



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: FEBRUARY 2023 by Lee Shipp

THE PERILS OF THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them (John 8:2).

Jesus sat and talked to the crowds! Wow. Jesus would be hard-pressed to make it in today's high-powered show of preachers. He sat and talked! No running, no jumping, no distractions. Why? Because He had something to say, He had something to give. His words were full of the Spirit and struck the heart of all who heard Him. Preachers today love to talk. Their preachings are performances. They know how to move the people but don't have anything to say. Compare the typical message proclaimed by the famed preachers of today with the latest motivational speaker, and you would find they basically say the same thing. The man who is brought in to stir up the sales team is not much different from the modern preacher. Preachers disguise their lack of intimacy with Jesus and unfamiliarity with His Word by smoke and mirrors - from their flesh, they rile up the listeners' flesh with great drama. Jesus sat and talked to the crowds; now there's a novelty!

I'm so bored with the religious system. I'm so bored with the "entertainer" preachers, the show, the game. I'm so bored with hearing the same messages over and over again saying, "This is your year, this is your breakthrough, this is your season." I want people to come to Church looking for Jesus; when they get there, I want Jesus to be center stage. I long for the day when people come to our churches craving the presence of the Lord and not the celebrity preacher. I grieve the place Jesus has been given in this drama that titles His name but promotes the people. This is a church age we were warned about. A Laodicean age where we have so many goods that we don't need Jesus. Well, beloved, I simply say, "Jesus is it! Period." There is nothing else. There is no one else. No one else is great - only Jesus! There is not enough time to talk about anyone else. There is no other gospel to herald but His!

The danger from the contemporary preacher is the mixture of kingdom dominion theology and amillennialism into conservative truths. These former theologies insist upon global dominion by the Church for Jesus. It demands that believers should walk in victory over hell in such a way that they never have a problem: no trials, no setbacks, no weaknesses, no brokenness, and no suffering. They feel the humble, broken, suffering believer is the reason Jesus has not returned and until believers realize "who WE are," we will continue to delay Jesus' return.

Many solid believers who once considered these claims to be heretical have recently incorporated these theologies into their messages. The spirit of antichrist has crept in. This is probably because the American preacher wants to preserve his way of life; therefore, he must preach and stir the people to believe they can take over the world for Christ. They can abolish the corruption of modern government despite the scriptures warning of perilous days to come. Jesus even warned that men will wax worse and the love of many would grow cold.

THE FORM OF GODLINESS

Paul foresaw the Church being overrun with godly performances but barren of actual power (2 Timothy 3). Sadly, these religious zealots do not know they are without power; they do not know that the show, the riches, and the performances have pushed Jesus out. "We are rich and increased with goods," they say. "We have need of nothing" they say; all the while, Jesus is knocking on the door to be invited back in. They gauge their power based on their ability to prevail over the people, not their ability to prevail with God, as when Jacob became Israel. The modern preacher would have us believe that the only thing America needs is a godly president, then the day will be saved. Please

understand I do believe in Christians running for office and making a positive difference in the world. I believe that the most valuable citizen of any country or local municipality is the Church of Jesus Christ. I also believe in the preachers of truth who are excited and preach with vigor: running, shouting, jumping, and all sorts of other things. However, when that powerful Church came out of the upper room and turned the world upside down, they did not convert Rome. Though multitudes would take refuge in the Kingdom of God, Rome would bring the hammer down on the Church with horrific persecution. Why do we think we shall escape persecution for the gospel's sake? This mixture of "Kingdom Now" theology has been added, and all stands to be lost. The reason is that many who put their faith in this system will eventually realize they have been "sold a bill of goods" that have no roots in God's Word or gospel. The preachers of this mixture dare to be confronted. They dare to be corrected. They refuse to even listen to a biblical question. They have dug their heels in and are not budging. They demand, "We are the ones. This is our day. We shall take over. We are the victors;" however, they have no concept of what the victory of Jesus even entails or how it occurs. They deny brokenness, which is the only way to power. They deny weakness which is how God's grace rests upon us (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul gloried in his infirmity. Still, these modern preachers believe that if you have infirmity, you lack the understanding of who you are in Christ.

What is the motive for all this? It is Satan's new apple. Eat this "Christ," and "YOU" will become They are declaring things they are willingly ignorant of. They get words, but they have not studied to show themselves approved. These modern preachers would renounce Paul because he confesses weakness and humility and is the worst of sinners; this humility is foreign to them. They would insinuate that Paul does not know who he is in Christ. He speaks too much about suffering and brokenness. Where are his victory and power? Recently, I was confronted by one of these preachers. They rebuked me because our Church had some suffering people in it. Some of our people battled sickness. Those condemning me were blind to the grace of God in our lives, blind to the presence of God among us, the testimonies of miracles, the joy of God's presence, and the powerful salvation of people coming into the Kingdom of God. They could not even see they were suffering and sick, had been married multiple times, and watched their loved ones die from sicknesses. Here are the words of Paul from 2 Corinthians 11. Paul tells the Corinthians it is a shame that he must defend his apostleship in Christ. But his life was under attack by false accusers, and Paul decided to act. He listed his credentials. Understand, these credentials are despised by this contemporary preaching machine today. Paul would explain: you Corinthians love the men who exalt themselves over you, who control and put you under their spell. Furthermore, he too could boast of his lineage: being a Hebrew, and a minister of Christ. But instead of boasting about what exalts him, he instead gives his testimony: I am exhausted from the work, beaten beyond measure, frequently in prison, dying constantly. I have been beaten with rods, once stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck. For a whole day and night, I floated in the ocean. I am frequently on the go, putting me in constant danger from robbers, my countrymen, and the heathens. I face perils in the city, wilderness, sea, and among false brothers. Shall I go on? Okay. I am weary and suffer much pain. I sleep very little. I am often hungry and thirsty. I suffer from exposure to nature, being both cold and naked. Wait, that's not all: every day, I am overwhelmed with the care of the churches. The modern preacher thinks, "Poor Paul; he just doesn't have much faith." Wait! Paul is not finished with his credentials: I am weak. I am offended!

Now, it is Paul's turn to tell you a thing or two about this life of Christ. Here it is, and I quote, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities" (2 Corinthians 11:30). Wow, you do not hear preaching like this today! Paul is not finished. He went on to say that God allowed a demon to hinder him! Oh my, preach that today! Paul said God explained it was to keep him humble. Again, the contemporary preacher would insist, "If Paul only knew who he was in Christ, he could have enjoyed such a greater victory."

Will the contemporary preacher teach Paul the right way to believe? I imagine the contemporary preacher delivering his message of power and victory to Paul. Let them explain to Paul how great we are. Let them explain to Paul that we cannot confess weakness or defeat. We cannot suffer brokenness, for we are the head and not the tail; we hold the keys to the Kingdom; we are the power of God on earth. I could see them instructing Paul that his churches suffered such division, satanic attack, sickness, and suffering due to Paul's ignorance to preach who we are in Christ.

PAUL GLORIED IN SUFFERING

Paul has an answer for you! Here it is, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. "... Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am

I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing" (2 Corinthians 12:9-11).

There it is; Paul says he is nothing. But the modern preacher, with his mixture of Kingdom Dominion theology, would rebuke Paul and say, "How can you say you are nothing? Do you not know who you are in Christ?" Furthermore, they cannot understand how anyone in Christ could celebrate infirmities, reproaches, lack, persecution, distress, and weaknesses, for they cannot comprehend how the grace of God works in a broken man. Paul called this glorying! Amazing! Most today would call it defeatism. How could Paul take pleasure in these things? Because of the immeasurable grace of God that would rest upon him, giving him supernatural power and victory. Paul had to comfort his friend Timothy. In his second letter, Paul said, "*Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).* Paul is exhorting ministers to take part in the afflictions; you don't hear preaching like this today. Paul testified that he unashamedly suffered because he was a preacher! His confidence was the world to come, not his acceptance in this world, "*For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).* Paul sought to encourage Timothy to remain strong, not to be weakened by Paul's afflictions; therefore, Paul assured Timothy of his calling by listing his credentials as God's minister. Paul explained to Timothy that Timothy should be joined to Paul because he knew his doctrine, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, and self-control. He unashamedly spoke of his persecution and afflictions he endured for the gospel: but the Lord delivered him from them all. He expressed to Timothy, "*... all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:12-13)* No doubt Timothy struggled with Paul's persecution. Obviously, Timothy was enticed to forsake Paul and join the ranks of those preachers who seemed to find the easy way of serving the gospel. Paul addressed these in 1 Corinthians 4. He said that God had exhibited the apostles as last and not first: like men sentenced to death, a spectacle to the world, to angels, and men. But other preachers, who thought they knew better than Paul, bragged about how wise they were in Christ. Paul said, "*We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise ... We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.*" This sounds so familiar today. What an embarrassment Paul must have been to so many in his day; no wonder Timothy suffered because of Paul's sufferings. Just look at Paul's life in Christ: "*we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless.*" Hold on to your seats because Paul is about to make an incredible appeal, "*I urge you, then, be imitators of me" (1 Corinthians 4:16).* I assure you; this modern religious system will not follow Paul! Today's modern orthodoxy runs counter to the scriptures and the testimony of Paul. Instead of suffering, brokenness, and affliction, they exhort the people much like Satan did Eve. They have a zeal but without knowledge. It is all so dangerous ... leading to such discouragement. So consumed with their identity in Christ that they don't need Christ. They are so focused on what "I Am" that they don't need the "I Am." So much talk of "You" that they don't need "Him." So much "anointing" that they have no intimacy with the Holy Ghost. So much mixture of Kingdom Now because they don't understand the "Kingdom" now. They are like the disciples when they cried to Jesus, "*Why couldn't we cast out the devil?" (Matthew 17:19).* What made the disciples think they could cast out a devil apart from Jesus anyway? The same spirit invading the Church today believes we can do all things because of who WE ARE in Christ, but without Christ. This current charade has made Jesus the means to our greatness, just like Satan's apple to Eve. Jesus is not my means to greatness; He is my greatness. It is not what I am, but Christ is the hope of glory in me. I must decrease, and He must increase.

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

Beloved, Jesus told us of the imposters coming who claim to be the way. Paul warned of the doctrines of devils and seducing spirits coming in the last days. Jude called us to contend for the faith that was once delivered. Did Jesus, Paul, and Jude get it wrong? Do we have nothing to worry about regarding false teachers? Was Jesus being sarcastic when He asked if He would find faith on the earth when He returns? If Jesus, Paul, and Jude were serious, the question must be asked, "Where are false witnesses today? Are we to live thinking they are not around? Is it possible they are gaining momentum as you read this article? They rush into the world with half-truths of Kingdom theology, only to get pulverized by the world system time and again because they don't understand the Kingdom of God, the coming of Christ, and victory through weakness and suffering. To understand the life of Christ, Christ must be your life. We can do nothing without Jesus, but this requires too much quiet time and intimacy of prayer. It simply requires too much time away from the stage for today's preacher. Multitudes of true believers stand to suffer great trials to their faith

as the preachers mix truths with lies. The people will see these doctrines do not fit reality. These errors could cause the believer to throw their confidence away. Constantly reminded of who they are in Christ but unaware of Christ, they will be swallowed up with confusing experiences; persecution will weaken their faith. They will not understand why sickness is not healed. They will even blame God for the triumph of evil and wicked men.

WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS

We are victorious. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. God has anointed us with power and given us the authority to go into the world to make Him known. We have a treasure inside these earthen vessels to the end that the power may be of God, not us (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Paul said he was troubled on every side, but he was not distressed. He was perplexed but not in despair. He was persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). How? Why? I get it; I really do. How can a people, in whom the power of God dwells, ever be perplexed, troubled, persecuted, and cast down? How can there be weakness? How can believers with the power of the Holy Spirit experience confusion? How can that be? I understand the reasoning, but reasoning will never answer these questions; only faith can answer the chaos of life. What is the victory? How is this power demonstrated? Why did Paul rejoice in his afflictions? The answer is this: the way to victory is the way of brokenness. If the power of God, and the life of God, is to be manifest through the believer, then the believer has to be broken. For the life of Christ within us to come forth from us, we must be handed over to death. This is not for our defeat, but victory. This is the victory, the life of Jesus in us will defeat death. We must bear in our bodies the dying of Jesus so the life of Jesus can be seen in us. We are actually handed over to death for Jesus' sake (2 Corinthians 4:10). Why? So the life of Jesus can be manifest in our mortal bodies. Paul was not depressed by this calling of God. He rejoiced in his infirmity, for the grace and power of God rested upon him. Paul was satisfied with knowing that his suffering for Christ was supplying grace to the people and glory to God. It was a cause so noble he could not faint; it was too glorious (2 Corinthians 4:18). God renewed him every day by assuring Paul that his suffering was only for a brief moment; however, the glory would be far exceeding and weighty. This modern spirit of preaching is pointing the believer to anything but this. What is the dangerous result? Our generation will not see Christ manifest through His Church. If the life of Christ is manifest by the believer's suffering, and the believer is taught not to suffer, then the generation will not see the life of Christ. If death cannot work in us, then how will the life of Christ work in you? (2 Corinthians 4:12). Sadly, you cannot preach this in most circles today. The people cannot handle it. They don't want that kind of Christianity. Modern preachers know this; therefore, they give the people what they want. They tell them about how great they are. They tell them all the good they are going to walk into. Paul said these preachers would come. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4 that it is in death that Christ is revealed. If Christ is not revealed, the light goes out in the world. The contemporary preacher does not realize what he is producing when He elevates the people and diminishes Jesus, but Satan does. There is no death in modern evangelism. No brokenness. But still, the truth remains, victory always comes from the cross life.

The Father is not looking for preachers, teachers, evangelists, musicians, or praise teams. The Father is looking for worshippers; worshippers He can preach through, sing through, and teach through. Many have time to sing to God, but few are worshipping God.

Worshipping God is the surrender of our lives to drink God's cup for us. Jesus in the garden, faced with the bitter cup, drank it all for the Father. His suffering and death would bring an explosion of life and freedom into the world. Hell would be broken.

The Holy Ghost comes upon worshippers; He overshadows them and puts His life in them. Then He breaks them with such grace that the life of Jesus comes out into the world. The life of Jesus will come forth from you, affecting the nations. Life defeats death, not theologies and doctrines, but Jesus, His life, His personality, will dominate what is destroying this present world. The answer to everything in your life, your family, your society, and your world is that you could rejoice in suffering and be handed over to death, so the life of Christ can pour out of you. The answer to this world is Who lives inside you, not what you claim you are, not your confession, but your Christ!