

LIVING OUT BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-17, 3:1-6

- **KEY THOUGHT- Discernment**- the ability to obtain sharp perception or to judge well.
- One of the most interesting things about our culture is that when something awesome is created or invented, it takes no time for someone to make a counterfeit or a fake that looks like it or does a function like it.

Fruit Loops >>> Frooty O's
Dr. Pepper >>> Mr. Pibb

- There are no telling how many people that have a fake painting on their walls that they spent thousands of dollars thinking it was the real painting.
- **A lie always needs a truth to break away from.**
- What I personally dealt with years ago when I worked for Hibbett were counterfeit bills and Air Force Ones. I want to show just how close a real AF1 looks like compared to a fake AF1.
- If you look at the shoes from a distance, they look real but when you get close you see they are fake and a counterfeit.
- This is very similar to what is happening at the church Corinth. No sooner than the gospel comes out and is made available to the Gentiles, a counterfeit or a fake gospel comes out and false teachers begin deceiving people and leading people away from Christ and the church. It cheapened the gospel message. Just like a counterfeit shoe cheapens the real shoe.
- Paul referred to these false teachers as “peddlers” of the gospel. These are people that didn’t care anything about the people they just wanted their money and use them.
- Look at the specific instructions Jesus gave the disciples.
- **Matthew 10:8- *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,^{1a} cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.***
- But what these people were doing were saying that you aren’t saved by grace alone, but rather you are going to be defined by your works and if you give us money I will tell you the true message of Jesus. They were doing everything contrary to Jesus’ instructions.
- This is super challenging for us to wrestle with today for a couple of reasons...(1) because it is much easier to measure religion than true righteousness (2) the flesh loves praise
- At times, we rely on this way more than allowing the Holy Spirit to work and trusting Christ and understanding that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
- These things like reading our bible and going to church or lifegroup or serving becomes **desires** of our hearts and not a list to check things off when we are led by the Spirit.
- But when we replace grace with religion it becomes false doctrine.

DON'T BE DECEIVED.

- This group began to infiltrate every single church planted by Paul over a 15-year span.
- And this is the biggest reason Paul wrote these letters in particular. He is saying, “Don’t be faked out by these false messages!”
- **Acts 20:29-30- *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.***
- Paul knew wherever God moved, Satan was going to move.
- **Galatians 1:6-10- *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have 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. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant^{al} of Christ.***
- We deal with the same things today.
- There is a movement that is currently going on in our culture today called **Progressive Christianity**. And they fall under this idea of deconstructionism.
- This is a deconstructing of your faith but restructuring it does not look like historical Christianity.
- Rather, it better fits your view and sinful nature and it attempts to please man which mean it does not serve Christ.
- Where the gospel says that we are born into sin and we rebel against God when we apart from Christ PC culture says we are good people that do some bad things occasionally and our opinions overshadow what the Bible teaches.
- These false teachers did the same thing just carried a different message.
- Now we get to **V. 1-6** and the first thing we see Paul doing is defending himself against some of the lies that the false teachers were saying about him.
- And he did this **NOT** because he cared what other people thought but more the gospel’s sake.
- If they had a poor opinion of Paul they may have a poor opinion of what he had to say.
- Don’t be fake... You can look like a lot things but not be those things. **Friend, Christian.**
- **V. 1-6** and beyond talks about how we make ourselves useful to the Lord.

DON’T BE DECEIVING.

3:1-3

- How do we do this? Have a reputation for godliness.
- These prophets carried around a recommendation letter from their superior to help verify their reputation. This isn’t a bad thing but how they were using it was bad.
- I have a certification of license and ordination in my office from Jett and the deacons that help verify to others my call as pastor.
- What was happening here was that these letters were being forged and were very misleading and people would even write Paul’s name on the recommendation.

- **Example:** We see this in movie. Critics are paid to write good reviews even when the movie is terrible and vice versa.
- **Matthew 7:15-16** *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”*¹⁶ *You will recognize them by their fruits.*
- Paul ends verse 3 saying..... **READ VERSE**
- What then is to be written on the human heart?
- **Titus 3:1-3** *“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. ³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.”*
- This is the reputation for godliness. The day to day life people see as you are being led by Christ.
- If you proclaim the name of Jesus then you are now responsible to that name.
- Don't look like a genuine Christian from a distance and then get a close look and find out you're a counterfeit. Don't be like those AF1's!

LIVE IN TOTAL DEPENDENCY. **3:4-6**

- Paul was always so quick to give glory to God and not to himself. Unlike the peddlers.
- Paul was a well-educated man and a brilliant man but never depended on his own adequacy. He depended on the Lord and trusted in the sufficiency of Christ.
- The legalists told people that any person could obey the law and become spiritual.
- You know what this mindset does? It inflates the egos of people.
- For others, it becomes a dark cloud over your life because you realize you can't live it no matter how hard you try. They will live in guilt, joy will be killed, and ultimately be ineffective witnessing for Christ.
- When you and I emphasize the grace of God, we have no choice and no trouble telling people we are lost sinners who cannot save themselves.
- Paul was not suggesting that the law was mistake or that the law was unimportant.
- Rather, he knew that the lost person must be slain by the law and left helplessly condemned before he can be saved by God's grace through Jesus Christ.

CLOSING

- Trust that Christ is truly sufficient for your life. Don't be tricked a by counterfeit gospels that we are so quick to receive. And understand.....
- You are being perfected by Jesus Christ every single day. Not tablets of stone.