



Dealing with Defilement Pt 3: Avoiding the Ditch!

March 21, 2021

Matthew 15:10-20 (Emphasis on verse 14)

The Text in Context (vv1-13)

1. We read of the conflict arising from the Pharisees' elevating man's word over God's Word (vv1-2)
2. Jesus' correction of the Pharisees and scribes was swift (vv3-6)
3. He rebuked them strongly, calling them "hypocrites" who said the right things but missed the heart (vv7-8)
4. Which caused their worship to be in vain! (v9)
5. Jesus teaches that the heart is the issue! That is where true defilement comes from (as opposed to external things). (vv10-11)
6. The Pharisees were offended at Jesus Words; truth offends! (v12)
7. God's plants will remain; weeds and tares will be rooted up! (v13)
8. Then we read this statement:

Matthew 15:14 (KJV) *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

A few thoughts on the Text:

1. What is a ditch? The word in Greek word means "a whole in the ground; a pit."
2. Jesus is referring to spiritual sight not physical, and therefore He's referring to spiritual ditches and the consequences thereof.
3. This rebuke is mostly for leaders...those charged with having the clarity and wisdom to guide others.
4. The Pharisees on the whole, did not possess spiritual sight. Their followers would reap a harvest of falsehood and judgment!
5. Consider one of the quintessential *blind leadership/ditch* narratives in Scripture: Numbers 16...
 - Your might recall the incident of Moses and Aaron vs. Korah and his company.
 - They challenged Moses' leadership:

Numbers 16:2-3 (KJV) *And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: **3** And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?*

- A "censer test" was implemented to determine God's choice.
- God told Moses to get everyone away from these blind leaders, and don't even touch anything that belonged to them!
- God literally opened up the "mouth" of the earth, a deep pit, and swallowed them up...

Numbers 16:31-33 (KJV) *And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: **32** And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that*

appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

- ...and unleashed fire to consume the 250 men who burned incense with them! (v35)
 - You'd think Israel would have learned a fearful lesson, but alas, God's people are often hard-headed! The next day, they blamed the incident on Moses and Aaron and gathered against them! As a result, God sent a plague to punish them; 14,700 people died!
 - **Who you follow is important if you want to avoid the ditch!**
6. Back in our Text, the phrase "Let them alone" implies a few things: 1) Nothing can be done about their offense, 2) They won't change their view of Jesus, and 3) Judgment (a ditch!) is coming upon them and those who follow them.
 7. **This succinct statement is extremely sad. It demonstrates the state of much of Israel: led by men who could not see and therefore trapped in spiritual blindness, missing the prophesied Messiah their midst and the time of their visitation. (Luke 19:44) Judgment would eventually come upon them as Jesus prophesied; their temple would be destroyed and millions would die. (70AD)**

The Nature of Leadership

There are five principles we must understand concerning the nature of leadership:

1. God has designed every jurisdiction, or spheres of authority, to have leaders. We call this:

The Principal of Authority: "God, for His own purposes and glory, has chosen to dispense and delegate His authority through human agency in all areas of human life, until either we die and are translated into the Heavenly Kingdom, or until He returns."

2. These jurisdictional leaders, via commandment, are accountable God. (Whether a father... Eph 6:4, a magistrate...Rom 13:1, or a pastor...Jam 3:1)
3. These leaders are supposed to lead unto God's glory and for the good of those they lead. (Jer 3:15; Eph 4:11-12)
4. As humans, whether we realize it or not, we can be easily influenced.
5. This is why leaders (those with authority and influence) are held to such high standards!

Spiritual Sight: A Necessity in Godly Leaders!

1. One thing a leader must be able to do, more often than not, is **see**.
2. This means a spiritual leader must be committed to Christ and His Word, willing to pray and repent, and submit themselves to God as they lead.
3. It is the nature of leadership to influence others, for good or for ill. Just a quick glance through Scripture (and world history) demonstrates this in vivid colors:
 - From Nimrod who may have lead most the world into idolatry at the tower of Babel... (Gen 10:9-10)
 - To Moses leading Israel out of Egypt, but Aaron quickly allowing them to return to idolatry
 - Again, to Korah who inspired a rebellion in the camp where 14,700 died (Num 16)
 - To Joshua's bold leadership to conquer a land teeming with giants (Joshua)
 - To the back of forth of "good king/bad king" in Israel and Judah: good kings like Josiah who inspired reforms and brought the people back to Scripture, and David who built Jerusalem

and prepared for the building of God's Temple—and bad kings like Ahab and Jeroboam son of Nebat, both of whom set up and inspired idol worship among God's people.

- In the NT, leaders like John the Baptist and the apostles could clearly “see,” whereas leaders like the Pharisees clearly could not.
- From world history, how did so many people follow Hitler, Pol Pot, and Stalin, who combined murdered tens of millions of people?
- **Scripture is clear; leaders influence and impact people!**

Isaiah 3:12 (KJV) *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.*

Isaiah 9:15-16 (KJV) *The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. **16** For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.*

Jeremiah 23:1 (KJV) *Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.*

4. **No leader is perfect, but a leader worth following MUST “see” Christ. They MUST have the right view of God’s Word. They must be striving to live honorably before God!**

Ditch Avoidance: 7 Suggestions

1. Pray!

- Recognize your susceptibility being led (in an of it self, a good thing), and to spiritual blindness and its corresponding “ditches.”
- Ask the LORD for His clarity and protection!
- Also, beware of your emotions and their ability to cloud godly judgment and wisdom. Feelings don’t always indicate truth!
- Focus instead on Scripture...what is biblically true!

2. Test all things!

- Test all things in the light of the Word of God. Be a Berean!

Acts 17:10-11 (KJV) *And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. **11** These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV) *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

1 John 4:1 (KJV) *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

2 Timothy 3:15-17 (KJV) *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **16** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for*

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **17** That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

- Be a student of Scripture! Know essential doctrine! Select books by godly, proven authors! Remember, even as you follow leaders, you do so as they follow Christ!

1 Corinthians 11:1 (KJV) *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

- In some situations, you may have to offer leaders respect but not submission:

Acts 5:27-29 (KJV) *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, **28** Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. **29** Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

3. Humble yourself before God and be obedient! Pride and disobedience to Scripture sets one up for ditches in life!

Proverbs 16:18 (KJV) *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

Proverbs 18:12 (KJV) *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.*

James 1:21-22 (KJV) *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. **22** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

1 Peter 5:5 (KJV) *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

4. Beware of false teachers!

- Even though this subject is somewhat uncomfortable, the warnings in the New Testament are ubiquitous and are just as important in our day!

Matthew 7:15 (KJV) *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

Romans 16:17 (KJV) *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (KJV) *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. **14** And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. **15** Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

Galatians 2:4 (KJV) *And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:*

2 John 1:7-8 (KJV) *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. **8** Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.*

2 Peter 2:1 (KJV) *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

- Paul warns the Ephesians about growing up unto maturity lest they be as children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men (Eph 4:14); the Colossians that no “man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col 2:8); and the Philippians to “beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision!” (Php 3:2)
- He warned Titus of “many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” (Titus 1:10-11)
- Jude calls false teachers men that “crept in unawares” (Jude 4) and rebukes them strongly, calling them “spots in your feasts,” “wandering stars,” and “trees with withering fruit, twice dead, pluck up by the roots!” (Jude 12)
- Our LORD Jesus had quite bit to say in this regard to the churches in Revelation, warning the church at Pergamum about their acceptance of those that held to the doctrine of Balaam and the church at Thyatira about suffering “that woman Jezebel.” He promised to fight against them and judge them harshly with sickness and death! (Rev 2:14-16, 19-23)
- **Friends, Avoid the ditch!**

5. Select godly leaders!

- Insofar as you can (one cannot select their parents for example), choose to follow godly leadership and refuse to follow ungodly ones.
- Scripture gives us many qualifications to consider:

Exodus 18:21 (KJV) *Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:*

Deuteronomy 1:13 (KJV) *Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.*

Acts 6:3 (KJV) *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*

1 Timothy 3:2-7 (KJV) *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; **3** Not given to wine,*

no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; **4** One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; **5** (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) **6** Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9 (KJV) For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: **6** If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. **7** For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; **8** But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; **9** Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

6. Submit to such leaders!

- Realize that God places leaders in our lives for a reason. Sometimes, they will see what we cannot!

Hebrews 13:7 (KJV) Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Hebrews 13:17 (KJV) Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

- This can also include a “multitude of counselors.” (Prov 11:14) Just make sure they are godly too!

7. Pray for leaders and be forgiving.

- Leaders need prayer!

1 Thessalonians 5:25 (KJV) Brethren, pray for us.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-3 (KJV) Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: **2** And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. **3** But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

Ephesians 6:18-20 (KJV) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; **19** And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, **20** For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

- **Every person, leader or not, will make mistakes. Repentance and forgiveness bring blessing and restoration!**

Ephesians 4:31-32 (KJV) *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: **32** And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

1 Peter 3:8-9 (KJV) *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: **9** Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

Final thoughts:

Good leaders do not want to be blind. They do not want those they lead to be blind. They know how much God loves His flock!

They do not want to personally fall into the ditch or have anyone they lead do so! LORD forbid!

On the contrary, good leaders have the attitude of the apostle John:

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." **3 John 1:2-4 (KJV)**

May you always be led in truth and walk in truth. Jesus Christ is truth. (John 14:6)

In Jesus' Name, Amen!