

When Faith Hurts: Recognising Spiritual Abuse – Part 1

The Spark That Lit The Flame

One of the contentious sparks that finally lit the flame we now know as the [Reformation](#) was the idea that the common person didn't need priests to mediate between them and God. At the time, the Church (the catholic Church – still the only established Church in the West) taught that grace was dispensed through the sacraments, which could only be administered by ordained clergy. Access to God was mediated through the priesthood, creating a system where spiritual life was filtered through human hands.

John Wycliffe (c 1328-1384), often called the Morning Star of the Reformation, had become outraged by what he considered the moral and political corruption among the priesthood and the spiritual abuse of the laity – the ordinary members of the church. He believed that the priests had elevated themselves so far above the laity so as to create a false barrier between God and people.

Protesting against the commonly accepted practices of the time, he contended that:

- Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity. Believers don't need a priest to confess sins, access God's grace, or receive salvation. Christ alone is sufficient.
- The Bible is the final and highest authority in matters of faith and practice, over and above church tradition or clerical interpretation – **sola scriptura**. I've written about traditions elsewhere so you can read more about that [here](#).

Sola scriptura – Latin for 'Scripture alone' doesn't mean that

traditions or rituals lack value or don't play a meaningful role in the life of faith, it simply means they don't supersede or replace the authority of Scripture – and where they conflict with it, Scripture always takes precedence.

John Wycliffe was not the first to make such an assertion regarding the sufficiency of Jesus or the primacy of Scripture. More than a thousand years earlier, Paul the Apostle took the Galatian church to task over their departing of the faith for what he called *a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all*.

Paul [warned against doctrines](#) that add human effort or tradition to Christ's finished work, emphasising that true faith is rooted in grace, not in adherence to rituals or human-imposed standards (Galatians 3:5-6, Ephesians 2:8). *The work of Christ is sufficient*, he reminded the Galatians.

He would no doubt have agreed with John Wycliffe, who – over 1,300 years later – maintained that any system *prioritising performance over grace, claiming exclusive access to truth, or defining salvation as a list of correct beliefs rather than trust in Christ*, not only distorts the gospel but also sows the seeds for communities rife with spiritual abuse.

What Is Spiritual Abuse?

Spiritual abuse is when a person or system uses God, Scripture, or religious authority to control, manipulate, shame, or harm others. It distorts faith into a tool of domination rather than love and freedom.

The tragedy of spiritual abuse is that it often masquerades as faithfulness, couched in biblical language. Words like *'truth'*, *'spiritual concern'*, or *'loving correction'* are often employed, with the catchphrase *truth spoken in love* used as a cover for conversations that contain cloaked judgment, spiritual superiority, or subtle control.

While this phrase – *truth spoken in love* – does come from the Bible, when Paul uses it, he is encouraging believers to grow in maturity, shown in the way they demonstrate love (Ephesians 4:15), not as it's often twisted to mean:

"I'm telling you you're deceived... but in love."

"I'm about to say something that's actually quite harsh... but only because I'm loving."

"I'm cutting you off... because I love you."

Spiritually Abusive Systems Replicate Themselves

Spiritually abusive people harm other people. However, spiritually abusive *systems* don't just harm individuals – they also *replicate themselves*.

In environments where fear, control, and rigid doctrine are normalised as "*truth*," people begin to internalise those patterns, often believing they are acting faithfully.

Over time, they adopt the same language, the same tactics, the same narrow lens – not out of malice, but because the culture has shaped them to see spiritual pressure as love, and manipulation as discipleship.

In this way, spiritually abusive cultures inevitably produce spiritually abusive people, many of whom genuinely believe they're helping others when they are, in fact, passing on the very harm they once received.

Of course, it's important to recognise that not every disagreement or correction is abusive. Sometimes, truth really does need to be spoken in love – with humility, gentleness, and a genuine desire for someone's good.

The difference lies in the posture of the heart and the impact

of the words: is the goal to restore, or to control? To build up, or to tear down? To *win*, or to *win to Christ*?

The Cure For Spiritual Abuse

And this leads us to the cure for spiritual abuse, which is, I believe, a Jesus-centric mindset. While sound theology matters – I’m the first to advocate for deep, serious, personal and corporate engagement with Scripture, a robust and living theology will spring from *understanding and experiencing who God is and what He has done for us, in Jesus*, not simply by giving agreement to a statement or creed of ‘theological beliefs’.

Like a concentric circle spreading outward, Jesus himself is the core from which every part of the Christian life flows. He is not just the centrepiece of our theology, but the source and shape of our entire faith – the origin of our love, the measure of our truth, the heartbeat of our worship. *He is our life*.

When Jesus is at the centre, everything else falls into place: doctrine aligns with grace, leadership reflects humility, spiritual communities become places that are safe, and mercy and judgment kiss one another.

But when something else takes the centre – a system, a doctrine, a leader, a fear – the circles become distorted, and what flows outward can easily become controlling or harmful.

Spiritual health begins not with getting all the answers right, but with keeping Jesus – who will lead us in all truth – at the core.

How Do I Know If I’m Being Spiritually Abusive?

Most people who perpetuate spiritual abuse don’t *think* they’re

being abusive. They believe they're protecting truth, upholding righteousness, or caring for souls. But underneath that often sits pride, fear, or a deeply ingrained belief that control equals faithfulness.

How can we tell the difference? How do we know if we've slipped from '*contending earnestly for the faith*' to controlling others in the name of faith, or defending doctrine at the cost of love?

1. We frame disagreement as deception.

We view disagreement with someone over theology as them *leaving the faith, being deceived or falling away*. For us, unity might look like uniformity, yet they are not the same thing. The Bible speaks of a universal, visible and invisible Church that is wildly diverse in how its members look, think or worship. Yet, within all this difference, its people are deeply connected in love and purpose, through mutual respect and, as touched on above, through the core central faith in Jesus Christ.

Uniformity, on the other hand, silences diversity in the name of truth and is often about control and fear of difference or 'mess', preferring the idea of enforcing group-think at all costs.

2. We speak with absolutes, black and whites, and hyper-literals.

We see the landscape of the Bible as black and white without nuance or the possibility of alternative interpretations to ours. Passages are applied absolutely and literally, often without consideration for context or in the light of grace.

People will try to say the Bible is black and white on every subject but it's not, not by half. There's plenty of grey, and bold, glorious colour too. There's space for openness and conversation and listening and learning and for seeing things

from different angles. While there are significant core doctrines that its not possible to differ on and still be called *Christian* (for example, the virgin birth or the resurrection of Jesus), there are plenty of second and third-tier theological positions that are fascinating to discuss, interesting to pull apart, and which definitely, absolutely do not define *whether someone is saved or not*. *Eschatology* – theology that deals with *the end times* – is one such topic.

3. We equate someone's worth or standing before God with their beliefs or behaviour

We treat people differently, depending on whether their theology aligns with ours. Rather than seeing every person in the image of God, we may consciously or unconsciously categorise them as '*in*' or '*out*', '*friend*' or '*foe*', and, as is common in some closed conservative communities, kindness, closeness, or blessing may be withheld – *shunning* – from those who we deem to have gone astray. We view this withdrawing as a *sad but necessary discipline*.

4. We think we are always right.

We may feel the need to constantly correct others, believing that our interpretation of Scripture isn't just valid but that it's the *only* valid one. When someone doesn't share our interpretation, we may consider them to be lacking understanding, spiritually shallow, or simply deceived, rather than considering that we could, in fact, be wrong.

Assuming our interpretation is the only valid one shuts down meaningful dialogue and puts us in the place of ultimate authority—where only God belongs. It leaves no room for learning, growth, or the Spirit's work in others. This mindset *turns faith into arrogance, not conviction*, and risks dividing the body of Christ over pride rather than truth.

How Do I Know If A Spiritual Community Is Spiritually Abusive?

The signs and red flags of a spiritually abusive community are the same as those you'd see in an individual – only magnified and reinforced through groupthink, tradition, or fear. Over time, they become woven into [the fabric of the culture itself](#), forming an entrenched and often intractable environment that is difficult to shift or challenge.

In spiritually abusive communities, there is a **certainty over humility** that defines the culture. Opposing or dissenting views or doubts are discouraged and questioning the status quo is seen as disobedience.

There is **control disguised as care**. Spiritually abusive communities often blur or erase healthy boundaries, becoming overly involved in members' personal lives.

Scripture is misused, not only taken out of context, but applied selectively, as and when it suits the agenda of those in control. The Bible becomes less a story of redemption and more a tool for behaviour management. In these settings, Scripture is no longer a living word that points people to Jesus – it becomes *a system of proof-texts* used to maintain power.

In Spiritually abusive communities, **acceptance depends on total agreement or compliance**, with any wrestling with faith or theology discouraged, dismissed, or defined as rebellion, weakness, or a lack of spiritual maturity. Doubt isn't treated as part of the journey – it's treated as a threat to the group's stability. As a result, people learn to suppress questions, keep quiet about struggles, and conform outwardly just to stay connected.

In spiritually abusive communities, there is often a **hyper-focus on *behaving* rather than *becoming***. The church, in

reality, is a messy but vital gathering of flawed, sinning humans who are being renewed daily by the grace of God – asking questions, voicing doubts, stumbling forward in faith. When behaviour modification becomes the primary marker of spiritual maturity, it produces only superficially ‘good’ people who learn to hide their deepest fears and darkest sins.

Yet the church must be the place where those hidden things can be brought into the light – not met with shame, but healed with grace, love, and truth that restores rather than condemns.

How Do I Know If I’m Being or Have Been Spiritually Abused?

Whether in a community or relationship, the signs of spiritual abuse are often subtle.

You might feel confused, fearful, or disconnected from God – as though you need permission to be close to Him. You might suppress questions to stay accepted. You might feel like your worth depends on performance or belief alignment. You might experience distancing and withdrawal upon asking uncomfortable questions or sharing truly where you’re at.

These are warning signs. Spiritual abuse isn’t always overt – sometimes it whispers insidiously, hidden in invisible codes and unspoken expectations.

The spirit of the Reformation was that *Christ alone is sufficient* – the one mediator between God and humanity. We are made right with God through Jesus Christ, not through traditions, systems, sacramentally dispensed grace, or the mediation of others.

At its core, spiritual abuse distorts the relationship a person has with God. It inserts human authority where there should be direct access, making people feel as though they

need permission, mediation, or perfect obedience to be accepted by Him. Instead of creating space where people can personally draw close to God, spiritual abuse places leaders, systems, or expectations in the way – creating unnecessary barriers to genuine, intimate relationship with God and laying ‘burdens on people which are too heavy to bear’.

If this resonates with you – if you’ve felt the weight of silence, shame, or misplaced authority in the name of faith – know that healing is possible. In Part 2, I’ll explore what that looks like: how Christ heals what systems distort, and how to rebuild a faith rooted in freedom, not fear.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” – 2 Corinthians 3:17, NIV

What Should I Do If I’m In A Spiritually Abusive Community?

Leave.

Systemic spiritual abuse is dangerous, deceptive, and, ultimately, destructive. These environments distort your view of God, damage your sense of self, and normalise control under the guise of faith. Even if you don’t feel personally harmed, staying means you risk becoming complicit – reinforcing harmful systems, silencing questions, and modelling that this version of “faith” is acceptable for the next generation.

You don’t have to stay in a place just because it calls itself ‘*the faith*’, ‘*the truth*’, or ‘*the way*’. There’s only one way, truth and life, and his name is Jesus. Leaving a toxic or spiritually abusive system is not leaving Jesus. *In fact, it may be the most faithful thing you can do.*

You might have doubts about taking such an extreme course of action and wonder, can a spiritually abusive system be *rehabilitated* or should it be *burnt to the ground*?

It depends. Reform is possible, but rare and unlikely. More often than not, if the roots are rotten, the system needs to die, not just be repainted.

When power is centralised and unquestionable, when protecting the institution matters more than healing the people, when spiritual control is baked deep into the DNA, *then it's time to light the match.*

In Part 2, I'll explore what recovery from spiritual abuse looks like – how faith can heal, how trust can be slowly rebuilt, and what it takes to reimagine church through the lens of grace.

I'll also touch on what it might mean for a healthy person to remain within a broken system, and the bare minimum that would need to be in place for that to be a wise choice moving forward. Look for 'When Faith Heals | Recovering From Spiritual Abuse – Part 2' coming soon.

Will Progressive Christianity Destroy The Church?

(Not a reader? Take a listen instead ↓)

I want to talk about something that's been on my mind for a while. Some time ago, I watched a commentary by a 'Christian pastor' that totally shocked me. In fact, I haven't really stopped thinking about it since.

I found it disturbing; equal parts ridiculous and horrifying, and I really couldn't believe it was being presented under the guise of legitimate Christianity.

For me, it highlighted a disturbing and, frankly, heartbreaking direction that modern Christianity, or at least a part of it, has taken; a wild trip sideways down the labyrinth-like rabbit hole of progressive Christianity*. And I believe this pervasive ideology, left unchecked, could signal the death knell of the church as we know it.

Here's the commentary and then I'll get to discussing it (this video has been removed from YouTube since the writing of this article, only the transcript is available, which is below):

"There's a part of the gospel where Jesus uses a racial slur [for context, the story of the syrophenician woman in Mark 7 and specifically Mark 7:24–30]...what's amazing about this account is that the woman doesn't back down, she speaks truth to power. Her boldness and bravery to speak truth to power actually changes Jesus' mind. Jesus repents of his racism and extends healing to this woman's daughter. I love this story because it's a reminder that Jesus is human. He had prejudices and bias and, when confronted with it, he was willing to do his work..." | [Brandan Robertson](#)

Brandan Robertson, poster boy for the progressive Christian movement, is, by his own declaration, 'spreading the good word of an inclusive, modern gospel'. Progressive Christianity, part of a larger movement called "the emerging church", claims that at the heart of this movement is the desire to articulate a way of being Christian that is an alternative to the traditional Christian faith portrayed in the public realm.

Brandan is a "noted author, pastor, activist, and public theologian working at the intersections of spirituality, sexuality, and social renewal" (taken directly from his website). He currently serves as the Lead Pastor of Metanoia Church, a "digital progressive faith community". In July 2021, *Rolling Stone* magazine included Robertson in its annual "[Hot List](#)" of top artists, creatives, and influencers who "are

giving us reason to be excited about the future."

Well, I, for one, am not excited in the least.

There's a lot to unpack in his words and, to be honest, it's hard to know where to start. The problem with progressive Christianity is that it is, by nature, slippery and hard to pin down at a glance; it comes so prettily packaged and cleverly articulated.

Words like inclusivity, deconstruction, equality, and truth-seeking are marched out in quick succession and used in such a way so as to sound noble but humble, and demonstrative of authentic faith.

Issues such as social justice or economic disparity and the marginalisation and discrimination of certain social or ethnic groups are highlighted and cited as key issues for which the progressive Christian will boldly campaign.

While these kinds of issues are certainly addressed within the biblical texts, they do not stand alone from the sound theology or biblical context in which they sit.

And this is one of the core issues with progressive Christianity; seemingly meritable values are affirmed and offered up as convincing proofs of a reshaped and reimagined 21st-century gospel, but, the reality is, they've been cleverly detached from the context or theological truth in which we find them in scripture.

For example, progressive Christianity **affirms the right of women to choose what happens to their bodies****. Initially, we might chorus a resounding yes; surely this is speaking to the unarguable value we place on free will and the intrinsic liberty of every human to choose their own destiny...until we realise this is really another way of supporting the legalisation of abortion, in any circumstances and for any means.

Progressive Christianity offers the statement that **Christianity is the truth for us. But it is not the only truth. We share our lives with people who are Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist. We experience these people as loving and caring by following their religious traditions. We believe there are many trains [to God] and God welcomes them all*.**

Again, we may begin to agree. Many religions affirm values in which we see merit (such as love and care for others)...but this is not what is really being said. This is really another way of advocating the post-modern ideology that there is more than one truth, that, in fact, there are many truths, different from each other but all true nonetheless. Critically, this statement asserts that Jesus is not the only way to God and that *being a good person* – “loving and caring” [of others] – will do the job just as well.

Not only that, personal experience is given primary authority in determining truth. Instead of the Word shaping the conclusions we draw from our experiences – *sola Scriptura*, our experiences become the primary authority in determining truth, requiring the Word of God to conform to and find agreement with our own conclusions and experiences.

Our experiences certainly form part of a raft of resources that provide value in decision-making or conclusion-drawing, but only when the conclusions we draw or the decisions we make are first and foremost shaped by the sound theology expressed in God’s Word and in light of the truths expressed therein. Our experiences are not to be considered reliable in and of themselves; scripture warns us that the heart of humanity is deceitful above all things and that our way of viewing the world is shaped by a mind that defaults to our own self will and not the will of God.

The conclusion expressed in the statement that **because we experience people as loving and caring therefore their expression of religion [without the need for Jesus] is still**

an acceptable path to God is in direct contradiction to what scripture teaches. *Sola Scriptura*, therefore, demands that this conclusion must be reworked and submitted under scripture; reason, logic, tradition, and experience are valid but subordinate to what God's Word teaches.

Dig a little deeper and you begin to see that progressive Christianity has an agenda, one that claims to be supported by biblical truth but is, in reality, a radical reappraisal and, often, rejection of traditional Christianity in favour of what is largely a human rights agenda.

The words employed and issues raised are used in ways that are deceiving, that relegate Jesus to simply a remarkable helper, spiritual teacher or life guru, that advocate for the inherent divinity in humanity, and that change the meaning of the gospel and its call on believers' lives entirely.

The primacy of personal experience, as expressed by progressive Christianity, propounds the idea that *our truth is true* and therefore cannot be argued against but must be accepted as valid, irrespective of God's Word saying differently.

Progressive Christianity teaches that you can find God within yourself, that sexuality and gender are fluid, that morality is relative, and that the primary call of Christian faith is to "love God, love our neighbour, and love ourselves", which is simply a clever reworking of Jesus' words in order to redefine 'love of neighbour' as including "affirmation of the LGBTQ+ community..."

"The significance of the word 'progressive' in a sociological sense is rather deceptive in that it misrepresents and downplays the very gospel the church exists to proclaim. It implies and claims that the traditional Christian faith has served its purpose, it is now old-fashioned, restrictive, irrelevant and even repressive." | Rev E.A. Curnow

“At its core, progressive Christianity is a different religion. It gives you a different God and a different Jesus. It’s not a Jesus who can save you.” | Alisa Childers

I want to analyse some of the ideas inferred in Brandon Robertson’s commentary, who, by the way, states that he “cannot know if Jesus was the incarnation of God with any degree of certainty”, and who “sometimes, believes in the divine claims Christians have projected back onto the historical Jesus and sometimes doesn’t.”

1. Jesus Was A Racist

I’m appalled even typing that sentence. However, it has been said so it must be countered.

Racism is defined as *prejudice against or antagonism towards a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalised*. However, throughout the Bible, God makes no distinction between people based on their social status ([Jeremiah 22:3](#)), their ethnicity ([Acts 10: 34-35](#)), or their gender ([Galatians 3:28](#)).

He sends rain on the just and the unjust and causes the sun to rise on the good and the evil (Matthew 5:45). His message of good news, first preached to Abraham, was intended to be a blessing for all humanity (Genesis 12:3). The whole world is separated from God by sin and His salvation through the sending His Son is for the whole world to receive, if they will (Romans 5:12, Ephesians 2:12, 2 Peter 3:9).

God is just, holy, perfect, generous, impartial, and good. If this is who God is, then this is also who Jesus, God-With-Us, is. Jesus was no racist.

2. Speaking Truth To Power

While the woman mentioned in this story ‘spoke truth’ and

while Jesus certainly was 'power', the use of this phrase is intended to convey something else entirely. The idea behind the phrase *speak truth to power* is that of an individual courageously confronting (possibly corrupt) authority, calling out injustices, and demanding change. It presumes that the one speaking is the true moral authority in the matter, someone who is willing to proclaim 'what is right' in the face of criticism or consequence.

Again, if we've seen Jesus then we've seen God and any display of power sits alongside absolute morality, justice and truth. Jesus himself *is* truth (John 14:6) and the use of this phrase here to imply he manifests injustice or untruth is plainly ridiculous.

3. Jesus Was Willing To Do His Work

This phrase *willing to do his (or her) work* is another favourite in progressive circles and is used to imply there is some character deficit or lack in an individual (in this case, Jesus), which needs adjusting or repenting of (a word which Brandon also employs in his commentary regarding Jesus).

Jesus was certainly prepared and "willing to do his work", but it wasn't the work of self-improvement or repentance.

The Lamb, without spot or blemish, sent into the world to reconcile the world again to God, his work was to do the will of his Father (Luke 2:49, John 5:36). Though he entered into our human experience and is, therefore, able to understand us in every way, right down to the alluring call of sin and the temptation to choose self will that we experience, his life and character were perfect. It could not have been otherwise, else our forgiveness and reconciliation could not have been obtained (Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22).

This is just a poor attempt to reinvent Jesus into a caricature that serves the cultural slogans and trends that the progressive Christian movement wants to advance, and which

bear no resemblance to the real Jesus of the scriptures; perfect lord, saviour, king.

4. Brandon Robertson's Conclusion: 'A Reminder That Jesus Is Human'

It's sad but unsurprising that this is Brandon's take-home point from this story. In reality, the story in Mark 7 marks a significant turning point in Jesus' ministry of kingdom-preaching and repentance-calling, where the mission is expanded to include the Gentiles; obviously super good news for you, me, and anyone else of non-Jewish heritage!

The world that we see in the Bible and all around us still is one where all of creation, including humanity, groans to be set free from the bondage of sin. The good news of the gospel is that in Jesus, who is both saviour and king, God is saving, rescuing, atoning, justifying, ruling, and reconciling people for the glory of His name and in pursuit of His purpose.

The story of Mark 7 is about the inclusive call of the gospel, the invitation extended to all to come out of the dominion of darkness, ruled over by the prince of this world, and into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, a kingdom of light and life. A call to *come as you are...but not stay as you are*; a challenge to surrender, to receive forgiveness and renewal, and to be transformed into the kind of human God always intended you to be (John 5:24, Acts 26:18, Luke 24:47, Colossians 1:13).

Will Progressive Christianity Destroy The Church?

*"Progressives are not just a group of Christians who are changing their minds on social issues and politics...they often **deny core essential doctrines of the faith**, which leads them to preach an entirely different gospel."* | Alisa Childers

Despite the descriptor, I don't believe progressive

Christianity to be Christian at all. The movement often denies key tenets of the Christian faith; the primary authority of the Bible as God's inspired Word, the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus, the dark reality of sin and the resultant separation it creates between God and humanity, and the need for Jesus' atoning sacrifice as a means of reconciliation with God.

Sin itself is often redefined, simply becoming "*all of our greedy impulses that create inequity in the world*" (Brandan Robertson), rather the biblical definition of rebellion against God's law, "*a word, deed, or desire in opposition to the eternal law of God*" (Augustine of Hippo) (1 John 3:4), "*evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, false testimony and slander and the like.*"

The truly dangerous reality is that the insidious ideology of progressive Christianity is infiltrating and hijacking genuine Christianity, silencing the church's ability to speak into and about the real-life situations for which she exists.

We are becoming less comfortable about naming sin and preaching the need for true biblical repentance and more concerned about being labelled as intolerant, judgmental, old-fashioned, or irrelevant. When did morality become simply degrees of relativity and we became afraid to speak up and say, "*that is wrong*", or conversely, "*this is right*"?

We are becoming confused by cries of inclusivity, tolerance, and *love of the other*; mistaking the inclusive call of the gospel for the exclusive reality of the church.

We are uneasy repeating the biblical truth that "*narrow is the way and few there be that find it*", preferring instead the idea that multiple superhighways of every description will

surely lead to God. The discovery of our *true, inner self* through spiritual evolution seems a more palatable message for the masses than the sombre alternative; the biblical narrative of *death to self* and radical rebirth in Jesus.

Despite her flaws, the church still needs to be the voice, the hands, the beating heart of Jesus in a dark and sin-enslaved world. We need to speak with sensitivity and compassion, yes, but we ought not to shy away from talking about the things people may not want to hear about but desperately need to; sin, estrangement, sacrifice, surrender, death, reorientation, transformation. We need to speak about these things too, with boldness and conviction.

Will progressive Christianity be the death of the church? No, I don't think so. I think the blood of Jesus, by which his church was purchased, is more powerful than that.

But I do think the church is facing one of her greatest challenges yet; not through external persecution as in times past, but through subtle, internal perversion. There is a desperate need for discernment and a deep commitment to the gospel of the Bible, in doctrine and practice.

I think we need to pay attention, to have our wits about us, wary of those who may come in sheep's clothing, disguising themselves as servants of righteousness. We need to be unafraid to boldly and confidently lay their claims and teachings alongside the sound words of Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, for scrutiny and assessment, acceptance or rejection.

And I think we need to courageously recommit to our commission that, collectively, we, the church, the 'woman of valour' for whom Jesus died, will shine brightly in a darkened and impoverished world through our most basic and guiding principle: that is, to incarnate Christ.

"But test everything; hold fast what is good." | 1

Thessalonians 5:21, BSB

* <https://www.bethelbeaverton.org/progressive-christianity>, <https://progressivechristianity.org/the-8-points/>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Christianity

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<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/05/progressive-christians-abortion-jes-kast/590293/>