

Small Books, Big Messages

“Truth and Love – Part 2”

2 John 7-13

- Delivered at Central Baptist Church on August 26, 2018

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** Who could have known that something so attractive could be so deadly? Joe Gutierrez was a steel worker for 42 years. He wrote a book entitled *The Heat: Steelworkers’ Lives and Legends*. It contains five stories, one of which is entitled, “Snow danced in August.”
 - He describes what was a beautiful scene inside the mill. As the steel was stripped by some rolling pads and cooled in a tall tower, silvery dust flakes would fall to the ground. It created this breathtaking scene particularly at night as the light glittered off of the dust.
 - For years visitors flocked to the sight. Gutierrez says that the workers used to fight over who got to work in the picturesque environment. Have you guessed the name of the dust? Asbestos.
- Today, we now know that asbestos is dangerous. The tiny particles get trapped in the lungs causing great health problems. We take great care to avoid asbestos. We take the proper precautions to remove it.
 - After 42 years in the steel mill, Gutierrez says he can’t walk too far, gets tired easily, and his breathing sometimes hurts.
- There are many things that are attractive at first glance but prove to be deadly. The same principle applies to our spiritual lives.
 - One of these is false teaching. Now here is the thing about false teaching - it never identifies itself as false. You don’t pick up a book about Jesus from the bookstore and read a warning label that says, **“This book contains 70% false teaching about Jesus.”** Websites don’t have a pop-up windows that say, **“this article seeks to undermine your confidence in the gospel.”**
 - False teaching always appears attractive. But in the end it is like breathing asbestos into your spiritual lungs.
- This raises all kinds of questions: Why is false teaching so bad? How do we identify it? How do we resist it? How should we relate to those who teach false things about Jesus? Do we just love them? Do we separate from them?
 - In verses 7-13 John helps us to deal with these questions. He shows us two things. First, he shows us *how to resist false teaching*. Second he shows us *how to relate to false teachers*. How to resist. How to relate.
 - John spends most of his time on the first point and so we will too.

UNDERSTAND THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

- The first thing that John shows us is **(SHOW SLIDE 2) how to resist false teaching**. He has a few things to say about this. If you are going to resist false teaching you need to start by making sure you **(SHOW SLIDE 3) understand the extent of the problem**.
 - Look at verse 7. **READ 7a - For many deceivers have gone out into the world.** He calls these men ‘deceivers’ because they lead people astray. They cause people to wander from the truth. So we are not talking about the average Christian who may have some errors in their thinking. We are talking about leaders, teachers, authors, pastors, speakers, bloggers, and professors. We are talking about people who publicly teach false things about Jesus.
 - When John says they have gone into the world it could mean they are out promoting their views like missionaries do. But John also uses the word ‘world’ to mean humanity organized against God. If that is his point then he means that although they may talk about Jesus they are actually part of humanity in rebellion against Christ.
- John makes clear the extent of the problem when he says there are **“many”** of these false teachers. They are everywhere. Jesus said the same thing. Mark 13:22: **“For false Christs and false prophets will appear**

and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.”

- In 1 Timothy 4:1 Paul writes, **“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”**
 - When Paul left the church in Ephesus he warned the elders there saying, **“I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!”**
- So the application to us is obvious. Be on your guard because false teaching is everywhere. It is on the Internet, in books, and in blogs. It is on the T.V. with preaches who claim to be Christian. It is in University religion classes. It is in churches that call themselves ‘Christian.’ It can come from bishops, from pastors, and from small group leaders.
 - So John, Jesus, and Paul are saying, **“Don’t be naïve and think this only occurs in select areas of the world.”** The first way to resist false teaching is simply by recognizing the extent of the problem – that it is everywhere.

HOLD FAST TO THE ESSENTIALS

- The next thing John says about how to resist false teaching is this: **(SHOW SLIDE 4) hold fast to the essentials.**
 - If you are going to resist false teaching you need to know the essentials of the faith in order that you might discern what is false. I’ve heard of bank tellers who can instantly spot a counterfeit bill because it feels different than the real one. To resist false teaching we must know the truth.
- Look again at verse 7. **READ 7 - For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.**
 - So these false teachers were denying one of the essential truths of Christianity. They did not believe that Jesus is God incarnate. They denied that Jesus is God in human flesh.
- Now John may here be referring to the teachings of a man named Cerinthus. He taught that Jesus and the Christ were separate beings. He said Jesus was a normal man and at his baptism the pure spirit being Christ came upon him enabling him to do miracles. And then the Christ left Jesus when he died. So Cerinthus denied the two natures of Jesus – that he is fully God and fully man.
 - One of the easiest ways to identify false teaching is to examine what is being said about Jesus. But to discern this you must know the essential truths about Jesus. And there are essential truths.
 - Notice in verse 9 John speaks of **“the teachings of Christ.”** **READ 9a - Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ.** Same thing in verse 10. **READ 10a - If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching.** So what are these essential teachings that we must hold to?
- As verse 7 says it begins with his incarnation. Incarnation means that God is incarnate in Jesus. This man Jesus is none other than God in human flesh. This means we must believe in the virgin birth. Why is it so essential to believe in the two natures of Jesus – that he is fully God and fully man?
 - If Jesus is just a man then he cannot save you anymore than I can, for only God can save. But if He is only God and not a man then he cannot represent humanity before God. But since He is fully God and fully man, he is able to save and can fully represent the human race.
 - So we must believe in his incarnation.
- But secondly we must hold fast to the essential truth of his death.
 - Believing in the incarnation is not enough. For why did God become a man? Jesus said he came to die.
 - God is perfectly just. To be just God must and will punish sin. But the good news of Christianity is that instead of punishing us for our sins, God punished Jesus. On the cross, Jesus willingly bore the wrath that we deserve to bear so that all who believe in him can be reconciled back to God.
- This leads to the third essential truth, which is his resurrection.

- The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead means God accepted his payment for our sins. What God did for Jesus in raising him from the dead, God will also do for all who trust in him.
- Finally, we must hold fast to the essential truth of his second coming.
 - One day Jesus is coming again to set up his kingdom on the earth. He will judge all people and assign each their eternal destiny.
 - So friends you resist false teaching by holding fast to the essentials.
- False teachers will always try to subtract something from Jesus or add something to Him. Some false teachers subtract from Jesus. These men in verse 7 were taking away from the deity of Jesus. Let me give some contemporary examples of those who call themselves churches but who *subtract* from Jesus.
 - The official teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses says, **(SHOW SLIDE 5) "we do not worship Jesus, as we do not believe that he is Almighty God."**¹
 - So JW's take away the deity of Jesus making him one of God's creation.
 - The Church of Jesus Christ Scientist calls itself a Church of Christ. It's teachings come from its founder, Mary Baker Eddy whose writings are authoritative. She writes, **(SHOW SLIDE 6) "Jesus is the human man and Christ is the divine idea"**² and **"Not that Jesus was or is eternal...not one with the Father."**³
 - The official creed of the Unitarian Church says, **(SHOW SLIDE 7) "Unity rejects the traditional Christian view that Jesus is a deity to be worshipped...Rather, we look upon Jesus as a great healer, miracle worker, and mystic who had a direct access to God."**⁴
 - All of these subtract from Jesus' essential nature as the God-man.
- But false teaching can also add to Jesus. Mormons for instance affirm the New Testament but then say you must interpret it in light of Jesus' final revelation, which they say is *The Book of Mormon*. The Book of Mormon presents Jesus as the spirit brother of Lucifer and as a man who became a god. So they add to Jesus and thereby deny his nature.
 - I had a friend who got involved with an organization that followed a book called *A Course in Miracles*. This book was written by a woman named Helen Schucman. She claimed that it was given to her by an inner voice whom she identified as Jesus. Once again, the call is to add more to Jesus, to understand Jesus in light of *A Course in Miracles*.
 - In summary then, if we are going to resist false teaching we must hold fast to the essentials. This means you must know the essentials and that you must discern when people are trying to add or subtract from Jesus.

RECOGNIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT WE BELIEVE

- As we transition to John's third statement on how to resist false teaching look at what John says about such teachers at the end of verse 7. **READ 7b - *Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.*** John is not name-calling. He is stating facts. Teachers like this lead people astray. They may claim to be for Christ but they are actually against Christ. They are anti-Christ.
 - Isn't that a little harsh John? Canadians have a hard time hearing some black and white statements. Aren't these just small differences of opinion? Why make such a big deal about this?
 - John says it is a big deal because if we are to resist false teaching we must, in the third place, **(SHOW SLIDE 8) recognize the consequences of what we believe.**
- In verses 8-9 John contrasts the grave consequences of false teaching with the good consequences of true teaching. The first consequence is a grave one. **READ 8a - *Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for.***
 - John is saying that all he and the other apostles have sacrificed for and worked for in this church could be lost if this church abandons the truth.

¹ <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/believe-in-jesus/>

² Mark Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*, 473:15-16

³ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*, 333:32; 334:1

⁴ <http://www.bible.ca/cr-Unity.htm>

- We see this consequence in history. The great schools of America and Britain like Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Oxford were founded as Christian schools. They were solidly Christian. But over time they bought into false teachings and today have abandoned Christianity. Of course they do many good things but that heritage that was worked for has been lost because they did not watch out.
- John contrasts this with a good consequence. **READ 8b - but may win a full reward.**
 - John's desire is that they would be fully rewarded on judgement day. He is not speaking about salvation because we are saved by grace. But faithful Christians will be rewarded.
- In verse 9 Paul gives another grave consequence – another reason why we must take false teaching so seriously. **READ 9a - Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.**
 - When people deny the essential teachings of Christ, it is not simply a minor difference of opinion. It is the difference between salvation and damnation. If a person denies the Son, they also deny the Father. It is impossible to have a relationship with God apart from Jesus, the Son of God.
 - You can see then why John takes false teaching so seriously. There are eternal consequences to what you believe.
- But John ends with an eternally good consequence. **READ 9b - Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.**
 - We must resist false teaching and continue in Christ because those who do get the Father and the Son. What you believe about Jesus has eternal consequences.
 - He is the difference between heaven and hell. For **“salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”**

WATCH OUT FOR PROGRESSIVE TEACHING

- So if we are going to resist false teachings we must first of all understand the extent of the problem. Second, we must hold fast to the essentials. And third, we must recognize the consequences of what we believe. John adds two more quick things. If we are going to resist false teaching we must in the fourth place **(SHOW SLIDE 9) watch out for ‘progressive’ teaching.**
 - Look back at the beginning of verse 9. **READ 9a - Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.** To go ahead means they were talking as if their teachings were progressive. They wanted to give new ideas on Jesus. False teachers always do this. They downplay the old as outdated. They speak about being progressive.
 - Now of course Christians are all for progressing in the Christian life. We are all for progressing in science. But when it comes to Jesus we do not progress beyond him and his teachings. John says our job is to continue in the teachings of Christ.
- So if you are going to resist false teaching watch out for people who say things like, **“The church has missed the point for 2000 years and I am here to explain it.”** If it's new it probably isn't true.
 - Watch out for people who claim to be progressive in their teachings on Jesus.

REMAIN UNDER THE CARE OF LOCAL GODLY LEADERS

- And now to finally wrap up this first point John says that to resist false teaching we should **(SHOW SLIDE 10) remain under the care of local godly leaders.**
 - Let's skip verses 10-11 for the moment and look at verse 12. **READ 12-13 - Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.** ¹³ **The children of your elect sister greet you.** John knows that in his absence false teachers are doing damage. And so he is going to see them. Once he arrives he will help direct them in the truth that he and they might have complete joy.
 - One of the best ways to resist false teaching is to remain part of a church where you have godly pastors that faithfully teach the word of God to you and godly people who watch out for you.

- It is not good enough to just listen to sermons on the internet. You need to remain under the care of local godly leaders.

HOW TO RELATE TO FALSE TEACHERS

- Well that wraps up John's first point on how to resist false teaching. Let's spend our last few minutes on John's second point. Having taught us how to resist false teaching he now turns in verse 10-11 to teach us **(SHOW SLIDE 11) how to relate to false teachers.**
 - On this point John says just one thing. How should we relate to false teachers? Answer: **(SHOW SLIDE 12) do not give them a platform. READ 10-11 - ¹⁰*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, ¹¹for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.***
- Now here is how many Christians read this verse. They find some other person who disagrees with them, whether Christian or non-Christian, and they say, ***"This person disagrees with the teachings of Christ so I will not have anything to do with them."*** They separate from everyone.
 - And so they avoid being friends with non-Christians, with Mormons, and atheists. They would never invite a Jehovah's Witness into their house to discuss theology. And when other churches or Christians disagree with them over secondary issues like drinking alcohol, end times views, young earth or old earth views, spiritual gifts, the place of Israel in the plan of God, birth control, style of music, or which Bible version to use they call the person a false teacher and separate from them.
 - After all they say, doesn't this verse say that if a person does not hold to the teaching of Christ we should not welcome them into our houses or greet them? I want to show you that this verse is clearly not speaking about these situations. How do I know that?
- You will notice first of all that we are talking about teachers here, not normal everyday people.
 - Look at the text. John says, ***"If anyone comes to you."*** Now who is the 'you'? Well it is plural, not singular. So to borrow a word from our American friends, it reads, ***"if anyone comes to y'all."*** The situation is if anyone comes to the church.
 - But it is not referring to any casual visitor who shows up. It is referring to any person who seeks to influence, lead, or teach. That is the context – people who deny essential doctrines, who have gone into the world, and seek to deceive others.
- Let me fill you in on the background here. John's readers knew the scriptures like Romans 12:13 which says, ***"Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."***
 - In those days Christian missionaries would travel but they did not have a Best Western or Hilton. The local inns were notoriously dirty, flea infested, and used more as brothels than places to rest. To avoid staying there, Christians took their travelling brothers and sisters into their houses.
 - Now these false teachers were coming and saying, ***"We are Christians. We would like hospitality."*** Once they were taken in they would use their influence to teach false doctrines. So it was a tricky situation. John had commanded them to love one another. But does love mean supporting a person who is teaching falsely?
- John is saying, ***"Oh yes, you must love one another. But don't let false teachers take advantage of your well-intentioned hospitality. You need to discern. If they teach a different gospel then don't give them a platform to work from."***
 - That is what the second half of verse 10 means. **READ 10b - *do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.*** Churches met in houses. Such teachers then were not to be given a voice in the church. When it says not to welcome them it is not referring to general politeness and kindness. To welcome means to express delight in their arrival and to give them the run of the place.
 - John warns then that if you give them a platform, if you support them, if you welcome them into your church and just let them teach their false doctrines then you are guilty of sharing in their evil work. **READ 11 - *for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.*** So that is John's point – do not give false teachers a platform.

- So as a church we must be careful not to give false teachers a platform. You need to be careful about this in your own life as well. Be very careful with T.V. preachers. There are a few good ones but most are way off track. Be careful who you send your money to. Be careful who you let influence your children.
 - Be careful what missionaries you support. Do not be afraid to ask them direct questions about what they believe and what they teach. Do not give false teachers a platform.

CONCLUSION

- When we lived in Vancouver, the house next door to us was being torn down. The excavator had already torn down the garage and was starting toward the house when the Work Safe guys showed up and shut the whole operation down. The head Work Safe man told me that the asbestos removal team had done an extremely poor job. Out of care and concern for the workers and for my family he did not want asbestos dust flying around the yards. He shut it down and highly suggested we keep our young kids inside until the dust had settled.
 - Out of love and concern for us that John writes this letter because he knows that false teaching will infect our spiritual lungs. We are to fill our spiritual lungs with the truth for the truth invigorates and brings life.
 - So I would like to conclude this service by reciting together a creed called the Nicene Creed. This creed was written in the 4th century when a whole segment of the church began to follow a man named Arius who taught that Jesus was created by God, and thus was not God himself. It is one of the most famous creeds in the history of the church and has been repeated by Christians for centuries.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 13)** We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 14)** And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 15)** Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried
- **(SHOW SLIDE 16)** The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 17)** And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets
- **(SHOW SLIDE 18)** We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic church.
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
and to life in the world to come. Amen.

***that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places*