The Character of False Teachers

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Date: 17 April 2019

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[0:00] I would imagine most people in here remember a number of years ago now Jim Jones.

! Jim Jones surfaced out in California. California had quite a following, a cult following. It started out claiming that he had a unique relationship with Jesus that other people didn't enjoy.
And that evolved very quickly to that he was actually Jesus himself. And that evolved even further toward the end where he said he was God, God the Father.
And Jesus was subservient to him. He took 900 and something people down to South America.
Authorities were closing in up here on him through child abuse, sexual abuse, women abuse. And the federal authorities were closing in.
[1:23] I was an FBI agent at that time. And Jim Jones had his lieutenants make vats of Kool-Aid, laced it with very strong poison, and ordered everybody to drink it.

It was cyanide, wasn't it? Hmm? It was cyanide? Yeah, it was some type of derivative of cyanide.
And he ordered them all to drink it, and most of them did.
Those that didn't were shot. And I came this close to getting sent down there. Because I'd been a detective and I had worked homicides before my FBI time.
And the FBI, we don't work a lot of homicides. Now, I worked a few on Indian land, Osage County and Claremore Indian Hospital, places like that. But most FBI agents never work a homicide.
And so I came real close to getting sent down there. And in a way, I thought it would have been challenging. But on the other side, I wasn't looking forward to it either.
[2:33] 900 and something bloated bodies out there. Jim Jones was a false teacher, a false prophet, a false messiah even.

And when the pastor called me this afternoon, he said, I don't know if this is enough notice. Can you teach? I said, I've got all kinds of lessons over here. As long as Oscar and Georgia and Stan haven't memorized it.
We've been going through the book of Galatians on Sunday morning. And I picked out one that deals with false teachers, false doctrine. And they've plagued the church since the beginning.
They've always been with us. And it is estimated that today there's more false teachers, false prophets, than at any time in history. And Paul was very pointed about these guys.
In fact, in Galatians chapter 1, let me start in verse 6. He says, I am astonished. And I'm told that's a really strong word in the Greek language.
[3:46] I'm absolutely astonished that you are so quickly deserting him. And remember, Paul had established the churches in the region of Galatia.

There wasn't one church of Galatia. There was a bunch of them. And it had just happened a few years earlier. He said, that word, different gospel, which is really not a gospel.
There's not another one. But there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. And now listen to this. But even if we are an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.
And as we've said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.
Most of your translations have that down as anathema, the anathema of God. And anathema means the eternally damned of God.
[5:17] If you're following or preaching or teaching or embracing another gospel, there's no hope. You've got to embrace the gospel of Christ or there is no hope for that person.

Now we're not going to be in Galatians chapter 1, we're actually going to be in Galatians chapter 5. But I wanted to read that. Paul, most of the apostles, and I'm thinking specifically of Paul, John, Peter, Jude, warned us about false teachers, false prophets, and they all had to contend with them.

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John had to contend with the Gnostics. These were guys that said they were on a higher intellectual level. God had given them greater revelation. So they were the ascended believers.
And their lot in life was to tell us what it all meant. And Peter, I'll get it right in a second, Paul dealt with the Judaizers.
That was the big thing in Paul's ministry, Judaizers. Well, who in the world are Judaizers? Well, as the name suggests, number one, they were Jews. And they said, if you want to be a Christian, you can do that.
[6:46] But to do it, you've got to come under the Mosaic Law. You obey the Mosaic Law and then you can slip into Christianity.

But they required, you've got to be circumcised, you've got to follow the Mosaic Code, not just Ten Commandments, but the Civil Law, the Moral Law, the Dietary Laws, all that stuff, basically the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch.
And once you're successful there, then you can slide on in to this hybrid Christianity that they taught. Well, there isn't one single person in the universe that ever got saved by keeping the law. No one ever kept it, except Christ, and he didn't need to be saved. But that was the Judaizers. And Paul had gone in there preaching truth, established churches, and they came in behind him as soon as he left.
And the Galatians were buying into it by droves. So much so, Paul had to write this letter to them as a warning. And in the fifth chapter, starting in verse 7, which I'll read in a moment, Paul points out the tragic consequences awaiting people who choose to follow false doctrine.
[8:15] doctrine. And you know, I've had people tell me, doctrine divides. Don't teach doctrine. Doctrine divides. Or, doctrine's boring.

Let me tell you something, folks. Doctrine is the glue that holds us all together. That's what holds us together. Doctrine is what we believe about what is taught in this book.
work. There are many people who choose to follow false doctrine, false teachers, false prophets, false messiahs even. I'm going to say this now because if I don't, it was going to be my poignant end when we got to the end, but I'll forget it.
The FBI estimated when Jim Jones was active and when he committed suicide and had all those people killed, that the FBI estimated there were 1,600 people in America claiming to be Jesus at that time.
1,600 folks that had a messianic complex. There are many consequences to following false doctrine and false teachers.
[9:26] Paul is going to mention four to us this evening. One, Christ is of no benefit to us if we're going to go down the path of error. Number two, without Christ, people are required under the Judaizers code, if you're going to say, I'm going to keep the law.

And I've had men tell me that. You better keep it all. Don't stumble. You've got to keep it all. And if you stumble in one point, you're guilty of breaking all of it.
And by the way, let's just mention one law. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. No one's ever kept that. I parrot R.C. Sproul who said, we live in continual need of a Savior because only Christ has kept that and we haven't.
Walking away from Christ and looking for something more, something better is falling from grace. You're exposed to grace and you walk away from it.
People are excluded from righteousness and righteousness of Christ is our only hope. We don't have any other hopes. So let me start, I'm going to read verse 7 to 12 Galatians 5 the words of Paul.
[10:47] Inspired words. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

This persuasion did not come from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. I have confidence confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment whoever he is.
But I brethren if I still preach circumcision and that's what he's being accused of by the way. Well Paul's out there he's preaching you've got to be circumcised to be saved which he wouldn't do it. If I still preach circumcision why am I persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.
I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. I wish Paul wouldn't shade it. He needs to tell it like it is. So here we see what happens with false teachers.

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[12:05] false teachers are men who espoused false doctrine. Now Paul and Jesus before him displayed great patience and kindness to men and women caught up in this horrendous sin.

But those who taught false doctrine found no comfort in Paul and they found no comfort in Jesus. he nailed them.
I mean Jesus fought organized religion his whole earthly ministry. Sadducees and Pharisees false teachers.
In fact the Lord called them hypocrites deceivers extortioners blind guides fools murderers persecutors now these came from the mouth of God in human flesh.
What an indictment. What an indictment. So Paul is going to present to us this evening six characteristics of the false teacher the Judaizers in this case.
[13:23] And these characteristics fit all teachers of ungodliness ancient teachers modern teachers and there's a lot of guys you don't have to drive very far and ladies you don't have to drive very far from this spot right here to get to false teachers.

You don't have to fill your tank up with gas. They're that close. They're that close. So don't think this is something well if we went to Chicago we might find one or two.
No no no. They're everywhere. Including Bartlesville America. The first thing the false teacher does is this. He hinders the truth.
He's at war with the truth. In verse 7 again you were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?
So the first characteristic of a false teacher should be obvious to everyone they hinder the truth. If they didn't do this they would not be designated.
[14:30] It's false. This is what makes them false. And Paul tells the Galatian churches man you were running well. We got you established. I went on to found other churches.

Next thing I know words come into me that you guys have totally lost it. You're going backward. But they had at one time run really well.
He knew that because through his ministry that the Holy Spirit got believers in Galatia into the race to begin with. They had been running well and then Paul leaves the area and the Judaizers moved in and started leading them away from the truth.
The truth they led them away from was grace and faith. And what they fled back to was law and works which never saved.
Never saved anybody. Wouldn't intend it to. The law was given to drive us to a Savior. We look into the law. It reflects back onto us and it drives us to the Lord Jesus.
[15:41] The only person who ever kept the law. Works aren't going to save us. I know guys that are trying to work for their salvation. And you know you can never do enough to be comfortable.

I call it the do-do religion. Do this, do that. I was in the FBI with a good friend of mine. We were talking, we had a break and we were chatting in New York City of all places.
I was talking about the grace of God. He was a Methodist and he said, I believe you're saved by grace, I just think you're kept by works. I said, well how are you doing? He said, not too good this week, but I'm going to do better.
But you never get there, do you? Even Saturday I worked with an FBI agent. We called him Spencer. That wasn't his name. You know why he called him that? We called him Spence. He looked like the twin to Spencer Tracy.
I saw this happen 15 years after Spencer Tracy died. People walking up to him asking for his autograph. And he got to where he just signed Spencer Tracy. He gave it to him. And Spencer Tracy had been dead for a decade.
[16:43] If there's anybody ever heard of this, I'll be shocked. Maybe Willard. Maybe the pastor. Maybe didn't. I don't know. He was a follower of Immanuel Swedenborg.

Swedenborgism. Immanuel Swedenborg was a miner, a mining engineer. And he started a religion. And it's still around.
How do you get saved in Swedenborgian? By keeping perfectly the Ten Commandments. And I told Spencer, I said, you never kept one.
You're saved by the blood of Christ. And he said, well, I've never heard that. Wow. That's not my lesson. I threw that in for free. I won't even charge for that.
So Paul tells the Galatian church, you're running well, and the Holy Spirit got you going, and then these Judaizers came in and led you away from the truth.

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[17:48] And the truth that they led them away from was faith and grace. And then Paul asks this question, he says, who hindered you? But obviously that's rhetorical. No one was there to answer.

Paul knew, as did the Galatian believers, who had hindered them. It was the Judaizers. they were hindering the people from believing in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
The Judaizers wanted men and women to follow them, and so they took them down the path of legalism. They were a pattern for false teachers today who want the attention on themselves, false teachers today who do it for financial gain.
Can you imagine there's people that do it for financial gain? And you see this all the time on television evangelists. If you will send me your seed, you're going to get a million fold back.
But you've got to send it to them. Paul then declares that the false teachers were not of God. Verse 8, this persuasion did not come from him who calls you.
[19:00] The second characteristics of false teachers was their ungodliness. Legalism never comes from God. And the false teachers were legalistic.

God is the one who calls people to himself through grace and not human works. The work of salvation is entirely by God and entirely by grace.
He does it his way and therefore we speak of it even as the effectual call, a sovereign call if you will. And we discover God's grace is sufficient. Nothing need be added to it.
Nothing can be added to it. Any teaching that claims that the gracious work of God in saving men and women is insufficient is false.
Yet this is precisely what the Judaizers were saying. It's exactly. to them it was always Christ plus something added to salvation.
[20:05] And you know the largest church on earth believes that, the Roman Catholic Church. It's grace or faith and works. You've got to do certain works. So many Hail Marys, so much penance, so much time in purgatory, and they've got all this stuff added to it.

Listen to Paul in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13 and 14. God chose believers from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
And it was for this he called you through our gospel that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Judaizers claimed to preach a gospel.
Paul declared it is no gospel at all. Your anathema. Therefore, the Judaizers gospel was not from God. The only true gospel comes from God.
Now, another thing that false teachers do is this, and they love it. They contaminate the church. They contaminate the church like cockroaches.
[21:19] A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. Verse 9. Galatians 5. If you contaminate a body of water, a pond, a lake, the whole thing is filled with contamination.

I mean, if we poured a bunch of glasses of really nice, pure water, and put some drops of strychnine in each one, who wants to drink it? It's one of the reasons, as a law enforcement officer, I was always amazed at kids that say, you know, I think I'm going to try some meth.
Do you know what goes into meth? Battery acid, drano, among others? I mean, who says, who sits around and says, I think I'm going to take in some drano and see what that's like?
you know, if you contaminate water, it's contaminated. A small amount of falsehood can corrupt the thinking and living of a large group of people.
That's why Jesus said, you better contend for the faith, because it's going away. It's slipping out of our hands. Folks, that was 1850 years ago that he said that.
[22:34] And we've seen in our lifetime, I've seen in my adult lifetime, entire denominations contaminated.

Contaminated. And that's why the Holy Spirit says, a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. In the Bible, leaven often represents sin.
It doesn't every time, but it often does. And Jesus warned us about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees who were false teachers of his day.
But the figure of leaven is generally used simply to indicate a permeating power, whether of something good or evil. In the Galatian passage above, Paul used the figure of leaven in both ways. It represented actual sin, and it represented the power to infect and permeate that which is good. You take something good, and it just gets filled with contamination.
[23:34] It just gets filled with it. And Paul used that same expression, by the way, when he dealt with the church at Corinth. I mean, how do we say it?

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Corinth was a messed up church. And there's whole denominations that build their whole life on passages in Corinthians, the two Corinthians. And it was messed up.
There's another truth about false teachers. They will be judged. And I want to say something about judgment. People fond of saying, you know, where's the coming?
Where's the judgment? Things go on just like they always have for the last 2,000 years. Let me just impress upon you. Judgment delayed is not judgment denied.
It's coming. It's coming. Verse 10, I have confidence in you and the Lord that you will adopt no other view, but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.
[24:40] Boy, would that I have never led anyone astray. And if I have, may they find the right way and may I be forgiven. That's a heady deal to lead people astray.

All false teachers are destined to judgment. judgment. But Paul brings comfort to the true believers telling them of his confidence in them.
He knows they will not adopt another view of the gospel, which is really no gospel at all. He had taught them the true gospel and they needed to stay with that.
He had encouraged the Philippians by telling them that he was confident that God, who had begun a good work in them, would perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.
And actually, he was addressing those who were partakers of him in the grace of God. Let me flip over to Philippians real fast. You don't have to turn there.
[25:42] But in Philippians chapter 1 verses 6 to 7, let me just read that real quickly. And I'm sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

It is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.
In defense and in confirmation of the gospel. the destiny of true believers is secure.
Jesus promised us that true believers would never perish. He went on to say that no one would ever snatch them out of his hand and that no one would ever snatch them out of the father's hand.
I used this with a good Wesleyan friend of mine one time. I said, come up here. He did. I said, okay, here you are. I put a little figure in my hand.
[26:47] I said, my hands are going to be Jesus. And I put them over him. I said, you're in Jesus. Now, you put your hands over mine and he did. I said, your hands are the father's.

And you're telling me you can lose your salvation. How do you get out of there? Well, you could jump out. I said, okay, well, you go try it. You'll be banging your head. The destiny of true believers is secure.
Jesus said no one would perish, no one would snatch him out of his hand or the hand of the father. But Jesus was also clear about this. True believers do not depart from the faith.
I was amazed to hear John MacArthur talk about his ordination certificate. Three men signed it. One of them, prior to his death, departed from the faith. And he and his buddies would come over and they'd get drunk in one of their apartments and they'd take a Bible and they'd tear pages out and stomp on it and do other things, corruption to those pages and just laugh and drink more.
And he signed his ordination certificate. Pretty amazing. When you're in Christ, we persevere and are preserved by the Spirit of God.
[28:09] Ungodly teachers do not share in that bright and secure future. They make people who are considering the gospel to stumble. That is what Jesus had to say about them in Matthew 18 6.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it is better for him to have a heavy millstone be hung around his neck and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.
That would be the best thing for them. This is a description of the Judaizers because they were disturbing true believers. Therefore, they would have to bear the greater judgment of God and that is a judgment long ago predicted for unbelievers.
False teachers also persecute true teachers. Verse 11, But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?
Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. Paul tells us that false teachers persecute true believers and he had in mind himself as one who was so persecuted.
[29:17] We tend to believe that governments are the great persecutors and at VOM we deal with that a lot, the Chinese government, the Vietnamese government, all that, but you know what? There is a lot of persecution of the true church by the false church and false denominations.

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The chief persecutor of the church is satanically inspired false religion. False religion. The Judaizers taught falsely that Paul still taught that for a man to be saved he had to be circumcised. That was a false claim. Paul did not teach this or anything else in addition to the grace by which we are saved. But Paul would have made a brilliant lawyer.
And he is brilliant in his own defense. He says look, you guys are going around saying you got to be circumcised, you got to be circumcised. And then they went around and said Paul is preaching circumcision.
Well if I am really preaching circumcision then I am one of you. Why are you persecuting me? Isn't that brilliant? They should have welcomed him with open arms into their fraternity.
[30:24] But they knew that was a lie. And he wasn't preaching it. If he had preached circumcision as necessary to salvation, he would have been one of them. But Paul didn't preach circumcision because he had already pointed out it would nullify the grace of God because righteousness would in their mind come to them through the law.

Through the law. He then points out that the stumbling block of the cross would have been removed. The cross was a stumbling block to Jews because they could not accept the idea of a suffering Messiah.
They thought anyone who hangs on a tree is accursed of God. And you know what? They were right. He took our curse. They should have read Isaiah. They thought the cross robbed them of the Mosaic law and circumcision.
The cross is still an offense to fallen men. I mean, I've had people say, you follow that bloody religion. You follow that bloody religion. Men and women tend to trust in what they can do for themselves and not what someone else claims to have done for them.
Those who hold to and preach the cross are at maximum risk from all those who cling to a system of works righteousness. And then I love the way Paul finishes.
[31:45] He says, would that those who are troubling you would mutilate themselves. Leave it to Paul. We taught last Sunday on Paul saying, these guys are a bunch of dung and manure.

And you can actually put some other even harsher terms in there. Paul closes with a very harsh statement concerning false teachers. He's so opposed to the Judaizers and the damage they were doing that he wished they'd just go ahead and mutilate themselves.
The Greek word for mutilate means to cut off. And it was often associated with castration. I mean, this is Paul.
That's what he had in mind here. Wouldn't it be great? Paul comes and says, go castrate yourself. Wow. Paul has in mind a challenge to the Judaizers.
If circumcision made them right with God, why stop there? go beyond mere circumcision and castrate yourself.
[32:52] Then they would be on a level with God never before achieved. That's the mockery that Paul's given them. But castration or even circumcision would not help the unbelieving false teachers.

Doesn't do anything for them. They wanted to add things to God's grace in order for a man to be saved. And like I told you, you hear of any religion that it's faith or grace plus flee.
Run out the door. Run out the door. I remember Apostle John was in Ephesus one time. He went into the bathhouse, which has a bad connotation now, but back then it was kind of the guys going to talk about sports and they take a mineral bath and it was wholesome.
And he's in there and this false teacher, Serenthus, came in. John ran out screaming, flee, flee, Serenthus has entered. The roof may collapse on us. I love those guys.
I love them. To add any human effort or act to God's provision through the death of his son is to exchange the saving gospel of Jesus Christ for the damning falsehood of paganism.
[34:15] And they are the anathema of God, the eternally damned. Thank you.

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