

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, June 19, 2016

In Perils Among False Brethren

In 2 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul provides a list of the various afflictions that he had experienced because of his testimony for the Lord. They are afflictions that we can relate to; things that are common to all of the saints of God, in every place, and every age. The Lord has given us to both believe on him, and to suffer for his sake (**Philippians 1:29**). There is certainly value in looking at that whole list, but my desire today is to enquire into the scriptures on one particular trial that Paul speaks of: being in perils among false brethren. The scriptures are brimming with instruction, and admonition on this topic. Our Lord Jesus spoke to it on many occasions, including several of his parables. This matter of false brethren was clearly heavy on Paul's heart, and it was indeed a topic that he often wrote about to the early churches, including this admonition to the church at Corinth:

1Corinthians 11:19 “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.”

That's not a maybe; that's a statement of fact: “there must be also heresies among you”. In this context, Paul is rebuking the members of that church for “divisions” among themselves. People dividing into groups, and not having the same affection toward one another. This is a constant danger in any church. These divisions (schisms) can arise from a doctrinal dispute or from a practical matter, like a disorderly walk, or a spirit of pride wherein someone is well pleased with themselves, and yet they needlessly, harshly find fault in others. Often, at the heart of such a thing, you will ultimately find a false brother. If we will serve God, then **we will indeed encounter false brethren** in our walk. The question is: how will each of us respond when we come to that fork in the road, where we are grappling with divisive and schismatic issues? Will we sow to our flesh by coddling and encouraging sin, thereby letting the wolf in the front door? Will we be haughty, and hypocritical, thinking that we can keep the wolf out by the standards and devices that we create in our own fleshly minds? Or will we cleave to the Lord, and trust in His blessed Word and the remedies that he has so carefully and lovingly provided us, knowing that these VERY TRIALS are needful for us, and by them, we will be made manifest as the sons and daughters of God. Consider the words of Jesus:

Matthew 10:34-39 “34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh

not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Consider also this warning from Paul to the Elders of the church at Ephesus:

Acts 20:28-31 “28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

This is a heavy matter. But there it is, in black and white. The Lord gave us this record for our learning and admonition, and many of us have had much experience with these matters, which confirm exactly what we read in the scriptures. Seeing that is the case, let us consider the scriptures on this weighty matter: Who are these “false brethren”? What are we to do regarding false brethren.

Who are these “false brethren”?

Let’s begin our analysis with the words of Christ, in the parable of the sower, and the four types of ground, found at Matthew 13 (parallel passages at Mark 4, and Luke 8). While we read this, keep in mind that while we are going to talk about several flavors of behavior, there are ultimately only two categories of people: those whom God has appointed as vessels of wrath, and those whom He has appointed as vessels of mercy, and thereby abide in His love. The Lord gives us this additional analysis, and these additional sub-categories, in order to help our hearts to discern these matters.

Matthew 13:3-23 “3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: 5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: 8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. 9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

- Here again, we have two categories. God determined whom He loved, and assured that the Word was given to them; on the contrary, he explicitly withheld it from those who are reprobate, condemned, and have not been redeemed.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

- The human heart HATES this notion; can't you just hear the cries of "UNFAIR!" Ezekiel 18:29 "Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?"

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. 14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

- Our Creator has blessed our eyes and ears THEREFORE they see and they hear. We don't glory in the flesh, as though we decided to look and listen; rather, we glory in God, who made us – by force, through the working of the Holy Spirit - to see and hear and believe. Irresistible Grace!

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. 18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

- This is the vast majority of the human race. By decree, God has kept the word from their heart, and often, from even entering into their ears. What a terrible stroke of divine, righteous judgment! We don't get to dictate where the word will be preached; we follow the Lamb; we trust the Holy Spirit to guide us; we know that we are not self-righteously winning souls, as though we have the power within ourselves to do it. Woe unto them who use their authority and influence in this earth to shut up the words of life and hope! (**Matthew 18:7**)
- Notice that these are NOT in the category of false brethren. They never made a good profession in the first place.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

- They "hear" the word – they make a good profession, and begin down the straight and narrow path. The word took hold, and produced what appeared to be good fruit for a while. That person's heart was filled with joy; they tasted of the heavenly gift. (**Hebrews 6:4**)

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

- **Luke 8:13** “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”
- When you have just a thin layer of dirt, the roots can’t fully take hold, which leaves the plant weak. There is no foundation that will sustain it. Once the scorching sun turns in on it, there is nothing to support it, and so it withers, and dies. So it is for a false professor – a false brother – when their faith is tried. They will not pass the trial. That may be manifest in a very short while, or it may take many years to show itself. They may endure many trials, but when the fire of affliction gets hotter, they will fail. If a person’s “faith” is contingent upon being confident that their flesh is sufficient to sustain them, then it will most assuredly fail. God appoints the trials, and He alone knows the hearts of man. None of us is able to endure ANY trial of our faith, if our hope and help rests within the flesh; we will only endure if our roots run deep in the spirit; if we are anchored to the unmovable rock of ages.
- Consider the example of Alexander: We first see this man, in Acts 19, trying to help Paul, Gaius, and Aristarchus, in the midst of the tumult in Ephesus. He nearly lost his life at that moment, to those raging idolatrous Ephesians. That’s certainly a trial of his faith, because of the word. The next thing we hear of Alexander is this: **1Timothy 1:19,20** “**19 ... Which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck ... of whom is ... Alexander ...**” **2Timothy 4:14** “**14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.**” So here you see that not only did Alexander fall away because of affliction, but he went out of his way to harm Paul personally, and further, he became a vocal enemy of the faith, and the preaching of the word. We have certainly experienced this.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

- **Luke 8:14** **And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.**”
- Here again is a false brother; a person that received the word, and made a profession. They set out on the straight and narrow path, but the cares of the world overcame them. You cannot serve God and mammon (earthly treasures); you will ultimately forsake the one and cling to the other (**Mark 6:24**). We cannot ever put ANY fleshly thing ahead of our love of God, including every earthly relationship (**Luke 18:29,30; Luke 14:26**). If we put caveats on our service to God (“I’m good to serve God, IF I have things the way I want them [insert list of demands]”), then we have not rendered our reasonable service to God, by presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). We must be content with our lot in life. If our contentment is contingent on

ANY earthly thing, then WE WILL FAIL, because IT WILL FAIL. Remember: all flesh is grass, and it will wither and die (**Isaiah 40:6**).

- Consider Demas, who Paul calls “my fellowlabourer” at Philemon 1:24, and who accompanied Paul on several of his preaching journeys. That sounds like a person who is strong in the faith, and yet this happened: **2Timothy 4:10** “**For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica ...**”
- In these two categories (stony and thorny ground), The Lord gives us a glimpse into the motions of the depraved heart. These are people that (at least for a time), believe within themselves that they are following the Lord. Some might have a sincere desire to follow the Lord (in their own mind). Some might have blatant ulterior motives (grievous wolves). Some might start with a sincere desire, but a little at a time they stray from the path, until they are antichrist in all their ways, seeking to deceive, and devour the flock. **1John 2:18,19** “**18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**” Regardless of how it plays out with each particular person, the Lord eventually brings circumstances to bear such that each person will have to count the cost of sincerely serving God. Those who have a lively hope will know that it is well worth the cost. Those that have a hypocrite’s hope – those that will “serve God” as long as it lines up with their human notions of right and wrong, it doesn’t hurt too much, and it allows them to pursue the parts of the flesh that they desire - will call it a vain, worthless rip-off (**Luke 14:26-33**). Once they make that determination, you can take it to the bank that they will spend the rest of their lives trying to find ways to cope with the truth that they have been taught – searing their conscience on a hot iron; they will twist and redefine the scriptures, or reject them all together.
- Make no mistake – these false brethren are perilous to us, and full of deadly poison. They present with many different faces, by which Satan will seek to tempt each of us, in a way that is unique to our particular frame. That peril doesn’t stop once they’ve been identified as a false brother – the work has just begun. We must then sow continually to the spirit, making use of the scriptural standards, beginning with those instructions to withdraw from, and avoid such people. At the same time, we have to battle the pride of our flesh, lest we be puffed up and self-righteous. We ought not to be thinking, or saying, hard, spiteful, fleshly, vengeful words about these people. Theirs is a very sorrowful circumstance. **Luke 10:20** “**Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.**”

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

- **Luke 8:15-21 “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. 16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. 18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. 19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. 20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.”**
- God’s people struggle with the same flesh - the same issues - that a false professor does. Are we never afraid and in distress in our flesh, when we face a fiery trial? Are we not drawn to some of the allurements of the world? Are we not prone to pride? Of course we are! But will we sow to that, or will we sow to the spirit? What will be the fruit of our doing?
- Here again, you see subcategories, according to how much fruit a person brings forth. This speaks to the fact that we all have different gifts, different skills, different roles, different work, etc. It’s not a competition; it’s not license to glory in the flesh – we have only what we have been given. We are all laboring with our hearts fixed on the prize – holding the same hope, for the inheritance of eternal life. Check out the parable of the workers in the vineyard, at Matthew 20. Those workers came at different hours in the day, and did different amounts of work, yielding different amounts of fruit, and yet they all labored for the same wages. Not only do they all get the same, but a major point of the parable is that some of those who are puffed up, and complaining indeed are not rendering their service for the right reason, and **WILL FALL AWAY**, and receive **NO REWARD** – look at the way that the parable ends: “for many are called, but few are chosen”. We should all labor to bring forth fruit according to our own unique lot in this life, with great thanksgiving unto God, and highly esteeming our brothers and sisters in Christ, in the process.
- God’s people are known by their fruits – their words **AND** their behavior, that show forth their heart toward God. If you are going to make a claim on serving God, then **THERE MUST BE FRUIT!** You see that God’s people are going to have various gifts, and have varying degrees of fruit, but they **ALL** have fruit that shows the indwelling, and working of the Holy Spirit. People can do the right thing, for the wrong reason; and on the flip side, people can do the wrong thing, with a right heart toward God about it. God knows! That’s what ultimately will define good fruit vs. bad fruit – how

does God see the matter! **Matthew 7:15-20** “**15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.**”

- How does this look? Sometimes it seems pretty clear. Other times, it isn’t so obvious. You can have some fruit that looks good for a while, and then suddenly you see that there was a corrupt root, and that attractive looking fruit is actually full of poison. It was never good in the first place, it just looked good for a time. On the other hand, you can have a tree that looks sickly, or even dead for a time, and then suddenly there is wonderful fruit springing from it, because the roots of that tree were good. We aren’t inspecting the fruit of a man’s doing, in order to determine his eternal home – that’s God’s business. We are inspecting it, so that we might rightly divide the scriptures in every situation, such that we can do our duty to reprove, rebuke, and exhort our fellow man, and so that we can keep sanctification in our lives, in our homes, and in the church.
- What I say now, I say with fear, and trembling before the Lord, because I don’t know my own latter end. It is a stark, and fearful thing to consider that I could be one who has a purpose for a time, and yet the Lord could be done with me at any moment. It’s that terrifying thought that makes me feel compelled to say these words with great plainness to you dear friends. Are you bringing forth fruit? You’d better be asking yourself that question, and honestly examining yourself. Are you withholding your strength from helping the Lord’s people? Are you actually applying the energies and gifts that God has loaned you? Are you a person that has been shown abundant kindness to the point that you are entitled, lazy, and selfish? Are you a person that will do only what is arranged for you, and absolutely required of you, while you otherwise arrange your affairs to accommodate the desires of your flesh? Please do not hide behind fleshly excuses. Please do not let new responsibilities, and new facets of your life derail you from tending to the ministry, and to the needs of your co-elect. There is no salvation by association – each of us must stand alone before God. You cannot sit in this house, and listen to these words week after week and then go right on about your business as usual. You cannot live amongst these abundant and wonderful examples of people who indeed present their bodies as a living sacrifice and then go right on about your slothful business as usual. You cannot wear out the saints who work hard to give you good help, counsel, and scriptural admonition, and then go on about your business as usual, full of murmuring, disputing, and discontentment. Consider this stark warning: “**Proverbs 29:1 He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.**”

- **Philippians 3:17-21** “17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

What are we to do regarding false brethren?

God alone knows exactly who these people are. We do not. We can simply see the fruit that a man brings forth; we can hear his words, see his manner of life, and then prayerfully apply the scriptures to what we see. In order to do that, we must be watching. In order to do that, we must be filled with patience, meekness, and humility – continually examining our own hearts, our own behavior, and submitting our own selves to God, and to our co-elect. In order to do that we must be asking the Lord continually for a godly heart, spiritual discernment, timely scriptural words, and the confidence of faith to daily exhort and admonish one another.

Hebrews 12:14-17 “14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

You see that this passage begins with the instruction to follow peace with all men. If we love God, then we are to sincerely love our fellow man, and desire and seek after their best good. We are to humble ourselves, and keep peace in all lawful ways. As you read this verse, recall the good instruction that our brother Steve gave us a few weeks back out of Matthew 7, regarding a censorious, hypocritical spirit. That speaks to the manner in which we are to follow peace with all men; and if we owe that to all men, then how much more do we owe it to our co-elect? BUT - when peace with men comes in direct conflict with serving God, then we must look to holiness first and foremost. We must keep that same spirit of meekness and humility, while refusing to encourage, and partake in sin, in the name of peace. Without that holiness, we show ourselves to be ungodly, and false professors – “without which [holiness] no man shall see the Lord.”

John Brown: "We must, then, at all events "follow holiness"; at all hazards we must act the part of persons sincerely and entirely devoted to God. If, in consistency with this, we can live in peace with all men, it is so much the better; but if peace with men cannot be purchased but at the expense of devotedness to God, then we must – we must willingly – submit to the inconveniences arising from having men to be our enemies, knowing that it is infinitely better to have the whole world for our enemies and God for our friend, than to have the whole world for our friends and God for our enemy. The whole exhortation seems to us equivalent to – 'Beware of unnecessarily provoking the resentments of the men of the world. If possible, live at peace with them; but never act a part inconsistent with your character as persons devoted to God in order to secure yourselves from their persecutions: if you do, you will act a very unwise part, for you will shut yourselves out from the enjoyment of the celestial blessedness.'"

Notice how Hebrews 12 continues - the application of the instruction is this: Look diligently. We are to keep holiness, by **looking diligently**. We are to watch for false brothers by looking diligently. Brown refers to this as "watching for one another with a holy jealousy". The Greek word used here is "episkopeo". It means to look after, to care for, to inspect, to look carefully, to beware. That word is only used one other time in the Bible, at 1Peter 5:2. In that place, it is translated as "taking the oversight": **1Peter 5:2,3 "2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."** Clearly, in Peter's writing, it is an instruction to the elders as to how they should be watching for the church. In the context of Hebrews 12, however, it is clearly speaking to ALL of the -members of the church. Certainly the elders should be a good example of patiently attending to that work, but **all of the members of the church have that duty**.

Please don't make excuses for why this is too hard for you; why you can't watch for one another, and humbly, kindly exhort one another. Remember, it is a basic duty that we owe as a part of loving one another (**Leviticus 19:17,18**); anything else is hatred. By definition, you cannot do this, if you refuse to speak often to one another; you cannot do this if you carefully manage who you are willing to talk to; you cannot do this if you are always busy sowing to the flesh with worldly pursuits and enjoyments. Is there anyone here who thinks that they are so spiritually mature; so wise; so upright, that they don't have great need for their brothers and sisters to be watching for them, and exhorting them, and admonishing them? If you think that, then the devil has already got you ensnared with your pride. You must not only KNOW that you need that help, but you must make yourself open to such help, and be easily entreated, so that your co-elect aren't AFRAID to help you. You can say you want help, but then be contentious, self-justifying, and easily offended when a person tries to help you. If one of your brothers or sisters comes to you with a concern, then MAKE IT EASY for them to talk to you. They might even be wrong about what they think they're seeing, but if your spirit is right, then you will want to hear their words, search your own heart and actions, and do everything that you can in order to do right by God, and by your

co-elect. You don't want to do that? You don't want to have to look after each other? You don't want to be looked at? That's heresy, brother! That's serving God with caveats. That's despising the church of God in the earth!

Look at the deadly fallout if we will refuse to do our duty to look diligently:

- **“Lest any man fail of the grace of God”**. This “grace of God” is not referring to salvation, as though someone could lose their salvation. This is speaking to the graces of God that are manifest in his people by their outward behavior – their fruit. If a person begins to fail, if they are heading into sin, then we owe them all of the scriptural help that we have to give. We owe it to them for their sake, and we owe it for the church's sake. If you have rotten fruit cropping up in the middle of the church, while doing nothing about it, then it will spread, until the entire church is rotten, and the candlestick is gone!
- **“Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”**. This root of bitterness is an unscriptural idea or practice, or an ungodly person, that has quietly taken root. Once it begins to show itself, we had better be watching, so that we can quickly get about the business of plucking it out by the root – fully and completely - or else it will come to full flower, and defile many in the church. The word “bitterness” is referring to the poisonous nature of the thing (**Deuteronomy 29:18**).
- **“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau”**. This would be a situation where we have quietly allowed a notorious sin to go on in our midst, such that a profane person, has access to spread folly and heresy in the church, leading people astray. Consider how this infected the church at Corinth (**1Corinthians 5**), and the church at Thyatira (**Revelation 2**).

Similarly, consider our duty to “try the spirits”:

1John 4:1-3 “1 ¶ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

Do they speak according to the Gospel of Christ, or have they intermingled that precious Word with the vile workings of the depraved human heart? **Isaiah 8:20 “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”** Do they behave consistently with their profession, or are they hypocritical professors that walk disorderly, and spread confusion and strife? **James 2:20 “20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”**

I imagine that some of you are feeling overwhelmed right about now. This is heavy; it's heart work. I've had trouble in my own spirit trying to get these words on paper. How should I be thinking about things? What should I be doing? When should I say something? Is my spirit right? Ultimately there is no outthinking these matters in our flesh, because these are spiritual matters, to be spiritually discerned. Therein is our hope and comfort! Do all of these things with a full heart unto God - He knows the spirits; he owns the hearts; he tries the reigns. Watch for each other. Help each other with fitly framed words. Pray for each other, that the Lord will help and keep our hearts. Be not weary in well doing. Wait upon God! Our brother Fred recently reminded us of the promise that God will show all matters to his servants in the fullness of time. Consider the parable of the marriage:

Matthew 22:8-14 “8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.”

I take GREAT COMFORT from this parable. There is no indication that the porters foolishly let this man in, and yet there he was. When we have done all that we are supposed to do, and find ourselves in darkness on a matter, we don't have to fret ourselves to death, and seek for an immediate answer, using fleshly thinking. We should get to the Lord, and trust that he will show us the matter. Here you see that these people did not see the man's lack of a wedding garment, until the king came upon the scene, and showed them. The Lord God will indeed come upon the scene, and help us. This is the same Lord who walks amongst his churches, and intimately knows every heart, and every need (**Revelation 2:1**). How often have we seen this happen? Amazing help and comfort. We must have patience, and wait on the Lord.

1Peter 4:12-19 “12 ¶ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”

It is not strange at all that we have this particular trial of false brethren to endure in our lives. It was accomplished in Christ, and in all of our spiritual forefathers. It is these very trials that cause the sons and daughters of God to shine forth, and be made manifest. Remember what our brother Tim told us recently about this verse:

1Corinthians 13:13 “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

At the end of these trials, only God’s people will continue in faith, hope, and love, because they are rooted in the Spirit, and these things flow from the Spirit. Everything, and everyone else will be burned up.

Acts 20:24 “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Revelation 3:11,12 “11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”

I love you all. Amen.