



2024 Second Quarter: The Great Controversy

Lesson #3: Light Shines in the Darkness

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SABBATH

Memory Text:

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going’ ” (John 12:35, NKJV).

When I was in school studying about the young blind and deaf Helen Keller learning to “see” and “hear” via finger and hand gestures, my English teacher gave us extra credit for going a full day blindfolded. That day revolutionized my life; there are so many things you take for granted when you can see! But if you can’t see, how do you know what food is on the plate? Are there bugs in it, or mold on it? When you put food on a fork, how much food is on there? What about keeping soup on your spoon? When you pick up your glass, where do you put it back down? When is the food gone? How do you dress in clothes that match? When you drop something, how do you find it? How do you know which path to walk without signs? Not to mention the inability to read, drive, enjoy scenery and art, or the faces of those around you. Who might take advantage of your blindness to cheat, steal, or beat you up? Believe me, from that day to this, I cherish my sight!!

So, when Jesus asked a blind man that had been crying out loudly, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” what he wanted Jesus to do for him, I can assure you that I understand his simple request, “Lord, I want to see.” And Jesus had a plain and simple response, “Receive your sight; **your faith has healed you.**”

Our daily spiritual prayer needs to be, “**Lord, I want to see.**”

“Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” Psalm 119:105

In the Bible, light and truth represent each other. As light allows you to physically see, truth does the same thing spiritually. Though our eyes are naturally drawn to light, our sin-sick souls are naturally drawn to the dark. Darkness in either dimension is said to be the absence of light. One of the many ideas presented in Come and Reason early on that has stuck with me is this scenario: you are lost in a pitch dark cave, alone for a week in total darkness, until someone finds and rescues you. If they rescue you at midnight, and you are brought out of the cave, your eyes feel fine. But if you are brought out at noon, your eyes can’t tolerate the light. It is so bright and painful! So, when you allow the Holy Spirit to help you “see” the truth, as painful as that might be, He does it in doses you can handle throughout your life. “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will

be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty.”

But if you do not allow the Holy Spirit to take what Jesus created, a perfect character, perfect love, and put that inside you instead of the darkness, when Jesus comes, how will you withstand the total, unveiled revelation of the fiery light of truth? Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrew 12:29 call **God a “consuming fire.”** Isaiah 9:17 points out that **“wickedness burns like fire.”** It reminds me of people who go into an MRI that have metallic paint in their tattoos. That also burns like fire, because the metal is moved by the strong magnet, creating pain. In God’s case, wickedness cannot bear up in God’s presence, because His truth cannot be held back. Can you imagine a dark mind coming into direct contact with the brilliant source of truth in the universe? No place to hide, no rationalizations that hold up; nothing to do but to face the truth of who you are, what you have done to yourself and others, and the total ripple effect of cause to effect that happened because of the wicked darkness you kept inside you? You could have chosen to be healed, to have light replace the darkness, but you would not. No wonder people beg for the mountains and rocks to fall on them to hide them from His face! Revelation 6:15-17. Daniel 7:9, 10 describes the judgment like this: “As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.”

Isaiah 33:13-17 talks about what happens when God himself comes to earth to rescue His people,” The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: “Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?” Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil – they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them. **Your eyes will see the king in his beauty** and view a land that stretches afar.

Celebrity Debby Boone shared in the Woman’s Devotional Bible a wonderful example of what the presence of light can do. “Every school morning for the past two year, precisely at 7:00 am, I have taken a deep breath, climbed up the stairs, and opened the door to my eight-year-old son Jordan’s bedroom. Each time I’ve steeled myself for the coming battle required to wrench his eyelids apart to start a new day. Most of the time I would leave his room convinced that he was well on his way to being dressed and would be downstairs ready to eat breakfast within ten minutes, only to climb those same stairs at 7:30 am, push back the door, and find him sound asleep. A couple of weeks ago, all this changed. And I had nothing to do with it. Jordan started leaving his window shutters wide open when he would go to sleep. The morning light would gently filter in and quite naturally and quickly awaken him. I now walk into his room and find him sitting at his small desk, completely dressed in his school uniform, wondering when breakfast will be ready. Jordan and I no longer have struggles in the morning. The presence of light has solved the problem completely. As I read the beginning verses of Isaiah 60, my mornings with Jordan came to mind. I asked the Lord to show me how to allow His light

to awaken places in my heart that I have been content to leave sleeping in the darkness and comfort of my soul. It's hard to wake up when you are surrounded by darkness. And we can't transform ourselves into what we should or want to be any more than Jordan could wake himself up just because he knows he should be up. Exposing ourselves to the light and presence of the Lord's love not only will uncover the dark places of our heart but also will fill them with light so that "the glory of the Lord rises upon you" Isaiah 60:1. But how do we expose ourselves to His light? That's the easy part....just by leaving the shutters of our hearts open. Come to God with an honest expression of willingness to allow Him to change us – by His wonderful and brilliant light.”

What influenced your spiritual and religious choices?

To become a Christian?

A Seventh day Adventist?

To attend, watch or read Come and Reason Ministries' presentations?

This year has especially difficult for me. I have had to learn a lot about grieving and forgiving. I imagine that Christ's cross in standing strong in the middle of a raging river, and in order not to be washed away, I must constantly hold onto that cross with both hands. If I am holding onto anything else... bitterness, anger, jealousy, pride, selfishness, material things, bad relationships, etc... I will be swept away. The Holy Spirit gives me the power to hold on, the strength to do what is right and light, and to turn away from darkness. That is a visual that helps me understand the position in which I stand in this world and with God. Nothing else compares to what Jesus delights to do inside me! He wants me to trust Him with outcomes, avenging, judgment, cleansing away the bad, filling me with God and with good.

Then how do we share this light?

Get on the nightstand

Ask Questions

Tell stories as Jesus did (examples of various dirtiness of plates, what tornado did to oaks and wildflowers)

God has an unlimited problem-solving tool box, which He will show us how and when to use

It is amazing that our Creator, who is the most intelligent, creative, capable problem solver in the universe, a being consisting of LOVE, powerful to save, heal, teach, rescue, wants to be intimate with us. He wants to be our daily friend and companion. He has proven Himself to be worthy of our trust and love. Are we drawn to the light, like moths, or away from the light, light roaches? In the end, there will only be two groups, no matter how many religions have developed. It is Christ on the cross, flanked by a thief who died and a thief who was saved. That is our choice, plain and simple.

So, our mission, should we chose to except it, is the mission of Jesus. Isaiah 61 gives the mission parameters. So we show God's character, His light by:

Preaching good news to the poor

Binding up the broken hearted

Proclaiming freedom fro captives
Proclaimng the year of the Lord's favor (God is with you!)
Proclaiming a day of vengeance of our God
Comforting all who mourn
Provide for those who grieve in Zion
Bestow a crown of beauty, the oil of gladness, the garment of praise

Are we a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor?

In the book of Revelation, considering the devil, we see he is called a serpent (because he is cunning), and a dragon (because he desires to destroy). In order to keep us in the dark, what are some of the serpent dragon Satan's strategies?

1. Partial truth, just enough to make us think we are right
2. Too proud to admit we are wrong when new, true light is presented
3. Encouraging us to think that if we are too busy to pray or read the Bible, we will stay in the same relationship with God as we had before.
4. The blending of Christian teachings with pagan practices
5. Comparing ourselves to each other
6. Create ongoing fear and pressure of potential loss of health, job, family, money, good climate
7. Other ideas?

SUNDAY - Compromise: Satan's Subtle Strategy

Compare John 14:6 (Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me") with John 8:44 (He also said, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is NO truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.>"). What a contrast between Jesus' character and Satan's is seen in these two passages!

Throughout the centuries, Satan has used the strategy that worked in heaven with angels and with Eve in Eden, and now with us, to use lies, distortion of the truth, and creation of doubt in God and His Word to lead God's creatures astray.

"Satan well knew that the Holy Scriptures would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the word that even the Saviour of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault, Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, 'It is written.' To every suggestion of the adversary, He opposed the wisdom and power of the word. In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the Scriptures. The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their

pretensions. Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over church and state.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pg 51

But the priest and rulers thought they had light; all the light they needed. Jesus gave the parable of a priest who loudly and publicly prayed, ““God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Jesus judged that the tax collector went home justified before God. “For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” So, what does it mean to “humble yourself?” How does that bring light into our hearts, and salvation to our souls?

This world messages us all the time to think of ourselves as better than others, rich over poor, cultured over uncouth, smart versus dumb, and on and on in so many different ways. Because, after all, “I’m worth it!” But like most things in God’s kingdom, His ways are the exact opposite of this world’s ways of believing. While He calls us His friends, His brothers, His children, and inheritors of the kingdom, he gave us an example of what that meant when He bent down and washed His disciples’ filthy feet, on the very night when each of them was going to betray, deny or desert him. He said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, **whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**” **This humility, this unselfishness is light!**

Both King Saul and King David were confronted by disobedience to God’s commands, but while Saul rationalized his behavior, David confessed and agreed that God was right; David was wrong. He was called, a man after God’s own heart. **This humble confession of wrong is light!**

MONDAY - Savage Wolves

Acts 20:29 expressed Paul’s concern that “savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock”. In other words, **believers would face fierce persecution from within the church.**

Heresies would enter the church. **False doctrines** would be substituted for divine truths. **Pagan practices** would prevail. In the fourth and fifth centuries, **compromise** subtly crept into the Christian church, with mission advance being the probable justification. But the terrible result was a departure from the truth of God’s word.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Paul’s comment, “the mystery of lawlessness does already work,” is significant. Even in Paul’s day, there was a gradual departure from the truth of God’s Word regarding obedience to God’s law. This departure would flourish in the later centuries.

Contrary to the second commandment, idols were introduced into Christian worship. For millennia, idols were in the forefront of all pagan religions. To make Christianity more acceptable to heathens coming into the Christian church, pagan deities were renamed as so-called saints. Sunday, the day of

worship for the sun god, was gradually adopted as the day of Christian worship in honor of the Resurrection. This false day, not sanctioned in Scripture prevails even now.

What kind of compromises do we see entering the church today? More important, what kind of compromises might we be making, perhaps by blending truth and error?

Some people get very worried about the truth of the Bible when they hear of different interpretations by various translators, a comma here, an added word there. If we can't trust that the Bible is still staying exactly what God meant it to say, then they won't believe or follow any of it. But I have found that even with various interpretations, **the vital things we need to be saved are preserved there.** We find there that God is the creative force behind our existence, that He warned us to stay away from danger, but once our original parents got involved with danger and distrust, God developed a plan (at the cost of His own life) to rescue and heal our doomed race. We now have the same choice Adam and Eve had...trust God and follow His light and life-giving commands to Him, or distrust God and go into darkness...to our doom. All of the questions we have, someone in the Bible asked and was answered by God. We can find our answers there. I think of the Bible as a big jigsaw puzzle, with pieces hidden everywhere. It is a pleasure to put the pieces together and see the final result of what God hid there for us to find. The answers! We need to find the answers for ourselves, guided by the Holy Spirit. The way, the truth and the life are there for us to find and learn more about.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. THEN I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

Whether we are lost or saved is totally the result of our own decisions. We have a choice. God will honor our choice, but it is a strange work for Him to have to let go of any of us into eternal non-existence (Romans 1). Much like it would be strange for us to try to rescue our child who has fallen into the freezing ocean, only to have them repeatedly push our hands away and refuse to hold on to be saved. They would choose to sink and drown rather than have help from us. Heartbreaking! You can see God's heart on this issue in multiple places in the Bible, for example:

Isaiah 65:1-3 “I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, “Her am I, here am I!” All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations – a people who continually provoke me to my very face...”

Matthew 23:37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.”

Deuteronomy 30:19,20 ‘This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land....’

When we believe lies about God and how He runs His universe, it not only influences others within our church, but also those outside of the church, effectively taking God's name in vain. What are some of the ways Satan seeks to weaken the Bible's influence on us?

- Scientific endeavors (Before the flood and today)
- Biblical Scholarship
- Procrastination
- Business
- Rushing through reading of the Bible
- Not seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit
- Not digging into the "Why" of what you read
- Becoming more interested in solving earthy problems than in our mission and connection with God
- Taking one verse and making a whole doctrine from it
- Not asking how what you are reading says about God's character
- Wrong doctrines leave people open to attack by demons (for example the state of the dead, eternal burning hell, secret rapture...)

TUESDAY – Safeguarded by the Word

The Bible is the infallible revelation of God's will. It presents Heaven's plan for humanity's salvation. Since "all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God," it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV). That is, "all Scripture" is inspired by God; not some parts or some parts more than others. The whole Bible must be accepted as the Word of God. Otherwise the door is wide open for deception.

The Bible clearly reveals God's infinite love in the light of the great controversy. It also exposes satanic delusions and reveals the devil's deceptions. Satan hates the Word of God and has done everything possible throughout the centuries to destroy its influence.

After all, what would we know about the plan of salvation without the Bible? How much, if anything, would we understand about the birth, life, teachings, and ministry of Jesus? Without the Scriptures, would we even begin to comprehend the depth of Christ's sacrifice, the glory of His resurrection, the power of His intercession, and the majesty of His return?

We must fight against any and all attempts to undermine its authority or inspiration, even from those who, while professing great love of the Bible, bring doubts about it, even subtly. Tragically, especially through the inroads of modern thinking, many theologians and Christians focus so much on the human side of Scripture that the Bible becomes the word of man instead the Word of God. The Bible, they argue, is the writings of kings, shepherds, a fisherman, priests, poets, and others who shared their understandings and conceptions of God, of nature, and of reality the best that they, in their time and place, understood them.

If this were true, why should we, living today in the twenty-first century, really care about what these people thought, much less make what they thought the foundation of our hope for eternity?

Psalms 119:105, 116, 130, 133, and 160 give insights from the psalmist, such as, “Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path,” “uphold me and I will be delivered,” “it gives understanding to the simple,” and “redeem me from human oppression.”

WEDNESDAY – Human Reasoning Apart from Scripture

The Holy Spirit works through our minds. He invites us to explore the mysteries of the universe. As someone has aptly stated: “As Christians, we do not check our brains at the door of the church.” Nevertheless, the brilliance of human reasoning alone is incapable of discovering the divine truths of Scripture. Truth is not a matter of human opinion. It is a matter of divine revelation.

One of the devil’s most effective deceptions is to lead us to believe that human reasoning, unaided by the Holy Spirit and uninformed by the Word of God, is sufficient to understand God’s will. There may be a way that seems right to us, or even to entire cultures, but it may be totally wrong in the eyes of God.

Mark Finley, who wrote this quarter’s lessons, shared the following: “A few years ago, my wife and I decided to do some hiking in the forest near the hotel we were staying at for the night. Typically, I am fairly good at directions, and after hiking for about an hour or so taking various trails, I was quite confident that I could find our way back with little difficulty. But soon we found ourselves hopelessly lost in the forest. The sun was going down, and I feared the worst. Thankfully, we met some other hikers who knew the way. We had been at least five miles off course but near a main road. Since their car was parked nearby, they offered us a ride back to our hotel. Discovering someone who knew the way and someone who had the ability to get us back to our destination made all the difference for us.”

God has not left us alone on our journey from earth to heaven. The Holy Spirit points us to the sacred Scriptures that lead us homeward. Truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil—these can be correctly understood only in light of God’s Word. That which contradicts God and His Word is error, and error is always dangerous; that which is in harmony with God is truth and goodness. How important that we make God’s Word our final arbiter of truth and morality.

Why is the human mind without the aid of the Holy Spirit incapable of discovering divine truth? Discuss the relationship between human reason and divine revelation. How does reason actually help us understand divine revelation? For example, look at Daniel 2, a prophecy that covers world history from the time of Babylon to the Second Coming. How does a prophecy like this powerfully appeal to human reason?

What shifts our paradigm, and breaks us out of our cocooned beliefs to see new revelations from God?

These are some of mine:

- Jesus pleading with the Father
- The realization that, as a nurse, I am a recording angel
- Ten commandments are like an MRI
- The hospital of salvation, instead of the courtroom

THURSDAY – Battle for the Mind

The Moody Bible Institute produced a film about pilots, who flew into the jet stream before people knew there was one. Their instruments told them they had reached their destination; however, they didn't believe it because they weren't due to reach their destination for several more hours. So, they kept on flying, but never reaching their destination. When their plane went down due to lack of fuel, they each tried walking in the same direction, still looking for the city for which they had aimed. Their bodies were found in the desert at various locations...having never found their destination. Of course, had they relied on their instruments, they would have arrived safely.

An illustration of how our inner ears work was also given in this presentation, showing how a person can think they are still turning in one direction, while they are actually turning in the opposite direction. This is why pilots who fly in stormy weather have to have IFR certifications, or Instrument Flight Rules. Even seasoned pilots must adhere strictly to their instruments, and fight their instincts to fly by how they feel about their position in the sky. John F. Kennedy is a sad example of an inexperienced pilot “flying by the seat of his pants” and ending up crashing; killing himself and his passengers. He would have been better off to have put his autopilot on...it would have gone by the plane's instruments.

We can think we are so right, but be so very wrong. Satan takes advantage of our tendency to believe we are right, no matter what, by presenting falsehood so very close to the truth that we will embrace it, without searching the scriptures to find the truth. God knows our best path and will share it with us, if we spend our time talking and listening to Him. He does have this annoying tendency to wait until the very last minute to show us the path...to see if we will try to solve the problem on our own, like Abraham. He tests us to see if we will trust Him and wait for His answers. He will finally shine a light from the end of our challenging tunnels and shows us the way to take. Learning this about Him helps us to show others how to find the light at the end of their dark tunnels of life.

2 Cor. 4:4 says, “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe..” What does this mean? How are their eyes blinded? How are eyes opened?

The Greek word for “mind” in this passage is *noema*. It literally means our perception or mental faculties. The SDA Bible Commentary makes an enlightening statement about this verse. “The battle between Christ and Satan is a battle for the minds of men. (Rom. 7:23, 25; 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:14, 11:3; Phil. 2:5, 4:7, 8). **Satan's principal work is to blind or darken men's minds. He does this by keeping them from the study of God's Word, by deranging the powers of the mind through the excesses of body and soul, by wholly occupying the mind through the things of this life, and by appealing to pride and self-exaltation.**” Volume 6, p. 854

The lack of knowledge on the part of the lost is not because they COULD NOT know. It is because they WOULD NOT know. Many have had every opportunity to know truth but chose not to believe, and Satan blinded their eyes. Satan’s kingdom is a kingdom of darkness. As The SDA Bible Commentary adds, “The gospel is the only means by which Satan’s diabolical schemes and deceptions can be exposed, and by which men can see the way from darkness to light.”—Volume 6, p. 854. The essence of the New Testament message is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is at the heart of the gospel and is the center of scripture. All Scripture testifies of Him (John 5:39).

During the early centuries of the Christian church, the New Testament believers were totally committed to Christ as the One who was the light in their darkness. They were redeemed by His grace, transformed by His power, and motivated by His love. Even death could not break their bond of loyalty to Christ. They recognized the devil’s deceptions in the glorious light of the gospel. Christ has always had men and women who, by His grace, have stood courageously for His truth. In these early centuries, the light of Christ’s love, grace, and truth shone through the darkness.

FRIDAY – Further Thought

The same spirit of hatred and opposition to the truth has inspired the enemies of God in every age, and the same vigilance and fidelity have been required in His servants. The words of Christ to the first disciples are applicable to His followers to the close of time: ‘What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.’ Mark 13:37.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 56, 57

In many parts of the world, especially where people have free access to the Bible, Satan has employed other means to weaken its influence. One very effective way has been through various **scientific endeavors or even biblical scholarship**, which sometimes takes positions that, if accepted, would undermine trust in the Word of God. For example, though the book of Daniel dates itself to more than 500 years before Christ, many Bible scholars date it, instead, to the middle of the second century B.C. They argue that it had to be written at this time; otherwise the prophet would have been accurately telling the future, and that can’t happen. Therefore, they argue, Daniel was not written when it says it was but, rather, hundreds of years later. Unfortunately, this lie about the Bible is one of many that modern scholarship seeks to foist upon us. And more unfortunately, many people accept this error because, after all, Bible scholars are teaching it. No wonder Paul warns us, “Test all things; hold fast to what is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Satan’s major attempt in the great controversy between good and evil is to malign God’s character and present Him as an authoritarian, unloving tyrant. How does the evil one attempt to do this, and what is God’s response to his lies?

In 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15, Paul confirmed, “...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.”

The apostle Peter affirms that “no prophecy is of private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20). How can we be sure we do not distort the meaning of Scripture to achieve our own ends? Why might this be easier to do than we realize? How can we safeguard ourselves against it?

The Bible depicts the great controversy in terms of a conflict between two radically opposite forces, such as light versus darkness or truth versus lies. True, the side of evil clamors for a compromise with the truth, for such compromise is evil’s only chance of survival. The side of evil seeks to secure its survival at any cost in order that it might destroy that which is good or of God. That is why the devil has continually been at work to lure the church into compromise. Unfortunately, the church fell into compromise, as did humanity’s first parents. The effects of these compromises are seen and felt to this day. God, however, who is the Source of truth and light, will never compromise. Trust in God and faithfulness to the truth, as revealed in Jesus through Scripture, will safeguard the church from compromise and prevent us from falling prey to the devil.

Let’s talk about compromise.

In various social contexts, such as family life and politics, compromise is considered acceptable and, in many situations, even desirable. Generally, the word “compromise” refers to reaching an agreement, to settling, by mutual concession, for the middle ground between the positions of two or more parties. The key to such an agreement lies in “concession”: each side must cede something so that both, or all, sides can continue to coexist or live together. In some cases, each side compromises because none has the strength to convince, or overcome, and control the other side by force. In other cases, the parties compromise simply because they want to live together peaceably as neighbors, or as family, in love or mutual respect.

In the context of the latter perspective, compromise certainly has a positive connotation, appearing as a solution to conflict and as an opportunity for peaceful coexistence. These types of compromises are common in our daily lives and involve negotiation or tolerance. However, in general, compromise is perceived as a negative phenomenon, implying the loss of an essential value, principle, truth, or quality. A compromised lot of medicine, immune system, national identity, education, morality, reputation, harvest, or military position is all undesirable and unacceptable because these threaten our very way of life or existence. The mixture of the ideas of worship in paganism with those in Christianity causes confusion and contamination of the truth. We need unvarnished truth, but we are not always happy with pure truth. We look to symbols, to artifacts, to relics as a way to imagine God and His power, but these symbols tell us nothing about the true God, and merely serve to lower our conceptions of who He really is. Why do you think the Ten Commandments list making no forms of anything in heaven, earth or waters to worship? None of these things compares in the least way to God. Christians need to remove the paganism from our beliefs, to keep and share the light of truth! Darkness is just outside the light and only waits to return when the light dims or goes out.

How about God? Could not He compromise with the rebel angels or with fallen humans to avoid the war in heaven and to allow all to coexist peacefully? Could He not, at least, tolerate the opposing party? If the opposing side wanted independence or autonomy, could not God grant this request?

Could He not simply give the rebels a region somewhere in a corner of the universe where they might live by themselves instead of being exterminated?

First, there is a qualitative difference between our daily negotiations and the compromise that Lucifer was desirous of achieving. God created us with all the freedom necessary to express ourselves, to interact and negotiate with others, in love and in righteousness. However, there are some physical and moral limitations that cannot be compromised because these limits constitute the very foundation of our existence. This foundation is comprised of the truths that God is our Creator, our Provider, our Lawgiver (and as such, reveals how we should live our lives in order to be happy), and our King. God is the Source of our life. We simply cannot exist without Him. Lucifer wanted to change this very foundation. He challenged God's character, status, and authority and claimed that humans are gods (Gen. 3:4), having existence in themselves and having ability to create their own meanings of, and standards for, life and happiness.

Second, and closely related to the point above, is the nature of sin. Sin is not merely holding a dissenting opinion. Sin is the conscious and deliberate rebellion against, and rejection of, God's claim that He is the only Creator, Provider, Lawgiver, and King. Sin cannot tolerate the existence of such a God. The foundational impulse of sin is to topple this God from His throne and install self as the king. The devil, however, offers a compromise. He would be willing to renounce his call for a total rejection of God's existence as long as he, Lucifer, was also recognized as a god. God, on the other hand, allows no room for such a compromise or negotiation with sin. What can He concede on His part? To say that He is not the Creator? To say He is not the Provider? To say that He is not the Source of life and standard of happiness and morality? To say that angels and humans can have life without Him? Any of these would be a lie. While compromise would be a triumph for the devil, compromise would mean capitulation for God.

Third, and closely related to the first two points, the situation described above is not only about truth and honor but constitutes the ultimate life-and-death situation. Let us imagine for a moment that we are Adam and Eve. We are in a setting in which Satan and God explain their positions to us prior to the fall into sin. Satan claims that God lies to us, that we are autonomous, that we are gods, and that we are immortal. Furthermore, he asserts that we can reject God's claims and will not die (Gen. 3:4) because we contain life, original and underived, within ourselves. Further, Satan accuses God of using His claim of being the Source and standard of life to control us all; this divine claim, for Satan, is dictatorship, autocracy, abuse, deception, and injustice. According to Satan, the fact that God does not want to compromise corroborates his allegations. For this reason, Satan calls us to break free from God's "lies" and "abuse" and experience a new consciousness and autonomy, wherein we discover and enjoy our infinite and eternal divine potential. But aren't these just allegations and speculations? Do we not run the risk of dying or disappearing from existence if we disconnect from God? Is it worth trying, just to prove a theory empirically? Lucifer certainly thought it was worth taking the risk.

God, on the other hand, tells us that He is the only Creator and Provider, and thus we cannot exist without Him. He tells us that if we do not believe Him, if we reject Him and His affirmations, we will disconnect from Him, the Source of life, and we will die, that is, disappear from existence. God explains to us that this outcome is not mere speculation but a fact because He is our Creator. We did not create ourselves, and we are not eternal. This fact alone, based on His Word, must be sufficient for

us to believe Him. However, God points out that His claims are also evidenced by our past and present life: that is, as long as we have believed Him and lived with Him, everyone has been happy. The entire universe has been running smoothly, and no one has died. God further explains to us that He cannot compromise not only because He is right but also because if He renounces His throne, all of us and the entire universe will disappear from existence since He is the only Provider or Sustainer of existence and life. For this reason, God calls us to believe Him, to trust Him, to stay with Him, and to live happily with Him forever.

If you witnessed such a debate, whom would you have believed?

Fourth, unfortunately for humanity, our primeval parents accepted Lucifer's speculation. Was the risk worth taking? No. The choice of our first parents turned into a tragedy for them and for the entire human race. Moreover, this conclusion is not mere speculation but is based on historical and empirical evidence. Instead of feeling divine and living forever after disobeying God's law, humanity felt empty, naked, and full of shame, their hearts and relationships broken (Gen. 3:7, 8). Moreover, the human race began to suffer and die. However, Lucifer did not stop his speculations against God's government; he proposed more compromise. We are immortal, he now claimed, because we have an immortal soul, which, after death, goes to a spiritual, ethereal sphere. Tragically, most people have fallen into the trap of believing that falsehood. Moreover, Lucifer now began calling on God and humanity to accept the reality of the existence of sin and death as the new normal. In the many non-biblical religions that have prevailed throughout human history, Satan has proposed to redefine and reinterpret suffering and death in order to avoid their pervasive presence, which constantly undermines his lying claims.

Fifth, God remained true to Himself. He explained that Adam and Eve remained alive after rejecting Him, not because Satan was right in his claim that we are immortal, nor because God compromised. Rather, Adam and Eve did not die because God, in His eternal love for humanity, had a plan of salvation, which started operating as soon as humans fell into sin. According to this plan, God, far from compromising, gave us a new opportunity to choose to be saved, live, and stay with Him. But this new opportunity and salvation were not the products of compromise. We must not confuse compromise with God's patience, love, and grace. Rather, salvation and the new opportunity for life spring from God's sacrifice. Precisely because God did not, and could not, compromise, He sacrificed. But He did not sacrifice us. Rather, He sacrificed His own life. If compromise were possible, He would not have needed to die in our place. But because He did not compromise, He chose rather to die in our place in order to uphold His truth, to manifest His love and righteousness, and to save us from the guilt and power of sin. Moreover, He did not compromise because He knew the consequences of compromise: suffering, misery, and death of the entire humanity and universe.

For the same reasons, God's true people do not compromise. True, traditional Christianity compromised the revelation of God's truth in Scripture. However, God worked to restore His truth in order that He might save as many as possible. For this reason, His faithful remnant church happily collaborates with Him to help spread His truth by reflecting His light.