

Remnant Life Church
May 19, 2024
Recognizing False Doctrine
Colossians 2:1-8

The first sin in the Garden of Eden involved many elements

- One of them was lying
- **Gen 3:4-5** - *You will not certainly die, the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*
 - That was a lie
 - satan did not know the mind of God; he made that up; he lied
 - Ever since that time satan, the father of lies, has been trying to deceive God's creation

There are many words that are used to describe or identify a lie

- Deception, falsehood, fib, untruth, fabrication, evasion, fiction, misdirection
- And if you really want to dazzle someone – subterfuge
- But they are all rooted in the same definition
 - *To speak falsely or utter an untruth knowingly with intent to deceive*
 - The goal of every lie is to deceive

Lying has become all too much a part of our everyday lies

- I would venture to say that well over half of what the media presents to us in virtually every format is untrue
 - Oh, there may be a few facts thrown in, but they are presented or edited in such a way as to lead you to a desired conclusion
 - I am also fairly certain that the advertisements we see for products are heavily embellished (another word for lie)
- And lying to each other has become commonplace
 - The novelist James Paterson reports in his book *The Day America Told the Truth* that 91 percent of those surveyed lie routinely about matters they consider trivial
 - In addition, a full third of those lie about important matters
 - 86 percent said they lie regularly to parents, 75 percent to friends, 73 percent to siblings, and 69 percent to spouses.
 - And that was written in the 90's – I expect those numbers have not decreased

But God is perfect

- He cannot lie
- And God hates dishonesty – it is found throughout the entirety of the Scripture
 - It is so important to God that He made it one of the foundational commandments for His people
 - **Gen 20:16** – *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor*
 - What is a false testimony?
 - It is a lie

- Are Christians immune from this?
 - One Sunday morning at the conclusion of his message, a pastor said to his congregation, "Next week I will be preaching about the sin of lying and in preparation for that message, I'm asking all of you to read Mark 17 this coming week." The following Sunday, he stood up to preach and asked, "Now, how many of you took the time to read Mark 17 this past week?" Nearly every hand in the room went up. The minister smiled and said, "That's excellent because Mark only has 16 chapters. Now, let's talk about the sin of lying."

But what about when the truth of God's Word is being twisted or something is being presented as truth but is not?

- That is what Paul is concerned about when he writes to the church in Colosse (Kah-LOSS-ay)
- This city located in modern southwest Turkey, was once very prominent in the region of Asia Minor
 - Although not so much in Paul's time it was still the location of one of the very first churches
 - And it was also a known center of angel worship and had become an influential cult that was infiltrating the young church along with other false doctrines
 - This was the reason Paul was writing to them

READ – Colossians 2:1-8

Many things have been written about the Apostle Paul over the centuries

- Not all of them flattering
 - He was abrupt
 - He was condescending
 - He hated women
- How much you think those are true depends on many factors, including your understanding of first-century Jewish culture
 - But one thing that could never be said was that he was uncaring or unloving
 - Paul cared deeply about the early church and the first converts to Christianity or The Way
- We can see that here in this letter that the sole purpose of his writing was to combat the dangerous false teachings that were beginning to supplant the supremacy and centrality of Christ in all things
 - He addresses several in general terms
 - Vs 6 he calls them *hollow and deceptive philosophies*
 - This is likely in reference to the many cults that had become established
 - He goes on to warn them against those who depend on *human tradition and the basic principles of this world*
 - The basic principles he refers to are astrology and the worship of the created heavenly bodies
 - As I mentioned earlier, there was also a large center that taught the worship of angels

- In all of that, he goes on to say that the only truth is that of Christ, and Christ alone

Well, as we have stated many times, the sins of yesterday are the same sins of today

- People today are hungry for some type of revelation, some type of light to help guide them
 - There was a man born in Munich, Germany in 1882 who became well known for his clever portrayals of characters making commentary on life of that day. Karl Valletín was a comedian who was an early influence in the classic art of the clown. One routine that he was known for involved a darkened stage illuminated by a solitary light thrown by a single street lamp. With a deeply worried expression and long-face makeup, Valletín walks around the circle of light desperately looking for something. A policeman then enters the scene from offstage and asks, “What are you looking for?” “The key to my house,” replies the clown. The policeman then joins the search, but they find nothing. After a while the policeman asks, “Are you sure you lost it here?” “On, no,” says the clown pointing to a dark corner of the stage, “it was over there.” “Then why on earth are you looking for it here?” asks the policeman. He replied, “Because there is no light over there,”
- People often are looking for light in the strangest places
 - And many times, the source of that light is not examined or even given consideration - but it should be
 - Especially today when there are now countless, unvetted, unproven voices telling you that they have the answers to the questions of life
 - And this has been true for thousands of years

The question has often been asked why did Jesus have such a hard time with the Pharisees and Sadducees?

- Certainly, part of that was the way they treated the people
 - He spoke of this often with their greater concern with material wealth and positions of honor
- But it goes deeper than that and it has to do with their focus, which was not always of God
 - To understand this means that you must know the history of both groups

Pharisees

- The sect of Pharisees is thought to have originated in the 3rd century B.C., in the time preceding the Maccabean wars
- The Maccabean revolt took place around 165 BC in an effort to throw off the control of the Greeks
 - The Greek presence included the capture and control of Jerusalem
 - As well as making the second temple the site of a pagan cult
 - The revolt succeeded and it is the Jewish festival of Hanukkah that celebrates the rededication of the temple following their victory
- But prior to that, while still under Greek authority, there was an effort to Hellenize the Jews, or turn them into Greeks

- And it was working
- There was a strong, growing tendency among the Jews to accept Greek culture which included its pagan religious customs.
- The rise of the Pharisees was a reaction and protest against this tendency among their fellow countrymen.
- Their aim was to preserve their national integrity and strict conformity to Mosaic Law.
 - Admirable! But they later developed into self-righteous and hypocritical formalists.
 - Pharisees were the most numerous and influential of the religious sects of Jesus' day and they were strict legalists.
 - One theologian describes it in this way...*Throughout all the centuries, the Church has been cursed with leaders exactly as described in the 23rd chapter of Matthew: irreligious professionals, parading themselves in holy garments, pompous fellows, strutting like lords, preaching religion, but having none of it.*

Sadducees:

- As a sect, thought to have originated about the same time as the Pharisees.
 - But they were primarily guided by secular considerations
 - They were actually in favor of adopting Greek customs meaning they took no part in the Maccabean struggle for their nation's liberty.
- They were a priestly clique, and though they were the religious officials of their nation, they too were irreligious in their thinking and beliefs.
- They were not as numerous, but they were wealthy and influential, and to a great extent, they controlled the Sanhedrin even though they were rationalistic and worldly-minded. They did not believe in the resurrection after life nor in the existence of God's messengers, angels.
- Is it any wonder Jesus continued to challenge them so aggressively?
 - They were leading the people away from God

How, then, can you determine if what is being said from the pulpit, what you are reading, or what you are hearing is not the truth of the Gospel?

1. First and foremost, it does not align fully and wholly with the Word of God
 - a. Paul wrote in both **I Cor** and **Gal 5** that a little yeast works its way through all of the dough
 - b. So it is true regarding false teaching
 - c. Only a little is needed to pollute the entire message
2. If the emphasis is on what you do rather than on what was done for you
 - a. It is Jesus plus nothing!
 - b. The Gospel of Jesus Christ and His teachings are the same today as they were when He spoke them
 - c. They should not be altered to "fit the modern culture" in any way

- d. In addition, this teaching makes Jesus out to be a liar!
 - i. John 14:6 - *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
 - ii. Nothing and no one can bring you to the Father apart from Jesus Christ
3. If it promotes division rather than unity, controversy rather than understanding
 - a. Any teaching of us versus them is not of God
 - b. This, unfortunately, feeds directly into the times we live in
 - c. Today, if a person does not agree with everything you are saying, the anger, hatred and labeling is immediate
 - d. God's truth is about peace, love, and unity between His people, even if we have different interpretations of how church is to be done
 - e. What did Jesus tell His disciples?
 - i. John 13:35 - *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*
4. If the leadership is unrepentant when confronted with error and are unteachable
 - a. Pride is one of the quickest ways to recognize that a person is operating in the flesh rather than the Spirit
 - b. Humility is the cloak that will guard your heart and your mind

Paul will again send a warning this time to Timothy in I Tim 1

- But he does not merely warn him to be on the lookout
- He tells Timothy to oppose them!
- That may not always mean a confrontation
 - That opposition is more important in your own life
 - Refuse to embrace anything that is not of the Word of God
- No matter how slick the presentation
 - No matter the promises
 - No matter how many others are following
- Hold firm to Christ and Christ alone as you battle the lies!

Best-selling author Chuck Colson said the number one question in our society today is this: Is there any absolute truth?

The answer we need to be screaming and shouting from the church is a very definite YES.