



Unto Full Stature Ministries



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Series 2. Understanding The Church

Episode 2. Mixture in the Church

2 Cor. 11.1-4 "1Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. 2For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4For 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!"

These words of Paul to the Church reveal both the grand objective for the Church, as well as a prophetic caution of corruption at its doorstep prone to enter in. Historically, God's dealings with His creation have passed from the "age of Creation" focused on Adam and Eve, to the "age of the patriarchs" focused on Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to the "age of Israel" focused on the Jew, and presently on the "age of the Church" which focus is explained in Eph. 1.10,

“¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”

And so, the fullness of God’s plan for creation will culminate when all things are gathered together under one Head, who is Christ. God has patiently been at work in the earth, from age to age, building towards this fulfillment of His master plan formed before time began. And yet it is written in Eph. 2.7 of a reference to the “ages to come” when God works His grace to a people in Christ towards fulfillment of His master plan, “⁷*that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*” It becomes clear that the present age of the Church is a work in progress towards the fulfillment of God’s purpose. This present Church age is undergoing a time of preparation towards this fullness of God’s plan in the age to come. We get a glimpse of it in our opening scripture of 2 Cor. 11.1-4... *that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

O’ the glory of this revelation; suddenly the thoughts just going to heaven are greatly diminished in the light of anticipating such an eternal relationship with Christ. The Church will become in the age to come, at the return of Christ, the Bride of Christ. This will usher in a more intimate and powerful relationship between Christ and His Church. This is addressed in Eph. 5 where a comparison is made between a husband and wife and Christ and the Church,

“³⁰For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

The two shall become one, now in spirit and union. Again, the fulfillment of the Church becoming the Bride of Christ is clearly noted in Rev. 19.6-9;

“⁶And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the^[of] Lord God Omnipotent reigns! ⁷Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” ⁸And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’

So do you perceive the desperation in Paul’s voice when he wrote, “³*But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*” The enemy of this *simplicity* in Christ, this singleness of affection to Him alone, is that attempt to seek another means, a different way, a different spirit. The comparison is being made to Eve who first gave way and mentally harbored the thought insinuated by the serpent that God did not have her truest interests at heart and this “other” professing friend (Satan) had more concern for her than God. Corruption entered in and was infectious as Adam fell also for the deception. As with our spiritual parents, this tendency towards corruption was passed down to all succeeding generations.

This is the present struggle within the Church, to guard against corruption and deception. This was the arena in which Paul continually fought the forces of corruption and evil. To tell a lie is a sin, but to fall into deception is a corruption of the soul, which is the pursuit of a false way not leading to the will and purposes of God in Christ Jesus. This becomes evident when the focus of God's calling for the believer becomes scattered and distracted among various other doctrines, between other spiritual or natural ways, or when holy ways become confused with the common and unholy. The plan of God becomes muddled, and the narrow gate becomes increasingly narrow. (Mt. 7.13-14)

A stark warning was issued by Christ Himself to the entire church at Ephesus. At first He commended them on a few practices but then issued this ominous rebuke, Rev. 2.4-5,

4"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent."

You have left your first love. *Your first love*; it must be remembered that this unique love spoken of by Christ, Gk. *agape*, does not have the same sentimental affectionate associations the word has in common English. This departure from their first love is not from a heart of selfless hospitality, or caring for the poor or abandoned, or a zealous concern to feed the flock and maintain church discipline. No, in all of this they maintained a "religious" exterior but inside became spiritually corrupt, departing from their first love of Christ, having a passion for the simplicity and preeminence of Him alone, for His presence in their midst, and for pursuit of His plan and calling upon their lives. In short, they have traded spiritual life in Christ for religious practices. This "*life*" begins now, and its relentless pursuit is continuous and upward.

Thus, Paul wrote of himself and his associates of their struggles, Col. 1.28-29,

28We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29To this end I also labor, striving with all His energy working powerfully within me.

The struggle was never ending. Within the Church and within the believer is the life and light of Christ. Just outside the Church and the believer is darkness, sin and death, on all sides all waiting to find the smallest opening crack in the door to enter in. To be *presented perfect* in Christ means that any degree of spiritual maturity, of becoming a full-grown man in life and practice, can only come from the intimacy of our living union with Christ alone. *To this end* we must all *also labor, striving with all His energy working powerfully within us.*

Sources of Mixture in the Church

In regard to mixture, may I say initially that there is a natural, fleshly, tendency of man to drift into mixture. For the most part it is unintentional; it just seeps into an unexpectedly unguarded soul. Jesus gently cautioned His disciples in Mt. 26.41, *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* Jesus understands the element of good in us wanting to do right, to follow Him rightly even through trials and temptations. However, a caution enters to be on guard, to watch and pray, not to enter into temptation. Temptation might be more than sinning by stealing or having some coveted item; it can include an enticement and allurements to do or have something you know you shouldn't or to put off doing something you know you should do. I have prayed to God to bring heavy conviction upon me at those times, and to give me the opportunity to repent and do the right thing. These are spiritual matters that greatly affect the soul.

Spiritually there is a desire to pursue Christ to the uttermost. But we are greatly influenced by these unredeemed bodies we are living in and the additional influences of surrounding natural circumstances. This is called “the flesh,” when the soul is more influenced by the intellect, emotions, and senses of the body than that of the spirit. The flesh is very sensitive, and in weakness it is susceptible to deception and being convinced of another Way or another righteousness. The Biblical phrase, *“it seemed good”* can apply to the spiritually apt when led by the Holy Spirit, such as, Acts 15.25, *“it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.”*

To those who are spiritually mature, there is an inner witness to the leading and prompting of God. It is a communion of Spirit to spirit, an inward sensing. This is addressed in Rm. 8.14, where it is written, *“¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”* Here, the word “son” is intentionally used instead of “children” as used in verse 16, a son being more mature and focused on the matters at hand, such as doing the work of the Father's house.

However, oh so common is the reaction of the “flesh” to something that “seems good;” for the flesh is governed by bodily senses, reasoning, and emotions and not by the spirit and heart. Eve knew the word of God because her first response to the tempting of Satan was, Gn. 3.2-3, *“We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”* However, in the weakness of the flesh Satan's temptation made sense and it seemed good to eat the fruit, Gn. 3.6, *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.”* Succumbing to this temptation had devastating results. Sin entered in.

Deception is knowingly becoming fully engaged in something that *seems good* but in reality leads to sin and loss of well-being. Outside of light is darkness. Thus, outside the Church and the believer is darkness, as Isaiah prophesied, Is. 60.2 *“For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people.”* Thus, while connected in spirit to the light and life of Christ, the Church and the believer stand surrounded by darkness, sin, death,

deception and all manner of fleshly enticements. *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation,”* has been and continues to be the encouragement of our Lord.

The sources of mixture in the church are manifold. Briefly, some to consider further are:

1) **The influence of the world.** Multiple worldly influences have seeped into churches. Among the influencers include: cultural influences binding one to traditions difficult to escape; the entertainment industry including songs, dance and music, seeping in as a talented “feel good” way to worship God; educational intellectualism leading to certificates of accomplishments rather than spiritual impartation of calling and gifting; counseling methods using tools of psychology that manipulates the soul rather than the Word of God which is the discerner of the heart; worldly philosophies and religions that propose alternate ways to the Gospel of Christ and a different way of thinking; and liberal societies that stretch the limits of what is good and acceptable, bringing in perversions and sin.

What may “seem to be” good is not always spiritually good. What is logically good and seems right may well be born in the intellect and emotions of the soul and not the spirit. For example, in today’s church some are teaching self-help methods of using one’s own efforts and resources mixed with Biblical principles to better one’s self. Some preachers have learned from motivational speakers how to tap in on the emotions and desires of the listener to get a positive response from them. Some are teaching new age practices of meditation, yoga, mysticism, and chanting along with gifts of the Spirit. This is all unwanted mixture and contamination of something meant to be sanctified and set apart from the world. We must test all things subjecting them to prayer and to the word. (1 Thes. 5.21)

2) **Undiscerning, educated but nonspiritual leaders.** Being schooled and versed in the Bible does not qualify one to preach and teach the truth of the Gospel. Leading a church may become academic, growing intellectually in Bible knowledge, and in Godly behavior, but in reality becoming only a religious shell difficult to break through to find the life promised in Christ. I have heard the near exact message preached by a spiritual man and by an academic plagiarizing man; the first settled in my heart, the second only reached my mind of Biblical facts.

3) **False prophets.** One may say, “What does this have to do with me, I’m not Pentecostal, or this or that. But the fact remains that prophets remain an important part of the Church clearly described in New Testament writings. Eph. 2.20 explains that the very foundation of the Church is laid by the apostles and prophets. Not all prophecies are of the *“Thus saith the Lord...”* type, speaking forth something fresh of the mind and will of God. Much prophecy is of unveiling Jesus Christ and the plan of God from Old Testament writings, writings that were directed at natural Israel but in reality foreshadowed Christ. Just as Jesus Christ, following His resurrection from the dead and appearing to His disciples, said, Lk. 24.44

“Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”

The unveiling of these truths must be made by true prophets. However, many are the warnings of false prophets: First by Christ,

Mt. 24.24 *“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”* And then by His apostles,

2 Pet. 2.1 *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”*

This *testing every spirit*, and testing prophecy is of utmost importance. It is written that on the one hand *“you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged,”* but on the other hand, *“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,”* meaning those of a prophetic spirit are to judge all prophecy whether they be true. But all may and should judge all prophecy according to its agreement with the Word of God. Sheep are often gullible and easily influenced and must be guarded. This is one of the most abused gifts of the Spirit; it has often hurt rather than build up the Church.

4) **Ignorance of Satan.** Satan, the fallen angel, and architect of the plan to defraud God of His inheritance in a people, and the master of lies and deceit, the enemy of God and His people, is a real being. Peter writes, 1 Pet. 5.8 *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”* **Be sober! Be alert, stay awake.** Peter is not only calling attention to this prowling beast, but he is also issuing a warning to sleeping shepherds, elders of the Church, and dozing sheep (believers) that he is doing so now, today. He looks for the vulnerable, the sleeping one, the one under persecution, the unknowing babe in Christ, the one in much distress and sadness. But also, he seeks the one whose attention is turned to sudden gains in life such as abundance in prosperity or sudden romance. All are prey.

5. **Lying Signs and Wonders.** There are supernatural occurrences that have the Holy Spirit as their source and power; for example, 2 Cor. 12.12 *“Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.”* The nature of these miracles is documented as true in the Bible. Many, many were the signs of Jesus Christ and the apostles. These are often seen and worked in the Church today. I do believe in miracles but not in fabricated ones relying on soul-power.

Stark warnings are issued also by Christ and the apostles of false signs or lying miracles. Jesus warned, Mt. 24.24 *For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and*

wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” And Paul wrote of lying wonders, 2 Thes. 2.9 “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.”

This kind of signs or wonders is demonic power. Satan will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve his lying purposes. His workings are often associated with divination, conjuring up spirits, and sorcery, all of which are condemned in the Bible (Deut. 18.10-12). Even the coming antichrist will claim his power is from God but is also a lie. (Rev. 13.2)

There are reports of apparitions such as seeing Mary, angels, and/or saints; oftentimes delivering a message from God. I cannot dispute some people actually seeing something supernatural. However, whether the apparition is authentic or not does not mean it is a message from God or a genuine appearance of Mary or an angel. Scriptures state that Satan and his demons appearing as angels of light, 2 Cor. 11.13-15,

“¹³For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”

Outside of psychotic illusions, or the actual appearance of an angel sent by God, Satanic deception is just as possible an explanation for apparitions. If the sayings of the apparition are contrary or unsupportive to the Word of God, it is obvious they are satanic in nature.

It is written that of things that happened and documented to the Israelites were written for our warning, 1 Cor. 10.11 *“¹¹Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”* But the Church seems not to have learned the lesson they should have, how Israel mixed with pagan gods and philosophies, consulting with seers and divination, and pagan rituals mixing with the worship services required by God. The resulting judgment included failure of a generation to enter the promise land, eventual destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, captivity, and the eventual termination of the covenant, Heb. 8.13 *“¹³In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”* Heb. 8.13

Much more can be said about mixture in today’s modern church, but time and space preclude it for now. But we will continue next time discussing the effects of mixing the Old and New covenants in the Christian Church.

S2.E2. Mixture in the Church – Questions for Discussion

1. Explain the relationship and different functions of the Church and the Bride of Christ.
2. What did Jesus mean when He said, “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak?*” Can you cite some examples in your own life how this may apply?
3. Explain how the world (its culture, traditions, governments, businesses, entertainment systems, etc.) has impacted the local church. What are the most visible signs?
4. Have you encountered immature, undiscerning, leaders, false prophets, in the Church at large? In your local church? What are some examples of their impact upon the Church?
5. What are some lying signs and wonders that permeate the Church? Can you cite some specific examples?