

Beware of Misinformation
November 4, 2018

The amount of information in our world today is multiplying at a dizzying rate. Truth... about nearly any topic is increasing. Much of this information is readily available on the internet and social media.

But there is another kind of information being pushed today like never before. This is misinformation. Misinformation is untruth. It is invented statements that pretend to be truth.

Misinformation is of several different forms and purposes. For example, some misinformation is intended deceive people for **political ends**. We are in the midst of an election. There are lots of TV ads. Some tell the truth. Some tell lies. Some mix lies and truth so as to mislead the viewing public away from one candidate and towards another. Candidates embellish their qualifications. Candidates embellish their opponent's mistakes. These are all forms lying. It makes it hard to know what the truth is just from these TV ads.

Another purpose of misinformation is part of an effort **to con us out of money**. I have been spoofed recently. Someone is sending messages to my church email address. When I look to see who sent it, it looks like I sent it. The message is sent from pastorrobin1 to pastorrobin1. The writer of the emails has figured out a way to make it appear that the message came from me to me. In the message, he claims to have hacked my email account. He is trying to blackmail me. He says he has pictures of me doing not nice things he supposedly took, he writes, with the camera on my computer. Little does he know, there IS no camera on my computer. I also checked my Sent folder. The emails did not go out from my address. They have not hacked me at all, but are trying to trick me into believing they have. They want me to send them money.

The same is true of those phone calls we get about our computers, bank accounts, credit cards, or the IRS are all more of the same. Someone is trying to make us believe an untruth to trick us out of money.

Another kind of misinformation is meant to make you laugh. This is **parody or satire**. There are several websites that do this, some of which are run by Christians. And they run fake Christian news stories. A recent story on one of these had the following headline: "**Budget Woes Force Heaven To Reduce Eternal Life To 500 Billion Years**". A recent headline on another of these sites was the following: **Baptist Church Launches Total Immersion Car Wash**.

Some of these fake stories have been posted by people on social media, not realizing the stories are phony. Back in 2016 many Christian people took such a story as real and created an uproar over it. The title of the article was **Elevation Church Debuts Water Slide Baptismal**. An adjoining picture showed the pastor on the platform of the church in Charlotte, NC, with a pool of water center stage and a water slide behind it. For the record the picture was phony. The church never had a slide on the stage.

This event illustrates how easy it can be to mislead people from the truth. Adam and Eve were originally very trusting of God. But the devil used a lie to trick them into

mistrusting God. The devil told lies about God and Adam and Eve suffered because they believed the lies. And we are still suffering the consequences of their misplaced trust.

One of the dangers to us Christians is being fooled by misinformation about Jesus. A.W. Tozer, a well-known preacher of fifty years ago warned of this.

"We are under constant temptation these days to substitute another Christ for the Christ of the New Testament." -- A.W. Tozer

(Man: The Dwelling Place of God, Christian Publications, Inc., 1966, page 140)

That is even more true today than it was 50 years ago. So before we go any further into Colossians let's review what Paul has emphasized about Jesus so far.

In Jesus we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (v14)

Jesus reveals what God is like. (verse 15)

Jesus is the head of all creation. (v15)

Jesus is the creator. (v16)

Jesus must be the priority focus of our lives. (v17)

Jesus sustains creation. (v17)

Jesus leads the church. (v18)

Jesus is the start of resurrection life. (v18)

Through the blood of Jesus God is reconciling lost people to Himself. (v20)

The importance of Jesus must not be understated. Paul has made a big deal of Jesus because Jesus IS a big deal. Who Jesus is and what Jesus did is the basis for our right relationships with God. Our salvation rests entirely on Jesus. We have put our faith in Him, in His shed blood, His resurrection, His identity as Lord, and Savior. In short, **Jesus is the entire answer to our lack of righteousness with God.**

Yet, so many people want to make Jesus less than He is. They want to dilute Jesus. They want to lessen the effects of His death and resurrection. They speak misinformation about Jesus. They prevent some from ever seeing the truth about Jesus. They lead others astray from the truth about Jesus. Even Christians have been led astray, led to give up their faith in Jesus alone for salvation.

And that is a problem. It is a problem because both our justification and sanctification rest entirely on Jesus. God wants more than forgiveness for us. Look at what God wants for every Christian.

Colossians 1:21-22 (NIV) Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--

Here is a quick summary of our sanctification, the goal of what the Holy Spirit is currently doing in each Christian.

God wants us to be holy.

Holy = something or someone given to God

The words consecrated and saint are related. When we give ourselves completely to God, we are holy. The money you put in the offering plate is holy. It is consecrated. It is set apart from all the other money you have and given to God. God is working to make our devotion to himself a pure devotion, a complete devotion. The Holy Spirit is working in us to make our holiness a reality.

God wants us to be blameless, the root of which means "without spot".

I have old dress shirts that are now work shirts. They became work shirts because they got a spot on them, a stain. It might be ink, or coffee, or spaghetti sauce. If I put on a work shirt to eat spaghetti, I don't spill any on the shirt. If I eat in a good dress shirt, I am more likely to spill on it. Why is that? God is working to remove the stain of sins from us.

God wants to make us like Jesus in our character. This is a step beyond blameless. It means we are behaving so well that no one can charge us with wrongdoing.

This description of sanctification is what God wants for us. But this only happens as we maintain our faith in Jesus alone. If we believe lies about Jesus, we are moving away from faith in Him alone. Paul writes to warn them about this danger.

Colossians 1:22-23 (NIV) But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation-- if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.

What is this hope? It is that you are entirely saved in Jesus. It is concerning this very issue that Paul has written this letter. He finally gets to the main reason he has written his letter.

Colossians 2:3-4, 8 (NIV) (I want you to fully know) "Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ... See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

The danger facing the Christians of this church was that they might let themselves be deceived by fine sounding arguments. He gets more specific in this chapter about the kinds of misinformation they would be likely to hear. We will look at those next week. We will also look at the kinds of misinformation we are likely to hear in our day. But before we do, let us be clear about what is at stake here. I'll illustrate with this bottle of water.

I have here an unopened bottle of purified water. It is clean. There are no harmful chemicals in it, not even in small amounts. There are no germs in it. We serve this water at various church functions. Many of you have drunk the water from these bottles. Most of you would do so again.

In this other small bottle I have some water that I collected from a ditch yesterday morning in my neighborhood. I am going to just dip my finger in it and get about a drop of water on my finger and mix it into the pure water. The pure water is pure no longer.

How many germs could there possibly be in one drop of ditch water? Raise your hand if you would drink this mostly pure water?

One drop of ditch water has polluted this purified water. It is no longer pure. It is polluted. Depending on the germs added from the ditch water, drinking this once pure water may make you very sick. Only one drop of non-pure water has made impure this bigger bottle of water. It is no longer pure.

Here is the application. Jesus alone is the pure cure for our sin problem. But if you add anything to Jesus, Jesus is no longer pure. In fact he will be no longer effective against sin. **If you are trusting in something along with Jesus for your salvation, the effectiveness of Jesus for salvation goes to zero.** Jesus and anything else together can't save you.

There are numerous things people do to make Jesus less than 100% effective for salvation. Some people add something to Jesus. If you add anything to Jesus, you are saying that He is not all you need. You are saying that he is not the entire answer to salvation. And if you say that, you are denying what Jesus said about himself. You are denying what His apostles wrote about Him. You are denying the central teaching of Christianity.

If you add anything to Jesus, you have fallen away from grace. You are trying, in some small way, to earn salvation. You are trying to make heaven a reward for doing religious things. And doing religious things, even added to faith in Jesus, will not save you.

Going to church won't save you. Faith in Jesus as the full payment for all of your sins will save you. But what if you combine the two? Faith in Jesus together with faith in going to church won't save you. Faith in Jesus together with faith in reading the Bible won't save you. Faith in Jesus along with faith in prayer won't save you. Faith in Jesus together with faith in doing good deeds won't save you. Faith in Jesus together with memorizing Bible verses won't save you. Faith in Jesus together with being a good person won't save you.

Other people deny some truth about Jesus. They deny his deity. They deny his resurrection. They deny parts of his teaching.

Adding to or subtracting anything from Jesus is misinformation. It is a lie. People do this to make themselves look bigger. But that means that Jesus is smaller. They believe lies to make themselves look better. But it makes Jesus look weaker. People choose lies to give them reason to brag. But this steals glory from Jesus.

In the weeks to come we'll look at some of the lies people were telling then and some of the lies people are telling today about Jesus.

But today's main point is this: **Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.**

Anything else is not the good news of Jesus Christ. Anything else leaves you in your sins. Anything else means you still need a savior, for anything else makes Jesus of no effect for justification with God.

Invitation

What are you trusting in for heaven/forgiveness/justification/righteousness?

Jesus died to provide complete salvation through faith in Him alone. Trust in Jesus and Jesus alone, with nothing taken away from Jesus and nothing added to Him. Only Jesus will save you.

If you have been trusting in Jesus and _____ (whatever), drop the whatever from your trust today.

(pray)

We're going to sing hymn 277, "Take My Life, and Let It Be Consecrated" Are you ready to give your life completely into the hands of Jesus today?