

Proclaiming Christ  
January 8, 2017

Jesus warned his followers to beware of the false teaching of the Pharisees. The apostles of Jesus warned us, in many of their letters, to be on guard against all kind of false teaching. False teaching is teaching untruths about God, man, sin, or salvation. There was much false teaching in the world 2000 years ago. There is even more in the world today.

Some of you have never lived in a world without the internet, but to many of us, it is not that old. The World Wide Web was just invented in 1989. Before that, where would you hear false teaching about Jesus? Where would you encounter misinterpreted Biblical truth?

One place might be a local church. You might go to a church in your community that preached a false gospel. Another place was TV. Still another might be a religious publication by one of the religious groups that goes door-to-door. But the most common way to hear false teaching back then was on the radio.

When I was in high school and college I listened occasionally to a man on the radio who sounded sincere, passionate, and his interpretation of the Bible seemed to make sense. When I read the verses he quoted, I could see in them how they might be interpreted to mean what he said. Unfortunately, I did not know the Bible well enough to refute him. Fortunately, I did not pursue his teaching. Later, when I took up a diligent study of the Bible, the Holy Spirit showed me the errors in what he taught.

Today, the most likely place to come into contact with false teaching is the internet or from someone you know. The internet has brought all manner of false teaching as close as your screen. And many people who are choosing to believe all sorts of things about God. You have probably encountered such in conversations with people around you.

Even people claiming to be Christians are teaching all kinds of things that disagree with the clear teachings of the Bible. They may deny some part of the gospel. For example, they may deny that Jesus is God. Or they deny that Jesus rose from the dead. Or they deny that we need a savior at all.

False teaching is all around us. We are coming into contact with it through others, blogs, news articles, and social media. We are all in danger of being affected by what others believe, if we are not solid on the truth of Jesus. Here is the point today.

**We must be diligent to know the truth so that we will not be led astray.**

We are going to spend several weeks in the book of Colossians looking at such a warning from Paul the missionary. We will start this short series by reading through our focus passage.

**Colossians 1:28-29 (NIV)** We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

**Colossians 2:1-4 (NIV)** I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that

they may know the mystery of God, namely, 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. Let us pray for guidance as we work our way through it. (prayer)

***verse 28a - We proclaim Him (Christ)...***

This is the call of all missionaries and pastors and evangelists. We are called to proclaim Christ. This is also true of the church. No matter what else comprises God's purpose for the church, proclaiming Christ is first and foremost. Every time we gather together, it must be in the name of Jesus that we gather. Our life together is about proclaiming Him.

It is vital that all people hear of Jesus. Without hearing, they cannot believe in Him and be saved. How many people died this past year without hearing the good news of Jesus. Maybe one of your friends or family members died this past year without putting their faith in Jesus. How tragic it is when this occurs. We must seek to share the news of Jesus with all those we come in contact with if we can. It is vital that they hear of Him.

So we proclaim Him. All else we do as a church is in support of that. Our worship is Jesus-centered. Our preaching is about Jesus. While other topics are covered, Jesus is the center of all our proclamation. And nearly every sermon ends with an invitation to receive Him as Savior and Lord.

Our service in the church is to be led by the Holy Spirit. As such, our service is intended to draw people to Jesus. While the Holy Spirit is God, just as Jesus is God and the Father is God, the work of the Spirit is not to draw our attention to the Spirit. Instead, the work of the Spirit is to draw us to Jesus. Jesus Himself said,

**John 15:26 (NIV)** "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

All the work of the Holy Spirit is designed to lift up the name of Jesus. So when you are serving in the church, being led by the Holy Spirit, your service is indirectly lifting Jesus up.

The same is true when you are serving in His name to those outside of the church. Your good deeds in the community, are used by the Spirit to point people to Jesus.

If we are not proclaiming Jesus we are no longer a new testament church. We are simply a religious club. Personally, I don't want to belong to a religious club. But I do want to be part of a church, a community of Jesus followers for proclaiming Christ Jesus.

***verse 28b - We proclaim Him, admonishing ... everyone...***

Our proclaiming of Jesus has a dual focus. The first focus is to admonish people, to warn people of their need for a savior. We have both good news and bad news for the world. Warning people of the bad news sets up the good news to be welcomed.

The bad news is that we are all sinners. One day we will each stand before God and give an accounting for our lives. We will all be found guilty of gross sin. And without someone to speak up for us, we will be condemned to hell. This is the bad news that everyone needs to be warned of. When a person is convinced of these truths they are more likely to welcome the news of Jesus as good news.

The good news is that there is a Savior who will speak up for us, provided we have put our faith in Him. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. He lived a perfect life, without sin. This made Him an acceptable substitute and sacrifice for our sins. God accepted His death as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. The proof of this is that God raised Jesus from the dead.

The resurrection is an integral part of the gospel. Never leave it out. We must not only believe in Jesus' sinless death for us, but also in His resurrection. He is the first of all who will be resurrected. His resurrection is the evidence for our own resurrection to come.

We must warn people of the bad news and then share with them the good news. This is the first focus of our proclaiming Jesus. But there is a second focus.

***verse 28c - We proclaim Him,... teaching everyone with all wisdom...***

Since there is so much false teaching around us, we must be solid in the truth of Jesus.

**In order to remain true to Jesus, we must learn the full truth of Jesus.**

The gospel is only the beginning of what we need to know. To guard against false teaching, we need to be proficient in deeper elements of the truth. We must know the theology behind the gospel. We must understand the full implications of the gospel. We must be conversant in the connections between the two testaments of the Bible.

Let me give you an example. When it comes to using computer software, I know enough of Microsoft Word, Excel, and Publisher to accomplish the basics of each. I am most comfortable in Word and Publisher, yet in neither of those am I proficient. I know enough to do the work required of me as your pastor. I sometimes wish I knew more of all of them, especially of Excel. If I knew more, I would likely use them more.

Now, it is not vital that I become more proficient at these programs. No one has complained to me about my lack of knowledge in these tools. I know enough to get by.

But the same is not true of the Christian faith. Many people do not know enough Christian theology to get by. Warren Wiersbe, a well-known Christian preacher writes, ***"Most of the people I have talked with who are members of antichristian cults were at one time associated with a Christian church of one denomination or another."***

(Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2)

What happened to such people? They were not solid in their knowledge of Biblical truth and were led astray. We have many enemies who would gladly lead us astray from the truth. Some do so because they believe we are naïve to believe the Bible. They would like to educate us to their way of thinking. Others have more sinister motives, wanting to control us and make us their followers.

Because of all such peoples we must be confident in the truth of Jesus, and be firm in our understanding of the deeper truths of the Christian faith. Like my basic knowledge of Microsoft Excel your understanding of the Gospel may be only a basic knowledge. If that is true, you are not firm enough in the truth to prevent being misled. Part of the reason, then, that we come together as a church, is to fill out each other's knowledge of the truth.

Paul had learned from much experience that the only safe disciples of Jesus are those who have been brought to perfection in Christ.

***verse 28 - We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.***

Now, this is not a perfection of character or an absence of sin. This is a perfection of theology. Theology is the study of God. Used in an everyday sense it is what you believe about God. We all have a theology. Every one of us has beliefs about God. You may not have ever lined out your theology, but you have one. I just pray it is the right one. I pray that it is the truth of God, and not just ideas you heard that you liked and adopted. The theology of too many people is just what they have decided to believe regardless of what God has revealed to us.

If we are not firm in the truth God has presented to us about Himself, we can be led astray into false teaching about God. This is the same as worshipping idols in place of God. Paul wishes to prevent the readers of his letter from being led astray. Paul writes of his own concern for the churches under his charge. We pick up his letter where we left off.

***verse 29 - To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

And then he gives them, and us, the reason for these words. Here is a warning for us.

***verse 4 - I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.***

The world we live in has always been one of competing philosophies, ideologies, traditions, superstitions, and religions. With the internet all of these are close at hand. They are all at your fingertips. And there are many fine-sounding arguments for some of them. We guard ourselves from them by digging deeper into the Gospel.

In order to become strong in Christ, we must learn the full truth of God, of man, of sin, of salvation, and of God's will for us in Christ. The truth of these things does not change according to human will. This truth is not flexible. It does not change from person to person, or culture to culture, place to place, or time to time. The truth of God is solid, unchanging.

In the weeks ahead, we will explore further in chapter two of Colossians. Let us give ourselves to what God has for us in today's warning.