

GEMS OF TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITOR

As we begin another New Year as time is counted in this present earth plane our thoughts may turn to reviewing our life, our past, and the future. Most of the time eternity is thought of as being a realm we enter upon the change called death but the truth is that *eternity is now*. We live in the *eternal now*. Everyday presents endless possibilities of growth and understanding the deeper meanings of life. Sometimes growth becomes very

uncomfortable as we realize that some of our old ways of thinking and living no longer are useful and changes need to be made for our own good and that of others who are in our life. The Scriptures use such phrases as “Behold, now is the accepted time,” “Behold, I make all things new,” “I will create a new Heavens a New Earth,” and “henceforth we should walk in newness of life.” The implications of these words can be totally transformative as we surrender to the process of growth and experience newness of life. The alternative is stagnation, disappointment, and endless suffering. Everyday we must decide whether we want to experience Heaven or hell. The common thread in this issue of **GEMS OF TRUTH** is the possibility of newness of life.

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NO END TO HIS KINGDOM

Luke 1:33 Common English Bible (CEB)

33 “He will rule over Jacob’s house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom.”

Astronomers today are telling us that the physical universe is continually expanding and that the rate of expansion is increasing exponentially. As mind boggling as this is, anything in the

physical universe can, at best, only be a sign pointing beyond itself to the reality of the spiritual universe which is not cognized with the five physical senses but can only be discerned with spiritual sense. This is the Kingdom spoken of by the angel to Mary in announcing the birth of Jesus.



The spiritual universe, the Kingdom of God, has no beginning or end and consists of God’s creation which is not physical but *wholly* spiritual. This Kingdom is a continual outflowing of God’s love and each of us is a part of that Kingdom, coexistent with the Father, never to be separated from Him, although most of humanity remains in ignorance of this and so suffers accordingly, groping around in darkness and ever looking for fulfillment in something in the realm of matter. The increasing expansion of the physical universe, as astronomers think they are seeing it, is nothing in comparison to the ever expanding universe of God’s perfect ideas which are ever blessing and uplifting all of us. Jesus announced that this Kingdom is *within* and should not be sought “lo here and lo there,” i.e., outside of Spirit in the material. Actually the spiritual universe of God’s creation is both *within* and *all around us* (see Luke 17:20-21, Amplified). The presence of the Kingdom of God around us is to be found in looking past the evidence of our five physical senses and finding the spiritual realities behind the world of form and matter. Real pleasure is to be found *only* in God. As our spiritual discernment grows we shall see the Kingdom more fully everyday as we learn to look past outward form. We are all privileged to be a part of God’s ever expanding spiritual universe and the peace, joy, and love that can be known as this is experienced is beyond all thoughts and words.

LETTER AND SPIRIT



2 Corinthians 3:6 New King James Version (NKJV)

6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Throughout human history "the letter [literal meaning]" of Scripture has been used by people as a weapon against others. We

forget that under the New Covenant the law [God's will] is no longer mediated to us on tables of stone but is written on the heart (see Hebrews 8:10-13). This was clearly promised in the Old Testament (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). As we use Scripture we must be guided by the Holy Spirit [the Presence of God within] or we will inevitably stray into the area of legalism and end up killing ourselves and others. We need to "put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11) and move on to maturity in God's love.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

John 10:27 New King James Version (NKJV)

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Today with the Internet we have literally *thousands* of sites on the topics of spirituality, religion, and self-help. There are many voices crying out for attention. Below are some of

my thoughts about hearing the Voice of the Good Shepherd which many times is very different from the voices we hear all around us.



"My sheep [those who want to know God more than anything else] hear My voice [they hear the voice of God in contrast to all of the confusing human opinions], and I know them [God reads the hearts and He knows who are truly seeking for something higher

and better] and they follow Me [those who truly hear the voice of God will follow Him and not spend their time on those things which end in disappointment and suffering.]"



CAST NOT YOUR PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

**Matthew 7:6 New King James
Version (NKJV)**

6 “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.”

I believe this verse has an important spiritual application. It would make no sense to apply it literally and the same principle could be applied to many other difficult to understand sayings of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount in particular has numerous difficult to understand sayings and often several spiritual applications can be made of them, depending upon our circumstances.

Often in our zeal to share something precious from our spiritual journey we may indeed try to “give what is holy to the dogs” or cast our pearls of truth “before swine.” “Dogs” and “swine” here are examples of how Jesus used metaphor and sometimes hyperbole to make an important point. Many people live on a very low level of consciousness and if we try to share the things of God with them it may result in doing more harm than good and in some cases they may turn against us and seek to do us harm. We need to always use tact and to *live* in the center of God’s love with a willingness to see even those who look the most hopeless in their true being which is in God’s image and likeness. This will connect to that spark of good in a way to bring the most good possible in that situation. Many have been turned away from Christianity by zealous people preaching in their face. There simply is no need for this.

TREASURE IN CLAY POTS

2 Corinthians 4:7 Common English Bible (CEB)

7 But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us.



I have reflected on this verse many times. God's treasures are ministered in this earth through "clay pots" which are subject to breakage and are defective. Major defects are recorded in the Bible of people whom God used mightily. Some of the defects were serious enough that membership in some of our churches today would have been denied to these folks. At one point David was guilty of both adultery and murder. I've read many biographies over the years of people who made great contributions in such fields as science, government, inventions, literature, and spiritual leadership. All of them without exception had grave faults and yet they did a great deal of good for humanity. We could apply this to organizations such as churches. All of them have made positive contributions and all of them have a negative aspect as well. Since they are run by defective "clay pots" this shouldn't be a terrible shock.

There are two primary lessons that I learn from thinking about this:

(1) I choose not to allow myself to dwell too much on the faults and failures of either individuals or organizations. God will take care of whatever corrections need to be done in His own time and way and I needn't spend much time fussing about them or taking matters into my own hands and neither do I have to live in isolation from my fellow men and their organizations because they are less than perfect. I can do more good by associating with people than by withdrawing from them.

(2) I can be encouraged personally when I consider my own defects and how God uses me in spite of them.



A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY

Luke 13:11-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

11 And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise *herself* up. 12 But when Jesus saw her, He called *her* to *Him* and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” 13 And He laid *His* hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

Some folks apply such phrases as "a spirit of infirmity" in a very literal way using it in the sense of an actual demon inhabiting a human body. I would like to suggest that in the Bible the phrase "spirit of" is *not* referring to a being of some kind but rather to a *quality or state of consciousness* either positive or negative. Below are just a few of the verses I found in doing an electronic concordance search with the words "spirit of" in quotes. Most of the citations that I found were referring to "the Spirit of the Lord" but the phrase is used in many other ways and none refer to a being unless a person chooses to interpret them in a very literalistic way. Note some of the ways this phrase "spirit of" is used throughout scripture. It wouldn't make sense to interpret the expression "spirit of" as meaning an actual entity so why should we interpret it differently in this story or similar ones in the Bible?

Exodus 28:3; Deuteronomy 34:9 a spirit of wisdom

Numbers 5:14; 5:30 a spirit of jealousy

2 Kings 2:15 the spirit of Elijah

Job 20:3 the spirit of understanding

Psalms 76:12 the spirit of princes

Ecclesiastes 3:21 the spirit of man; the spirit of the beast

Isaiah 4:4 the spirit of judgment; the spirit of burning

Isaiah 29:10 the spirit of deep sleep

Isaiah 57:15 the spirit of the humble

Isaiah 61:3 the spirit of heaviness

Daniel 5:11 the spirit of the holy gods

Zechariah 12:10 the spirit of grace and of supplications

Luke 4:33 a spirit of an unclean devil

Acts 16:16 a spirit of divination

2 Corinthians 4:13 the spirit of faith

Ephesians 1:17 the spirit of wisdom and revelation

2 Timothy 1:7 the spirit of fear in contrast with the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind

[The above "spirit of" citations are all from the KJV.]

The woman in the story quoted above had been afflicted with a false belief, "a spirit of infirmity," for many years and as a result was bent over, unable to raise herself up. Her false belief about herself brought much suffering. Jesus didn't preach to her or lay any guilt trips on her. He did not see her according to the human picture but He saw her true self as God's perfect child and He rebuked or broke through "the spirit of infirmity," the false belief, that was holding her in bondage and healing was the result.

In the Bible many times "God's hand" is used as a metaphor referring to Divine power in contrast to the human use of power in some way. So perhaps Jesus laying His hands on her simply meant that He moved in the power of God and that's what made the difference. So today Jesus is willing to see our true self rather than the outward appearance and He delivers us from all of these "spirits" [false beliefs] so that we may live in wholeness. He replaces the "spirit of fear" with "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." I think this is very good news indeed.

In my times of heart searching I'm often convicted of "a spirit" that I need to cast out so that I can receive more of what God has for me. This is an ongoing process and at times I'm amazed at why this "evil spirit" didn't come to my awareness before. God has been infinitely patient with all of my stumbling and failures. One of the mega-themes of the Bible is the long-suffering of God towards humanity. This thought convicts me of the great need to be patient in all of my dealings with others--not a small thing.

GOD IS EQUALLY AVAILABLE

"The nature of God is such that His rain falls on the just and on the unjust. He is equally available to the saint and to the sinner. He looks impartially upon all regardless of color, race, creed, religion, or lack of

religion. The difference in people's experience does not lie with God, it lies in their ignorance or lack of awareness of God."
-- from Joel Goldsmith's "The Art of Spiritual Healing"
Chapter 2 - Is God a Servant?



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