

## ***Criterion for Genuine Christian Ministry***

The measure of genuine Christian ministry is not whether it contains some redeeming quality or whether someone has been helped along the way.\* For the new-creation Christian who desires to mature and for those who seek to build up the true Body of Christ, the aforementioned sentiment is based on an entirely wrong principle. If the premise were true, the whole body and tone of letters contained in the NT would be radically different. For example, the Holy Spirit would NOT have moved:

- ...Luke in writing **Acts** to document the numerous disputes, which according to some lacked love and respect. Why didn't Peter submit to the criticisms of the circumcised believers (Acts 11:2)? Why didn't Paul and Barnabas yield to the men from Judea-Antioch (Acts 15:1,2)? And why didn't Paul refrain from criticizing the crowd meeting at the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34) based on the fact that the philosophers held to a *form* of theism, rather than being outright materialistic atheists.
- The Holy Spirit would NOT have moved Paul's letter to the **Romans** to include *insensitive* criticisms toward the:
  - 1:18-32 (reprobate mind)
  - 2:17-28 (religious hypocrite)
  - 9:19-24 (free-will humanist)
  - 10:2-4 (self-righteous religionist)
  - 11:20-24 (racially arrogant)
  - 12:2,3 (worldly intellectual)
  - 13:2-7 (criminal & political anarchist)
- The Holy Spirit would NOT have moved Paul's **First** letter to the **Corinthians** to include critical discussion of: the source of genuine knowledge (Ch.2), division (Ch.3), false apostles (Ch.4), sexual immorality and the responsibility of leadership to exercise judgment and action (Ch.5), personal disputes (Ch.7), conflict in marriage (Ch.8), eating certain foods (Ch.9), rights, responsibilities, and liberty (Ch.10), gender roles (Ch.11), dispensational diversity (Ch.12), genuine love (Ch.13), orderliness (Ch. 14), and money and financial support (Ch.16). All these issues would have been avoided since they are guaranteed to bring offense and thus umbrage on the part of some individual.
- The Holy Spirit would NOT have moved Paul's **Second** letter to the **Corinthians** to include: standards for ministerial integrity (Ch.1), the need for forgiveness (Ch.2), a mandate for separation (Ch.6), and a contrast between true and false apostleship (Ch.10-13).
- The Holy Spirit would NOT have moved Paul to pen any of the letter to **Galatians**. The tone of this epistle is largely denunciatory and critical. And for that reason, some Christians do their best to ignore its content all together. What many Christians fail to understand is that *doctrinal error* is most often corrosive upon one's thinking, and because ideas have consequences, upon one's behavior as well. For that reason, the genuine, biblical *under-Shepherd* should not, indeed cannot remain silent in the face of doctrinal heresy. It behooves Christians to understand that the tone of the Letter to the Galatians is as much a reflection of the Holy Spirit's passion as it is of the Apostle Paul's.

- The Holy Spirit would NOT have moved Paul to ask the Father to give the **Ephesians** wisdom, revelation, and enlightenment (Ch.1:17) or have highlighted his audience's former lost, hopeless, and *excluded* condition (Ch.2) thereby failing to practice inclusivism toward others who might read his correspondence. Nor would the Holy Spirit have broached the issue of freedom in Christ versus those who would seek to rob believers of their foreordained liberty (Ch.5). What judgmentalism and lack of love led the Apostle to enumerate the evil behavior of those who are perishing; why not emphasis the positive (fruit of the Spirit – Ch.5:22) only.
- The Holy Spirit would NOT have moved Paul, in his letter to the **Philippians**, to utter such harsh words as found in Chapter 3:18-19, nor in **Colossians** to warn and expose about Gnostic (New Age) heresy (Ch.1&2), as well as deceptive philosophy, ceremonialism, and asceticism (Ch.2).

And such is the common theme and tone of discussion throughout the remaining fifteen (15) NT epistles. Review the text for yourselves. The entire NT is filled with various criticisms and judgments—all the necessary ingredients for believers to form safe and sound minds and consistent biblical worldviews. The measure of any Christian ministry is not whether it draws large numbers of people, builds impressive architectural monuments, or establishes goodwill in the community by adopting views that are non-offensive to others! No, the measure of genuine ministry is whether it conforms to both the *content* and *spirit* of the Apostles' ministry (particularly Paul's) as revealed in the NT.

Most importantly, we need to ask the question, "Is this ministry connected and dependent upon the Risen Christ, the Head of the Body?" Or, is it spiritually disconnected as mentioned in Colossians 2:18,19?

"Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual [but religious] mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head [Christ], from whom the whole body [the true Church], supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow."

What right or liberty do so-called evangelical leaders have to make changes to the criterion mentioned above, if they believe Scripture to be the inerrant word of God? The impotence and worldliness within today's Church stems, in part, from its effeminate avoidance of conflict and its willingness to submit to a twisted form of tolerance (rooted in postmodernism)—all reflecting the *spirit of the age*.

What has happened for the past several decades is that the Scriptural concepts of *love* and *unity* have been severed from the womb of *genuine knowledge* and *truth*, with the intent of adopting them in relativistic settings for political purposes. This philosophic and cultural *separation* of love and unity from the framework of knowledge and truth would have dumbfounded the Apostles and been viewed as an abomination.

Clearly the Risen Christ's words spoken to the ancient church located at Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-6) add light to our contemporary problem. Bold emphasis and bracketed [ ] comments mine.

"These are the words of Him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: **I know your [good] deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested**

**[exercised discernment and judgment of] those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.** You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

**“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love [of righteousness and the truth]. Remember the height [integrity and clarity of judgment] from which you have fallen [into relativistic malaise]! Repent [change the way you think] and do the things you did at first [standing against error and defending truth]. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this [remnant of virtue] in your favor: You hate [intense feeling of aversion from what is evil] the practices of the Nicolaitans\*\*, which I [the Risen Christ] also hate.”**



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\* Mark 9:38-40 is often cited (by those promoting modern inclusivism) as proof that Jesus Christ welcomes ministerial diversity, and thus any criticism of other churches, ministries, priest or clergy is wrong and contrary to Christ’s teaching.

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us.”

However, any genuine interpretation must take into account the seeming contradictory teaching by Christ in Matthew 7:21-23.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

So how does one reconcile these statements?

First, as a general rule, Scripture must be understood *dispensationally* (“rightly divided”) or confusion will reign. The Gospel accounts set forth Christ’s earthly ministry to Israel. (For a more in-depth discussion, read both [Distinctive Gospels](#) and [The Dispensational Gospels](#).) Contrary to the teaching of many, demon possession was a unique and exclusive phenomena when God the Son walked the earth and during the early Apostolic era—*only*.

Note carefully, that the Disciples had made a certain observation and then proceeded to exercise ecclesiastical *control* over an individual and event they didn’t fully understand. Christ would put in check their premature impulse to exercise authority independent of Himself. During the era of “signs and wonders”, God would sovereignly prevent the rise of counterfeit miracles and thus the Disciples were not delegated the responsibility of oversight. But this would not always remain the case. While the era of genuine demonism and true miracles would come to a close, religious charlatans would continue the outward practice for the sake of deception. Knowing that a time would come when counterfeit activity would occur, Christ warned and gave insight to a future “day” (White Throne judgment which follows the Millennium), when the dialogue of Matthew 7:22-23 would be heard.

\*\* The Nicolaitans were likely an aberrant sect (followers of Nicolaus) who while laying claim to being “Christian” engaged in heresy (*gnosticism* combined with *clerisy*), together with pagan idolatry and immoral behavior. The modern world now contains a plethora of such groups.