

Christianity Vs. Cultural Paganism

Lying and Deceit

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The Presidents of the United States have a history of lying:

- Franklin Roosevelt lied about the nature of the Yalta accords, creating the matrix for a half-century of anti-Soviet paranoia.
- John F. Kennedy lied, in the early 1960s, about the compromise that settled the Cuban missile crisis, and kept the Cold War alive by humiliating the U.S.S.R.
- Lyndon Johnson lied, in the late 1960s, about the second Tonkin Gulf incident, and moved the U.S. down a slippery slope that destroyed his hopes of creating a great society.
- Richard Nixon lied, in the 1970s, about Watergate.
- Ronald Reagan lied, in the 1980s, about his policies in Central America, creating a secret and illegal foreign policy that resulted in "the murder of tens of thousands of innocents."
- George Bush lied, in 1988, when he said "Read my lips: no new taxes." He later raised taxes losing him the next (1992) Presidential campaign.
- Bill Clinton lied when he said, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman." He is still known today for his convoluted lying. Charles Krauthammer said, "Clinton revealed a notion of truth as endlessly self-reflecting as a fun-house mirror." Clinton's reasoning is a variation of "All Cretans are liars. I am a Cretan. Therefore I am a liar." But, of course, if I am a liar, I am lying about being a liar, and thus I am not. The lies-feeding-lies circularity is deeply disturbing because you can never believe or accomplish anything with a person of this mindset. He seems to really believe that his legalisms, his dodges, his superficial wordplay, his resort to idiosyncratic definitions constitute an authentic escape from falsehood.
- George W. Bush appears to have lied about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Much of the intelligence used to justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq was discredited by investigations during the 1990's. The president was not ignorant of what was going on over there.

Presidents have commonly sought the protection found in "plausible deniability."

One bible passage, that could easily be the motto of the presidents of the United States, is Isaiah's warning to the leaders of ancient Israel, about their idolatry, violence and lying.

Isaiah 59:3-4 For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity. No one calls for justice, Nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.

A mere glance at the history of ancient Israel, and of the United States, leaves no doubt of the extent to which the leaders will lie to further their agendas, and cover their own skins.

Where does such a state of mind come from?

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

We realize, that heavy influence, in this world, comes from Satan, and so he is constantly promoting lying as a way of promoting a person's own agenda.

It is a terrifying thought that Bill Clinton could soon be in a situation where he is once again in the White House as the first gentleman—the first husband, or whatever the media will call him, under the authority of an even greater, more ruthless liar, if Hilary succeeds as the first woman president.

All of these men and women have openly led us to believe, that they are at least one type of Christian, or another, under their very broad definition.

How can we have confidence in our leaders when the whole thing is pretense, fraud and acting, and is based upon lies and dissimulations?

This is the society in which we live; one where citizens expect, even want to be lied to by their politicians; one in which we laugh at people lying to one another, in television commercials and sitcoms, as a form of entertainment.

If we are to put on "the new man" the apostle Paul speaks of, we must put off "the old man" that forms the connection with the lying and deceiving of this humanistic society. Each one of us must speak truth with one another and about one another.

We have to avoid half-truths, shaded truths, tale bearing, bearing false witness, hypocrisy and deception. These things have no place in the minds, or actions, of a true Christian. It is what makes us distrust our political leaders; it should not be a reason for us to distrust each other, as brethren.

Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is loosely divided into two sections: the exposition, or the

detailed explanation of doctrine, and the practical application of that doctrine. He comes to the practical section beginning in verse 17:

Ephesians 4:17-19 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Here, Paul gives a description, in detail, of the kind of life that was lived by the Gentiles, or we might use the term "the world." He could say to them, "You cannot possibly continue living that kind of worldly life, if you really have learned about what Christ is offering you, if you really have heard His words of wisdom and hope; and if you really have been taught the truth by Him."

Ephesians 4:20-24 But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Then, Paul sums it all up here by exhorting us to 'put off our old self' which belongs to our former manner of life; and to 'put on the new self,' created after the likeness of God.

The general governing principle is that we put off the old man and that we put on the new man.

But the apostle Paul cannot leave it in that general form. It is necessary for him to apply it in detail and to take up specific questions, specific aspects of conduct and behavior. And, that is what he begins to do here in verse 25, and in a sense, he continues to do this right until the end of the epistle; but, he keeps on inter-dispersing it with doctrine.

This, then, is his argument. We are no longer what we once were, in reality we have become something entirely different, if we have repented of our sins and accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, and have received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

We have to put off in every way everything that is suggestive of what we once were. We have to put on everything that really does belong to, and is true of, this new man that we are in Christ.

So, Paul wants the Ephesians to see how this is done. There are certain general principles contained here with respect to the specific details which govern each one of the single detailed applications that Paul begins to spell out there in verse 25.

Before we look at the specific application, consider these three general principles, these common lessons, which stand out in this section of Paul's epistle:

The first principle is that truth must always be applied. Truth is not merely a thing to regard objectively and to enjoy intellectually, but truth has to be applied. We may at times sit here and be wow-ed by the clarity and intellectual depth of the truth being taught by God's ministers, but what good does it do to applaud it if it is not applied in our own lives? Truth is useless if it is not used.

The purpose of all the doctrines of Christ, and of all knowledge, is to lead us to a life that is in conformity to the truth. As Jesus said, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." It is a waste of time to stop at knowledge only. Knowledge is absolutely essential, that is why Paul devoted the first three chapters, as well as most of this fourth chapter, to it.

Knowledge is absolutely essential. We can do nothing without it. But to stop at knowledge (like the world has)—theoretical, scientific, and academic knowledge—is just about as bad as being ignorant. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. The wrong use of knowledge produces foolishness, just as ignorance does.

The second principle presented by Paul is that a real and true understanding of the truth always leads to application. So that if a person does not apply the truth, his real trouble is that he has not understood it, because if a person is gripped by a truth and sees what it means and what it implies, of necessity he must apply it.

That is why Paul introduces these sections generally with words like *therefore*, and *wherefore*; as he does in verse 25:

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

The third principle, that Paul presents, is that the doctrine and teaching of God's church apply to, and affect, the whole life in its every detail. No one is a Sabbath Christian only—it is a way of life 365 days a year, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, sixty minutes an hour, sixty seconds a minute.

The apostle Paul tells us not to lie, but to speak the truth; not to steal; not to talk foolishly. He goes on, through the rest of the chapter, into details concerning parents and children, husbands and wives; every conceivable thing is touched on, every aspect and walk and area of life.

The doctrine and teaching of God's church apply to them all. The spiritual life cannot be compartmentalized. It is spiritually fatal to divide our lives up into compartments. What about you? Are you a weekend Christian? Or, is this a total way of life for you?

Our conduct should be the same everywhere, in Sabbath services, at the store, wherever we are. In other words, our Christian faith must be manifested, and put into practice, not only in our public or professional conduct, but in every part of our conduct.

We cannot be the type of person who is conscientious in his visible conduct, but who does not apply the same standards when he comes to his private behavior. Paul shows us, here, that these variations and inconsistencies are completely wrong.

Christ's doctrine, the principles of God, covers and governs the whole of our life, in every single

detail. It gives us this wholeness, and delivers us from the dichotomies and the divisions which are always characteristic of sin, not only between one person and another, but even within each individual himself.

There are specific characteristics that stand in the apostle Paul's method of teaching God's ethics and morality. First, he states the negative, telling us what we must not do. Second, he states the positive, in which he tells us what we should do. Third, he gives us the reason for the required action.

Let us look at Ephesians 4: 25 for example: "*Therefore*" makes the connection between principle and practice—between doctrine and action.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying [the negative], "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor [the positive]," for we are members of one another [the reason for the action].

Paul provides three specific steps—a definite format: negative, positive, and reason.

The Ephesians, to which Paul is directly speaking, had been brought up in a heathen society and had been living a life of lying, fraud, stealing and deceit. They lived in a society basically like ours today. Paul was not speaking to some far off isolated area, he was speaking to a people very much in the situation that we are today.

And now, as Paul writes to them, they are in the process of conversion. But it does not mean that all of a sudden upon their calling from God that all is well with them. Just like we do, they had their problems too. They are in a fight of faith—a fight for their spiritual lives, and they are greatly troubled by these old tendencies. Paul could see it in them and he was warning them and reminding them that they were to leave that old man behind and put on the new man.

So, what does the apostle Paul tell them to do? He does not tell them here to pray to God to take these things out of their lives. Over this question of lying, he does not say, "pray to God to deliver you from the tendency to lying." It is understood that we should pray for God's help to overcome sin. But, Paul's emphasis here, is not prayer. What he actually says is, "Stop lying! See to it that you always speak the truth!" So, he puts this right on our heads and he gives us our duty and our responsibility to stop it.

There is a partial and incomplete teaching that always tells us that whatever the problem, or the difficulty, there is only one thing to do, and that is to take it to God in prayer. Ask Him to deliver us from it, to take it out of us; and we just stand by and watch as God does it all for us. Of course, that is faith without works, and faith without works is dead, as we all know.

In contrast to this Paul says, Put away lying and speak only the truth because we are spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. This is what we have to do. It is our duty and it should come from the heart of every one of us. Our commitment must be well established as part of our character, which resides in the heart.

Ephesians 4:26-29 Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal

no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Remember, corrupt words proceeding from your mouth can also be forms of gossip, half truths and distorted stories about one another.

Ephesians 4:30-32 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Paul admonishes us to put a stop to our former worldly ways and stop being cultural pagans. Those of us who have grown up in God's church cannot stop necessarily our former worldly ways in the same way that someone more recently coming into the church does. What we have to do is to stop slipping into worldly ways, especially those teenagers who are so enticed by the world.

We have a responsibility, as members of God's church, to do these things—to apply in actual practice the teaching that we claim to believe, and always to know why we are behaving this way.

Overcoming requires that we know why we have stopped doing something, why we have started doing something else, and then, we can tell other people why. When they come to us and say, "Why have you stopped doing the things you used to do with us?" We should not just stand there and say, "I do not know." We must be ready always to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

The apostle Paul implies all of this by using the word, "Therefore," to begin verse 25. In other words, the reason for our behavior is found in the teaching that he has already been given to the Ephesians. Following "therefore," he provides us with the specific reason.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,"

Why is this point about the uniqueness, or the special character of the reason, so important?

Why do we need to know why we do what we do in God's church?

It is of vital importance because there are other forms of moral and ethical teaching and behavior other than Christianity. This world's Christianity does not have a monopoly on pagan moralities. These are so-called humanistic moralities, ethical and cultural systems, and they are very evident in this modern world in which we find ourselves.

As members of God's church, we must be able to draw a clear distinction between Christian

morality, and every other form of morality, ethics and culture. Otherwise we will be unable to state the truth plainly and clearly.

God's truth is not merely a case of not doing certain things and doing other things, thereby conforming to a moral, ethical pattern, or to a certain type of culture. We see this very clearly in mainstream Christianity, where they have a form of morality and ethics and they do it, but it is not internalized.

It is very important that we realize that the teachings of Jesus Christ have nothing in common with pagan, humanistic, moral and ethical teaching and ideas with respect to such matters as lying, and being angry and having tendencies to violence, and stealing, and using corrupt communications—with respect to life.

Keep in mind, that according to Webster's Dictionary, the general definition of a "pagan" is, "One who has little or no religion, and who delights in sensual pleasures and material goods." This general category includes all non-Christians: atheists, environmentalists, homosexuals, evolutionists, and anyone else who is part of the worldly system.

The gospel of the coming Kingdom of God and its way of life is absolutely unique. There is nothing like it—never has been, and never will be. It is not something that the world, or mainstream Christianity, can imitate.

The world has formed its own collection of moral and ethical principles, exactly as we find in the writings of many Greek pagan philosophers, who lived and taught and died before Jesus Christ ever came into the world. Sometimes, the principles overlap with parts of God's truth—that is how Satan works to deceive—a little truth, with a whole lot of deception and perversion. So, we see the world finding "truth" in Socrates, Plato and others.

Some of the most moral and ethical people in the world are the cultural pagans, because many of them do not steal, do not commit adultery, and even do not use profanity. And so, Christianity is seen by them as nothing more than a moral and ethical system that tells us not to do certain things, and to do others.

When these cultural pagans are associated with the members of God's church, Jesus refers to them, quite often, as "tares."

Matthew 13:36-42 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. "The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

So, what is the difference between cultural pagans and the good seed—the true members of the Church of God?

In Matthew 12, Jesus discloses that conduct, especially speech, reveals character, and that the only remedy is a radical change of the heart of a person. What a person truly is, determines what he says, and does. So, every spoken word reflects his heart's intentions, and all is known to God.

Matthew 12:33-37 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." "Words" are the indication of the true principles of a person's heart and mind; by "words" the heart will be known, as the tree is by its fruit. If they are true, appropriate, faithful, instructive, moral, they will prove that a person's heart is right. If a person's words are false, envious, spiteful, and immoral, they will prove that a person's heart is wrong, and will be among the causes of why he receives condemnation.

I am going to give you seven essential differences between Christianity, and any and every form of pagan culture, or a collection of pagan virtues.

What are the differences between true Christianity and non-Christianity? What are the differences between true Christianity and cultural paganism?

1) The first important difference is found in the reasons that non-Christians give for why they live their own type of life. They invariably isolate their conduct and behavior as something in and of itself. They isolate certain virtues, or list a series of abstract virtues, that, they say, are the things that people should practice. We know that the Pharisees did this. Their approach is essentially theoretical and abstract, and they pick out virtues that appeal to them, and urge us all to apply them.

The Christian reason is always different. The reason why we do not do certain things, but do other things is always in terms of our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Because Jesus has come into the world and died for us and has risen, and has given us new life, we must be striving and suffering for Christ.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving

together for the faith of the gospel,

Philippians 1:27 (ESV) "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,..."

Paul chooses his words very carefully. The King James Version has it, "*let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.*" Nowadays this is on the misleading side, only because it is not complete. To us conversation means talk; but it is derived from the Latin word *conversari*, which means to conduct oneself. The primary meaning of the word that is translated, 'conduct' in the New King James, and 'manner of life,' in the English Standard version, and 'conversation,' in the King James Version, means to conduct oneself.

In the 17th century, when this was written, a person's conversation was not only his way of speaking to other people; it was his whole behavior. The phrase means: "*Let your manner of life, let your conduct and talk be worthy of those who are pledged to Christ.*"

But, in this circumstance, Paul uses a word that he very seldom uses in order to express his meaning. Here in Philippians 1:27, he uses *politeuesthai*, which means to be a citizen.

Paul was writing from the centre of the Roman Empire, from Rome itself; it was the fact that he was a Roman citizen that had brought him there. Philippi was a Roman colony; and Roman colonies were little bits of Rome planted throughout the world. The citizens never forgot that they were Romans, spoke the Latin language, and called their public leaders by Latin names.

So what Paul was saying here is, "You know full well the privileges and the responsibilities of being a Roman citizen. You know full well how even in Philippi, so many miles from Rome, you still live and act as a Roman does. Remember that you have an even higher duty than that. Wherever you are, you must live as befits a citizen of the Kingdom of God." That is one of the differences between true Christianity and mainstream Christianity. That is, that they are not really living as a Christian of the Kingdom of God, because they are only living it on the surface, and in their private and personal lives it does not carry over

Our manner of life should not be primarily to be worthy of our nation or some organization but to be worthy of the good news of the message of Christ. Our reason is always personal; it always refers back to God the Father and Jesus Christ—who they are, what they have done, how they have done it, why they have done it, and what they are doing to change and perfect us. True Christianity is dynamic, it is alive, and it is all of the time.

The reasons why we live the type of life we live as true Christians is diametrically opposed, and different from the world, or even the tares in the church. We are not conformed to the world, or the things of the world.

2) The second important difference is that these pagan systems (which may use Christian terminology) always presume natural ability or human ability. That is, they come to us and tell us to pull ourselves together, to conform to the pattern. They are presuming that we have the ability and the power to do so—to fight unseen powers. Later, in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul warns about the nature of our battle for life.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Mainstream Christianity barely mentions Satan the devil. They are embarrassed to mention certain things lest they be labeled a fanatic. But, he is there, and he is alive and well, and he is the father of lies.

But, the "intellectuals" presume that we have the ability, and the power, within ourselves to solve our own problems. This system of belief, regarding ethics and moralities, has nothing to offer the weak of the world. You have to be a cultured person before you can apply pagan culture and humanistic morals and ethics in the way that they are taught.

This pagan system of belief presumes that you have it in you, and if you have not got it, it rejects you. It assumes you are poor and weak mentally. The mentally weak assume that since the intellectuals understand it, it must be right. But, the masses of people have never really been convinced deep down that it works because they see no benefit or improvement from it; but even more importantly, God has revealed the truth of His existence, and the penalty for sin, to the world. But, what happens is that the intellectuals are so set in that mindset that they can see nothing else. But the "peons" can see that even their system is not working, but they think that they are intellectuals so they must understand the truth and what is going on in the right way.

Romans 1:18-21 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

This why Paul says here in the 4th chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, *"no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."* That is a major difference between true Christianity and the rest of the world.

Non-Christian teaching has nothing to do with failures. If a person is unable to relate or respond to intellectual presumptions, they just denounce him and leave him to his own ignorance. They say he is unintelligent, or a fool, and avoid him; they or seek to enslave him.

Christianity, on the other hand, presumes that we, as the weak of the world, are given new life and are renewed in the spirit of our mind. This is of God, this is miraculous, this is supernatural; it presumes the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within us. There is a tremendous difference between

non-Christian and true Christian doctrine. Do not let anyone deceive you. When the Worldwide Church of God began its splits and disintegration, thousands of people could not see the difference.

We must rely on God for understanding.

3) The third important difference is that moralities and ethics, when divorced from the teachings of Christ, encourage pride and self-satisfaction. Generally, a person crowns himself with the belief that he is not a liar. He says to himself, "I am a man of my word! My word is my bond!" And, he is very pleased with himself.

Sometimes, this is manifested in what we think of as cleverness. I have heard of some, in the church, who intentionally buy something to use for a short time, or for some specific purpose, with the full intention of returning it for a full refund when they are done with it. This is a type of lying deceit, because it is not only dishonoring an agreement (which is what we do when we exchange money for goods—the item and printed receipt being the written contract), but it is also revealing a motivation from a heart of deceitfulness. The store would not knowingly sell the item to a person who it knew intends to swindle it. I have been surprised at how often I have heard of this going on within the church.

A person who holds to any kind of morality, and ethics, apart from Christianity is always pleased with himself, and his own achievements, in being deviously clever. Although he sees himself as an honest person, his true attitude of pride and self-satisfaction shows that he is dishonest.

Dishonesty equals lying. Dishonesty is, *'the disposition to defraud or deceive.'* Lying is, *'marked by or containing falsehoods.'* These are the common dictionary definitions. Everyone knows what dishonesty and lying are, whether you are a member of God's church or you are a cultural pagan.

Jeremiah exposed the nation of Judah's sin of treachery and deceit from God's perspective in Jeremiah chapter nine. Jeremiah uncovers their blatant sins. Society was shot through and through with wickedness. Willful ignorance of God was the root of their sin.

The first sin in his indictment was widespread adultery. His reference is to their spiritual adultery of idolatry with which gross immoralities were carried out. The picture he paints is of the tongue as the bow and the lying as the arrow. At this time the people of Judah were skilled liars, not only in business lives but also their personal lives.

Jeremiah 9:2-3 Oh, that I had in the wilderness A lodging place for travelers; That I might leave my people, And go from them! For they are all adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men. "And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me," says the LORD.

Their lies have the effect of taking away a man's integrity with similar accuracy to that of a

sharp arrow shot from a powerful bow. For Judah, it was the false prophets who told the people that there was no desolation about to impact them. The people believed them; made no preparation for their defense; did not return to the Lord; and war came and destroyed them.

We find the United States, today, in a similar situation, where their false teachers, false prophets and false ministers are saying that everything is well, and things are not that bad. They say, "Do not worry because we are a powerful Christian nation."

Jeremiah 9:4-7 Everyone take heed to his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; For every brother will utterly supplant, And every neighbor will walk with slanderers. Everyone will deceive his neighbor, And will not speak the truth; They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves to commit iniquity. Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me," says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will refine them and try them; For how shall I deal with the daughter of My people?"

Jeremiah draws on the terms used by the refiner of metals, the first is the smelting to separate the pure metal from the ore; the second is the testing to see whether the metal is pure, or still mixed with alloy. God tests, corrects, and refines His people by trials and tribulation, so that whatever is evil will be consumed in the fire, and whatever is good may be purified.

Jeremiah 9:8-9 Their tongue is an arrow shot out; It speaks deceit; One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, But in his heart he lies in wait. Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the LORD. "Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?"

Do we need to ask the question, "What is going to come upon this nation?" Is God going to punish this nation for its lying and deceit?

Just as men prepare before a battle to get their bows ready, so also do those who decide beforehand to be deceitful. They know exactly what they are doing. In this case, their lying words are their arrows. Like a murderous arrow, in his prideful lying heart, he lays in wait to ambush the unsuspecting person. This is their way of life.

To show the unnaturalness of their wickedness, Jeremiah says that the people trained their tongues contrary to their proper function. To me that says that they knew what they were doing and they trained themselves to do it. Lying takes more effort than speaking the truth, but they were willing to bear the drudgery of sin. We need to be careful when watching sitcoms, that we do not laugh at the lies.

In contrast, Christianity always keeps us humble, always makes us conscious of what we are not, and what we are failing to do. And as we look at the perfect life of Jesus Christ, we feel like worms or probably more like maggots.

And when we are addressed with the words, *'Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ*

Jesus, we feel like crawling under a rock because we know we have so far yet to grow.

4) The fourth important difference is that non-Christian systems leave the old man and the old nature untouched. They merely whitewash the surface a little and conceal the corruption that is within.

II Peter 2:18-22 For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Scratch the surface veneer of these false teachers—these cultural pagans, and you will discover the unchanged character underneath. Offend or cross one of these false teachers, who seem so moral and ethical, and you will find that their morality is only skin deep.

His old man is exactly where he was and what he was, but he has a "respectable" veneer on the surface. He may have a nice surface appearance, but the beauty is only skin deep. Deception is his name, bondage is his game!

God, on the other hand, creates a new man, a new nature, a new creation, a new heart, a new outlook. It is the difference between something being done on the outside and something being done within.

II Corinthians 4:6-7 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

In describing those to whom the gospel is entrusted as "earthen vessels," Paul is contrasting the relative insignificance and weakness of the human bearers of that light with the inestimable significance and power of the light itself. Behind this contrast, Paul implies that God's purpose is to help people recognize that this almighty power is God's alone.

In sharp contrast, the pagan systems simply spend time pouring murky chemicals into the dark polluted stream. But, God goes back to the source of the stream, and makes that pure. Christianity goes down to the depths, it produces a new creation—a new man comes into being.

5) The fifth important difference is that non-Christian morality systems simply thwart, and put a brake on, the manifestation of sin. They do not effectively deal with sin itself.

A man who follows these pagan systems will never be guilty of anything major or obvious. He believes in being respectable. He does not associate with anything openly perverted until it is accepted by the majority of society. But, in principle, and in essence, the evil is there in his personal life! A prime example of this, is what has happened in mainstream Christianity. The Christian churches have a form of appropriateness, and decency on the surface, but yet look how many of the major denominations have accepted homosexuals into the congregation and even ordained them. They have accepted that sin as normal.

Since there is such a great enmity toward God by mankind, the doctrines and teachers most appreciated and followed by humanity are not from God. The teachers of the cultural pagans take pleasure in the flesh, lay on no restraints, and leave everyone in full possession of his heart's desires and sins.

But, because true Christianity encourages overcoming sin, Satan, the world, and our own human nature, it is easy for a person with the spirit of truth to discern false doctrine and false teachers.

I John 4:4-6 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

True Christianity deals with the whole problem. We see it illustrated in the Sermon on the Mount. The Pharisees taught that as long as you had not actually committed adultery all was well, and you were perfect with respect to that commandment.

But, Christ said that if it is in your heart, mind, thought and imagination, and if you have played with it, you are guilty of it! His words go right down to the roots and to the depths. They do not only concern outward manifestations, but inward and hidden ones as well.

Non-Christian systems are only concerned with public behavior, and private behavior is often so different. Let me illustrate what I mean: Environmentalists and animal rights activists wave the banner of saving the plants, trees, animals and other natural resources. We have to stop polluting our environment—true! We have to stop raping the land—true! We have to stop abusing animals—true! They give a sense of moral indignation.

It is amazing how good these conscientious people sound. But, take one look at their personal lives, and beliefs, and it turns your stomach. These groups are primarily made up of nature worshippers and want to depopulate the earth by 80%, by any means possible. They are all for murdering innocent babies through abortion, and all for the intended murdering of the elderly, who they deem useless through mercy killings and assisted suicides, called euthanasia. Many are homosexuals and sexual deviants in other ways.

Granted every last person is not of this type, but the majority are. On the surface it seems like a good movement. We have God's discernment and we can see the paganism behind it.

Go into their personal lives and you will not find the same intense effort in their moral conscience with regard to their fidelity to their wives. A public morality that does not apply itself in the most gentle and kind-hearted relationships of life is a fraud.

The moral and ethical indignation of people who have not the same moral indignation in all areas of life are at the very least evil, hypocritical sinners. Their moral indignation is an appearance only, it is not genuine. They do not really overcome sin, because it is always there in a big way, and they feed it quite often.

6) The sixth important difference is that the non-Christian systems actually deal with nothing but repression. They know nothing about expression. They are negative and lack freedom having to do with God's way of life.

But, true Christianity has both. You stop doing one thing, and you do the other. You not only stop lying, you speak the truth.

I Peter 2:15-17 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

But, the non-Christian system is always negative and purely repressive. It knows nothing about the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The fact is that pagan, and similar cultures, are always manufactured. They always lack life, and they always lack spontaneity. They are a kind of standardized product. The result being, that they always produce the same type of mind and outlook.

Nowhere is it more clear than watching the youth of this nation just go along with whatever the styles and fashions are at the moment, whatever the popular music is of the moment, or popular television programs and movies.

Galatians 5:13-15 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

So, we see the result of what happens within these church groups when people become more worldly. There are great splits, and people cannot get along, and there are accusations and lies thrown back and forth. The mainstream Christian church that is in the building that we used to be in split because some people were putting on morality that was not happening, and changing doctrines and forming their own doctrines and that type of thing. They were requiring that people fit in to a specific mold.

Cultural pagans all look the same and they all do the same things in the same way. They violate personality, because they press all personalities into a single mold. They lie to themselves claiming unity through diversity, but they all think the same way. They all have enmity toward God, because they are all of their father, Satan, who is the father of lies.

But, Christianity never does that. In Christianity there is always variety in the unity. We, who are Christians, do the same things, but we are not the same. We keep the same Sabbath and Holy Days, in contrast to the world that has different holidays, in different countries, originating from the same basic lies.

James 2:10-13 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

The inspired written Word of God is always positive, and dynamic, in its encouragement to overcome sin, and put on the new man, as we self-govern ourselves. When we get irritated, or spiteful, to one another because they do not fit into the mold that we have created, what we are actually doing is thwarting the wonderful variety that God is creating in each and every one of us. People are different, and we need to have a certain amount of tolerance of their idiosyncrasies, and differences, in the right way but not tolerance of sin.

In self-governing, we use God's Holy Spirit—the mind of God—to apply the teachings of Jesus Christ in our lives. It helps us to overcome sin, Satan, the world and our own human nature, and freeing us from the bondage of sin.

7) The seventh important difference is that the non-Christian systems are always cold. It is the coldness of artificiality. It is the difference between a rose blooming on a branch in your garden and an artificial rose on your shelf at home. They look very much alike at first. But, under closer scrutiny that artificial thing is cold, it is dead, there is no warmth about it, there is nothing that really attracts us when we get near it, and we find that it is not what we thought it was from a distance.

The same thing holds true about all the merely moral, ethical systems. You cannot really get near people who are merely moral and ethical. There is a coldness about them. They are self-content, but you do not get sympathy out of them, there is no warmth, and we do not feel encouraged by them.

I John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

Just as "a person of the lie" may repulse the true Christian, so also 'cold artificiality' may indicate the presence of a 'tare' among 'good seeds.' Only God Himself can judge that.

But, when you come to the true Christian, what a contrast! He is warm, he is sincere, he is sympathetic, he is approachable, he is encouraging, and he is not striving for the limelight.

He is self-governed by a principle of love and reverence for God the Father and Jesus Christ, for his brethren in the church, and for his neighbor, that is, his fellow human beings.

The true Christian is obedient to the two great commandments of love toward God, and love toward his neighbor, which are broken down into ten more specific commandments that have a physical and spiritual application.

Matthew 5:27-28 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

There is sincerity, warmth, life, radiance, a dynamic quality with purpose, that is characteristic of the Christian. It is not that the Christian is always completely and perfectly this way (twenty four hours a day—seven days a week), because all are human. We make mistakes, have failures, suffer personality clashes, and suffer persecution with Christ, in our lives. But, as a basic disposition, and most of the time, a true Christian is a joy to be with.

The two contrasting systems of Christianity and paganism are obviously exact opposites in every comparison.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is intensely practical, as we have seen, for its own special reasons, which are far removed and remote from the reasons that the world gives for its culture, its moralities, and its codes of honor and of behavior.

The reasons for our morality, found in the bible, are always uniquely Christian.

There is little, or nothing, that is so opposed, and so hostile, to the doctrine of the church, as lying. The first section, of the fourth chapter, of the epistle to the Ephesians, is devoted to the doctrine of the church—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body, one Spirit, we are called in one hope of our calling.

The church is like a body fitly joined together, all members are joined to the Head and receive the same blood supply. Without doubt, the body is one!

Is there anything that is as destructive of truth as lying? 'Do not lie to one another', says the apostle Paul, but 'each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are all members one of another!'

Paul is speaking to the church, and in the context of the life of the church.

If we tell a lie to another member, we are really damaging ourselves; in a sense we are lying to ourselves. There is no such thing as an independent existence. Half-truths, shaded truths, gossiping, bearing false witness, hypocrisy and deception, should not exist at all in the church of

God.

It is interesting that Proverbs 6:16-19 says, these six things the Lord hates: 1) a proud look; 2) a lying tongue; 3) murder; 4) a heart that devises wicked plans; 5) people who are quick to do evil; 6) a false witness who speaks lies.

It is interesting that he lists two of those as types of lying. Obviously, God hates lying. He adds a seventh thing that He hates (that He calls an abomination)—one who sows discord among brethren. Probably, there is no greater, easier, or faster, way to sow discord among brethren, than to speak lies, to tell half truths, or to shade the truth.

Gossiping, that is, using incomplete and distorted truths is lying. Speaking of the larger church of God, some of you are known as gossipers. Members of God's church know to avoid those of you who are gossipers. I will qualify that, by saying we are all gossipers to one extent or another. So, we all have this to overcome.

It is interesting that the list of things that God hates all destroy relationships.

Romans 14:7-13 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

How can there be fellowship if there is lying? It is exactly opposite to true fellowship. What makes fellowship possible is trust, mutual trust—mutual reliance, a feeling that we can trust one another, and therefore we can speak freely and openly, one to another.

But, the moment the element of lying comes in, fellowship is destroyed. We are no longer free; we do not know how much we can believe, or what we can believe we do not know how much we can trust the other person. And if fellowship is broken, we are in a kind of police state in which everybody is spying on everybody else.

Lying is destructive to fellowship. Lying makes unity impossible, because it cuts at the root of the whole doctrine of the true church at its most essential point—love and truth. We must love our neighbor as ourselves. And, we certainly would not want to be lied to; neither would we lie to ourselves. Although, sometimes we lie to ourselves unknowingly, telling ourselves that we are not guilty of gossip, half-truths or lying. We cannot love others without being truthful.

So, as the apostle Paul said, in Ephesians, *"Let each one of us speak truth to one another, for we are members of one another."* How can I improve on the apostle Paul's words?