

## Truth and Evil

My heart was burdened this week as I thought about the evil in the world.

Burdened by both the obvious and elusive evil. We live in a time and society where many do not know truth or believe that there is truth and this allows evil to come into their lives. The evil that confronts and attacks us ignites us emotionally and can spur us to action. But the evil that is almost unnoticed is insidious and like cancer we do not know we are being consumed by it until it is often too late.

Listen to what was said from the past, “The best way to take control over people and control them utterly is to take a little of their freedom at a time, to erode rights by a thousand tiny and almost imperceptible reductions. In this way the people will not see those rights and freedoms being removed until past the point at which these changes cannot be reversed.” What politician understood this insidious approach to evil and was willing to employ it? None other, than he who proved to be the most evil man of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Adolf Hitler.

Holding fast to truth and fighting against evil is not a 21<sup>st</sup> century problem, but one that has existed since the Fall in the garden. Satan’s job is to sow lies into people’s minds and into society preventing people from knowing God. In the absence of knowing God evil comes into the world. Satan has used men throughout history to accomplish evil. Jesus told those listening to Him, but who could not let go of the lies they had come to believe put forth by the Jewish leaders, “the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) Their hearts were hardened against the truth and they did not want to hear truth. Jesus then told them another truth, “You are of your father the

devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) We cannot have it both ways, we either serve God the Creator of the Universe or the world and the god of this world is "the father of lies." The choice is truth or lies

We are experiencing an election where it appears our two choices are megalomaniacs who do not know the truth. Is this not the same problem Jesus dealt with in Herod and Ananias? Leaders are a reflection of the corrupt society that does not want to know truth. **The foundation of a healthy society is truth, and truth is found in God. The truth of God is revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ.** Also from the beginning people have worked to pervert the truth for their own power and in truth, although they may not know it, service to Satan. People and churches can invoke the name of Jesus lulling people into believing they are saved while what they are believing, in truth, is false doctrine and not of God. The people listening to Jesus said to Him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" (John 8:33) They thought they were saved because their lineage of coming from Abraham and by their tradition. What do people think saves them today?

### **Truth, Evil and Tradition**

From the beginning of Jesus Christ's church people tried to interject small changes to take people away from the truth of God. Changes that over time become tradition, man's tradition not God's. Early in church history this began with the Catholic Church. Reading from the Catechism of the Catholic Church – The

Transmission of Devine Revelation, chapter 2, article 2, paragraph 82, “Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with **equal** sentiments of devotion and reverence.” The arrogance, claiming man’s traditions are equal to God’s truth. By this method the church moved from belief in the “Five Solas” to a position of man-made traditions, the worship of idols or saints and praying to dead people instead of praying to God directly. “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5) These people believing in man-made traditions are not alone, so many who identify themselves as “Christian” do not practice and believe in the “Five Solas.” They have traded God’s truth for half-truths and man’s traditions, which are the lies of Satan.

The “Five Solas” came out of the Protestant Reformation and summarized their convictions about essential beliefs of Christianity. Here at Canyon Bible these Five Solas are also foundational in summarizing what we believe and live.

***Sola Scriptura*** (“Scripture alone”) The Bible alone is our highest authority.

***Sola Fide*** (“faith alone”) We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

***Sola Gratia*** (“grace alone”) We are saved by the grace of God alone.

***Solus Christus*** (“Christ alone”) Jesus Christ alone is our Lord and Savior.

***Soli Deo Gloria*** (“to the glory of God alone”) We live for the glory of God alone.

Foundational truth brings us to the heart of John’s letter to “the elect lady and her children.” Second John, his short letter, warns against the same false teaching mentioned in his first letter, but also focuses on Christian hospitality. False teachers were using the kindness and hospitality of Christians to gain influence within John’s congregations. The Church of Christ began shortly after His

resurrection and the churches planted by John are young in their life in Christ. Almost without delay from the founding of the Church these false teachers were doing exactly what Hitler voiced 19 hundred years later so clearly, “The best way to take control over people and control them utterly is to take a little of their freedom at a time, to erode rights by a thousand tiny and almost imperceptible reductions. In this way the people will not see those rights and freedoms being removed until past the point at which these changes cannot be reversed.” I disagree with Adolf, in that these changes can be reversed, not by worldly men, but by the power of God found in men living the truth of God.

## **Truth & Living**

The immediate problem John is dealing with was that of traveling teachers taking advantage of young churches and sowing false doctrine. According to Christian ethics as recorded in the “Didache” a document from the late first century Christian hospitality was considered of great importance. The very first sentence of the Didache begins with "*Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles.*" The Didache speaks of holding true to the scriptures and of Christian lifestyle taught by the Apostles through their inspired writings. Providing hospitality to traveling saints was important, but the Didache also speaks concerning those who take advantage of Christian hospitably for their own purposes. The writers of the Didache invented the word “Christmonger” to describe those who attempt to profit by Christianity. It is easy today to see “Christmongers” is our world. So the problem is not new and has not changed. We cannot control what others think and do, but we can be faithful in our living for Christ. Our responsibility is dealing with life’s problems biblically. This was John

purpose for writing his letters. John wants those reading his letter to follow the order of truth found in the Scripture and the Apostle's Teaching in dealing with these problems. We will examine key words in John's letter. Truth is found in verses 1, 2, 3 and 4. Love is found in verses 1, 3, 5 and 6. Command occurs in verses 4, 5 and 6.

John's letter is typical in format with introduction, body and closing. Reading the introduction, "The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, <sup>2</sup>because of the truth that abides in us and Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love. <sup>3</sup>Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love." Within John's letter, we find a two prong message; first, the experience of truth and love within Christian relationships and the local church, and second, the experience of danger outside the local church. John loves this woman and her children in the truth of Christ and "also all who know the truth, <sup>2</sup>because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever." The only absolute truth, eternal truth is found in God and we know God's truth through His inspired Word, the Bible. So, what binds the Christian community, the local church, Canyon Bible, together is a common commitment to this truth of God and out of this comes love for each other. This is a key difference between true Christians and false teachers and heretics. Christians and false teachers may share some common goals. However, the false teachers appeal to the world while John says true Christians "4 walking in the truth ... 5 we love one another ... 6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments." John Stott, one of my favorite authors wrote, "So long as the truth endures, in us and with us, so long shall our reciprocal love also endure. If this is so, and Christian love founded upon

Christians truth, we shall never increase the love which exists between us by diminishing the truth which we hold in common. In the contemporary movement towards Church unity we must beware of compromising the very truth on which alone true love and unity depend” (Epistles of John by John Stott) Truth comes from God and love is built upon God’s truth and this sets the Church and Christians apart from the world.

The woman and her family John is writing to are Christians. Their lives are known to be Christian by these virtues: morally they live righteous before God by being obedient to His commands, their lives are also lived in sacrificial love of service to others and this is possible by the truth of sound doctrine. I am not saying they or even John were perfect for all fall short by sin. John writes to encourage them through Christ that dwells within them and the power of Christ in their lives is marked by truth and love – for each other and the Word of God. It is only through the Holy Spirit given by Christ that we can overcome sin.

Reading 2 John beginning in verse 4, “I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the **truth**, just as we were **commanded** by the Father. <sup>5</sup> And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new **commandment**, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we **love** one another. <sup>6</sup> And this is **love**, that we walk according to his **commandments**; this is the **commandment**, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.” John says as Christians we are commanded to follow God’s truth and truth is demonstrated by our obeying the commandments of God and God has commanded **that we love one another**.

Verse 7 gives the reason for this life style dedicated to God’s truth in obedience

and love. “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.” Satan’s game plan from the beginning of the Church was to destroy it from within. Satan knows he will not destroy the Church of Christ by blatant evil he has infused into the world. The genocide of World War II by Hitler incited the Church to act. In this century the Church has again been spurred to action by the genocide in Darfur region of Sudan. Evil continues as it has since the Fall. Small evils continue to chip away at God’s truth, it is as Hitler said, “erode rights by a thousand tiny and almost imperceptible reductions” of God’s truth. So we find the state of much that calls itself Christian in today’s world, in truth, not Christian.

What can we do in the face of the corrupt world we live in? The same thing that Christians have done throughout the centuries since Christ rose from the grave and the same that Christians of the future are called to do until the return of Christ. Pray, study the truth of God’s Word and understand we are commanded to live out the truth of God though love for Christ and each other. Though John’s letter specifically, but also throughout the Scripture God teaches that His truth, the only eternal truth is not optional as many churches claim today. Truth is essential and God commands it as the way of life for believers. Failure to accept biblical truth is sin. On the other hand, John is indicating that love is the expression of God’s truth and must be deliberately undertaken by believers in sacrificing service to others with joy. This is a deliberate choice and action to believe and be obedient, and it is this that increases a believer’s spiritual maturity.

In John’s first letter he was concerned about heresies, especially Gnosticism. They believed salvation was found by one purging themselves of the material world, by

becoming divinely spiritual through their own efforts and that Jesus was spiritual not physical. However, Gnosticism seems to be only one of the problems for the readers of this letter. What we do know from verse 7 is that the heretical influence John is writing about is great and increasing. “For many deceivers have gone out into the world.” These many deceivers may have begun in an orthodox Christian church but accepted false teaching and have now become false teachers themselves. For this is what John said happened in his first letter. Speaking of those who were now serving the antichrist he wrote, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.” (1 John 2:19) From John’s viewpoint, false teachers were dangerous heretics and imposters because they did not hold to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. In specific they taught that Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh. If a teacher teaches these kinds of doctrinal errors “Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.” To be a deceiver as defined by the dictionary is one who misleads by false appearance or false statements or lies. Jesus made it clear that for these people they “are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44) What this says about false teachers, prophets or preachers is beyond shocking. They are not just a little wrong, but they are heretics serving Satan and destined for hell and are working to take many with them for the glory of Satan. Is there any easy way to determine if someone is a heretic or if their teachings are the truth of God? The answer is yes. We can evaluate what they teach by the basics, the Five Solas –

***Sola Scriptura*** (“Scripture alone”) The Bible alone is our highest authority. It what

is being taught consistent with the Scripture?

**Sola Fide** (“faith alone”) We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Is salvation found only through Christ or is some system introduced?

**Sola Gratia** (“grace alone”) We are saved by the grace of God alone. Are we saved by God’s grace or does man have some credit for their salvation?

**Solus Christus** (“Christ alone”) Jesus Christ alone is our Lord and Savior. Is their idols or the worship of men added to our worship of Christ?

**Soli Deo Gloria** (“to the glory of God alone”) We live for the glory of God alone.

Our lives are for God’s glory and it is not about how great we are.

They must pass all five, not for 3 or 4, but all five. This truth is extremely relevant to today’s religious landscape for the danger today is found in the question, what is the truth of God? The danger is not found so much in secularism, most people will voice concerns, like that of this current election and the people we have a choice to vote for and yet they continue down the same path. It is not communism or any other obvious anti-Christian political forms of government. The greatest danger is that which goes by the name Christianity but which excludes the true Christ. John warns believers, look with me at verse 8, “[Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.](#)” Be on your guard – the Word of God is the sentry in your life. Challenge anyone who does not hold true to the Word of God. If one does not hold fast to the truth of God and as verse 9 states, “[goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, he does not have God.](#)” If you are not abiding in the teaching of Christ, you do not have God. You are lost and unsaved. It does not get much simpler or clearer than this.

Truth must always govern our exercise of love. We can have no real relationship or

unity with those who reject the truth of the gospel, that is, the truth of the Scripture of God the Father and Jesus the Christ. We simply have no common spiritual life with them. The Apostle Peter wrote, <sup>22</sup> “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” (1 Peter 1:22-23) Only those who God has called through Christ have purified souls and are enabled to be obedient to the truth and this results in brotherly love. You may think you have a deep relationship with a non-believer. Maybe even a brother or sister, but the truth is you do not. Salvation requires believing in the truth of God. Since salvation requires believing in God’s truth it is critical that Christ’s church presents an accurate and true gospel. God’s truth resulting in His love is to permeate all aspects of the church: individual beliefs, corporate life, the preaching of the Word, evangelizing the lost and fellowship among each other.

### **Truth – Walking in Love**

Walking in truth found in verse 4 refers to believers living their lives controlled by truth or light as John said in his first letter, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7) Walking is commonly used for the process of living out one’s life in the scriptures. Believers “walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4) Christ’s followers “walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7) Children of God through Christ “walk ... and live by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:16 & 25) To “walk” through life living for Christ means to “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Ephesians 5:2) Here in

John's second letter he explains what it means to "walk in love." John writes in verse 6, "this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it." This short letter is a call for Christians to live consistently with the truth they believe. Which brings to mind the old adage, "If you are going to talk the talk you better walk the walk." Or, as Benjamin Franklin said so simply, "Well done is better than well said." The proof of one's Christianity is in the living out the Word of God.

The world is full of problems; let this not be the case among Christians. The only true basis for unity and love in the church is the truth of God's Word that indwells, blesses and controls believer's lives. It is the knitting together of souls with deep, solid affection because week after week and month after month and year after year we have shared the precious truth of God. If you love Christ with all your heart, love His Word with your very soul, and if I preach Christ and His Word with heartfelt faithfulness over years with you, what else can happen but our love of Christ and love for each other will grow and be our focus?

Despite the growing hatred of Christ and Christians, those of the true church, firmly rooted in the truth of God, will weather the coming storm and sail into the safe harbor of heaven. Christ is our general leading us in battle and we are in this fight led by Christ, surrounded by His spiritual warriors and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with our brothers and sisters.

Here are my closing thoughts - life together in love protects against deception. Deception works because it makes shame look glorious, ugly look pretty, folly look wise, suicidal ways look life-giving, and sadness look like gladness. Deception works because we think we will be happier if we turn away from Christ and

embrace sin. This is what Paul warned of, “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, <sup>10</sup> and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. <sup>11</sup> Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, <sup>12</sup> in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) Let us not be dismayed look at verse 4 of 2 John one last time this morning, “I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.” John rejoiced by what he experienced in the lives of fellow Christians. In other words, what was true for John is true for us; living together in God’s love, even if we are surround by antichrists, is a blessed and joyous way to live. The giving and receiving of the truth of the gospel and the love of Christ is a rewarding live. I tell you, my beloved, a community living out God’s truth and love will not be easily deceived by the god of this world and the short-term pleasure of sin.

My beloved of Canyon Bible Church these are darkening days in America. Therefore, don’t let the world, don’t let the spirit of antichrist rob you of your love for each other or the happiness of your life together lived for the glory of Christ. Amen!