

Keeping the Truth Pure

Using Right Reason and Source for Correct Doctrine

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God's church has right doctrine. It is revealed to it through God's Word, and it is revealed by God Himself. That is something with which I think we can all agree. My comments today will build on that general statement, and it will follow this line of thinking. By way of synopsis, I will mention where I am going.

First, God requires us to have more than just right doctrine. We need more than right doctrine. We can memorize that. God expects us to know and to use right reasons to support the right doctrine. That means using His Word to support His doctrine. Therefore, we need to ensure that the source of our reasons is God's Word.

Secondly, if we support right doctrine with wrong reasons—that is, if the source of our reasons does not spring from God's revelation to us—then what we are doing is contaminating God's Word and in a very real sense, profaning God's truth, His Holy Word.

As a third point, for our part, it is vital that we do not allow our minds to become ensnared with man's reasoning—which is really Satan's reasoning. Even though these reasonings may seem "religious"—such as commentaries from Sunday morning preachers or something like that on the television—if they do not square or agree with the law and the testimony, as the Prophet tells us in Isaiah 8: 20, then these reasons need to be understood as darkness. There is no light in them, and we need to shun them.

With that synopsis in mind, turn to Luke 20 to see where I am headed. Here Christ addresses Himself to the Sadducees' question about the resurrection. Remember that the Sadducees denied the resurrection. Christ, citing Exodus 3: 6 and 15, quickly puts paid to their foolish notion:

Luke 20: 37-38 "Now even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' For He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Christ did not frame His answer—that is, His defense, or His proof—of God's truth in terms of the immortal soul, for instance, or any other worldly ideas that were afloat then and that are around this very day. Some have done just that. I have heard some Protestant and Catholic apologists defend the resurrection, claiming at bottom that God, in fact, had to resurrect people because He made the soul immortal and, therefore, He has to resurrect everybody to everlasting life or to everlasting damnation. This is a common thing that you hear in the Protestant churches.

Christ did not do anything like that. He did not profane God's truth that way; He does not contaminate the truth with man's reasoning. Not departing from that truth one iota, He went all the way back to the rock from which Israel was hewn, back to Abraham; and He did so through Moses so as to have two witnesses for His defense. He, in fact, bases that defense on the promises He Himself made to Abraham centuries before, recorded in Genesis. The source of His proof of the resurrection is God's Word; it was not Satan's lie.

Turn over to I Peter 3, where the Apostle makes an important comment about the truth that Christ is at once so zealous, but also so careful to defend.

I Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense [the KJV reads, "an answer"] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you ...

Obviously, Peter means for us to give the right reasons, not just any old reasons. We all know the source of those right reasons is God's Word. As well, we all know that we have God's Holy Spirit and that it "guides us into all truth" (John 16:13). With God's Spirit, we can do what the world's commentators and ministers can not do: We can understand God's Word, and use it—that is, use God's Word—to defend God's doctrines. God's Word is the foundation of all knowledge, as Mr. Armstrong taught us.

Christ's source is God's Word. He sanctifies it, sets it apart from the reasonings of this world by giving the right reason for His answers. He applies a principle we all know very well, one which deserves at least a quick review in this context. We will go back to the Book of Haggai. Here, God talks to the Prophet about the concept of contamination as it relates to that which is holy. It is this principle which makes syncretism so very wrong and, at the same time, so very dangerous.

Haggai 2:12 "If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?" Then the priests answered and said, "No."

The Amplified Bible adds a clear gloss to this verse. It simply says in four words that "holiness is not infectious." That is, a good apple placed among bad ones will go bad; it will not make the bad apples good. We do not make profane objects or ideas—that is, the bad apples—holy by bringing them into contact with the holy—the good apple. Christmas is profane. Try as you will to put "Christ" into Christmas, it will not work. It will not make it holy. Our efforts will fail. We can not sanctify Christmas by putting Christ into it. Continuing in verse 13, where God again speaks through Haggai:

Haggai 2:13 "If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these [holy objects], will it be unclean?" So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."

Again, the Amplified Bible's gloss is as accurate as it is succinct. It simply says that "unholiness is infectious." Those bad apples turn the good ones bad. If we mix wrong reasons, wrong doctrines and wrong ideas with God's truth, we will contaminate that truth. Syncretism is not neutral but desecrating. If we use the unholy lies of Satan to support God's Holy Word, we have defiled that Word. We have profaned it as surely as gainful labor on the Sabbath profanes God's holy time.

Christ understood this; He was careful to sanctify God's Word by citing right reasons in His defense of God's truth. His Source was God's Word, which He did not contaminate with Satan's lie.

Turn, if you will, to Job 42. We will be spending quite a bit of time in the Book of Job today. What we find in this book is an extended example of espousing right doctrines, reaching some right conclusions here and there, but often stating wrong reasons in support of those right doctrines. I am speaking of Job's three buddies: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. We will not have any time today to go over Zophar, but we will talk about the other two briefly. They do come up with some right conclusions every once in awhile; but, as we will see, the source of their reasonings is not God's revelation at all.

As a point of departure, consider why these three fellows got themselves into such a peck of trouble with God.

Job 42:7 The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

The Fenton (English) translation is remarkable in my view. That translation is this: "My anger burns against you and your two friends, for you have not reasoned correctly about Me..." This is important: God does not accuse Eliphaz or his cohorts of either moral turpitude or hypocrisy. They may have been morally upstanding and good neighbors. After all, they were concerned enough about their distressed friend to travel who knows how far on those smelly old camels to visit him. Nor is there any indication that they did not practice what they preached. One would not think that someone with Job's character would have fostered friendships with scoundrels, crooks, and hypocrites.

Their problem, God says, had to do with their thinking, their reasoning, the source of their ideas. We will see that, though occasionally they do come up with some right conclusions, the reasonings behind them are dead wrong. The source of their reasonings is not informed by, it is not based on God's truth; therefore their doctrines were polluted, like fresh water mixed with chemical wastes. They were useless. Their doctrines were not pure but a jumble of truth and lie. For all this, God was more than a little upset; His anger burned.

What is the foundation, the source of their reasons? Let us take a look. We will start with Eliphaz. Go back to Job 5. First, we will identify an example of one of his "right conclusions." He does come up with some right ideas every once in awhile. From that vantage point, we will go on to see who was Eliphaz's teacher. Eliphaz confidently asserts,

Job 5:17 "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty."

This sounds pretty good. There is really nothing wrong with that. Compare it to Proverbs 3:11: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction." It is not exactly the same, but certainly close in concept.

Why would God's anger burn against Eliphaz for the kind of statement that I just read in verse 17? In point of fact, we could go through the comments of Bildad and Eliphaz, and we could look at their first speech here in Job 4 or 5 or at other speeches and identify all kinds of very right sounding comments. We would think, in fact, if we read them in isolation and did not really know exactly what we were reading, that we were reading from the Psalms or from the Proverbs. In fact, I have often heard people, even ministers from the pulpit, quote the book of Job, not giving any heed to who actually made the comment. Yet, here in Job 5:17, the statement is made by a person who intensely angered God because of his reasoning.

What was the source of Eliphaz's thinking? From where did it come? Notice verse 27. As if by accident, Eliphaz, here at the end of his first speech, tips his hand. He says,

Job 5:27 "Behold, this we have searched out; it is true. Hear it, and know for yourself."

Who is the "we"? If you read all of that speech in chapters 4 and 5, you will not find who the "we" really is unless you read very carefully. It is not Bildad. It is not Zophar. It is not his two buddies that are with him, because in the whole speech he never makes reference to them. The pronoun *we* appears to have no antecedent; it seems to come out of thin air—but not quite. Near the start of his comments, way back in Job 4, Eliphaz identifies the mysterious "we," and no wonder God was angry.

Job 4:12 "Now a word was secretly brought to me and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair on my body stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; there was silence..."

The "we" was Eliphaz and this scary spirit who taught him by night. I want you to notice that this spirit came secretly. When God's Spirit comes to His true prophets, it does not come to be secret. Almost always, God tells the prophet to reveal what he has been told, either to speak the words or to write them to the people, to instruct them, to warn them, or to teach them of something in some way. However, this spirit imparted secret knowledge to Eliphaz, knowledge which he "searched out" over a period of time and then imparted to Job so he could "know for himself."

What did this spirit teach Eliphaz? The scriptures are quite specific. Let us go on and take a look

in verse 17. This is actually a quote from a spirit.

Job 4:17 "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker? If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust...?"

Like so many deceptions, here is a subtle mixture of truth and lie. True, man cannot be more righteous than God. He cannot be more pure than God—but we know he can ultimately be as righteous as God and that in the resurrection he will be as God is God, and he will have God's righteousness. No demon ever wants to admit that! Just where do we read that God does not trust His angels and charges them with error? There is no confirmation of that anywhere in God's scriptures that I can find.

Well speaks this demon to Eliphaz. The only spirit beings whom God charges with error are the demons! The demons know very well. This demon knew very well all about the charges that God had raised against him.

Eliphaz was a Gnostic. Gnosticism lays great emphasis on the difference between spiritual and physical, as this passage does. It emphasizes the difference between God and man and holds that the two can never meet. In Gnosticism, there is no unity between God and man. There is no atonement in Gnosticism. Gnosticism, at heart, denies the gospel; and it denies that man can become God. Gnosticism will not admit the idea of the Family of God.

If you read this spirit's speech down to its conclusion, through verse 21, you will see that the spirit offers no hope at all. Man can never attain to the level of God. This is the core of Eliphaz's first speech to Job: hopelessness. As James said this morning, quoting Romans 15, we get our hope from the scriptures. Eliphaz was getting his teachings from a demon.

Now turn over to Job 15 and see what Eliphaz has to say in his second speech. It actually gets worse. Note where he has taken this demon's logic—or where this demon's logic has taken him. He says here that mankind is not only incapable of being more pure than God but that man cannot be pure at all. Full stop! I also want you to notice the number of questions. These people used rhetorical questions an awful lot.

Job 15:14 What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous? If God puts no trust in His saints [it is interesting, is it not?], and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!

Well, for someone who came to cheer up his good friend, Eliphaz does not have a very good bedside manner, does he? These are not the most encouraging words in the scriptures. As he says in Job 5:27, Eliphaz has "searched out" the teachings of the spirit. He has actually meditated on the teachings of this demon. In doing so, he has come to the wrong conclusion that man cannot be pure and cannot be righteous but "is abominable and filthy."

Eliphaz here espouses the idea of the total depravity of man. This is the same thing that Calvin came up with. For all I know, the same demon that dealt with Eliphaz could have been the same demon that was in John Calvin centuries later. Do you know that Calvin actually believed that "the road to hell is paved with the souls of children?" Dead children have no hope. He actually believed that. His doctrine, like that of Eliphaz, was one of hopelessness.

Eliphaz goes ever further, if you take a look at what he is really saying, because he denies the power of God's regeneration. He denies the power of God to change people, for he says that God does not trust even His saints! We know differently! God did come to trust His friend Abraham. We could find scriptures that talk about that. He trusted the prophets to carry out His message. He comes to trust us. He better be able to trust us! He seals us, and we are there forever in His kingdom. If He does not trust us, there is a real problem. No, He is going to trust us. We can change, and we can join God's camp with His help.

What Eliphaz claims is not the teachings of God but the teachings of a demon. Gnosticism, remember, teaches that there is a totally impassable divide, a huge gulf between the spiritual and the physical. The spiritual is good; the physical is bad; and never the twain shall meet. In fact, there was one eastern form of Gnosticism centuries ago that actually held that between the High God, called the First Cause, the Creator God, and man down here, there were no less than five levels of deities. They claimed that the High God was so pure that He could have no contact with corrupt man. He had to buffer Himself with levels and levels of deities. This is an abomination!

Whatever happened to the God who loved Israel so much that He cleaned her up, made her to thrive like a plant in the field, and finally took her as His own? You will find the story in Ezekiel 16. What about the personal God who loves us so much that He died for us while we were still sinners, as Paul states in Romans 5: 8? What about the God who knows our frame, remembers we are dust? The god of the Gnostics is not the God of Psalm 103: 11.

These are just a few of our understandings of the nature and character of God revealed in His Word but understandings which Gnosticism simply will not accept and will not admit in any way. Eliphaz did not see the God we see. He did not see a God of love. "We love Him because He first loved us," John told us. Love is a matter of reciprocity; that is, it is a relationship that is reciprocal. Not understanding God's love and not understanding that God is love, how could Eliphaz love God? How could he build a relationship with God? Indeed, how could he build a relationship of love with his fellow man? He could not. In spite of all the "just love Jesus" people say (including modern Gnostics), they have not even the slightest concept of God's love.

Eliphaz championed an understanding of God that is utterly antithetical to ours. It is as far away from the truth of God as east is from west; it is diametrically opposed to the Gospel of God's Kingdom. His source was Gnosticism, the doctrine of demons.

Here in Job 15, Eliphaz further identifies the source of his knowledge, his beliefs.

Job 15:17 I will tell you, hear me; what I have seen I will declare,
what wise men have told, not hiding anything received from their
fathers, to whom alone the land was given, and no alien passed among

them

I want you to notice that there is no mention of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob here. Many people believe the book was written before that. I do not believe that. There is not even a reference to, in my view, Noah. This does not seem to be a pre-flood reference. These appear not to be the fathers of whom Eliphaz speaks. His wise men of old learned their doctrine from their fathers. Notice, Eliphaz did not advise Job to seek the fathers but to go further generations back. How far back? He says to look back to fathers who were the first ones to receive the land, before there were any aliens.

To whom did God first give the land? Was it not the demons who were the angels before their fall from heaven? They occupied the land first. Then they fell. They fell into sin. At that time, when they were still in power here before the fall, there were no interlopers, no aliens, because man had not yet even been created. Men were the aliens, principally Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—sojourners in a land that was not theirs, but inheritors of the land and ultimately the world—the world that the demons forfeited, the world that we possess.

The demons were dispossessed of the land, and they considered spiritual Israel—in fact, all mankind—to be squatters, foreigners, not the legal heirs of the land. They see us as illegals to be rooted out. To them, we are the aliens. Eliphaz echoes the bitterness of a fallen spirit who has become his mentor, the spirit who hates God, the spirit who hates God's people, having lost so much. We will inherit what the demons have forfeited. They have disqualified themselves from receiving that for which we can qualify. These are the fathers Eliphaz advises Job to study, and Job did not buy it.

What about Eliphaz's third discourse? Turn to Job 22. Here Eliphaz turns cynical. Hopelessness inevitably leads one to cynicism. Again, notice the questions. The speeches are filled with questions.

Job 22:2 "Can a man be profitable to God, though he who is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways blameless?"

Eliphaz would answer these rhetorical questions in the negative. They are trick questions, designed to convince Job that his "iniquity [is] without end" (verse 5). We, however, would answer these questions in the affirmative. We would say yes, because it is great gain to God: He gains ultimately the companionship of sons and daughters forever. He reproduces Himself. Gnostics see God as so far removed from man that He does not care about man, that He has nothing to gain from man whatsoever. This is exactly the opposite of the Gospel of Christ, the gospel that we know.

Consider the comments of Bildad. Like his crony Eliphaz, Bildad comes up with some pretty decent advice. For instance, Bildad asserts:

Job 8:20 "Behold, God will not cast away the blameless, nor will He uphold the evildoers."

Now this sounds good. Notice the closeness of a verse in Psalm 94:

Psalm 94:14 For the LORD will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance.

However, like Eliphaz's, the authority to which Bildad looks is deeply suspect. Notice where he admonishes Job to

Job 8:8 "Inquire, please, of the former age, and consider the things discovered by their fathers."

There is one of those phantom pronouns again. To whom does the pronoun *their* refer? If you read all of Bildad's discourse—that is, chapter 8—you will not find any plural noun which would serve as the antecedent to that pronoun. It is again off the wall. Let us go on.

Job 8:8-10 "...and consider the things discovered by their fathers; for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth are a shadow. Will they not teach you and tell you, and utter words from their heart?"

This is very dangerous stuff. Bildad does not advise Job to look to God for information but to some group of unnamed peoples in an undefined former age who have knowledge of something that was discovered by their fathers. We have gone back to a generation before the patriarchs and, I suggest, before creation. He is saying to go way back to the time of the demons. He says to go back to what these people have learned, stuff that had not been taught by God but taught by some shadowy fathers of the fathers—again, a generation back, further back than the patriarchs. That is enough to put a chill on anything that Bildad has to say.

What did these fathers of old teach Bildad? Turn over to his last discourse in chapter 25. This is his entire discourse. It is just a short speech by Bildad. Notice again the heavy use of questions.

Job 25:2-3 "Dominion and fear belong to Him; He makes peace in His high places. Is there any number to His armies? Upon whom does His light not rise?"

Well, good. This really sounds pretty good, with all this stuff about dominions and so on. It almost sounds like something from the Book of Daniel. However, notice the next question, because this is where his logic goes:

Job 25:4-6 "How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman? If even the moon does not shine, and the stars [perhaps angels] are not pure in His sight, how much less

man, who is a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm?"

Here is another muddle of truth and lie. Bildad promotes the Gnostic notion of a deep chasm separating God and man. Even the angels are defiled. Man, only a maggot, cannot attain His righteousness. No atonement. No unity. Again, this doctrine is the exact opposite of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, the heart and core of which says that man is made in God's image—not in the image of a worm, not in the image of a maggot—and that he can properly aspire and, indeed, qualify to attain God's righteousness. He can be approved. The teachings of Bildad's fathers' fathers are all wet. Job did not buy them either.

As a last scripture, let us turn to Colossians. The book of Job and the book of Colossians are counterparts, because they are arguably the most anti-Gnostic books in the Old Testament and New Testament respectively. In Colossians 2, Paul tells the people of the Colossian church where true knowledge resides. He asserts that they—and all God's people—can attain

Colossians 2:2-3 ... to all riches of the full assurance of understanding,
to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of
Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

What he is saying is that we do not need to look anywhere else. We do not need to seek secret knowledge, certainly nothing that is proffered by demons.

Colossians 2:4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with
persuasive words.

I have not had the time to stress this matter, but Job's buddies' rhetoric was extremely tricky, very sophisticated, with a lot of questions and rhetorical devices to lead Job to think in certain ways—extremely persuasive to the unsuspecting.

Colossians 2:8-10 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...

Like Christ, Paul understands that even the elect can be deceived (Matthew 24: 24). Make no mistake about it: the false teachings of demons can be persuasive; so sugar-coated, so subtle. A mixture of truth and lie, they can seem so correct. However, to blend the lies hidden in the commentaries, or buried in the sweet words of mountebank television preachers—to mix these with God's holy and true doctrine is to be guilty of syncretism. That lie profanes, defiles God's revelation to us, contaminating the truth. God's anger will burn. We must know better than to touch the unclean thing. Unholiness indeed is infectious.

We are complete in Christ. Do not mix the lie of the Gnostics with the truth of the Gospel.

