



“I don’t want to change. I want all of you to change!”

Confirmation Bias vs Truth

The Real Spiritual War

Pilate said to Jesus, “**What is truth?**” *John 18:38*

Pilate had no doubt had considered this question long before Jesus stood before him. Among the unsaved, it is a question that remains unanswered.

(John 18:37 ESV) “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

Jesus came to reveal truth. Some believe the parables Jesus told were to hide truth from the rebellious in the world. Yet, when asked why He told parables His answer did not include hiding the truth, but rather He told the truth in stories because the people had become hard hearted.

*(Matthew 13:13–15 ESV) “This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For **this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they***

should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.”

Jesus came to bear witness to the truth, but the majority of the Covenant people had become disinterested in truth and hard hearted. **They** had closed their eyes. Consequently, all they would listen to and receive was a story.

After thirty-seven years in full time ministry, I have come to realize that most people say they are interested in knowing the truth — right up to the point at which they hear it. The reality is that most people are seeking confirmation of what they presently believe to be the truth. Psychologists call this confirmation bias: *the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one’s existing beliefs or theories*. This tendency is so innately strong within people that in some Christian circles anything different than what their majority has accepted as true is considered heresy. They won’t even have a discussion about it.

Let me first say that when a Truth has been firmly established there is no need or reason to pursue anything else. The Bible says that we are not to remove the ancient landmark which our fathers have set (Proverbs 22:28). An example: Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the father in any other way. While not all religions believe this, this is indisputable in true believing Christian circles. However, not **all** Christian doctrine is this way.

I distinctly remember getting saved and being filled with the Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. I was not raised in a Christian home. When the minister asked me if I wanted the “second experience” I simply replied, “I want them all, how ever many there are.” I had no church doctrine to interfere with me receiving. I easily received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

I later found out that the Baptist denomination considered speaking in tongues to be of the devil. I did not know they believed this way *before* I prayed for it so I had no introduction of doubt. I remember thinking, *“I asked God to fill me with His Spirit. How is it that they believe the devil answered that prayer? The Baptists say its of the devil, yet I asked God for it and He gave it to me.”* Its amazing that an entire denomination can be so certain of their doctrine that they will declare that something they don’t believe in is therefore of the devil. **That’s confirmation bias!**

I believe confirmation bias to be one of the greatest enemies of a person in pursuit of the truth. It is closely related to tradition. Jesus said this about tradition:

*(Matthew 15:6 KJV) “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of **none effect** by your tradition.”*

Both confirmation bias and tradition are rooted in the beliefs and practices of some majority of people. This leads to selective hearing. People will refuse to listen to anything that does not agree with what they already believe. Following are some quotes from an article on the subject.

The Truth: Your opinions are the result of years of paying attention to information which confirmed what you believed while ignoring information which challenged your preconceived notions.

In a beautiful revelation of what many of us have suspected to be true, scientists have found that once people reach a conclusion, they are unlikely to change their opinion even when new information prove their initial beliefs wrong.

Over time, by never seeking the antithetical, through accumulating subscriptions to magazines, stacks of books and hours of television, you can become so confident in your world-view no one could dissuade you.

“Thanks to Google, we can instantly seek out support for the most bizarre idea imaginable. If our initial search fails to turn up the results we want, we don’t give it a second thought, rather we just try out a different query and search again.”

The above quotes, although from the secular fields of study, define what a Biblical stronghold is. I would define a stronghold this way: *It is a belief that is surrounded, supported and protected by many reasons.* People often think its a demon. A demon may have started the belief, but the result is a way of thinking in a people that is not Biblical. The Bible speaks of doctrines of demons (1Timothy 4:1). There are some demons who are extraordinary teachers. A human, once indoctrinated, doesn’t even need a demon around to perpetuate the errors any longer.

Sometimes, it is harder to change a human than it is to deal with a demon. We have authority over demons but we do not have authority over humans. Humans have to be convinced of something different in order to change. We cast out demons and they must go but humans have a choice. Paul understood this:

*(2 Corinthians 10:2–6 ESV) “I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing **against some who** suspect us of walking according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have **divine power to destroy strongholds.** We **destroy arguments and every lofty***

opinion** raised against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive** to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, **when your obedience is complete.

People seem to either over spiritualize this or under spiritualize this. Paul is an apostle. Apostles are often “adjusting” ministers. While there are no more foundational apostles, apostles of today do work to keep the foundation pure. In the scripture above, Paul is speaking of apostolic authority and anointing.

When Paul says, “*For though **we** walk in the flesh...*” he is speaking of apostles. It is true that every Christian has to fight the fight of faith, but apostles are often sent in when an adjustment needs to be made in doctrine. They are sent to destroy strongholds. The proof that he is speaking of apostles is given when he then states “*when **your** obedience is complete*” thus making distinction between apostles and those he is writing to.

People do not often, on their own, see where their thinking is wrong. Reading and meditating on the Word is definitely one of the primary places the Holy Spirit changes the thinking of every believer continuously. However, when a stronghold gets into a group of people, God sends in an Apostle to destroy it.

Divine power is needed to deal with strongholds. To destroy “*arguments and every lofty opinion*” among a group of people, tradition and confirmation bias will have to be confronted, destroyed and changed. I promise you, this takes divine power and an anointing. People seem to love their beliefs and opinions more than many other things — and they cling to them. True apostles understand this and what it takes to change a human mind. Personally, I believe there are few true apostles among us today but many are needed.

Jeremiah was sent on a mission from God to confront the thinking of God’s people. Some ministers today believe that an apostle is a “sent prophet.” Here is what his assignment was:

(Jeremiah 1:9–10 ESV) “Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Notice that before he could build and plant he had to first break down and destroy. This is usually the case. Most of the time there is something in the way of believing rightly, and it is their wrong thinking that is supporting some kind of a stronghold.

God then tells Jeremiah that He will make **HIM** into a stronghold.

*(Jeremiah 1:17–19 ESV) “But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, **I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you.**”*

I'll bet there was no “pull” on the anointing in that meeting. A true apostle is a professional at telling people things that they do not want to hear. They can't be stopped. If people are not “pulling” on the anointing, an apostle doesn't care because his power to proclaim does not originate with the will of the people. When a true apostle is dealing with a stronghold it can be intimidating to some of the hearers. People are not used to having their beliefs challenged at a level that requires, and even demands, a change.

Paul defends his authority and cautions them about his coming to them.

*(2 Corinthians 10:7–11 ESV) “Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we. For even if I boast a little too much of **our authority**, which the Lord gave **for building you up** and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” Let such a person understand that **what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.**”*

I guess rumors were going around that Paul was some kind of loud-mouthed weakling. True apostles are sometimes scorned by others because they often go against the flow of the multitude. Can you imagine? People were saying that Paul's speech was of **no account**, yet he wrote most of the New Testament. Paul boldly says to them that what he says in letter — he will **do** when present. That's the voice of an apostle!

Confirmation bias had a hold on me for a long time. When I started out in ministry I was excited about what I was hearing among those I was in fellowship with. God was truly moving with many ministers and we were hungry for God. Consequently, I began to accept as true **all** that I heard preached simply because of **who** was doing the preaching. Looking back, most of what I

heard I still believe to this day and I see it as truth. However, God was about to change **some** of my beliefs.

I was not seeking to change any beliefs when God began dealing with me to change. As God began challenging some of my beliefs, I resisted stubbornly, and, for a long time. Some of what God had to change in me took almost ten years. I mean I resisted it because I did not want it. The “adjusted” changes did not occur because I was studying them to see if they were true. That came later. I would be studying what I **thought** was right and He would arrest my thinking and just challenge me on the spot. I cannot underestimate how much I was resisting change. I just thank God that I did not have to get knocked off of my horse and blinded for three days — but I was close.

Because of the strength of confirmation bias, some things God needs to bring into the Body of Christ take generations to accomplish. Some have to die in the wilderness before the younger ones who were not corrupted by Egypt can enter the promised land. But, it does not have to be that way — and that is not God’s best.

In 1986 the Lord called me to minister on building the financial base of the local church. At that time, the Lord told me what I would face in this calling. What He told me didn’t seem to me like it would really happen. However, every single thing He showed me has happened. Most of it has to do with the **thinking of people** and their **reluctance to change**.

Learn to listen to the Spirit of God concerning doctrine. The following scriptures do not tell us that we don’t need any of God’s ministers. They do tell us that the Spirit of God is the final authority concerning truth.

*(1 John 2:27 ESV) “But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But **as his anointing teaches you** about everything, and is true, and is no lie—**just as it has taught you**, abide in him.”*

*(John 16:13 ESV) “When the Spirit of truth comes, **he will guide you into all the truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”*