



The Dangers of False Teachings

— by Miki Hardy

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” 2 Timothy 4:3-4

The time has come and the time is now! Today, Christians around the world are being deceived by false teaching, with devastating results. When you are constantly hearing about what you can get from God, you don't want to hear about what you can give. But the Christian life is one of sacrifice; a life completely surrendered to God. Anything else is compromise!

Why should we be so different to the Christians of the early Church? Didn't they prove that by freely offering their lives to Jesus Christ, accepting the suffering, trials and tests that faced them, they were able to live a righteous life of victory over sin? This is in fact the simple, clear and powerful message of the gospel. Today however, Christians have everything back to front.

Itching ears

Instead of first seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, they run after earthly treasures. The result of constant exposure to false teaching is that you develop itching ears, so that you grow to love these kinds of messages. They will excite and delight you until you have become trapped by them, and are all that you will want to hear. This is a

dangerous road to take, because as soon as someone preaches a message that demands something of your life, you will struggle to accept it. Everything in you will rise up and reject that message. In fact, you might even declare that it is false doctrine!

Who's advantage?

It was the Pharisees in the days of Jesus who so strongly opposed His message. They were so proud and self-assured that they believed they were untouchable. But when Jesus came with grace and truth and taught them a simple message that confronted their lives, they resisted Him. They even accused Him of having a demon. And from early on, they plotted to kill Jesus, such as the violence in their hearts against Him.

The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3 that many live as enemies of the cross. They pervert the gospel for their personal interests and twist Scripture to their own advantage. He says that their god is their stomach and their glory is in their shame; their mind is on earthly things. This means that they glory in what they possess and their appetite is never satisfied. The Bible is clear: their destiny is destruction. But Paul writes in Galatians 6:14, *"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."* So the question must be asked: What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

This is what happens when Christians depart from the true gospel and turn aside to myths. The Galatian church was overjoyed when they heard the message of the cross for the first time and accepted it with great eagerness. They were prepared to identify their lives fully with Christ and suffer persecution for the sake of the gospel. But when enemies of the cross slipped in among them and began teaching that circumcision alone was sufficient for salvation, they were deceived.

The danger within

The real threat to the Church today does not come from outside, but from within. Just as it says in Galatians 4:17, many preachers today are zealous to win you over,

but for no good. They want to alienate you from the true message of the gospel, so you become zealous for them. These preachers promise you many things so you will be eager to hear them again and again. But they want to win you over to have greater access to your money.

However, the message we are called to preach is Jesus Christ and Him crucified, which is our identification with Him in His sufferings, His death and His resurrection. This message is not designed to excite anyone. It requires denying yourself and taking up your cross and following Jesus. But the grace, peace and joy that is the fruit of a given life will be poured out upon you abundantly.

A firm foundation

You can destroy your life with material things, but you will never destroy your life with spiritual investment. It will set your feet on a firm foundation and be a great protection for you all your life. The assurance that you have rejected false teachings and embraced the truth will be your security and your everlasting reward.

It is much harder to uproot things in your heart than to plant them. But the more you hear the message of the cross in all its fullness, the more you will desire it. If you are sincere and ready to accept that there may be teachings that God wants to remove, allow Him to uproot them. Do not close your heart. Rather, let His word nourish and refresh you, bringing you healing and restoration.

Zealous for Jesus

I want to reassure you, the message of the cross is not new. It has always been there, though you might not have been able to recognise it. It is the message the first apostles lived and preached – the apostolic gospel – and it is the same message that will lead you to freedom from lies and deception. Do not listen any more to preachers who are zealous to win you over, so that you become zealous for them. If you preach the cross of Christ you have one aim; to make people zealous for Jesus. I urge you to resist false teachings and cling to the message of Christ and Him crucified, the one message that sets the captives free.■

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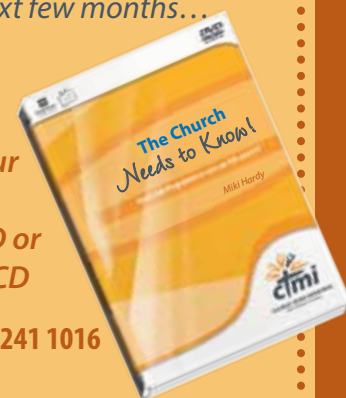
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