

## 1 Peter 1:8-9 – Part AA

**1Pe 1:8 (NKJV) whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls.**

Two weeks ago we closed by looking at some of the issues created by the Emergent Church and the New Apostolic Movement. We were looking at this as we closed that Sunday because we live in a church age and spiritual culture that has so misrepresented the gospel and the cost of what it means to be a disciple and follower of Christ that those who really are following Christ in a biblical way are deemed as irrelevant, judgmental, and arrogant. The point that we made was that the postmodern church has greatly diminished the gospel message with many frivolous and worthless substitutes that have no eternal value whatsoever. The point was that the gospel has no substitutes and needs no improvements, so we were addressing the issue of how these subtle movements were pervading the church and infusing false doctrine into the church itself.

One last movement that I wanted to mention before moving forward in our exegesis is the New Age movement – which has been around for quite some time. We really should call it the Old Age movement because it has been a false teaching for a long time. It is probably an area that we do not feel too threatened by, but in reality, it has made a fairly large impact of many areas of Christianity. The word that seems to make all of these kinds of movements seem “relevant” to undiscerning individuals is the word “spiritual”. They all utilize that word, and it seems to a kind of magnetic effect on people. They hear the word “spiritual” and they naïvely just accept some teaching to be true and to have spiritual value. It arouses their curiosity, so they begin to just dabble with it a little.

When it comes to the New Age movement, they use what they call “techniques”. Most all of the “techniques” used by the New Age practitioners come from Hindu / Buddhist type Far East religions. For instance they use have Reiki masters. Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that they claim promotes healing. It is administered by the “laying on of hands” and is based on the idea that an unseen “life force energy” flows through us and is what causes us to be alive. If one's “life force energy” is low, then we are more likely to get sick or feel stress, and if it is high, we are more capable of being happy and healthy.<sup>1</sup> You can understand why undiscerning people that are depressed, or who physically do not feel well, or who are searching for some “new” thing can be drawn into these so-called “spiritual techniques”.

Then we have things such as Gregorian chanters (sacred songs of the Roman Catholic Church). This is just another form of Far East meditation techniques where you place your mind in neutral and try to absorb some kind of “spiritual energy” into your life. The Scriptural practice of meditation has nothing to do with sitting and not thinking, but to the contrary being fully engaged in understanding the meaning and substance of God's Word. Your mind is fully engaged on the Word of God. We have yoga experts, breath work instructors, transcendental meditation instructors, clairvoyant readers, astrologers, and many other forms of mystical instruction which are all designed to teach the individual how to free their spiritual person from their physical body. Then, to make their practices more acceptable, they have created their own “spiritual words” like holographic, synergistic, unity, oneness, harmony, at-one-ment, transformation, personal growth, human potential, awakening, networking, energy, consciousness, and

self. These words are prevalent in New Age conversations and writings.<sup>2</sup> They are deadly words and demonic practices that literally lead someone into the realm of evil spirits.

So, New Age teachings are basically a collection of ancient religious traditions, along with an assortment of various influences to include Eastern mysticism, the combining of modern philosophy and psychology, as well as the integration of science and science fiction. In the New Age movement there is an ungodly combination of false spirituality and mystic superstition that become combined with various “techniques” that the individual is to embrace. The idea is to go deep within or to connect with this unknown spiritual “energy” or “force” in the universe. They teach that God is a god of energy forces that the individual has to connect into. All things, including man, constitute what they call The Universal Mind, The Source, Universal Self, Cosmic Consciousness, Universal Presence, or The Force" - your Inner Voice, Higher Self, or Intuition.” God is an impersonal energy force, immanent in all things (including man and animals). God can be referred to either as she or he, mother or father, god or goddess. Most New Age teachers hold that “Mother Earth” as they call it, the sun, the moon, and the stars, indeed all of nature can be worshipped as God. In their teaching, man becomes god once he is “connected” to these life energy forces. They ascribe the supernatural to man and not to God. Part of their instruction is that man should seek and accept spiritual instruction and directions directly from the spirit world. You can be assured that Satan just loves that. If someone wants to invite and expose themselves to various forms of demonic activity in their life, then all they have to do is embrace these kind of false teachings.<sup>3</sup> So, the lure of the occult is almost always on the basis of acquiring this supernatural knowledge or power. It is exactly what happened in [Genesis 3](#) with Eve and the serpent. Satan convinced Eve that she could be like God. This is exactly what the New Age movement teaches.

New Age techniques use various means to have mystical experiences with the cosmic god, nature, or one’s self. Some of the methods are **imagining**, where you are told to imagine your own reality; **transcendence**, going beyond the limits of time; **sleep deprivation**, with the purpose of inducing a mystical experience; **focusing**, “to experience all of reality as unified and not as a collection of unrelated objects”; **avoidance**, where communication with the outside world is stopped in order to reinterpret the world without its influence on you; **identification**, “to trade places mentally with an animal”; **reflection**, an exercise designed to help you to view the year to come differently; and **star-gazing**, “to induce a sense of objectivity about your life and a feeling of connectedness to the rest of cosmos.”<sup>4</sup> There is absolutely no limit as to what these people decide that they can teach as truth.

The crazy part of all of this is that this “spiritual” nonsense has somehow slowly made its way into the church! I am sure that you are asking yourself as to how has it done that? How could a conservative evangelical type church embrace segments and parts of these demonic practices? Well, it is really quite simple. The more experience oriented that teaching becomes in a church, the more people will begin to embrace this kind of spiritual nonsense. People are constantly looking for something new, something exciting, something that seems mystical and mysterious – and many segments of Christianity have accommodated that mentality. However, listen to what [Romans 7:18](#) says. This is very important, so please pay close attention,

**Ro 7:18 (NKJV) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find.**

The problem is that if we try and obtain answers in and of ourselves, from deep within, or from some kind of cosmic energy force that we can connect with, that we always get the wrong answers. If I can say it in a more dramatic way, we have entered into Satan's domain. We actually open the door for demonic activity to begin to influence and even control our life. Please appreciate that the enemy is able to literally put thoughts into people's minds. John 13:2, speaking of how Satan worked in the life of Judas, says the following,

**Jn 13:2 (NKJV) And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,**

He just casually dropped his evil thought into the mind of Judas and Judas acted on it. So if someone accepts those thoughts (what I call "seed thoughts" that he plants in their mind), they will eventually act on those thoughts. The truth is always, always in Christ, the truth is always in the Word of God. The truth of the living God is contained in His Word and in His Son and it is NEVER found anywhere else. When we try to find answers from any source other than the Word of God, we will always get the wrong answers and begin to build our lives on a foundation that has no eternal value. The problem with all of the religious / meditation type approaches to spirituality – you know, legs folded, eyes shut, arms extended, and humming sweet nothings, is that they are all quite unbiblical and quickly lead the individual into a demonic world, into the realm of spirits and demons. [Colossians 2:8](#) says,

**Col 2:8 (NKJV) 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.**

I still find myself completely amazed and dumbfounded relative to how much effort, time, and money that people will invest in trying to find meaningful answers for their life, but still find themselves utterly empty and devoid of any consequential truth for their life. [Romans 12:2](#) is a great passage relative to how we as believers arrive at the correct answers for our life.

**Ro 12:2 (NKJV) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

[Colossians 3:9-10](#) says the following,

**Col 3:9 (NKJV) Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,<sup>10</sup> and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,**

As believers, we are to be constantly renewing our life to the Word of God. Just keep learning, just keep studying, just become absorbed in the only source of truth in the universe – the Word of God. The word for "**renew**" in both of those passages is the Greek word is "*anakainosis*", and it can also be translated as "**renovation**". When we renovate something, we tear down that which is old and replace it with that which is new and solid. That is exactly what happens when we continue to renew and fill our minds with God's Word, with biblical truth. Once again, you may be asking yourself why even mention this kind of thing in a conservative, Christ honoring church. It is simply because there is a strong movement away from biblical values, and if we lack discernment in these areas, it will cleverly find a way into the fabric of conservative churches. Just think of how far the church has moved from traditional values in the last 25 years. We now have Baptist churches ordaining homosexuals and marrying lesbians, and

agreeing to redefine the family. Fifty years ago, this would have been completely unacceptable, but in a culture that seems obsessed with never offending anyone, compromise of biblical foundations and truth just seems necessary and unavoidable.

Please appreciate that this is no small issue that can just be casually dismissed. [Galatians 5:11](#) calls what the Emergent Church stands against, and what this entire postmodern movement hates, as the “**offense of the cross**”. The Greek word for “**offense**” in that passage is “*skandalon*” and means a “stumbling block”. It was originally the name of the part of a trap to which the bait was attached, hence, the trap or snare itself. In the New Testament, the word is always used metaphorically, and ordinarily of anything that becomes a hindrance to others.<sup>5</sup> [1 Corinthians 1:23](#) says,

**1Co 1:23 (NKJV) but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,**

So, it refers to that which offends someone. The message of sin and repentance is a great offense to those without Christ, but then when you include a message of eternal judgment and a Lake of Fire, it is just too much for some to swallow. So, the ever-evolving postmodern church has removed what they consider to be culturally irrelevant doctrines and superimposed their false gospel over the true gospel. In essence, they have no saving gospel and are leading people into eternal damnation. Paul felt so strongly about this kind of aberration in [Galatians 1](#) that he said if anyone ever introduced a false gospel into the church that they were to be “**accursed**”. Notice what [1 Peter 2:7-8](#) declares,

**1Pe 2:7 (NKJV) Therefore, to you who believe, *He is precious*; but to those who are disobedient, “*The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,*”<sup>8</sup> and “*A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.***

The gospel will always be a stumbling block and an offense to people. It is that way by God’s design, and the last thing that the church needs to do is to try and reinvent what many foolishly deem to be culturally irrelevant. Please remember what we have taught so often - that when the church thinks that it has to be culturally relevant, then it immediately becomes biblically irrelevant. Eventually it becomes so enamored with relevance and not substance that it opens itself up to all of the new unbiblical cultural philosophies and false teachings that seem to quickly find their way into the life of an undiscerning church.

I want you to think through something with me at this point, and it has to do with the idea that substance leads to significance, but lack of substance leads to relevance. This is very important in relation to how truth often impacts someone’s life. Because of how the church has embraced the idea and pursuit of cultural relevance, think of “significance” as truth that never changes to accommodate the culture and think of “relevance” as ideas that are constantly changing to accommodate the culture. Unfortunately, if someone were to ask an undiscerning Christian the difference between “significance” and “relevance”, they probably would not see much difference – and that is the problem. That is why all of the aberrant teachings that are appearing all over the church landscape within the Emergent Church can find a resting place. It is because this present church age is literally enamored with becoming relevant to the culture, and in that process, they have lost meaningful biblical discernment that must govern the direction of a New Testament church.

No matter what the church perceives as relevant, and no matter how many relevant changes are taking place in the church, and no matter how much compromise the church is willing to embrace, truth never changes. Here is the way that we should view biblical teaching: **Substance > Significance > Conviction** (Confrontation). The unbiblical alternative to this kind of teaching can be viewed as: **Lack of Substance > Relevance > No Conviction** (Removes confrontation – seeker vs sinner, tolerance vs. truth, storytelling vs teaching / preaching). The postmodern church of today has lost its conviction about truth. It is trying so hard to be relevant to people and to offer them what they want, that it has lost all conviction relative to what God wants.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Rand, *What is Reiki*, ep.

<sup>2</sup> Slick, *New Age*, ep

<sup>3</sup> Seven, *Jesus*, ep

<sup>4</sup> Slick, *New Age*, ep.

<sup>5</sup> Vines, 801.

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