

Letters From My Father
Week 17
1 Timothy 6:3-5
“The Fruit Inspectors - Part One”

Introduction

Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. You'll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you'll recognize them by their fruit.

Matthew 7:15-20

I've often heard it said that, “Christianity isn't a religion, its a relationship.” In fact, I have even said this myself over the years. But as I have gotten a bit older, and hopefully more mature in my walk of faith, I have come to think that this statement is a bit misleading. Oh, I understand the sentiment behind it, but to say that Christianity is not a religion is not entirely true. Webster's Dictionary defines **religion** as:

The belief in and worship of a superhuman power or powers, especially a God or gods, a particular system of faith and worship.

So, by very definition, Christianity is indeed a *religion*. However, it is a religion that comes from a *relationship* with Christ, and as such, it is the only true religion. All other religions are counterfeit. This isn't a popular stance to take in this era of “tolerance”, but it is true nonetheless. And it is the responsibility of The Church to reveal this truth to a lost and dying world. We need to warn people of the falseness of every other supposed faith, other than the saving faith of knowing Christ Jesus.

To know Christ is to be changed from the inside out. Christ lives in us, and we in Him. And as a result, the way that we believe and worship are also changed. We are brought into a right standing with God, through Christ, as His Word teaches us how to worship God in spirit and in truth (**John 4:23**). So then, Christianity is a religion (system of worship) that comes from a relationship with Christ!

The Apostle Paul called this “right worship” or “proper reverence” with God, *eusebeia* (pronounced *yoo-seb'-i-ah*), which is a compound word made up from two words meaning, “right” and “worship”. In *The New Testament* the word *eusebeia* is translated as “godliness”. The word is mentioned fifteen separate times in *The New Testament*, and eight of those occurrences are in *1 Timothy*. In fact, “right worship” could very well be argued as the theme of the entire letter. Paul wanted the church at Ephesus to properly worship The LORD, and that is why he sent Timothy to Ephesus in the first place. False teachers had crept into the church unawares and had led the people astray from the proper teachings of Scripture. And Timothy was sent to get the church back on track.

As Paul comes to the close of his first letter to his young son in the faith, he reiterates the importance of exposing false teaching in order to be certain that the church at Ephesus be returned to a “right worship”. He went into great detail to instruct each and every member of the congregation as to how to conduct themselves in regards to godliness (*eusebeia*). Everyone from the pastors and deacons, men and women, and even slaves were instructed to follow the teaching of Christ, for it is the Word of God that has authority over all Believers. Everything that we do must be in accordance with the teaching of The Scriptures. This is why it is required of all elders, that they “be able to teach” (**1 Timothy 3:2**).

Everything false will be shown for what it is when exposed to the light of Scripture. For only by “right worship” will the church become what God intended. False teachers and false doctrines are sent from Satan in order to corrupt what is good and proper. But when these things are exposed to Scripture, they can no longer remain hidden. Those who are firmly grounded in *The Word* can immediately recognize the false teacher by his fruits. The false teacher is *Arrogant*, sowing only *Animosity* and driven by *Avarice*. But they cannot stand in the light of God's Word, for it always reveals their true nature.

Arrogance (vs. 2b-4a)

Teach and encourage these things. If anyone teaches false doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our LORD Jesus Christ and with the teaching that promotes godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing. 1 Timothy 6:2b-4a

When Paul says, “*teach and encourage these things*”, I believe that since he is coming to the close of his letter, he is telling Timothy to teach all the things that he has covered so far. He has spoken of the pastor/elder responsibilities and qualifications, the qualifications of deacons, the proper attitudes of worship for both men and women, as well as, the relationship between servants and masters. In short, he has instructed the people how to conduct themselves in godliness (*eusebeia* or correct worship). He reinforces this by telling Timothy that these are the things that he must teach and encourage.

After this, he contrasts the actions and motivations of the false teacher with the attitudes of proper worship. When we do things God’s way, we have love, joy, and peace. False doctrine can never produce these results. In fact, they produce the exact opposite. The low road never leads to high ground! So Paul points out the emptiness of the false teacher; first, by exposing his character, and then later, his actions, as well as, his motivation.

Paul informs us, under the direction of The Holy Spirit, that all false teachers have a character flaw. They elevate themselves and their self-invented theology above the very teachings of Christ. The reason that most people reject Christianity is because they simply do not like the teachings of Scripture. Men do not like to be told that they are sinners in need of repentance. They prefer a god and a belief system that accepts, and even congratulates their sinfulness, rather than one who would expose and condemn it. So as a result, they either avoid The Scriptures altogether or twist them in order to reinforce their own preconceived ideology. These are very dangerous people indeed.

Paul warns Timothy that these false prophets (or prophetesses as the case may be) are driven by arrogance. After all, who in their right mind believes that they know more than God? The false teacher does. The word that Paul used to describe these evil charlatans is *typhoo* (pronounced toof-o’-o), and it literally means to *be enveloped in smoke*. In today’s vernacular, we would say that these people are “*blowing smoke*” or “*full of hot air*”. They are so filled with a sense of their own importance that they actually convince themselves that what they are saying is wisdom, but as Paul goes on to declare, they understand nothing.

There are so many “preachers” out there today that match this description. They strut and preen on stage like proud peacocks and try to impress people with their great knowledge, but in the end, it’s all just a bunch of smoke and hot air. There is no substance to their teaching. But because of their personal charisma, these evil people are able to draw many away from “right worship”. They coerce and convince the unsuspecting masses to turn away from the truths of Scripture in search of a more enlightened path. I am convinced that the hottest part of hell is reserved for such as these.

To know Christ is to be humbled by His presence. The more time that you spend with Jesus my friends, the more that you become cognizant of just how inadequate that you are apart from Him. We have nothing to boast about, except Christ and His love, mercy, and grace. Beware of the so-called “preacher”, who thinks highly of himself, for in his arrogance, he displays his lack of knowledge of the Risen Savior.

But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our LORD Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

Animosity (vs. 4b-5a)

...but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words. From these come envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions, and constant disagreement among people whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth.... 1 Timothy 6:4b-5a

A simple reading of Scripture tells us that **the Fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)**. Notice that the false teachers offer none of this, but rather, the exact opposite. Right worship brings us into healthy communion with God, while false worship brings contention and strife.

The false teacher is an expert of the corruption of Scripture. Just as Satan twisted God's Word in the garden of Eden in order to deceive Eve, the false teacher will do the same. I cannot tell you how many times that I have witnessed a so called "prophet of God" twisting The Scriptures in order to make them say what they want. I am convinced that this is what Paul meant when he said that they have an unhealthy interest (the Greek word is *noseo*, meaning *sick or diseased*) in words. They obsess over certain words in order to mold them to say what they want. They have no interest in knowing the mind of Christ, but rather, they have a goal in mind and will use whatever means necessary in order to achieve that goal. Even if it means misusing God's Own Word.

But the false teacher can never offer lasting peace with God. False religion never does. Instead of having peace from their empty words, their hearers live in strife and discord. Beware the preacher who manipulates his followers with promises of physical health, prosperity, and personal power; while avoiding the truths of sanctification, submission, and sacrifice like the proverbial plague. For when they are unable to deliver upon their false promises, those who follow them will eventually become all the more disgruntled and discouraged.

Are we really supposed to believe that everyone who flocks to the modern day church of the so called "prosperity gospel" finds health, wealth, and perpetual happiness in this world? Of course not! The only people who profit from such delusional schemes are those at the top of the pyramid. And when the "rank and file" congregants still have the struggles they were promised to be delivered from, what do these so called "prophets" have to say about it? They criticize them by saying they do not have enough faith! See how that works? These sons of Satan stand in the pulpit making false promises of wealth and prosperity, using themselves as an example, because they have been fleecing the flock, as it were. And then, when the people complain that they are not receiving those same benefits, they are condemned for their lack of belief! What a scam!

So why do people fall for such absolute nonsense (not to mention blasphemy)? It is because their minds are depraved and deprived of the truth. They flock to the false teachers, not from any desire to be made right with God, but rather, to obtain everything that their selfish hearts desire. Their minds are depraved by their own lust. And secondly, they have no real knowledge of the truth. If they had been firmly grounded in the teachings of Scripture, then they would have never fallen for the false teachers in the first place. Depraved and deprived are two very powerful words that perfectly describe the human condition of our country today. What a sad commentary that is indeed.

Contrary to popular belief, we, The Church, do not "win" in this world. There is never going to be a time when this fallen world embraces, or even accepts our truth. In fact, it despises us for it, and always will. But when Christ returns, *then* we will be victorious. We will never win down here, but in the next world, we win it all! God's Word tells us that the gospel isn't meant for our "prosperity", but rather, it is meant to redeem us from our sins. We are to lay up treasures in heaven, for the ones that we possess in this world will all be destroyed in the end. And while we are here... we struggle.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."

Matthew 5:10

Avarice (vs. 5b)**...who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain.****1 Timothy 6:5b**

And there it is! The naked truth revealed and uncovered for all to see. The motive behind false teaching is greed! Make no mistake. The false shepherd does not love the flock. He merely desires to fleece it! You will never hear the televangelists preach this verse, for it exposes everything that they are in seven simple words: **"...godliness is a way to material gain."** Can you imagine standing at the foot of the cross of Christ and thinking, "How can I use this to get rich?" That, my friends, is the very embodiment of blasphemy. How is that even possible? Because Satan has inspired it, that's why. Now do you understand why Paul described false teaching as "the doctrines of demons" (**1 Timothy 4:1**)? A person's heart must be very twisted indeed to think that The Son of God lay down His life on the cross so that we could be wealthy.

Paul will go on to repeat the words of Christ by saying that **"the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."** Jesus has plainly commanded that we need to choose whom we will serve for we cannot have "two masters".

No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.
Matthew 6:24

So if your "religion" motivates you to serve anything else except Christ, then you do not have "right religion". Godliness is **loving The LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).** We must all **"choose this day, whom we will serve" (Joshua 24:14-15).** The false teacher's motivation is greed, and when it is shown in the light of Scripture, it can be seen from miles away. So examine the motivations of those who would presume to teach you. Are they filled with arrogance, twisting The Scriptures to their own ends? Are the results of their teaching the peace that passes all understanding or do they cause strife, jealousy, and discord? And just why are they teaching in the first place? What is it that they desire above all else. Are they motivated by a desire to follow Christ and to lift Him up for all to follow? Or is their motivation more cynical and sinister in nature? Who are they in this for exactly, themselves or Christ? The simple application of God's Word will reveal the truth. We must examine everything in the light of God's Word, so that we will know for sure.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you know The Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of antichrist, which you have heard is coming; even now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One Who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world. Therefore, what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we know The Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.
1 John 4:1-6

Bottom line: If what is being taught does not align perfectly with the teachings of The Savior, then be sure that it is not "right worship". And it is not from God.

And that, my friends, is**The Truth!!!**