

We are engaged in a great battle for the minds of men, but in a religious world dominated by doctrines of men (Matthew 15:9), truth is difficult to ascertain by those whose minds are so cluttered with such doctrines. Truth can be known (John 8:31-32; Ephesians 5:17), BUT there are many false teachers gone out into the world (1 John 4:1), both in the 1st century and in the 21st! However, to even contend for this fact is tantamount to being branded as a bigot in modern society.

Contrariwise, we see that the New Testament is literally filled with urgings not to be led astray, yet many of our contemporaries maintain that such is impossible, after all, the saying goes, “we’re all going to heaven, we’re just taking different routes to get there.” However, Paul warns the Thessalonians to be wary regarding the 2nd coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3), and later urges them to not allow anybody to “beguile” them in this matter (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). This obviously broaches the question of why did Paul even issue such a warning, if it were not possible for people to be deceived? This word “beguile,” used six times in the New Testament, always carries the idea of causing someone to accept false and erroneous ideas concerning truth. The hearts of innocent people can be deceived (Romans 16:17-18). The overall thrust of the second letter of Peter was to warn his readers against false teachers. These Christians were living in a hotbed of Gnostic philosophy (see Col. 2:8; Ephesians 5:6 and Jude 4), and were vulnerable to false teachers leading them astray. Being led astray is possible even today.

Peter writes: “*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these*

things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:15-18 KJV).

Before writing these words of our text, the inspired Apostle Peter had just finished discussing the 2nd Coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-12), which some were denying (3:3-4). Paul earlier addressed the same problem when writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:12). Peter specifically reminded his readers to remember “*the words spoken by the prophets” as well as the “commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour”* (3:1-2). There were those who ridiculed the idea that Christ was coming again (3:3-4). Was it true that things have always remained the same since creation, as they argued (v. 4)? Peter bluntly states that they were wrong in making such a contention. False teachers have always conveniently overlooked what the Bible says in that which they do not accept, but don’t hesitate to quote the Bible where it happens to agree with them (3:5); incidentally this quoting of Scripture is a practice of Satan (see Matthew 4:4). The flood of Noah’s day is proof that things have not always remained the same, and Peter’s point is that God intervened then, and He will intervene again at the end of time.

Since this world is to be destroyed, what effect should that knowledge have on mankind? Peter says: “*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness”* (3:11). Peter’s point? There is a connection between

BELIEF and BEHAVIOR! Why bring this up at this juncture? Because judgment day is surely coming, and men shall give an account of the way they’ve lived out their time here on earth (Acts 17:31 and 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Since Christ is coming again, and this earth is to be destroyed, we ought to make every effort not to be deceived by false teachers, thereby subjecting ourselves to the possibility of falling from grace and being lost (v. 17). How should the “apparent” delay of God’s judgment be regarded? Which is it? Does this delay prove that Christ is not coming again (3:4) or should it be viewed as evidence that God desires that all should repent, and be saved (3:9)? Peter says the latter is the correct answer.

It seems somewhat ironic that so much attention is given to warning against false doctrine in the New Testament, yet so many treat this issue as a trivial matter. So few will ever admit that they “wrest” the scriptures, yet most folks can name others who do! In 2 Pet. 3:16, the Bible states that some twist or distort God’s word and they do so at their own peril. Such a treatment of God’s word places one’s own salvation in jeopardy.

According to Peter, the scriptures given by Paul were being twisted by some to make Paul say something that he (Paul) never said. The **fact** that it was being done is far more serious than the mere accusation that men were guilty of doing it, yet too many people condemn those who expose false teaching than condemn the false teaching itself. Such an attitude contributes to more people believing a lie, and losing their salvation which leads to this question: which is more important, teaching the truth or getting someone to feel that “I am a good ole boy”?

Does false teaching really matter all that much, as long as people are sincere about what they believe, whether it be true or false?

Absolutely, it matters! Jesus declared that the teaching of men's doctrines makes worship to be in vain (Matthew 15:9), and we ask, does that not matter? Is it a small thing with you that people can lose their souls because of it? It can cause both the teacher and those whom he teaches to be lost; is that a small thing? (see 1 Timothy 4:16; James 3:1).

Why would people be involved in teaching false doctrine, since it can cause such horrible consequences? Numerous reasons could be given, but here are a few:

1. They serve their own belly (Romans 16:18), or i.e., they have an ulterior motive (see 2 Peter 2:3).
2. They might be unlearned or unstable, and not aware that they are (2 Peter 3:16)
3. Pride might cause influential teachers to not want to lose followers by teaching the truth (Mark 13:22).
4. Because teachers themselves have been taught wrong, and they continue the practice, et al.

What are some of the most dangerous fables facing today's religious world? One would be teachings regarding the grace of God. There are many who dismiss the demands that grace makes on the lives of Christians. They think that God's grace is going to cause Him to overlook their sins (Romans 6:1-2). We must face the fact that it is possible to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1), caused by believing the false teachings that grace trumps keeping God's commandments every time, i.e. grace and law are antithetical! The fact is that it is very possible for a Christian to be removed from him that called him into the grace of Christ and ultimately end up supporting a false gospel (Galatians 1:6). Away with the idea that "I know what the Bible says, but I'm going to do this action anyway and just rely on the grace of God."

Furthermore, we dare not reduce Christianity to a mere set of platitudes which have no connection to our behavior. There will always be those who "*think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot*" (1 Peter 4:4). Peter was referring to lasciviousness, lust, revellings, (see 1 Peter 4:3), etc., in other words, BEHAVIOR! Additionally, there are those who minimize the importance of doctrinal issues: Is Genesis 1-11 merely a myth?, do Christians receive special revelations today?, is God's plan of salvation the same today as it was in the 1st century?, is baptism optional?, etc.

How can we avoid being deceived? Answer: by searching the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), by continuing to examine ourselves, and comparing our teaching with what the Bible says (2 Corinthians 13:5), by realizing that even we can fall from our own steadfastness (2 Peter 3:17), proving all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and realizing there is a pattern (the New Testament) which is to be followed (Hebrews 8:5).

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**"They Shall Be Turned
Unto Fables"**

Fables: A Cause And A Cure

by
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