

*"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?" 1 Corinthians 14:8*

**KJV**

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# The Original BAPTIST OBSERVER



*"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." Jeremiah 6:16*

## Sounding Out The Faith November 2018

### The Holy Spirit of God

### ~He is God, His Indwelling, His Office Work, His Power~

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit possesses the elements of a personal existence. He is not a moral principle, or an impersonal influence. The Bible gives evidence that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person in the Godhead.

Personal pronouns are words that express a distinction of person. They are used in the Scriptures to refer to the Holy Spirit. John 14:26 says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." This verse clearly states the Comforter is the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. John 14:16 says, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Notice the second "he" is referring to the Comforter. John 16:7, 8, 13, and 14 are more verses that use the personal pronouns of "Him" and "He" when referring to the Holy Spirit, showing that He is a distinct person.

The Holy Spirit has personal qualities. He has intelligence and knowledge. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 states, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Corinthians 12:8 says, "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;" denoting that the Holy Spirit had wisdom and knowledge to give. Romans 8:27 tells us that the Holy Spirit has a mind and He is able to make intercession for the saints. This is simply not possible if the Holy Spirit is a mere "personality" or manifestation of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit has the ability to speak, teach, commune and intercede. Acts 13:2 states, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." John 16:13 also says, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." Acts 8:29; 21:11; Revelation 22:17; John 15:26; Romans 8:26; and II Corinthians 13:14 are all verses showing that the Holy Spirit is a person with abilities to accomplish the things only an individual can do, not a "personality".

The Holy Spirit has a will. Can a manifestation have a will? No! 1 Corinthians 12:11 says, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." This verse clearly states that the Holy Spirit has a will and the ability to carry out His own will. Of course, the Godhead being in complete unity will not differ in their own individual wills, but they do have their own wills to carry out. A "personality" simply does not have a will.

The Holy Spirit, as a person, can have personal treatment toward Him by others. Notice, Romans 15:30 says that the Spirit can be loved separately from Christ. In Genesis 6:3 the Bible states that the Holy Spirit can strive (rule or judge) with man. Isaiah 63:10 says, "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." This verse shows that the Holy Spirit can be rebelled against and vexed when man rebels. Acts 7:51 says that the Holy Spirit can be resisted by man. In Ephesians 4:30, the Holy Spirit can be grieved showing that He has feelings.

Hebrews 10:29; Acts 5:3; and Matthew 12:31-32 shows that the Holy Spirit can have despite done to Him; He can be lied to; and there was a time when He could be blasphemed with great consequence.

The Holy Spirit is one person in the Godhead. He is co-equal and co-eternal in the Godhead. In Acts 5:3-4, He is called God. In verse 3, the Bible states they lied to the Holy Ghost. In verse 4, the Bible clarifies that lying to the Holy Ghost is lying to God because He is God.

The Holy Spirit is eternal. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14) He is omnipresent, or all present. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me." (Psalm 139:7-11) 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 shows us the Holy Spirit is omniscient, or all knowing. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) This verse reveals that the Holy Ghost is all powerful, or omnipotent.

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The Holy Spirit's name is used in equality and synonymously with God. Matthew 28:19 gives the Holy Spirit equality of power with the Father and the Son. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." (I Corinthians 12:4-6) In these verses we see that the work of the Spirit is the work of God because He is God.

Let's consider some other instances of the Holy Spirit revealing that He truly is God and a person in the Trinity. Matthew 1:18 says, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Luke 1:35 says, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Notice that the Holy Spirit's coming upon Mary was the power of the Highest because He is God.

Of course, in Matthew 3:15-17 at the baptism of Jesus it is impossible to miss the presence of the Trinity in three, distinct, different places and positions. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." Notice Jesus is on the earth being baptized, the Spirit is descending like a dove and lighting upon Jesus, and the Father is speaking from Heaven.

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness showing they absolutely cannot be the same person in different manifestations. (Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1) It would be redundant for the Spirit to lead Jesus if they are the same person. Therefore, over and over the Scriptures reveal that the Godhead is three distinct persons. Their oneness comes because of their complete harmony and fellowship. In fact, Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from the dead works to serve the living God?" This Scripture is clear that Jesus' offering was made through the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 4:14-21 shows us that Jesus preached in the power of the Holy Spirit also. Romans 8:11 says, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Notice the power of the Holy Spirit raised Jesus and shall also raise all those that know the Lord as their Savior.

It is by the Holy Spirit of God that the Holy Scriptures were written by inspiration. II Timothy 3:16-17 shows us that the Spirit is God because inspiration was of God. II Peter 1:21 shows us that inspiration was directly from the Spirit. It says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

There are different symbols used in the Bible for

the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-33 are places where the Holy Spirit is symbolized in the form of a dove. The anointing oil of the Old Testament law showed forth the power of the Holy Spirit on man in the different positions God had placed them. (I Samuel 16:13; Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:14-18) In I John 2:20 and 27 the same "anointing" imagery is used to describe the anointing of the Lord's New Testament church with the Holy Spirit as Comforter.

Another symbol used for the Holy Spirit is fire. It was used to show the power and presence of God. This is pictured in the example of Moses with the burning bush in Exodus 3:2-6. Moses realized the presence of God in the fire and God told him he was standing on holy ground because of God's presence there in the fire. Notice how God shows His presence with Elijah on Mount Carmel in I Kings 18:38-39. God showed Himself as God in the fire that consumed everything, including the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and the water.

Notice how that God in His Word uses fire symbolism as a purging. This is showing us that God, through the Holy Spirit, cleanses and purges from sin. Isaiah 4:4; and 6:6-7 God uses the symbol of fire to demonstrate His cleansing of sin. In Malachi 3:3 the Bible says, "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness." This verse is speaking directly of Jesus coming but the work of cleansing of sin is accomplished inwardly by the Spirit of God. (Matthew 3:11; Hebrews 12:29; Ephesians 5:26; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12)

The Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament is evident in many ways. First, we can see the Holy Spirit's work in the reconstruction of the earth after Satan's sin. (Genesis 1:2) Psalm 104:30 says, "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth."

The Spirit's work in the Old Testament is also in preparing men to do a work for God. In Exodus 31:1-6, the Spirit prepared Bezaleel, Aholiab, and others to construct the articles needed for the Tabernacle. The Spirit prepared Joshua to take over the leadership from Moses. (Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9)

The Holy Spirit worked in calling men to salvation and service. (Genesis 6:3) Psalm 139:1-14 shows that the Holy Spirit is everywhere discerning all that we think and do. He convicts to draw us to God. (Proverbs 1:23-24) The Spirit also "stirs up" the saved. (Psalm 51:11-12; Haggai 1:14; Zechariah 4:6)

The Holy Spirit's work in salvation is clear. He indwells all believers at the point of salvation. John 3:1-7 shows that to be born again, saved, one must be born of the Spirit. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Galatians 4:28-31 shows us the difference between being born of the flesh and of the Spirit. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of prom-

ise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Romans 8:9 states, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. That new birth takes place in the inward man according to Romans 7:22, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:"

The Spirit of God is the "earnest", or guarantee, for the child of God according to II Corinthians 1:22. Ephesians 1:12-14 says, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

The Holy Spirit's role in the indwelling of the believer grants assurance and a sealing of eternal life. Ephesians 4:30 says those that are saved are sealed until the day of redemption. Romans 8:19-23 teaches us that the redemption of a child of God (sons of God) is guaranteed. Being a son of God and having the Spirit indwelling in the heart of a believer is granted only in the new birth by God. (John 1:12)

The Holy Spirit has an office work in the Lord's New Testament churches. The Spirit of God indwelling the believer is limited in His work. We see in John 14:16-17 that Jesus' church had the Spirit of God "with" them, but Jesus said He "shall be in you". Jesus was telling His church that another Comforter would come and He was the Spirit of truth. John 14:26 says, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Notice in John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." The Spirit of God indwelling the believer will not teach or guide into all truths. Yes, it is the same Spirit of God but there is a greater access and work He can accomplish as Comforter to a New Testament church member. I Corinthians 2:9-16 shows us that the Spirit reveals the deep things of God to His New Testament churches. We cannot try to understand God's Word by intellect because it is a spiritual book. It has to be understood spiritually by the Spirit of God. God has revealed His wisdom to His churches by the Spirit. Ephesians 3:10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

In Matthew 18:20 Jesus promised His church He would be with them. Jesus is present in each local, New Testament church through the Holy Spirit as Comforter. Ephesians 2:18-22 says, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself be-

ing the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." It is through the Holy Spirit as Comforter that a person who is saved, Scripturally baptized, and added to one of the Lord's New Testament churches has access to this "dwelling" or fellowship with God.

In Acts 1:1-8, we see Jesus, after His resurrection before He ascended, giving instructions that the church is to tarry in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit is come upon them. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Jesus is talking with the 11 apostles, the same 11 He instituted the Lord's supper to and Hebrews 2:12 says this was His church. We know they were saved, so they had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus told them to wait to receive a power from the Holy Spirit that they did not have as "saved" people. They were to wait for the promise of the Father which was the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the church when the Holy Spirit took up His office work in the church.

John 14:16-17 says, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Notice that Jesus said the Spirit "dwelleth with you", denoting present tense. However, He further stated the Spirit "shall be in you" showing future tense. These church members were already saved so the Spirit dwelled with them as the earnest that God grants to all children of God. The Spirit was going to be in them as a church in His role as Comforter after Jesus ascended.

In Acts 2:1-4 says, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This is the occasion that the Holy Spirit baptized the church designating when He took up His office work as Comforter. The last gift He gave the church was the gift of tongues. (I Corinthians 12:28) This was the "power" that Jesus told the church to wait for. The Spirit indwelt every believer but there is a different power and office work that is available from the Spirit of God to those who are members of the one of the Lord's New Testament churches.

John 14:18 says, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." How could Jesus be "with" His church if He was going to leave to Heaven after He ascended? He would be present with His churches through the Holy Spirit as Comforter. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26) This is a promise

the Lord made to His church that is fulfilled only in the office work of the Comforter to the church, not in salvation.

In John 15:26-27, Jesus tells His church that the Comforter will come and enable them to be His witnesses. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." In John 16:7-12, Jesus instructs His church that the Spirit as Comforter will not come to them unless Jesus goes away first. When the Spirit comes in His office work as Comforter to the church, He will convict the world because the church is to be the Lord's witnesses in the world. The Spirit will then work by the Word that is preached by the Lord's churches in the world.

John 16:13-15 says, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Notice that the Spirit as Comforter to the Lord's churches, teaches and guides them into **all** truth.

Ephesians 3:18-21 says, "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." The deep truths are only found and revealed by the Holy Spirit as Comforter to His local, New Testament church members. (I Corinthians 2:10)

Ephesians 3:5-10 shows us that the mysteries in God's Word are only made known to the Lord's New Testament churches by the Holy Spirit as Comforter. Verse 10 says, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God," Who was the wisdom of God revealed to? The Lord's New Testament churches have access to understanding and knowledge of God's Word that is not revealed to the world or even the saved because of the office work of the Holy Spirit of God as Comforter.

The Holy Spirit's work has been defined in the indwelling of the believers and also in His work as Comforter to the Lord's churches. Let's look at some examples in the Scriptures of His work:

\*John 6:44 - The Father draws all men to salvation, but how is this done? By the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. (Hebrews 3:7-8; I Peter 1:12; Acts 20:23; I Co-

rinthians 1:18-25; I Corinthians 2:14; Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17)



\*Acts 2:36-37; 7:51-54; 9:4-6 - The Holy Spirit "pricks" or convicts men's hearts by the Word of God.



\*Acts 9:1-31 - We can see the change that the Holy Spirit made in Saul, who later became Paul. He was born again by the Spirit of God when he was saved. After he submitted to baptism and church membership, he now had the Comforter to guide his work for the Lord.



\*Acts 10 & 11 - Cornelius was a "religious" man that "prayed to God always". However, the Spirit of God saw his desire to know God and He sent Peter to preach "words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved".



\*Acts 13:1-4 - The Holy Spirit accomplishes missionary work in establishing more New Testament churches by His work in a local body.



\*Acts 20:28 - The Holy Spirit leads men to pastor the church God would place them in. (Hebrews 13:17)



\*Luke 2:25-38 - The Holy Spirit led Simeon according to the Word and he experienced great joy in seeing the Scriptures fulfilled.





# God's Order for Godly Women

In Titus 3:8 says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." Paul, through the Holy Spirit tells Timothy to "affirm constantly" to those that believe that they should be "careful to maintain good works". We understand and know that these good works must be "good" according to the Word or else they will not be "good". (Isaiah 64:6; II Corinthians 5:21) So, Ladies, if we are to please the Lord in our work, we must be busy about finding out what the Bible says concerning women in His New Testament churches. We will be considering what the Bible teaches about women as local, New Testament church members, wives, mothers, and sisters in Christ.

First of all, let's consider James 1:19-20, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." The Bible says for us to be "swift to hear". "Hear" comes from the Greek word meaning "to hear, give audience, come to the ears". We are told to be slow to speak. In order to hear, we must be quiet. Sometimes it would behoove us to just close our mouths and listen to the teaching from God's Word. We are also told to be slow to wrath. When we are full of wrath, we do not hear. Our own mind is already made up. We put our own "perception" on the things that we do hear so that they are no longer take in the context or intent that they were spoken. This is our first big hurdle to overcome before we will be able to "be careful to maintain good works".

Now, let's look at James 1:21. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." There are some things that we are told to "lay apart" from our lives. One thing to get rid of is filthiness. Filthiness means dirtiness, dealing with moral depravity. We simply are to put all those things out of our lives that bring us into immorality and the filth of this world. This "superfluity of naughtiness" is the surplusage or superabundance of badness; depravity; or malignity. Making allowances in our lives for these "fleshly" and "lustful" practices, ideas, or thoughts, eat like a malignant cancer. It breaks down our inhibitions toward sin and causes us to be open to accepting and subject to practicing these immoral acts.

These immoral influences are what is causing the downfall of our children and our homes. We allow so many "naughty" influences in our lives that the Word of God seems to have no effect on us because we are so hardened by sin. Perhaps we need to reconsider what we are listening to, what we are watching, what we are reading, and with whom we are spending the majority of our time. Perhaps we need to better monitor what our children are hearing, seeing, reading, and with whom they are spending their time.

Let's consider the rest of James 1:21. We are told to "receive" the Word of God with meekness. It is absolutely vital that we take the Word of God in and accept it for our benefit if we are to be "careful to maintain good works". Sometimes we are too busy "shoveling" the Word of God over our shoulders instead of "raking" in the Word for our own personal gain. II Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

This tells us that the Word of God is for our benefit. It will furnish us to be "careful to maintain good works". John 12:48 says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." This teaches us that we will be judged out of the Word of God. Perhaps now is the time to heed to the Word before we stand before the "Judge" and are judged out of the things He expected us to perform.

James 1:22-25 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." This tells us to not only "hear" the Word, but to "do" the Word. In verse 23, the Word of God is referred to as a "glass" that one uses to behold himself. This is a mirror or a looking glass like we find in the Old Testament. Exodus 38:8 says, "And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." The Bible tells us the laver was made of the polished brass looking glasses of the women. This laver was used by the priests according to Exodus 30:17-21 before they entered the sanctuary and before they ministered at the altar. This was a cleansing or a washing taken before they presented themselves before God. We are told to receive the same cleansing or washing in Ephesians 5:26. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," The Word of God is vital to our being "careful to maintain good works". Just as the priests had to "wash" before ministering, we as New Testament "kings and priests", Revelation 1:6, should "wash" so that we can see the "filth" that is on us and take care of it before ministering unto the Lord.

James 1:26 says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." This verse tells us that if our "tongue" is out of control, then our religion is vain. This hurts, Ladies. If we talk loud enough and long enough, it does begin to reveal our heart. God is looking at the heart. "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." (I Samuel 16:7) God doesn't want to see "ritual". He wants to see genuine, heart-felt action from His people because they know the Word, believe the Word, and practice the Word.

James 1:27 shows us that we can have a pure and undefiled work for God. This work must be God's work. It is that work of being "careful to maintain good works", according to the Scriptures.

Let's consider some examples in the Scriptures to help us see what we may need help with in our lives as women.

Genesis chapter 27, we read about Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob. Verses 1-3 say, "And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;" In verse 4, Isaac promises to bless Esau. Verse 5 says, "And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying," Later we read that she had her son, Jacob, trick Isaac into thinking he was Esau. Therefore, Isaac blessed Jacob thinking he was Esau. Was Rebekah usurping authority over her husband? I Timothy 2:12 says, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The word "usurp" means to act of oneself; to take that which does not belong". Rebekah used "subtlety" to get her way. She had her mind made up and she worked out the situation to make sure "her will" was accomplished. "Manipulate" means to control the action of by management; falsify. Was Rebekah "usurping" authority over her husband by this manipulation? Yes, she absolutely was usurping authority over her husband. This was not "maintaining good works" because it was out of God's order.

In Exodus 15:20-21, the Bible says, "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown in the sea." Here we see Miriam in a leadership position. She was leading and directing the women, not the men. The women followed Miriam. This is according to God's order and God sanctioned and blessed this effort.

Ladies, we have a position of leadership, but in its rightful order. When we are put in positions of leadership over men, we are usurping authority over them. (taking that which does not belong) If we are doing this, can we be "careful to maintain good works"? According to God's Word, we are not.

Later, in Numbers 12:1-10, we see Miriam in another leadership role, but God does not bless it because she is out of His order. "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it." Moses was the man of God placed in a leadership role by God. Aaron and Miriam thought they had better ideas than Moses' way of leading.

Numbers 12:9 says, "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed." God was not happy with Aaron and Miriam. Miriam's rebellion was not only toward God's leader, but also toward God who said that a woman should not usurp authority over a man. In verse 10, God struck Miriam with leprosy. She was shut out of the camp for seven days because of the leprosy.

Miriam was "acting of herself" and "taking that which did not belong to her". These two occasions show us that a woman leading is not out of God's order. The problem comes when she is usurping authority over a man in those leadership positions. God has a special place of service for everyone. That service can never be out of His order.

Let's learn from Miriam in her correct order instead of behaving out of order as she did later. Let's stay busy being "careful to maintain good works". Careful is the key word. Let's make sure we are being diligent about staying in the Godly order and being used of God to "keep" ourselves "unspotted from the world". "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27) God has a beautiful order that He established. Don't let the world lie to you and show you anything differently than that beauty. (Ephesians 5:22-33)