**Chapter I**

**Theology of Tension: An Answer**

 The **Theology of Tension** simply means there are always two sides of the coin. There is always the left and the right of a matter. There are always two tensions pulling at each other. It doesn’t matter what the issue is, most of the time, there are two sides of it. **When one side is removed and the tension broken, that’s when we get into real trouble.**

**An Illustration Of Tension**

 A crisis occurred back when Ronald Reagan was president. An American airliner was shot down flying over Russian air space. It had taken off from Alaska in route to Seoul, South Korea. The Russians claimed it was a spy plane and shot it down with over two hundred passengers aboard.

The reason I bring it up now is what happened to the airliner and why it was over Russian air space. Automatic pilot in those days, as it was explained to me, worked like this: There was a beam broadcast from Alaska to Seoul and the plane’s guidance system flew along that beam.

The plane doesn’t remain on the beam perfectly. It will fly along until it detects the beam on its left, and then the guidance system will correct to fly closer to it. Then the plane may in time fly across the beam and find itself on the other side. The guidance system will detect the beam now on the right, and make corrections again to fly closer to it. This process will continue all the along the flight path, back and forth, left and then right. If the guidance system fails by removing the tension, the plane will drift to the left or to the right. In this case, the plane drifted way over to the right, flying over Russian air space, and was shot down for the purposes already mentioned.

 I think this is a great way to understand the purpose of the tensions found in scripture. The tensions are created when scripture seemingly opposes, contradicts, or challenges our understanding, against itself.

On the one hand, the Bible teaches this; on the other hand, it appears to be teaching something different. What do we do with such things? The Divinity of Christ for example: there are passages that clearly indicate His divinity, and passages that clearly indicate His humanity. Many of us have struggled trying to figure out how both situations can be true.

Many on the other hand dismiss one or the other, removing the tension (some have rewritten the Bible to remove this tension). If we keep the tension as God intended, we come to a place of seeing the God/Man of Jesus Christ: He was fully human and fully divine. If we remove the tension, we will find ourselves off target, out in left or right field, missing God and the way to go in.

 In truth, right now ALL of us are wrong in some area of our believing, thinking, and teaching. We may not believe it about ourselves, but we certainly believe it about others. If it is true about others, then it is true about us.

We all should consider what we believe to be the place we are at now. This is with all of our good intentions, recognizing that we possess hearts that are deceitful and desperately wicked (in the natural). This is why scripture warns us NOT to lean on our own understanding (Pr. 3:5). We are pursuing the truth, seeking to be in God’s will, and setting our eyes on Jesus.

The real work is of the Spirit, but we often succumb to carnal reasoning. To think that we’ve somehow arrived at THE truth and have full understanding of any one teaching, issue, or area of life, is foolish.

I’m not saying that we can’t know that we know from the Spirit what truth is.

This presents another area of tension. **I can know I can experience the witness of the Spirit; the revelations of the truth bring faith, peace, rest, and joy**. We certainly are to stand in these things, and at the same time realize there is always more. The tension in the scriptures provides for our spiritual life and understanding to know; yet, at the same time prevent us from becoming fixed, arrogant, cocky, and dogmatic. **The tension keeps us in the place of receptivity because there is always more!**

 The following principle comes from experience in feeling the tension that scripture brings us to, if we remain faithful to the whole counsel of God’s Word. These tensions can be found in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

1 To everything *there is* a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:

2 A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck *what is* planted;

 3 A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up;

 4 A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance;

 5 A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;

 6 A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away;

 7 A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;

 8 A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.

**A Tool**

 Most of these issues are opposing each other. The scriptures contain many more, especially in the area of spiritual life and teaching. I share this principle that should be used as a tool. We should recognize the tensions, and then remain in them.

When we remove the tension in order to come to an answer, we have acted prematurely. In truth, our theology and beliefs will be *underdeveloped,* having short circuited the work of the Holy Spirit to bring understanding and insight.

We will have jumped the gun, espousing our own positions and dogma—this to me is carnal reasoning. Let the tension remain; keep both sides as faithful, realizing that in God’s wisdom they are invariably both true.

The question is how are both opposing issues true? Sometimes our human understanding will never grasp it; it is a spiritual answer from the Spirit life. The carnal mind wants to control it, bring it down to human concepts, when in reality the answer cannot be discerned accept through the Spirit.

 **The tension brings us to a point of being unable to make it work**. We must surrender to God’s infinite wisdom *to receive* revelations of the truth. This place of surrender is holy ground, a sweet place to remain, a place of humility, and it prevents our carnal mind and pride from dominating us! This is how Jesus said He’d build His church through revelation knowledge:

Mt 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, **for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you**, but My Father who is in heaven.

**The Theology of Tension**

 The Bible has many tensions, and they are there because God placed them to keep us on target. It is in the tension that we are safe. It is also in the tension that understanding and revelations will come to us.

**By remaining in the tension, we are always acknowledging scripture.** We are affirming things even if we don’t understand them. It keeps us safe from going to the left or the right on an issue.

In truth, it may be more than God just placing the tension in scripture (I’ve said it is one way of looking at it). **The other way is that for us to grasp the divine it always produces tension, in our finite and human thinking**. Since we are natural and carnal being sense driven for most our lives, the practice of being spiritually minded competing with the natural, is going to produce tension just by seeing the divine.

Here are a few verses of scripture that reflect the tension and our need to stay

within it:

De 5:32 “Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; **you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left**.

De 28:14 "So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, ***to* the right or the left,** to go after other gods to serve them.

Jos 1:7 "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn **from it to the right hand or to the left**, that you may prosper wherever you go.

Pr 4:27 Do not turn to **the right or the left**; Remove your foot from evil.

And the most outstanding is Jesus’ teaching us about the narrow and straight path:

 Mt 7:13, 14 "**Enter by the narrow gate**; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 "**Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult** *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (The NIV renders 14: But small is the gate and ***narrow the road*** that leads to life and only a few find it.)

 The narrow road depicts a path that has broad and wide areas to the left and to the right, areas we do not want to walk in. Another way of looking at the tensions found in scripture, are the ***apparent contradictions*** that skeptics and other detractors like to bring out, in order to discredit the word of God. They would call them contradictions; yet, in just about every case there are reasonable and sometimes awesome explanations. These explanations or revelations only come when the tension is embraced and both sides of the apparent contradictions are affirmed.

When the tension presents itself, we need to stay faithful to the messages; although to us they appear to be in opposition. We must ask the question in every case: “How can both of these passages that appear to contradict, oppose, or counter each other, be true?”

Fundamentally, we believe the Bible IS the Word of God, meaning that we believe it is perfect, without errors, and faithful (in the original languages). Therefore, we must resist the temptation to relieve the tension by explaining it away. When we remove the tension, we have stopped the possibility of revelation knowledge coming to us. In essence, by choosing one side or the other, we begin to turn to the left or to the right and not stay on the straight and narrow.

 In short, by removing the tension found in scripture we create tensions among ourselves by going to the left or right of understanding. If we remain in the tension found in scripture, we’ll at least be closer to one another and have less tension between us.

 Another by-product of removing the tension is that we can become stuck. We will not progress in awareness and revelation *if we deny scripture*. This may explain how it is that someone with thirty years of experience as a born again Christian really hasn’t grown much (at least in particular areas where the tension was removed).

Instead of becoming more aware and sensitive to the Spirit, their hearts have hardened and become somewhat blinded. The tension really is not only for our safety, it is for our good. It keeps us in the place of revelation and receiving, for the things of the Word of God are spiritually discerned. They are not matters of intellect, human reasoning, and deduction. The carnal man cannot receive the things of the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14)!