

The Letter or the Spirit?

2Corinthians 3:6 *Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*

Ministers of the Spirit are God connectors.

Are we connecting people's faith to the power of God or to the wisdom and power of man?

1Corinthians 2:4 *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

Are we causing people to put their confidence in their own will power, or in the power of the Spirit of God that works from within?

1Corinthians 3:10 *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

Be careful to build consistent with what grace communicates

1 Corinthians 3:6 Mirror Word *I have planted, by bringing the gospel to you in the first place, then Apollos watered the seed in his ministry to you; but God causes the Christ life to ignite and expand in you. 3:7 If all we succeeded to do was to attach you to us as individuals, then we have failed you; the one who plants is not more important than the one who waters; it is not about us, it is about you realizing God's work within you. (Our ministry has only one objective: to reveal Christ in you*

Colossians 1:25-27 *I am made a minister of the mystery of the gospel which is Christ in you the hope of glory*

Grace working in the form of the Holy Spirit makes us conscious of the power of God that works from within. The Holy Spirit connects us to the spiritual realm. He makes us conscious of the work of the cross with the righteous that we have been given by Jesus in focus. The Holy Spirit always comforts us and gives us the power to believe by giving us hope. He ministers God's love and compassion to us. He never connects us to the things of the law and the guilt and condemnation that comes with it. All intercourse with the law has been terminated

Romans 7:6 *But now we are discharged from the Law and have terminated all intercourse with it, having died to what once restrained and held us captive. So now we serve not under [obedience to] the old code of written regulations, but [under obedience to the promptings] of the Spirit in newness [of life].*

Ministers of the Spirit never use the law to manipulate people because the law connects people to the power of their flesh which is subject to weakness.

Joh 6:63 *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

Hebrews 10:14-17 The Holy Spirit writes God's laws on our hearts but not the laws of the commandments because they have been done away with.

John 15:12 *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

We are told to continue in His love.

John 15:9 *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

Jesus loves us the same way that the Father loved Him. Meditate on that! How did the Father love Jesus? He loved him just like he loved himself. He gave him everything that he had. Jesus loves us and sees us just like he sees himself. He shares everything that he has with us. Jesus was the firstborn son of God and he shared his sonship and inheritance with us.

John 1:12-13, 16

The disciples once asked Jesus who was the greatest among them? Jesus replied that the Kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of this world.

Luke 22:24 *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

The kingdoms of the world exalt the leader and place him in the position of prominence while everyone else becomes subservient to him. Jesus said in His kingdom, it does not work that way. He said the greatest becomes the servant. He says that he himself came to serve us because he sees us seated in the position of honor. Jesus loves people. Mankind is God's inheritance and he sees us as his greatest treasure.

1 Peter 2:17 Honor **[value]** all men. There is no "us and them" mentality with God. All men are honored with the same honor.

Acts 10:28 God spoke to Peter in a dream and told him that he should not call any man common **[unholy]** or unclean.

We are told to love our enemies.

Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. **36** Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Children of the Highest are in love with people. Children of their father the devil love the message of judgment more than they love people. Their ministry produces condemnation that keeps people from seeing who they are and it keeps people from entering into the kingdom within themselves where righteousness, peace and joy abide because ministering according to the flesh disqualifies people.

***John 8:44** Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

***Matthew 23:4** For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. **13** But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

Paul's eyes were not on sin, they were on Jesus

***1Corinthians 2:2** For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**4** And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: **5** That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

We are ministers of the Spirit that bring life to those we minister to. When we see someone that is at fault, how do we restore them?

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. **2** Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

How did Jesus minister to people? What is the law that motivated Jesus? Jesus was motivated by the love that he had for ALL people. He covered their sin and looked for a way to restore them. He forgave those that spitefully used him. He put them in remembrance of power and faithfulness that God had to deliver them. He was full of compassion and demonstrated the love of God. He was motivated by his desire to set people free from the things that held them captive. His eyes were not on sin. His eyes were on deliverance.

Sadly to say, those of us who minister to others often mix the things of the letter with the things of the Spirit. It is no wonder that we have become a frustrated people. We have read some things in the scriptures and interpreted them through the letter of the word. It is easy to do because the letter of the word seems to make it plain that we are to minister judgment to people. The trouble is, those things directly contradict how Jesus told us to minister to others according to **Luke 6:35-37**. Children of the highest love their enemies and show them mercy.

Matthew chapter 18 is a classic example of how we often interpret things through the letter of the word rather than the spirit of the word. We pick out passages within the chapter and focus on the letter without reading them within the context of the chapter and without having a revelation of what the scripture is really talking about.

Matthew 18

Matthew 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. **16** But if he will not hear thee,

then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

We read this and immediately come to the conclusion that we must deal with the offenses of others by confronting them with them. How do we come to that conclusion? It is written right there with ink on paper!

The phrase "**go and tell him his fault**" according to Strong's Concordance has two opposite meanings. It can mean to confute, or it can mean to rebuke or convict. The word confute means to prove that the accusation is a lie. It means to prove that the opposite is true. The word convict means to prove that he is guilty!

The chapter starts out with the same question that one of the disciples asked in Luke chapter 22. Which of us is the greatest? The whole chapter then proceeds to answer that question. Jesus uses the example of a little child saying that we must humble ourselves as a child in order to enter into the kingdom. If we receive the child, we receive Him. We are admonished not to offend children. The word offend here means to entrap or to cause them to abandon their religion. When we minister the letter we magnify sin and that causes people to lose heart. It also causes them to fight back to try to defend themselves. However you say it, they become self conscious and that is what the letter ministers and it will produce spiritual death.

Matthew 18:3-6

Verses 7-9 talk about offending and taking offense. It says if your hand offend you, cut it off. Or if your eye offend you, pluck it out. In other words, if you are offended by someone, get over it! The consequence of taking offense is not worth it. It throws both you and the one who offended you back under the ministration of the law. If we judge others, we ourselves become judged by the same standard, and all are equally guilty under that system. All of us will lose heart because the principles of the law do not set people free.

Verses 10-14 talk about the lost sheep.

10 *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

"Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones. The word despise, according to Strong's Concordance means to hold their guilt against them. The angels in heaven always see us in the face of our Father. Paul said the same thing in **1 Corinthians 2:2** I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified. We need to look at everyone through the power of the cross!

When a sheep goes astray or wanders from the truth, Jesus went after them because it was not his will that any perish. Jesus came to save, not to condemn.

We are going to skip over the next part for a moment because it is about telling your brother his fault. We are trying to determine the mood of the chapter, so let us go directly to the passages that follow it.

In **verses 21-22** Peter asks Jesus, how often do I forgive my brother? Jesus tells him seventy times seventy.

In **verses 23-35** Jesus tells a parable of a king and his servant. The servant owed the king a great deal of money, but the king had mercy on the servant and forgave him. That same servant found someone that owed him a small amount of money and refused to forgive him. The king said should not the servant forgive others the way that I have forgiven him. In other words, should we not release others from their offenses the same way that Jesus has released us from our offenses? Holding on to offenses produces torment and holds everyone involved captive.

Now let us go back to the offending passages:

Matthew 18:15 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16* *But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17* *And if he shall neglect*

to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Based on the context of where it was written, do we release them from their offense, or do we hold the offense against them? We refute the offense. We prove the opposite to be true. We forgive them and refuse to be offended. We demonstrate love. Love disarms people! It produces change where confrontation only causes people to put up walls!

If we fail to convey to that person that he is loved and valuable, if he does not receive it, get more people involved. Get the whole church involved. If that does not work, count him as a heathen and a publican. How did Jesus treat the heathens and publicans? Did he ostracize them? No! He had dinner with them. He continued to love them until that love drew them to the Father!

We are called to be ministers of the Spirit who connect people to the love of God which in turn gives them the power to overcome their weaknesses. We put people in remembrance of who they are because of the work of the cross.

2Peter 1:3 *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

2Peter 1:9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.**12** Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us. We are ministers of the Spirit. He has anointed us to deliver the captives. He has sent us to restore the spiritually blind and to set people free.

Luke 4:18 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*

