

Don't be fooled!

Ever since the gospel has been in existence (Gen 3:15), Satan has been at work trying to twist and distort its clearest meaning. Since his objective is to *be like the most high God*, he tries to imitate God. This earth is under Satan's rule, and this is evident by the mess that exists. God is a God of order, not confusion (1Cor 14:33, 40). Satan has counterfeited everything he feels is useful in his rulership of the world. In his arrogance, Satan seeks not to worship the true God but desires worship for himself. Knowing Satan's motive, we should be aware of the counterfeit and know how to expose it when we are confronted by it.

The declared enemy of God is Satan and the evil angels that sided with him in the pre-historic angelic conflict. Further, there are human beings who have sided with them, whose end will be the same (Matt 25:41). *"For such Men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."* (1Cor 11:13-15). This is the greatest deception that Satan has ever conceived! Even in first century this lie was perpetuated. The lie is to copy Christianity as far as morality and righteousness (falsely), but not have salvation through the blood of Christ. Satan is in the Church! His Pastors are there too! This passage should redefine the words, evil and Satanic. Just because a church has an air of religiosity, morality and respectability does not mean they are worshipping the true God. If the true gospel is cleverly left out, that church is under Satanic thinking. If you go to a church and never hear the true gospel, certainly Satan is behind it. As far as someone looking on, the righteousness that comes from spiritually dead man is not easily distinguished from the righteousness that comes from the someone who has been born of God. God is not fooled, He knows perfectly every one who is His. Adding to this confusion is true believers who function under carnality producing dead works.

God's solution to man's problems of sinfulness and immorality is regeneration. It is not reformation of the old nature. No matter how you clean him up, dress him up or perfume or deodorize the unregenerate man, he stinketh to God. The truth needs to be told, *"You **must** be born again."* You need a new nature. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation..."* (2Cor 5:17). You are not born again because you act religious, pray, give money to a church, fast, attend church seven days a week, tithe or are very emotional about God. People do all these things and are lost, sold out to Satan and on their way to the lake of fire. It is certainly not God's will for man to sin. But the gospel is God's answer to sin. Sin is not an issue in salvation, Why? Because God judged every sin in the human race in Christ. God offers salvation to man absolutely free, NO WORKS are required before, during or after salvation. Because God is perfectly righteous and just and cannot compromise these perfections (or else God would not be God), Satan seeks to use this to frustrate the grace of God. He urges man to malign, belittle, and mock those who simply place their faith in Christ to be saved and have eternal life.

Satan knows that if you add the slightest of human works to faith, you tie God's hands to save you. Adding works says that God must accept dead works for man's salvation, something that His righteousness abhors and rejects. It says that God must recognize something in man's sinful nature as meritorious, noteworthy, which He will NEVER do! Jesus Christ performed all the work necessary for anybody in the human race to have salvation, but you must depend, rely, believe on Him and Him alone to save. When you add works, you reject the perfect work of Christ and tell God He must accept your imperfect works for your salvation. Religion, which is Satan's invention to ensnare man, is man by his works, seeking to gain the approval of God. Christianity is God, by the work of Jesus Christ, seeking man and offering him salvation absolutely free, no works, by simply believing in Jesus Christ. Therefore, since this is the only way of salvation clearly taught in the Bible, the enemy seeks to hide it, twist it, and distort the plain truth of the gospel of grace.

The apostle Paul certainly understood this because he was a very religious Pharisee. He thought he was doing God's service, but was in reality persecuting the church. When Paul was finally saved, his eyes were opened to spiritual things and then he understood the true issues. Those with whom he associated with in religion, Paul had a burden for their salvation. *"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel."* (Rom 9:2, 3). What love for those who Paul knew most certainly were lost, because of their rejection of the gospel. Paul knew these people, he was one of them, and if he could just show them, certainly they would believe. *"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."* (Rom 10:1-3). Here were people that had the word of God, the covenants, promises, they were always doing alms, praying to God, constantly doing great things for God; they were moral and at the same time Paul says, they needed salvation. Why? they would not submit. The arrogance of their self righteousness would not allow them to submit to God's plan which is NO WORKS. In their arrogance, they were impressed with themselves and their works. God must also be impressed they reasoned. They were wrong! They were lost.

Today the same situation exists. There are many religious folk all around us who need to hear the gospel, who are spiritually dead, condemned by God and on their way to the lake of fire. They think their relationship with God depends on their works, their morality, their empty rituals. These people have the word of God, but are blinded by Satan (2Cor 4:4). They have rejected the gospel and accepted Satan's counterfeit. Our responsibility is to share with them, if they will allow us, the gospel of grace. Just because a person says "praise the Lord" or thanks Jesus or God, we are not to assume they are saved. Even if they are moral and walk upright, that is not an indication they are saved. If we know the gospel, we have an obligation to give it everyone who needs it. If we give the gospel to someone who is already saved, they will not be offended or mad at

us, but will glory in the grace of God with us. If they twist and turn and fight us, they may not be born of God or understand spiritual things (1Cor 2:14). We do not fight back with the same weapons, "*for though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*" (2Cor 10:3-5). Our weapon is the word of God which is a "*critic of thoughts and intents of the heart.*" Before we enter this warfare we must equip ourselves with the word. You cannot give the gospel clearly if you do not know it. We need to take time to learn the gospel, for it is a matter of life and death! If we accurately present the gospel we will see this *divine power* spoken of here.

Let us not be ashamed of the gospel, or intimidated or fooled by the religious crowd. All they really need is the glorious gospel of Christ. Let us not take anything for granted, but be ready to speak the truth in love, having your words seasoned with grace, setting forth the truth plainly to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

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