

Doctrines That Divide and Truths That Unite – Part 3

by
Jim Sayles

Presumption and its illegitimate offspring, assumption, are the demons that fuel the fire of division and strife in the body of Christ, effectively hindering the full manifestation of His glory in the world, and, yet, most believers are scarcely aware of their existence or the fact that they are in bondage to both.

Presumption is the inappropriate interpretation and application of scripture by one of the following means: 1) a limited understanding of the text; 2) the meaning of the text is twisted into something different than the Holy Spirit intended, or; 3) where the meaning of the text is understood, the believer applies the text inappropriately and without personally acquired spiritual insight (i.e. like claiming a promise that the Lord has not specifically prompted the believer to claim).

Jesus made a comment about the commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.”

The Jews presumed (without personally acquired spiritual insight) that the command was limited to the physical act of adultery, but the Lord explained that the man who harbors desire for a woman, other than his own wife, is already guilty of the sin of adultery.

This expansion of the commandment is not evident in the command itself without the additional spiritual insight provided by the Lord, but believers today who have 24 hour access to the spiritual insight provided by our Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, who was sent to guide us into all truth, continue to act presumptuously in regard to scripture, interpreting it and applying it on the basis of intellect alone.

Unfortunately this is not just true of untrained believers. It is also specifically true of many seminary graduates who hold doctorates in Biblical Hebrew and Greek and are experts in systematic theology, and the proof of this statement is that they all disagree with each other concerning doctrine, practices, and the interpretation of scripture.

The pressure to conform to a specific denominational or ministerial interpretation of scripture concerning doctrine, practice, and the interpretation of scripture is IMMENSE both in terms of occupation (i.e. their jobs depend on it) and their reputation among ministerial peers.

This takes place even in denominations and ministries that believe in the “priesthood of believers” (i.e. the believer’s direct connection and communication with the Lord). And denominational leaders assume, knowingly or unknowingly, an elitist priesthood (and, though none would claim it, “apostleship”) for determining what doctrine, practices, and interpretations of scripture are taught to those over whom they are shepherds.

In this they believe that they are promoting unity within the denomination or fellowship by determining what is included in being of “one mind” and of “one judgment” as far as their denominations and fellowships are concerned.

I will quickly add that this is only a problem because most fellowships do not practice the New Testament example of confirming the truth, promises, and commands of the Lord through a consensus of elders (including the pastors) in the Spirit. And many who do practice a form of

leadership by elders do so intellectually on the basis of both presumption and assumption rather than the mutual reception of the revelation of the Lord.

And, having the confirmation of a mutual revelation of the Lord's truth, promises, or commands, the elders are then responsible for leading the fellowship in receiving the same truth, promises, or commands from the Lord and not as a religious rule or rigid interpretation handed down by those in authority.

The purpose of prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is not to tell us what to believe so that we are in intellectual agreement with them. It is their purpose to demonstrate true spiritual unity and to "equip" the saints by providing testimonial examples of what it means to walk by faith and to walk in the Spirit. It is also their purpose to teach believers how to accurately divide the word and receive the revelation of the Lord's truth, promises and commands directly from the Lord Himself.

***But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.
Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.
Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. Matthew 23:8-11 NASB***
(emphasis is the author's)

Assumption is the adoption of a doctrine, practice, or particular interpretation of scripture from a source or authority acting as an intermediary (source) between the Lord and the believer. Evangelical protestants can "see" this in regard to Roman Catholics and the Pope, but they are blind to the fact that they have adopted vast amounts of assumed doctrine, practice, and interpretations of scripture from denominational authorities, seminaries, pastors, teachers, Bible "experts", and television ministry leaders, based on their confidence in these sources and not based on their own Spirit-guided exegesis of scripture.

The pressure on believers to conform intellectually to the accepted doctrines, practices, and scriptural interpretations of their denomination, fellowship, or chosen ministerial authorities is IMMENSE.

Nor are they aware that much of the doctrine, practices, and particular interpretations of scripture they have adopted by assumption from these intermediary sources without confirmation by their own Spirit-guided exegesis of scripture, were originally arrived at through presumption, and not by revelation.

"Revelation" itself seems to be a scary word for some people, as if only the prophets, kings, and disciples who wrote scripture received revelation from God. Those men did receive the perfect, specific revelation of God for the purpose of speaking as the mouthpiece of God, both in the original context and in written scripture, but every Christian who has believed in his heart and confessed with his mouth that Jesus is the Christ, has received that truth from God by revelation (*apokalypsis* – Strong's #602) in exactly the same way Peter received it. And every act of genuine faith from that time forward, whether a small act of agape love prompted by the still small voice of the Spirit, or an act of special faith like casting out demons or raising the dead to life, has come by the revelation of God's will, either in the form of a promise or a command from the Lord.

Likewise, every correct interpretation of scripture is not only revealed but confirmed by the Spirit.

If it comes by the intellect alone it is suspect.

If it is adopted or assumed by intellectual consent it is doubly suspect.

Can't be much plainer than that. All those who arrive at doctrine, practice, and the interpretation of scripture through a Spirit-guided (revelation) and Spirit-confirmed exegesis of scripture will be of "one mind" and "one judgment." Those who presume to know the infinitely deep and complex truth, promises, and commands of the Lord on the basis of intellectual examination alone have already missed the Truth (deliberate capital "T"). And those who adopt and assume doctrine, practice, and the interpretation of scripture from intermediary sources without their own prayerful, Spirit-guided exegesis of scripture, also err.

Intellectual presumption and assumption regarding doctrine, practices, or the interpretation of scripture DIVIDES.

Revelation by the Spirit of Truth UNITES. Period.