer must be this: God has not abandoned His intention; He will still seek to have those who know what that is and who come into line with it. And, forgive me but it is just possible that the gathering of just a handful here in these days has no less a significance in it than God's desire to make known to His people that He has not given up His original purpose concerning His Son and the Church.

If I should be right, may the Lord give to us a due sense of the tremendous significance of the place of His overcomers in this universe for all eternal

ages as an instrument to His hand for the expression of His government and the administering of His kingdom.

It is the Lord's thought for as many of the Church universal as will give Him the response that He seeks when He says: "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches".

Satan is, of course, aware of all this, so all of his actions in the course of history have been to either prevent people from becoming believers, or when that fails, he seeks to prevent those who *are* believers from reaching spiritual maturity, preventing them from becoming the overcomers of this Age;

(J.R. Strombeck) God's purpose then in the lives of His children while here on earth is to create, develop, strengthen, and refine that complete dependence on Him which must be found in those who, throughout all eternity, are to be the very closest to Him and share His glory. They shall be with Him where He is (seated in the throne at the right hand of the Father); and this is of utmost importance, the earthly existence of the saved is but a brief period of preparation for an eternal calling. Few there seem to be who realize the glories of this exalted a position which is to be held (by the Lord's overcomers, His remnant) throughout an unending eternity.

(Paul Billheimer) Literally everything Christ is doing in our lives is designed to qualify His Eternal Companion for entering into full partnership with her Lord in the governance of the creation. . . This is the order of beings which is to be the aristocracy of the universe; we are to be princes of the heavenly realm. Christ will administrate and govern His eternal kingdom through His body, the Church. Satan will be displaced (by those under who's feet he is crushed).

If the enemy is allowed to martyr us, he will do so. If not, he will deceive us so that we can't grow and reach maturity. For those who do reach spiritual maturity, they will be in the category of Christians who will execute God's judgement on Satan and his angels. This is one of the reasons the scriptures warn us that our greatest challenge as believers is to avoid deception related to what it means to be "in Christ" and what it means to attain to full spiritual stature.

And Satan's most powerful and effective deception is not opposition; it's imitation. It's not the 'red devil' approach; it's the "Angel of light" approach.

(2 Cor. 11:4; 14-15) If he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.

We are witnessing the rapid, global narrowing down of those remaining faithful to the Lord as contrasted to an equally rapid expansion of those being drawn into a global apostasy.

As Lance Lambert put it;

In multitudes of places, so far as the preaching is concerned, so far as the activities are concerned, no fault can be found, but there is no sense of spiritual vitalizing. There is no impact, no moving of the people to register the testimony of the risen Lord against the forces of evil. The enemy is getting them all quietly, nicely, snugly, into spiritual death.

And combine that with Vance Havner;

The devil is not fighting religion. He's too smart for that. He is producing a counterfeit Christianity, so much like the real one that good Christians are afraid to speak out against it. We are plainly told in the Scriptures that in the last days men will not endure sound doctrine and will . . . heap to themselves teachers to tickle their ears. We live in an epidemic of this itch, and popular preachers have developed ear-tickling into a fine art.

The effect of all this is summed up in Rev. 3:17; “. . . You don't realize that you are blind.”

The reason I'm raising this issue again, is because of how fast it's moving and how many Christians are falling for the enemy's "counterfeit Christianity".

I used to think that if I just taught the principles surrounding this danger, people would see what's happening around them, they would connect the dots with what

they're learning in the Bible, and would be able to distinguish between that which is false and that which is true. But that's not happening.

The latest thing that was a "attention-getter" for me in this was discovering that people who have been involved in our fellowship for several years immediately jumped on the Charlie Kirk, Turning Point USA, train just like a few years before that, when people locked into "The Chosen".

I'm sure that eventually the Turning Point deception will give place to the enemy's next deception, but for now this seems to be a powerful allurement of many believers away from understanding and remaining faithful to God's true purpose for His people in this Age.

Part of the reason people went for these deceptions was because of the power of their presentation and promotion, and part was because like Lambert said, ". . . as the activities are concerned, no fault can be found." In other words, they're using all the right words, talking about loving and worshipping Jesus, etc. But like Paul told us, we're going to be offered a "another (a false) Jesus" and it's imperative that we are able to see that when it happens.

I don't understand why, but people seem to think that Satan is either unwilling or unable to use the truth to deceive. I don't know what they thought it would look like when Satan comes to us as "an Angel of light" surrounded by "ministers of righteousness", as Paul warned in 2 Cor. 11.

I've taught numerous times that we have to go Berean on everything that professes to be a "movement of God". We are living at a time in history when the need for in-depth, personal research is not only rational; it's a survival issue. It doesn't take great spiritual discernment to see through Mormonism, Catholicism, Bethel or Hillsong, but Satan can be way more subtle than that when it comes to the deception of the elect.

All that a person has to do to see clearly why these so-called Jesus movements have nothing to do with the real Christ is to take the time and the effort needed to find out what they actually believe regarding what the Church is, what God's eternal purpose in Christ is, and how to distinguish between what's attractive to the soul versus what is discerned by the Spirit; as our Lord said in Lk. 16:15, "That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

The Church isn't being deceived by darkness; it's being deceived by false light.

Movements like Christian Nationalism, Turning Point, the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) and others are "of this world". But according to John 15:19, we are "*not* of this world". Jesus is asking us to step into His world, but we're asking Him to step into ours.

When Jesus came into the world, He made it clear that He was from another world entirely. He spoke of what His world was like and we were filled with gratitude to think that He has made those of us who belong to Him citizens of heaven; that His world is now our world. When He was on earth, it was obvious to all who knew Him that He was from somewhere else, somewhere where the fallen and destructive principles of this world do not exist.

He said that now we are also from that other world. We are not of this world, just as He was not of this world.

Many of His disciples wanted Him to conquer Rome and free the nation of Israel. But Rome belonged to Caesar, so Jesus simply said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's". They would have loved to see Him become an activist and lead a recall Governor Pilate movement, but this wasn't His world. He was extremely involved in the hurts, pains, and lives of individuals, but He was extremely *uninvolved* in the social, cultural and political winds of His time.

You won't find one passage in the Acts of the Apostles where the Church was involved in trying to change or promote social justice, or transform the government or culture of the Roman Empire. Jesus never took one step to topple Rome. He never started a social activist movement or advocated for a political candidate.

In 1 John 4:17, John says, "As He was, so are we in this world." Are we? Are we really like He was in this world? Jesus never took a stand for or against Rome, He didn't side with Rome and He didn't side with those who were plotting Rome's fall. He wasn't a Socialist, or a Communist, or a Conservative, or a Liberal, or a Democrat, or a Republican.

Throughout the last 2000 years, for those Christians who have understood both the truth and the implications of being "not of this world", they have refused to be naturalized to any part of it. When they were asked who their King was, or their president, or their leader, they said, "Christ", and for that Rome killed them. When

they were asked what their country was, they said, “heaven”, and for that, patriots hated them. And when asked what their nationality was, they said, “Christian”, and for that, nationals despised them. Jesus was hated and despised by those who wanted Him to be something He wasn’t – a citizen of Earth.

(John 15:18) If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of this world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of this world, therefore the world hates you.

How does it feel to be from another world? How does it feel to be a stranger in a strange land? How does it feel to receive the animosity of the citizens of earth because, like our Lord, we won’t join them in their earthly causes? Most of us have no idea what that feels like, because we are trying to have one hand reaching to heaven and the other hand entangled in the affairs of this world.

Dr. Larry Crabb believes we have been led off track by Christian leaders who tell us that our prayers, activism, and united influence will turn our nation around and usher in a godly society. I agree with one of Dr. Crabb’s bottom-line rationales for why so many choose to follow this path—social crusading is easier than finding God. Persevering in our growth in Christ is a much more difficult task than becoming a political activist; just as writing a letter to our congressman is much easier than a disciplined pursuit of God through prayer and the study of His Word.

But the real, bottom-line reason is because, for the most part, contemporary Christians have no idea what the Church really is as a completely new creation of God; so, they also have no why we are here.

(2 Cor. 5:17) If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

(Col. 3:1-2) Since you have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on the things of earth.

This world, including America, is spiraling out of control and all of the Christian Nationalism efforts are not going to put it back together again. Our modern-day reformers can lobby as hard as they want, the only thing they will ultimately accomplish is alienating those for whom Christ died and stirring up the anger of the

“heathen” upon whom they have sought to enforce a righteousness which only Spirit-indwelt people could ever achieve in the first place.

If the world hates us because we present Christ to them, that’s to be expected. But if they hate us because we’re publicly announcing how much we hate what *they* are, how can we expect to reach them with the gospel of Christ’s love?

The time in our history when the Church was most effective in this world was when she was most detached from it. The power of the Church is not in her political insight, her social agendas, or her economic wealth. The power of the Church is her Lord! When the saints pursue Him in prayer and study, instead of pursuing social reform, then He responds and the gates of hell are stormed. The following comments by Sparks clearly define the distinctiveness of this Age;

There was marked out by God a period, a dispensation, in this world’s history when God would not be doing something as belonging to this present world or related to this present earth. Up till that time it was otherwise. He was dealing with the nations in relation to a nation among them (Israel). That nation was His chief concern, and everything was of an earthly order, finding God intervening swiftly and along temporal lines in the affairs of that nation. Then a future time will come when He will have something on the earth again- a kingdom of this world. But between these two economies there is this special one in which God’s object is to take out of the nations a people for His Name, a people of a heavenly birth, a heavenly life, a heavenly sustenance, a heavenly vocation, a heavenly warfare, and a heavenly consummation. Thus, in this present age, God is not occupied with this earth and the setting up of something here. The deepest reality of the Church is that it is not of this world or fixed to this earth. Now the whole tendency of man is to set up and have something here; to see, handle, project, run, establish, organize, constitute, and build, as on this earth. This has been the one most positive cause of loss of spiritual power and effectiveness.” (T. Austin Sparks)

The work of the spirit of Antichrist is the psychological conditioning of the church in the final generation to replace the spiritual with the sensual; to get us to believe that that which is outwardly impressive and massively popular is true and of

eternal value. So, we end up disregarding the in-depth spiritual instruction of God's Word and we lose the protection we desperately need.

We are being taught to walk by sight, not by faith; to base reality on that which our intellect and reason determine to be true, rather than seeking to become spiritually discerning people. The main characteristic of the overcoming remnant in any dispensation is spiritual discernment, as we saw earlier in 1 Chron. 12:32 with the "sons of Issachar". Their insight regarding their time in history, coupled with a clear understanding of God's purpose for His people, placed them in a position where they knew exactly what Israel should do. Those who share this spiritual discernment and insight in our Age are the ones who understand the Lord's movements in our generation and know the specifics of what God's people should do.

The 'co-called' (self-identified) remnant podcasters of *our* time do not have that characteristic. They believe they are the remnant, but what they are doing and teaching is nothing more than what anyone could do if they put some effort into a study of Biblical eschatology. They are only pointing out what's obvious to anyone paying attention. Once you get beyond the surface, it's obvious that they *don't* know what the church is, they *don't* have a full and accurate systematic theology (they don't even appear to believe that that is important) and they *can't* identify the Lord's work in the present tense because they don't know what God's ultimate purpose is or how He intends to complete it.

Ironically, it almost seems like those who are the most deceived are the one's proclaiming the loudest for us to be on our guard against deception.

The Bible told us that this is where we would be at this time in history, and we're there. We've "departed from the Truth, giving head to deceiving spirits" (1 Tim. 4:1).

Salt and light do *not* refer to pursuing social justice in a world God has condemned; these terms refer to the spiritual impact the Church is to have on the forces aligned with the "god of this world", not the forces of immorality in liberalism or "the swamp", or whatever. Spiritual impact is the result of battling "principalities and powers . . . the rulers of darkness", not "wrestling against flesh and blood".

Movements like Turning Point and the New Apostolic Reformation are the exact opposite of the purpose of the Church. They are a Satanic deception designed to pull the Church down to earth to fight for something God has no intention of resolving prior to the return of His Son. America is under judgment; and in spite of what Trump says, it is *not* entering a “Golden Age” of peace and prosperity. These movements are attempts by Satan to misrepresent the true calling of the Church, turn her away from the purpose of God and deceive her into publicly standing against the very people we are here to “seek and save” with the gospel.

Here is one of the clearest passages in the scripture on what we are intended to accomplish;

(Acts 26:17-18) I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

That has absolutely nothing to do with marching on the capital of a nation which, itself, is within the domain of Satan’s kingdom on earth.

(John 18:36) My kingdom is *not* of this world; if it were, My servants would fight . . . but My kingdom is *not* of this realm.

Our kingdom in Christ is not of this world. Our true identity is alien to this world and our purpose is spiritual not cultural or political.

The entire Bible is the progressive revealing of the battle over who is going to rule the universe; it will either be Lucifer and his angels, or it will be the Lord reigning through the instrumentality of the overcomers within the new creation humanity in Christ – the Church of the First Born.

To be a part of that reigning company of believers is what Paul said is “the on-high calling” that we have;

(Phil 3:12-15) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but *one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward

call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us, as many as are mature (in our understanding). . . walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

The “upward call” of God in Christ is defined in passages like Revelation 3:21 as “sharing the Throne of the Lord”; to reign with Him over His creation for all eternity. That has been God’s plan from the beginning of time, and it explains all of His ways with us in this life; all that He takes us through and teaches us is intended to move us to that goal. We can grieve or quench His work in us, but some will go on with Him, as Paul did, and make this the “one thing” they pursue above all others. They commit *themselves* to what God has committed *Himself* to.

When this 7000-year history of humanity has run its course, the Book of Revelation makes it clear that it will be a Lamb on the Throne of creation, not a dragon- Satan, along with all who have opposed the rule of Christ, will be banished from His Kingdom forever.

The Bride of the Lamb, the New Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven and the infinite ages of the eternal future will begin.

God’s plan and purpose for us is as far above picketing and protesting the evils of this nation as heaven is above the earth. Don’t let the enemy’s deceptions pull you down into the crusades of this condemned world and cloud your heart and mind from the realities and wonder of our “on-high calling” in Christ – and our *true* citizenship in heaven.

The reason I did this study was to take us into the eternal counsels of the Godhead and see what He’s shown us in His Word about who we are and why we are here. God’s purpose is both singular and simple - He’s calling out from the nations a people for His Name who will become members of His family and for those willing, He’s moving them to maturity; and He’s allowing us to decide whether we will stand with Him in this so that we can become members of a remnant within that family who will share His throne in the governance of His creation.

Every other purpose that exists is man-made and is designed by the enemy to pull us away from what the Lord wants for us. No matter how Christian or patriotic it sounds, any other purpose is not God’s purpose.

When Israel was freed from Egypt, they moved into the Wilderness and were told that God's intention for them was to go to Canaan. The Jordan River separated the Wilderness from Canaan.

Reuban and Gad set up camp on the East side of the Jordan rather than cross over to Canaan on the West side. The overwhelming majority of Israel refused to stay with God's purpose and move into Canaan. Only Joshua, Caleb and the next generation were committed to what the Lord intended for all of Israel.

That's what happened in relation to God's people during the Age of Israel.

For the Age of the Church, the Wilderness is our testing and training in preparation for moving into spiritual maturity and ultimately sharing the Throne of Christ. The majority of Christians have set up camp on the wrong side of the Jordan; only a remnant of overcomers are staying the course. Their commitment is to the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus", as Paul wrote in Phil. 3. And they will not let anything stand in the way of their apprehending that for which Christ has apprehended us.

As we've seen, Paul taught this in nearly every epistle he wrote and the Lord emphasized it in all seven letters to the churches in Rev. 2 & 3 as the ultimate goal of every Christian, every Church, spanning the past 2000 years.

As we saw when we studied those letters in Revelation, and when we consider the uniqueness of each church, everything that's commended, everything that's warned about and how different they all are; it always comes down to one thing only for either recovery of what's been lost or advancement to the goal. We know this because the same phrase is given to each church at the end of the letter, regardless of the unique situation of that church, and that one phrase is "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying . . . " So again, the issue for all of us is whether or not there is full receptivity to what the Lord wants to tell us concerning His purpose for us in Christ.

Tonight has been a brief appeal to be very careful about what is being presented to the Church these days. Don't assume that because it looks good and sounds good and everyone seems excited about it, that it *is* good.

Take some time in prayer and research to find out all you can before you form an opinion. If the Bereans did that with Paul (as we're told in Acts 17:11), and were

commended for it, how much more should we be doing it in this time of intensified deception we are living in?

To close our study, please seriously consider this author's comments on the purpose God has had for us since before creation;

The great purpose of which we have been called. The great ultimate goal of our salvation in the purpose of God. Nothing other than union with Christ in his throne, in the government of this universe. Perhaps your hearts have trembled in the presence of the tremendous purpose we have in Christ.

As I've been saying, Satan will do anything he can to hide this or to replace it with an alternative purpose. Our eternal destiny in relation to the throne of God's Son depends on us knowing and holding to the Truth.

Are we going to stand with the Lord for the accomplishment of His purpose, or are we going to set up camp on the wrong side of the Jordan because that's what everyone else seems to be doing?

(Mark 4:24-25) Then he said to them, "Be diligent to understand the meaning behind everything you hear, for as you do, more understanding will be given to you. And according to your longing to understand, much more will be added to you. For those who listen with open hearts will receive more revelation. But those who don't listen with open hearts will lose what little they think they have."