

Two False Doctrines That Weaken the Church

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How long, O you sons of men, Will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness And seek falsehood? Selah. But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly. Psalm 4:2-3

If we look around today we see the truth of this passage. Jesus said that when He returns, will there be any faith on the earth. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 tells us that the day of Christ's return will not come unless there is a falling away from the faith first. I think we are seeing this warning taking place. The line between the Christian and the world is getting fuzzy. Many times the church is so indistinguishable that often we can't tell the difference between the two. "How long will you turn my glory into shame?" The glory of God in our lives is His grace – unmerited favor – inherited by faith in Jesus Christ. Throughout the church's history, it has been well understood that surrendering to Christ is a product of salvation through faith in Christ. Today the belief has been twisted into a shame. Very few Christians are surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. Instead the new theology is that because of grace we have a license to sin. Those who claim the name of Christ openly shame his name before the world.

I have been dealing with some people that have been duped into thinking that sin is ok because Jesus forgives. That is a lie and is clearly addressed in scripture. One person was unwilling to depart from what he was taught. He was taught that he could sin freely as long as he returned and asked forgiveness and he quoted 1 John 1:8-9, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Sounds good until you read a few verses later in 1 John 2:4-6

He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

If you have to ignore scripture to make your doctrine fit, it is a lie. Scripture must be interpreted with scripture. The Bible will never contradict its own doctrine. If there is a contradiction, your doctrine is wrong. The next chapter in 1 John says, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." 1 John 3:9. His seed refers to the Holy Spirit that is given to everyone who invites Jesus into their hearts and makes Him Lord. I believe this is referring to a sinful lifestyle. Once again we have to interpret scripture with scripture. Two chapters earlier, John wrote that if we say we have no sin, we are a liar and the truth is not in us. I believe this passage is clearly speaking of our lifestyle. We cannot live a sinful lifestyle without falling under conviction. If we can, we don't have the Holy Spirit within us and we should make sure that we do have salvation. That does not mean that we won't blow it, but we can't comfortably live a sinful lifestyle if we belong to God.

There are many growing false doctrines that draw people away from God. The popular idea that we can participate willfully in a sinful lifestyle and maintain a relationship with God is false. Look at 1 John 1:6-7:

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we walk in darkness, we are living a lie. But if we walk in the light, then we have fellowship with God and we have the confidence that we Jesus Christ cleanses us from all our sins because He paid our debt on the Cross. This agrees with Romans 6:1-2, 11-16

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present our members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

If you have been delivered from satan and his claim over you, why would you return and submit to him and return to bondage? The Bible also instructs us not to sin because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we were bought with a price. Our deliverance from sin was not free. It is offered freely to us, but the cost to God was heavy and the pain that Jesus endured on the cross was severe. To shame that gift and to openly make a mockery of His name is sin. We cannot walk victorious with the devil. If we belong to Christ, victory is only through walking in the light. That means making my daily walk with Jesus Christ as my central focus in all that I do. I must submit to Him as my Lord. In John 15 Jesus stressed the importance of abiding in Him and the Word abiding in you. Knowing God's word is not convenient, but it is necessary to walk in His light.

Also in Psalm 4:2 the Bible says, "How long will you love worthlessness And seek falsehood?" The Bible says that the world is passing away and along with its lusts, but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:17). If the world is passing away, why do we put so much value on its goods. Why do we value what is worthless and temporary over God's promises that will benefit us here and now as well as in eternity? We are instructed not to love the world. God will allow us to reap what we choose to sow. If we invest our lives in the world, we will reap the world and not anything of God. If we invest in God and in His will, we will reap the promises of God and the glory of what God has prepared for us in eternity.

Satan will do anything to get your eyes off of Christ. He will gladly present to you a false Christ but he does not want you to find the will of God nor does he want you to focus on Jesus Christ as revealed in scripture. There are doctrines out there that compare your wealth to your godliness. Your concern is not your wealth. Your concern is following God and submitting so that He can use you for His glory. Wealth and possessions are not a measurement of spirituality. In fact, the Bible spends much time warning us not to focus on riches. Proverbs 23:4 tells us not to work for the purpose of being rich. It is like setting your focus on what is nothing. Riches will surely make themselves wings and fly away like an eagle to heaven. Repeatedly the Bible presents wealth as a burden. It is a burden because it is hard not to make it our focus and our desire. When money and wealth is more valuable than God, it is an idol. When it is a measurement of spirituality, it is a lie.

This was a problem in the apostle's day and it has had a big resurgence today. Look at 1 Timothy 6:5-7:

Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Clearly the scriptures warn us to withdraw from those who teach that godliness is a means to get gain. The true gain is being content with what God has provided. Scripture always redirects our focus from ourselves

and anything that draws our attention and puts it on God. The just shall live by faith. Being content with what we have is an act of faith. I believe that what God has provided is exactly what I should have. I also believe that what God has provided has the purpose of being used to glorify Him. We are the limit to God's blessings. God's will does not provide anything that will draw your affection away from Him. We can depart from God for selfish gain, but God will not bless it and we will never be satisfied or content.

I was given a comment about this type of gospel. This one teacher said that Martin Luther and other well accepted Bible teachers were called heretics in their day. That is true, but I think it is incomparable. Martin Luther studied to be a Catholic priest. As he studied the scriptures first hand, he became concerned that the doctrine and practices of the church did not conform to scriptures. He fought the battle to bring the Catholic church back to scriptures because they stood in opposition. He was eventually ex-communicated because he refused to conform to the church beliefs. His famous quote as he pointed to a passage in the Bible that the church was clearly violating was, "Here I stand, I can do no other". That is quite a different scenario than a teaching that is doing just the opposite. Instead of pointing to scripture and making a stand, many of the modern changes are ignoring scripture that opposes their beliefs. If your doctrine contradicts scripture, your doctrine is wrong. Any belief system that zones in on a few pet scriptures and discounts those that refute their beliefs is on dangerous ground.

The Bible warns us against adding to, or taking away from scripture. Scripture must be interpreted with scripture. Just as the errant belief that 1 John 1:9 gives us a license to sin, any doctrine can be formed using the Bible if someone picks and chooses. When we compare 1 John 1:9, "if confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" to other scriptures as done earlier, we can get a clear picture of what the Bible is revealing to us.

Jesus warned us that true faith would be rare when He returns, 2 Thessalonians repeats this with the prophecy that before Jesus returns there will be a falling away first and false doctrines are predicted in 2 Timothy 4:3-4:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Romans 1:25 also warns us that people would exchange the truth of God for a lie. Because of this, God will turn those who choose the lie over to their own desires. God will give us what we choose. If we value a false doctrine that feeds our selfish desires, God will let us consume ourselves with the lie. But if we choose the truth and make Jesus Christ our focus and surrender to His Lordship, we have the promises and blessings of God. The just shall live by faith. Faith in God means we are willing and commit to submitting to God and His will for our lives believing that what the Bible says is true. If I believe in the promises of God, I will be content knowing that God is using all things to work for my good. If I bypass God's plan and try to get ahead of God, I am not walking by faith. If I quit following God when troubles come, I don't have faith.

Faith begins at the foot of the cross. Only through faith in Christ do we have access to God and have the right to be a child of God. Once we are a child of God, we walk by faith by choosing His will over our own understanding. The world offers instant gratification with empty promises. God offers fullness of joy and pleasures in His will but requires trust. Without walking in faith, you will never have the blessings of God. God doesn't show you the end, He shows you the promise and then requires your faith.