

Theology 2.7 – Word made flesh

A. SPIRITUAL REALITIES:

1. **What is Christian Faith? Is it comprised merely of correct doctrine? What was humanity created for, and what is our chief purpose... if not “to know God and enjoy Him forever”?** Seminary and church experiences often reduce faith to IQ and often overlook EQ. Faith has both elements – head and heart working together... both IQ and EQ.
 - a. IQ [head] has to do with the cognitive aspects of knowing and understanding. The argument has been successfully advanced that Gospel Centrality and Diachronic Theology [seeing theology through the whole plan of redemptive history] are preferred to the more static approaches of systematic theology. Understanding the Mind of our Lord is infinitely better than merely understanding issues of theology.
 - b. EQ [heart] has to do with the emotional relational aspects of loving God. It is possible to know about God and not love Him. It is infinitely preferable that you love God.
 - c. When the head and heart aspects are both in play – the fullness of God and the wonder of living in community with Him are realized. It is in this context that living in the “awe and wonder” [Phil 2:12-13] ignites our spiritual vitality – the recognition that God is everywhere and in everything and we as His ambassadors are engaged in His Mission to rescue humanity. This is where the Great Commandment and the Great Commission integrate.
2. **Thoughts on Spiritual Warfare & Faith Movements:**
 - a. **Early Pentecostalism – Smith Wigglesworth was one of the most influential early Pentecostal preachers, and helped shape what would become the standard fare of Evangelism and Faith Healings in the 1880’s.**
 - i. Health problems were attributed to demons, and healing ceremonies involved casting out demons, anointing with oil, and the use of prayer handkerchiefs for those who could not attend.
 - ii. Revival meetings were common with preaching, evangelism, and healing components.
 - iii. Awe and wonder fueled evangelism, and emotionally charged meetings often overshadowed the proclamation of clear Scriptural-evangelical truth.
 - b. **Vineyard Movement in the 1970’s represented by John Wimber – Pentecostalism tended to focus on demon possession and Satanic oppression as the heart of most problems.**
 - i. Wimber became a well-known speaker at international Pentecostal conferences with a focus on what he called "Power Evangelism" and healing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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- ii. Wimber took an approach to Pentecostalism which was somewhat different from that of peers and predecessors. This new approach became known as "The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit."
- iii. The Third Wave differed from classic Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement, foremost, in their approach to Spiritual Gifts. Whereas the previous groups had emphasized the gift of tongues as the only evidence for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Wimber and those he influenced emphasized that this was just one of the many spiritual gifts taught in the Bible. This teaching revolutionized what was a major theological stumbling block to some mainstream Evangelicals, the demonstration of "signs and wonders" expressed in the present-day world in a form alleged to be alike to those of the days of the First Century Apostles.
- iv. Demons were often seen to be behind every abnormality and problem – they were believed to be the source of physical, emotional and psychological maladies.
- v. They gave way too much power to the demonic realm – and dealing with it became excessively technique related.
- vi. A positive was the realization of the potency of the Spiritual realm... the negative was the disproportionate fascination with the realm of evil.
- c. Charismatic Movement in the 1970's & 80's represented by Chuck Smith & Jack Hayford [Four Square Full Gospel] – recognized the Spiritual reality and emphasized Spiritual gifts that were really well grounded theologically.
 - i. Music and worship became the center stage for the church experience with Spiritual integration into theological ministry, with a balance in the combination of teaching and experience.
 - ii. Chuck Smith tapped into the younger generation who had a counter cultural mindset. Jesus was seen as the greatest counter cultural figure in history.
 - iii. Calvary Chapel encouraged a less formal [stodgy] method of worship and celebration introducing electric guitars and drums, and the Jesus Movement was born.
 - iv. Calvary Chapel has grown into a worldwide church and missionary movement.
- d. Modern Mega-church movement tends to apply business models with CEO mentality.
 - i. Process orientation often overlooks dependence on faith and the Spiritual reality.
 - ii. Success is often seen as quantitative rather than qualitative.
 - iii. The focus on numerical growth and church planting and to a lesser degree on Biblical literacy, with little focus on spiritual formation and leadership training and development.

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- iv. A major problem is the ease of participation in the social nature of community gathering without personal transformative growth. This has led to a buffet service consumer mindset of offering a wide pallet of programs and services to attract numerical growth.
- e. Post Modern movement tends toward rediscovery of Spiritual experience with a blending of many disciplines... as long as they remain other-worldly and theologically relevant.
 - i. The focus tends to be on personal experience and relational connectedness. Small group and home fellowship is the face of the new community.
 - ii. Social justice and community outreaches are key practices. Jesus concern for the poor and oppressed is a mandate for social action.
 - iii. Tend to be less dogmatic about moral absolutes and more accepting and tolerant of personal lifestyle choices... such as pre-marital sex, homosexuality, etc.
 - iv. Mood, art, message and music are interwoven in creative ways in corporate service events.
- f. New Calvinism – CJ Meheney, Tim Keller, Mark Driscoll, John Piper are all examples of churches that have combined 16th century conservative Calvinist theology with a more current and socially relevant presentation.
 - i. Sovereign Grace Church [CJ Meheney] – are Charismatic Calvinists... a new direction of Charismatic spiritual expression.
 - ii. Mark Driscoll lists four main differences between Old and New Calvinism:
 1. Old Calvinism was either fundamental or liberal, and either separated from or syncretized with culture. New Calvinism is missional and seeks to recreate and redeem culture.
 2. Old Calvinism fled from the cities. New Calvinism is flooding into cities.
 3. Old Calvinism was fearful of the Holy Spirit and generally cessationist (i.e., believing the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as tongues and prophecy had ceased). New Calvinism delights in the Holy Spirit and is generally continuationist with regard to spiritual gifts.
 4. Old Calvinism was fearful and suspicious of other Christian denominations and burned bridges with them. New Calvinism expresses love for all Christians and works to build bridges between them. This fourth distinctive is what Driscoll considers a vital component in being able to engage with the present day society.
 - iii. Tim Keller is pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York with a membership of over 6,000. His book The Reason for God is a wonderful

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demonstration of his cutting edge apologetics in light of conservative theology and social liberalism.

3. Spiritual Anthropology – seeks to balance the high calling of humanity before a Sovereign God who is Spirit in the best sense of the word. This plays out with:

a. Human Interaction under God’s Permissive Will – free will action directives as we seek to do God’s Will. God works to reveal His plan to His people in personal revelation through the following means from the most dramatic to the most common:

- i. Big decision/life path changers – where God gives specific guidance through dreams, visions, spiritual declarations, etc... but not compulsion. These are times when God steps into a person’s life and causes a major change in the trajectory of one’s life – these are rare events and they occur approximately 1% of the time throughout a disciple’s lifetime.**
- ii. Significant decision that is not a path changer – where God influences our decision through inner conviction with the Spirit’s prompting to say or do something – this occurs approximately 10% of the time.**
- iii. Spiritually motivated Biblical directive – where God brings conviction to act by moving us through revelation in Scripture which ring in concert with words from friends, and errors or faults we commit, etc. – this occurs approximately 15% of the time.**
- iv. Sub-Spiritual consciousness – where God is moving us through dreams, thoughts, or various actions that move us toward a direction... this is more of a nudge or a drift rather than a turn where God works through circumstance... and often where we see the matter more clearly looking back upon it – this occurs approximately 20% of the time.**
- v. Discretionary decisions – where God allows us to chose what we want to do in the greater context of His will – these are things that are more minor matters where human free will is most free – God influences us but His revelation is unclear or inconclusive but where God works these matters out for Good – this occurs approximately 54% of the time.**

b. Human interaction and obedience to God’s directive/prescriptive Will – most of which we don’t really see or fully understand:

- i. Development of Christlikeness – the more I grow and mature in Christ and the more I prayerfully walk with God, I become more conscious of and consistent with my mind and actions being conformed to Jesus.**
- ii. Special guidance – God often provides clear directives through His Word, but they are received and applied through faith. As Christlikeness develops, we become more adept at seeing the issue and responding appropriately.**

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- iii. **God’s involvement in my life is both overt and covert – there are things that I am more obviously aware of, and much more that I am unaware of or realize later.**
- iv. **God’s arm-twisting intervention – where He acts to compel me through circumstances to do what I don’t want to do – such as Jonah.**
- c. **Decision making – the high calling of humanity as having been created in God’s Image necessitates a respectful balance of knowing God’s Word and His Will, being wise in evaluating the situations I find myself in, prayerful dependence expecting God to reveal His desires – all of which join together to affect my thinking and influence my actions.**
 - i. **Start the decision process prayerfully – expect that God will influence my thinking.**
 - ii. **God gave us a brain and He expects us to use it – wise & thoughtful evaluation of the issues surrounding the decision is expected. Make a list of positive and negative influences/impacts. Often writing down the positive/negatives of an issue will help clarify my thinking as I more fully describe the matter. Most issues are not black or white, but rather shades of grey. By reflecting in prayer and then analyzing the issues on paper will help clarify the choices.**
 - iii. **Look for Biblical imperatives to guide the decision making process.**
 - iv. **Seek counsel of mature friends and leaders... evaluate their counsel and prayerfully consider what God would have you do.**
 - v. **If you remain unsure, pray for additional clarification expecting God to help. God does not promote confusion or deception... these are tools of the adversary.**
- d. **Calling of God and decision making –**
 - i. **Giftedness and talent come into play in Job & ministry options and decisions. We have natural abilities [those things God imbued us with from birth], but we also receive spiritual gifts [those things we receive supernaturally] to serve the body.**
 - ii. **Some people may have an inner desire to do something, but no objective or supernatural call to service. One should proceed with caution without a clear call with affirmation from trusted friends.**
 - iii. **Door openings or closings are God working through circumstances. A closed door is a no... while many open doors may be God asking us “how do you want to serve Me?” Another possibility is that the desire is right, but the timing is wrong... all this takes discernment and wisdom.**

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- iv. **Trusting the Sovereignty of God when I don't see verification of a call – may well be an exercise of my faith that God can and will use me when I seek to do His work.**
- v. **A major problem in the church is the thought that ministry is exclusive to the pastorate within their mission field – market ministry is as important and underutilized by trained ministers. Add to this the problem that most church ministry goes into developing and maintaining the organization [institution] of the church. While some evangelism and teaching occur, very little is devoted to equipping church lay-leaders for ministry.**
- vi. **Our journey with God is partially objective and partially subjective – the walk has enough verification to encourage us to persevere, and enough trust to strengthen our faith.**
- vii. **Most of these choices will involve a “responsible Decision” that incorporates many of these elements. “Leaps of faith” [drastic action motivated by the Spirit] are more the exception than the rule... however walking by faith [daily dependence and prayerful perception of the Spirit] should be the norm.**

B. SATAN

1. **There are 2 principal OT passages that are used to define Satan – although the passage is directed toward an earthly king, it is a type of evil associated with Satan.**

- a. **Is 14:12-23** ^{ISA 14:12} “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! ^{ISA 14:13} “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. ^{ISA 14:14} ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ ^{ISA 14:15} “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit. ^{ISA 14:16} “Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, *saying*, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, ^{ISA 14:17} Who made the world like a wilderness And overthrew its cities, Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’ ^{ISA 14:18} “All the kings of the nations lie in glory, Each in his own tomb. ^{ISA 14:19} “But you have been cast out of your tomb Like a rejected branch, Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, Who go down to the stones of the pit Like a trampled corpse.
- b. **Ez 28:12-19** ^{EZE 28:12} “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ^{EZE 28:13} “You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. ^{EZE 28:14} “You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. ^{EZE 28:15} “You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. ^{EZE 28:16} “By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the

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stones of fire. ^{EZE 28:17} “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. ^{EZE 28:18} “By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. ^{EZE 28:19} “All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever.””

- c. **Chron 21:1 – Satan moved David to perform a censures.**
- d. **Job 1:6ff & Job 2:1ff – Satan had access to God and was acknowledged as the accuser.**
- e. **Zec 3:1ff – Satan as accuser.**

2. NT references to Satan:

- a. **Luke 10:17-21** ^{LK 10:17} The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” ^{LK 10:18} And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. ^{LK 10:19} “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. ^{LK 10:20} “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.” ^{LK 10:21} At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.
- b. **Even demons are subject to Your Name.... Jesus as God is Lord over creation including the Spirit realm. Satan had access to God’s throne room... did he lose this right when he rebelled, or does God tolerate him and use him in spite of himself? Scripture doesn’t clarify this matter but does reveal that the power of God is revealed in Jesus Word and His Name... Satan and his followers are rendered powerless over believers who believe God, take Him at His Word and act upon it. God’s power is released in me and through me from God’s Spirit within... it is not a formulaic rendering that provides power, but rather it is the Word of God faithfully appropriated that release Spiritual authority.**
- c. **Satan is called the “Prince of the Air” and the “Prince of this world” – these terms suggest that he has real power and some authority that he usurped from Adam. God’s promise was that Adam’s seed [Jesus] would crush Satan’s head while Satan would wound Jesus.**
- d. **Satan offered the world kingdoms to Jesus at the temptation in the wilderness. Jesus declined the offer but didn’t renounce his claim.**
- e. **Luke 10:18 – Jesus comments He watched Satan fall from heaven.**
- f. **Acts 26:18 – Satan has a dominion of darkness.**

3. These references to Satan and the Spiritual reality he leads must affect how I think and act about things, including:

- a. **My personal attitude toward evil needs to be in terms of something that is not just bad, but totally reprehensible and utterly repugnant to God.**

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- b. **My hope in light of the Fall – as bad as things are in this fallen state, the Hope we live for is contrastingly wonderful.**
 - c. **My place in calling out people into the Kingdom of Light from the domain of darkness through the proclamation of the Gospel.**
 - d. **All disciples are called to bringing Grace into a fallen world that is under judgment and marked for destruction.**
 4. **There is no political nation [kingdom] of earth that is not a part of Satan’s domain [kingdom of darkness]... this includes America. There is no Christian Biblical Theocracy... there is no national representation of the Kingdom of God – Israel couldn’t do it, nor can America.**
 5. **The Spiritual remnant that continues to act in the world is the Church [the organic mystical-Spiritual Body of Christ, not the institution or organization of the church.**
 - a. **Of all the Christian deceptions the “prosperity gospel” is the most blatant betrayal of God’s statement about the nature of the world and believers. God does not promise wealth or a ‘name it and claim it’ mantra. He promises that He will never leave us or forsake us... but that we may suffer in this fallen world. Those who have the means should seek to advance the Kingdom of God.**
 - b. **It is a sign of maturity when Christians realize they are not a part of this world – we live in the now, but our goals, values, etc. are fundamentally different. We come to realize we don’t belong here, and we long for God’s Kingdom.**
 - c. **No country is representative of God – and no political party is uncorrupted. The nature of humanity’s government is corrupted and unredeemable.**
 - d. **Christians have a responsibility to the powers in control... “render Caesar what is Caesar’s.” But world powers/leaders are not my ultimate authority.**
 - e. **While I have a responsibility to be obedient to the ruling powers... when they come in conflict to God’s ethics, I must please God not man... faithful contentious objecting may be required of me... but you don’t break laws to right wrongs... rather you stand your moral ethical ground in Jesus’ name.**
 6. **The greater perspective of Christian Hope and Faith exceeds any possible benefit from earthly compromise. The question becomes where does my hope really lie? Do I really believe what God says about eternity being my home?**
 - a. **The current economic conditions have erased 30%-50% of all wealth... and it is still falling. Am I counting on my wisdom and my wealth or on God?**
 - b. **Unemployment is at 10% and is climbing... many people did things right and are still suffering, in addition to those who were wrong and suffer consequentially.**
 - c. **As the economic situation unfolds and the hope of retirement seems more and more doubtful, what do I decide to do? Whose values will I obey?**
 7. **We are engaged in a Spiritual Battle – for which we have limited awareness of.**

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- a. **There is something bigger going on in God’s Plan than what we can objectively know. Trusting is relying on Him in spite of the situation and circumstances.**
- b. **Faith is ultimately our best position, and Hope our best future.**
- c. **We need to learn to live in the Kingdom of God while yet in the Fallen kingdom of earth. We must exhibit God’s Grace and Kingdom principles.**
- d. **Jude 1:17-25 – something better is coming! Amen!**

But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, “ In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.” ^{JUDE 1:19} These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Gospel Coalition Bay Area – Is now official! The local coalition is gaining traction to place the Gospel at the center of faith and practice in the Bat Area. This is a way to get past the theological differences that divide so many theologians and church communities, and regain the call for the unity of the faith.