

# Christians Must Perform the Truth - Part 2

by Stephen Olford

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*Christians must protect the truth from false teaching by measuring everything they hear by the doctrine of Christ and the deeds of Christ.*

**Duration:** 53:27

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:21, Ephesians 4:14, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 John 1:7-9

**Topics:** "Truth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the prevalence of counterfeit preachers and evangelists in today's society. He emphasizes that these individuals mimic the lifestyle of genuine men and women of God, but their teachings are deceptive and destructive. The speaker refers to the example of Jim Jones, a self-proclaimed messiah, to illustrate the dangers of false teaching. He highlights that false teaching is always deceptive, destructive, and divisive. The sermon is based on the second epistle of John and encourages the audience to possess the truth and be aware of false teachings.

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## Transcript

Greetings to you, a joy to be with you again, and to join also our friends who are watching by TV extension. I want you to turn with me straight away to the second epistle of John, and I hope that you're reading it every day. It would be tremendous if you could memorize this precious little epistle, only 13 verses, and so relevant to the very hour, indeed the minute, in which we live today, as will become very evident in these next two Bible readings, which are split, as we will see in a moment.

You've got your outline, we've dealt with triumphant truth, Christians must possess the truth. That's the starting point. Yesterday, you remember it was Christians must perform the truth, having received the commandment from the Father, walk, get up and go, obey, we must flesh out the truth.

Now, this morning and tomorrow, we'll deal with the next in our Bible readings, Christians must protect the truth. Part one, this morning, part two, tomorrow morning. Christians must protect the truth.

For our reading then, second epistle of John, and I hope you have enough light not only to follow me, but to take your notes. For many deceivers, verse 7, for many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Look to yourselves that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses, that is to say, goes beyond the bounds, remember that definition, goes beyond the bounds, outside of the bounds of Scripture, of course. Whosoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God.

He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. May God add his blessing to that reading from his word. Christians must protect the truth.

C.H. Spurgeon was once asked, if you defend the Bible. Defend the Bible, he said? I would no sooner defend the Bible than I would a lion. You don't defend a lion.

You open the cage and let him out. That's a great statement. I've often used it.

But we need to qualify that. While we identify with Spurgeon's confidence in the Bible to defend itself, we must qualify what he meant. He presupposed that the Bible was the inerrant word of God and therefore the infallible guide in all matters of faith and practice.

And in that sense, the Bible defends itself in all that it reveals of God and requires of man. To deny that is a very serious thing. But it in no way affects the Scriptures.

For the Bible says we can do nothing against the truth, only for the truth. You see, the truth is propositional truth, objective truth. It stands there as God himself.

God has exalted his word above his name. It's there. We can do anything against the truth in a sense.

Because the truth stands immutable. The impregnable rock of Holy Scripture. All we can do is to afflict our own souls.

Truth will triumph come what may. Truth will triumph in spite of all men say. Truth is triumphant.

But having made that clear, and I needed to start there, we are exhorted in Scripture to contend earnestly for the faith. And by that term, the faith, means the whole body of truth, the whole body of divinity. What we will say in simple terms, our Holy Bible, we are to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude 3, jot that down, a very important verse in our day and generation. Indeed the Lord Jesus warned before he went to heaven that false Christs and false prophets would arise on every hand, attempting to deceive even the elect. You dear believers here, you young people taking notes this morning, you folk who are waiting and attending on the word of God, and he urged his own disciples to take heed, Mark 13, 21 following.

That prophecy of course was fulfilled very, very quickly after the Lord Jesus went to heaven, and of course has been fulfilled in one sense or another in waves of heresy and cultism and deviations right down through to this very minute at which I speak. So the Bible has a tremendous lot to say about this matter of protecting the truth. And right here in our little text of 13 verses, we have two Bible readings on this theme.

The first is going to deal with detecting false teaching, and tomorrow rejecting false teachers. This morning, detecting false teaching. So let's get right down to it.

We must detect false teaching. Many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, or is coming in the flesh, as one version has it. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Look to yourselves, watch it, watch it, that you do not lose your full reward. Whoever goes beyond the bounds, transgresses, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Now of course, the first epistle of John deals with the same theme in several chapters. And you may want to jot this down and even turn to it, because Scripture compares with Scripture and helps us to interpret Scripture. 1 John 4, verses 1 through 3. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God.

Because false prophets have gone into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is of God.

Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard was coming and now already is in the world. The fact that false prophets had arisen then and are across our country and the world today is something the Lord Jesus talked about.

Something the prophets talked about, as we shall see tomorrow. Something the apostles talked about. They were all around by the time John wrote this epistle, performing amazing miracles.

I mean amazing miracles and proclaiming their message. And simple souls were so impressed by these manifestations, these signs and wonders, that they were influenced by them. So John warns, believe not every spirit.

And here in our text, look to yourselves, watch it. Watch it. Watch it.

As we look at this subject this morning, there are three things we need to remind ourselves of. And they are tremendously important. One, false teaching is always deceptive, obviously.

But we're going to see that that's a plain statement of scripture. False teaching is always destructive. And thirdly, false teaching is always divisive.

Let's follow that outline and go right through this passage. False teaching is always deceptive. Many deceivers have gone out into the world.

Just as the apostles were sent forth by the risen Lord to preach the true gospel, so these false teachers were commissioned and controlled by the Father of Lies. That's what the Lord Jesus calls the devil. The Father of Lies.

You'll find that in John 8, 44. The Father of Lies. To spread a different gospel.

And they traveled widely throughout Asia Minor, preaching their message and performing their miracles. Now, of course, the same thing is happening today, right here, in this land. I'll demonstrate that in just a moment.

Wherever the true gospel is being proclaimed, the false gospel is being peddled by hucksters and heretics. There's a very important verse there. And look at the margin when you read it, in 2 Corinthians 2, 17.

Hucksters, yes, and heretics. Especially these hucksters. It's a word which has quite a figurative and imaginative meaning about it.

It's the picture sometimes of a basket of apples, with the shiny ones right at the top. But underneath they're all rotten. It's also used of wine cellars in Paul's day, John's day, who watered the wine down.

Watered the wine down. Instead of giving the truth as it is in Christ, in its purity and strength and poignancy, they watered it down to make it popular. Hucksters, peddlers.

And they were deceiving Christians right, left, and center. Now there are two ways in which these hucksters and peddlers deceive Christians. And hear my words carefully.

Number one, their language is deceptive. Their language is deceptive. Deceivers who do not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh.

This is both subtle and sinister. John Stott has a tremendous comment here. We are not told that they categorically denied the incarnation, but that they did not acknowledge it, as is translated in RSV and NED.

Perhaps they were subtle enough to counterfeit rather than contradict it. Nevertheless, their teaching was tantamount to a contradiction. End of quote.

These false teachers were followers of various heretics. One of the most popular ones, and dangerous ones, was a man called Cyrinthus, who denied the manhood and Godhead of Jesus. As united at his birth, never to be divided.

That's what we stand for. He taught that Jesus was just an ordinary but righteous man who received Christ at his baptism. At his baptism, in the form of a dove.

They went around and preached and performed miracles. At the end of his life, the Christ departed from him, even though Jesus rose again from the dead. The essence of error was the severance of the human Jesus from the divine Christ.

Now, this teaching, in those days, and as understood by scholars today, was a form of intellectualism, known as Gnosticism of the day, which embraced various pagan, Jewish, and semi-Christian systems of thought. Its two main principles were the impurity of matter. Therefore, God could become flesh, because in becoming flesh, he touched matter, and God can touch matter.

Also, the supremacy of knowledge. Therefore, Jesus could not humble himself, because in humbling himself, he was less than intellectual, and super-knowledgeable. Crazy stuff.

But it's around us today. Only different God, disguised but the same thing. In short, it was an attack on the humanity and humility of Christ, God, manifest in the flesh.

That's why I'm rather worried and disturbed sometimes when our emphasis is all on Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus is Lord. Jesus is God. Some of us can get along with Jesus, but we don't want God.

We live in a day when false teachers are telling us that we need Christ, or Jesus, plus something else. They claim to have new knowledge and insight that go beyond God's revelation in Christ, as recorded in the scriptures. This all sounds very impressive and attractive, but is in fact deceptive and diabolical.

Hundreds of young people have come to me in America, and when I come to this country, leave alone older ones, and they're confused because they've been told that they need something more than Jesus Christ. And invariably, it started with deceptive language. Heather and I have traveled all over the world, and in countries that will be nameless today for obvious reasons.

We've heard it again and again. We've got new teaching now. We've got new teaching.

It so bothered me that wherever I went, as soon as I stood up and prayed, I said, Ladies and gentlemen, I have nothing new to say. It's the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. God may give some new touch of power, a new sense of the livingness of the word, but the truth is unchanged.

All of you who read your papers or watch television, newscasts, especially when you have a snippet of anything religious over here, will have heard of Jim Jones, that self-proclaimed messiah in a polyester suit, a man who played God from behind mysterious dark glasses with quiet, soft voice, who said he had a knowledge above God, and he would give young people everything they wanted. Here was his motto. Here was his motto.

A leader who told young people who felt like nothing, going nowhere, that they could be someone doing good. And hundreds, hundreds gathered around him in his California church. Then when it got too hot for him, you remember, he went away to Guyana.

And that tragedy ensued. Do you know that that man, I heard the tapes with my own ears, preached a message that would stand the mustard and would have been accepted at Filey, even with critical listening. But he was an utter and total phony.

Commenting on the death of Jim Jones and the mass suicide which followed at Jamestown, Guyana, Marvin Stone, a hard-nosed journalist and analyst, wrote this. He was editor at the time of U.S. News and World Report. He said, when we announce the death of God, and by God that's Jim Jones, when we announce the death of God, we do not necessarily announce the birth of reason.

We send off millions in search of a substitute for God. The abandonment of the traditional altar, that is true worship and the true pulpit, the real orthodox stand of midstream Christianity. The abandonment of the traditional altar can lead people to worshipping at the altar of the Reverend Jim Jones.

What happened in Guyana should send a message to our ministers, our clergymen, to get out of politics and back into the pulpit. To cease being agents of social reform and economic reform, not that the gospel doesn't do that through the church, he wasn't saying that. But he says they ought to get back to the pulpit to minister the word of God to the souls of men.

An anonymous writer has put it this way. Try the spirits, saith the Lord, they must follow my blessed word. If they fail to pass the test, do not stop to hear the rest.

The language is deceptive. The lifestyle is deceptive. Lifestyle is deceptive.

Look at the text very carefully. Deceivers have gone out, gone out into the world. Now we could easily pass over that and miss something very, very important.

That verb, gone out, is a very important verb. The verb has an official connotation. It is used of the Lord Jesus in relation to his going out in his messianic mission.

We read of the son going out from the father into the world, John 7, 29, 8, 42, 13, 3. We read of the apostles going forth into the world, John 17, 18, 20, 21, and on and on. It has a tremendous connotation. Now these false teachers were professionals.

Without doubt they were dressed like the apostles. They traveled like the apostles. They taught and preached like the apostles.

They even sought hospitality, as we'll see tomorrow, verses 10 and 11, like the apostles. In brief, their entire lifestyle was a takeoff of the master and his men. They were in every sense of the word, counterfeits.

Today we're bombarded on every hand by these counterfeit preachers, evangelists. We see them on television. We hear them on radio, on tapes, on platforms, in pulpits.

We read their tracks and their lifestyle is a carbon copy of genuine men and women of God. Heather and I were in the Philippines just a little while ago and we did a series of rallies and institutes on biblical preaching and evangelistic services all across that wonderful country, but in many ways poverty-stricken country. And we went through one area that just broke my heart.

I know what Haiti's like. I know what parts of India are like. Yes, I know what some of the squalor in South Africa is like.

But I tell you, you need to go to the Philippines. We were put in a hotel. I almost felt convicted to be in a hotel at all.

There were no homes and that's where we were put. There was a lounge and a strange thing as we walked through that lounge, the television was on. Going all the time.

Going all the time. And all around the doorway of the hotel were these precious little Filipino people, barefooted and terribly poor. I looked at that television for a few moments and there was an American evangelist.

He had his psychedelic suit and he had his hair slashed back or frizzed up, I don't know which. He had his flower in his lapel and he was telling those poor precious little people, those gullible Filipinos that if only they would trust in Jesus Christ, they would have the Cadillacs and Rolls Royce that came on to the television. And that if they had any illness at all, they would be healed at once.

It was only sin that made them sick. I was so mad, I almost pulled off my shoe like Khrushchev to throw at that television. Next day, in fact it wasn't next day, that very day, I had a press conference.

In every one of the cities this happened, that's the way they do it over there. And the very first question I was asked was this, are you a health and wealth preacher? And I looked into the face of that reporter and I said, sir, I'm a follower of the Christ who was born in a stable, had nowhere to lay his head, was crucified on a piece of wood he didn't even own, except in his Godhead, sovereignty and creatorial power, and was

buried in a borrowed tomb. I follow Christ who said to me, if you're going to come after me, deny yourself, pick up the cross and follow me.

Next question please. That doesn't mean to say God doesn't bless people with riches. That doesn't mean to say God can't heal instantaneously, but sometimes he heals through Dr. Burton and the hospital staff and medicine.

Sometimes he heals, listen, indefinitely, like the Apostle Paul who was never delivered from his thorn in the flesh, but given grace to take that infirmity right through to his dying day, so far as we know. But Jesus said, the main thing is, deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow me. Don't be deceived by language or lifestyle.

Go deeper than this, measure everything you hear by the doctrine of Christ and the deeds of Christ, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures and revealed and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Secondly, false teaching is destructive. False teaching is destructive.

Look what he says, watch it, watch it my readers. Oh my converts in Christ, watch it. Look to yourselves that you do not lose those things you have worked for, but that you may receive a full reward.

As John issued this warning, he doubtless had in mind some who are not walking in the truth. We referred to those, didn't we? He said, I rejoice that some are walking in the truth, which means that some weren't. And by the way, he's not addressing heretics here, he's addressing believers.

Believers who could be deceived and led astray. It is a serious thing to imbibe false teaching. I don't care in what small doses you take it in.

I repeat, it's a serious thing to imbibe false teaching. Eventually it affects the whole system, the whole system. A healthy body can be rendered helpless in no time when there is infection.

I had a series of meetings abroad and I knew it was going to be tough going, so Heather and I went on a vacation and a holiday and came back absolutely full of beans. Ready to go. As it happened, Heather wasn't with me on this occasion, our son David was with me.

And again it was in the Philippines. It was the 50th anniversary of FEBC, the Far Eastern Broadcasting Company. And we had a wonderful time.

And we were, incidentally, at that time, entertained by Marcos. And I don't know what he did with the menu, but I got food poisoning. I almost died.

Do you know, it was just the mayonnaise in one dish. I mean I was so ill, I wanted to die. My whole system was affected.

Doctors worked on me night and day to neutralize the toxemia in my system. But I was perilously affected and so was my service. Thank God eventually I did give the addresses I was invited to give.

But my that taught me a lesson. Just that little bit of mayonnaise. You see, false teaching destroys us personally.

There's an emphasis in the Greek on the you, yourselves. Look to yourselves that you do not lose those things you have worked for. We need to underscore that pronoun yourselves.

It is the first and foremost priority in your life. Because as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. God is more interested in what we are than what we do.

More interested in us than our work. And if what we are does not satisfy his holy demands, then what we do is virtually worthless. I love to read John Trapp, known as Master John Trapp.

Way back there in the Puritan days. He has a sobering comment on this verse. He writes, the godly, when they fall into error or grow remiss and leave their first love, lose what they have wrought.

One, they lose in respect to the praise of men. Two, they lose in respect to their own former feelings of God's favor. And three, in respect to the fullness of the reward in heaven.

And then he adds, the Nazarite who broke his vow had to begin all over again. When John writes this letter, he has in mind not so much spiritual apostasy amongst those to whom he is writing the believers, but spiritual catastrophe. There is much in scripture concerning those who deny the faith, and that could be an entire Bible reading.

And I have a list of verses here on those who actually are heretics and deny the faith. They'll find their place in the hell fires of eternal perdition. In this verse, however, John is warning the believer, you and me, you and me, against error, deviations, heresy, whatever you like to call it.

And I lament over men and women with whom I studied at college, who went out into the work with me. And today, they're way out in left field. They've lost out.

The glow's gone. And some of them, the faith is gone. And it was all because of false teaching.

No wonder the apostle warns, look to yourselves. A seminary student once told Billy Graham that in that seminary, that's a theological college in this country, a school of divinity, he'd learned how to drink, how to curse, and how to have sex experiences. He said that he had lost his faith and he was on the verge of suicide.

This is where the new morality, so-called, expressed in relativism, which repudiates all the commandments, especially the seventh commandment, on adultery. Although he's a backdated individual, his teaching is still affecting us today. Professor Fletcher, Joseph Fletcher, who wrote Situation Ethics, he was the founder of this relativism, this Situation Ethics.

He wrote all the commandments all over again. He says, God says, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not steal, etc., etc. He says, no, what we should really understand these commandments to mean is, thou shalt not kill ordinarily.

Sometimes, shoot him. Thou shalt not commit adultery ordinarily. If there is an understanding, a consenting understanding, there's no harm in that, or fornication.

Thou shalt not steal ordinarily. In other words, not God's insistence, but man's convenience. That'll destroy you.

False teaching destroys us vocationally. Look to yourselves that you don't lose the things that you've worked for. Do you know that we're all building, building a house? We are building day by day.

Yes, we're building. We're building a house. We're building a temple.

That's the picture of our work. And John is not only concerned about the lives of the believers, but the labors of the believers. What is that of losing our reward? And the word reward here in the text, will you notice, look to yourselves that you lose not those things you've worked for, but that you may receive a full reward.

The word reward there is the word used in the Greek for your wages. A workman's wages. See Matthew 28, John 4, 36, James 5, 4. According to this verse, it's possible to lose the things we've worked for.

To lose our wages. Our wages, our rewards in heaven. Now, Paul illustrates this beautifully in that third epistle of 1 Corinthians.

You may want to turn to it later on, but for the sake of time, let me move through it. He deals with this vocational loss in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 3, 1 through 15. Comparing our work to the building of a temple, corporately as a church, and individually our own temple lives.

Comparing the work of God to the building of a temple, he speaks first of all of the foundation. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now it's important to observe here that a strong construction starts with a solid foundation.

What we think of Christ is how we build on Christ. All right? That's the foundation. The doctrine of Christ.

Back to that in a moment. Then he talks about the materials. If our doctrine is weak or wrong, we build with wood, hay, and straw.

On the other hand, if our doctrine is sound and spirit anointed, we build with gold, silver, precious stones. Then he comes to the rewards. The precise word that John uses in our text.

And John says it, Paul says it. Everyone's work will be manifest, for the day will declare it. Because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work endures, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned, he will suffer loss. But he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Young people don't fool. Don't fool with God. Don't fool with the Bible.

Don't fool with truth. We have a short time to live. It's only probationary.

It's eternity we live for. The world we've forgotten, as Davis used to call it. And one day we're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

A doctrine I very rarely hear preached on anywhere today. I'm not talking about the Thronos, the great white throne, while Christ rejecters will be condemned forever. I'm talking about the judgment seat, where we are going to be arrayed for the things done in the body, while we're in this time frame.

And whether or not we build with wood, hay, and straw, or gold, silver, precious stones, and we'll stand before our Lord. And if we haven't built with true doctrine, true theological conviction, and we haven't walked that narrow way of conformity to God's truth, we're going to see our buildings burnt up, and we're going to take the charred embers of wasted lives, and press them into his pierced hand, and say, that's all I have for you, Lord. Don't fool! Don't fool.

This means that a Christian laborer can be fired or fined for poor workmanship. This has nothing to do with losing our salvation. That's pointed out in the text.

We'll be saved, yet so is by fire. You say, but can I ever be happy in heaven, if that happens? Yes, because you'll know that he's been inscrutably fair, and you wouldn't be happy if you were there unfairly. But at the same time, you've got nothing to show.

You've destroyed the building. No wonder Paul warns, let each one take heed how he builds. My heart aches as I think of laymen and ministers, and even missionaries who once ran well, who are now out of the race altogether.

Or, to return to our metaphor, a building for God I know of ministries that have been abandoned and make sorry sights today, all because of false teaching. John's warning was never more urgent or pertinent than today. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things that we have worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

All right, our last consideration. False teaching is divisive. How are these to be said? Divisions all over the place.

Divisions all over the place. Whosoever, verse 9, transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ, has both the Father and the Son.

Do you see the division there? Do you see the dichotomy there? Even at a glance at this verse reveals the wide disparity between those who transgress, who go beyond the bounds of biblical revelation, and those who abide in the doctrine of Christ. False teaching always divides. Church history is a commentary on this sad fact.

And God's purpose for his people is unity in Christ. And to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace is one of the greatest endeavors of individual Christians or the church corporate. This unity, by the way, has three aspects to it, just to tuck into that corner of your mind.

It is made possible through the cross of Christ. It's a gift. It's made effectual in us through the Holy Spirit.

The unity is a gift of God. The gift of God. But unity is also a divine growth.

Not only a divine gift, it's a divine growth which results from the edifying of the body of Christ till we come to the unity of the faith. The unity is also a divine goal. As we conform to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and somehow, I just feel it in my soul.

If I could borrow Jacob's ladder and climb my way right up into heaven now and just sit quietly at the feet of my enthroned Lord, I somehow feel I could hear him pray, Father, oh Father, make them one. Make them one. Father, make them one, that the world may believe that you sent me.

And yet we're tearing it apart and allowing the devil to divide us. In view of this, we need to really look at two things as we close. What is false? What is true? What is false? What is true? False doctrine is always extra-biblical.

That is to say, it's outside of the bounds of scripture. Outside of the bounds of scripture. Anything you ever hear, test it with a word.

Is it in the word? Is it in the word? Within context, is it supported by other scriptures? And if you're in doubt about it, wait on it, study it, consult those who are mature in the Christian faith until you're sure. Is it in the word? Whosoever transgresses does not abide in the doctrine of Christ and does not have God. As Stott once again observes, the author is almost certainly borrowing from the vocabulary of the heretics.

They claim to have go-ahead views, a superior gnosis or intellectualism, which enable them to advance beyond the rudiments of the faith in which the common herd, that is all the Christians, were content to abide. And then I like this. John sarcastically attacks their claim.

That is John the Apostle. They had indeed gone ahead. They'd advanced so far, they'd left God behind.

Even though John the Apostle may have had Sorinthus in mind, the enemy of truth, he was also aware of what is unbiblical, known as progressivism. Progressivism. Going outside of the Bible.

I have a word from the Lord. I have a word from the Lord. Where did you get it from? You could have got it from the devil.

Because the devil rarely, if ever, comes with horns and hooves. The most beautiful animal or creature in all of God's pristine creation was the channel he used in the Garden of Eden. And when he comes to you and me, it's an angel of light with a Bible in his hand.

There's something so attractive about new teaching which does not restrict you to the old paths. Oh, that old hat. For goodness sake, don't preach that stuff.

Don't teach that kind of doctrine. Man alive, our fathers did that. We're in a new age.

Balderdash. Balderdash. This is unbiblical progressivism.

Do you know that was, in Paul's day, the greatest thing people enjoyed at Mars Hill? They did nothing else, morning, noon and night, than to hear some new thing. Some new thing. Acts 17:21. Some new thing.

And this is the problem in the hour in which we live right now. We're all familiar with such deviations as what used to be called modernism and now radicalism or liberalism and humanism and all the isms. They're not isms.

They're wasms, as E.V. Hill used to put it. In each instance, it's nothing less than arrogant progressivism. We want to go beyond the boundaries of divine revelation.

And bring division in the body. Sometimes it's a matter of exaggeration. Sometimes it's a matter of extremism.

But then it's a case of error itself. You see, revelation is a line straight from God's heart to my heart. Through the scriptures, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit.

A little deviation to the right or the left is exaggeration. Push it a little further, extremism. Push it still a little further, it's error.

After all, folks, what fellowship can you have with people like Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian scientists, Mormons, and similar groups? We're not being unkind. We're not being judgmental. We are standing on

truth.

Every large cult which comes to the attention of the public, such as the Hare Krishna movement, Rev. Moon, Unification Church, there are thousands and thousands and thousands of smaller ones. And their primary appeal is to young people in the 17 to 25 age bracket. And all of these cults are meeting apparent needs in the lives of young people who are desperately looking for someone to tell them what to believe.

The cult groups provide a cause, a sense of belonging and worth, a structure, a simple black and white answers. Unfortunately, young people recruit themselves, involve themselves, and become captive converts to unbiblical form of brainwashing, half-truths, deceit, and distortion of scripture. Researchers in the most recent review, researchers in the most recent review, say there are 1,500 sects and cults.

There are many more than that, but mainly, mainly distinguishable ones that are actively seeking, in the United States of America, here and in Europe, recruits, just like the precious people in this auditorium this morning. And the interesting thing about it, all these groups are strongest where Christianity is weakest. The litmus test, of course, is always the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, his deity, God of every God, his humanity, man of every man, his substitutionary death, his atoning work on the cross, the power of his blood, his death, his literal, physical resurrection, his session at the right hand of the Father.

He's coming again to judge the doctrine of Christ. That's what John's talking about here, the doctrine of Christ. But more of that in just a moment.

That false doctrine is always outside of the Bible. You just can't find it in the Word. But quickly, true doctrine is always sola biblica, always within the Bible, only Bible, only Bible, in its conservatism.

The doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. And this little phrase, the doctrine of Christ, is not so much the doctrine about Christ, though that is involved, obviously, it's what Jesus taught himself, what Jesus taught himself by his life, by his life, and by his teaching. He came as the eternal Word to flesh out the Father in all the fullness of grace and truth.

In his life and ministry, by the power of his sayings, he could declare the Scripture cannot be broken from Genesis to Malachi, if you please. In like manner, he anticipated the New Testament by the promise of his Spirit. He predicted the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name.

He will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. As the living Word, the Scriptures testify of me.

It follows then, the true doctrine is always biblical in its conservatism. Always biblical in its conservatism. So how do we close this session this morning? Three things I want to say to you.

First, we must possess orthodox doctrine. We must have the doctrine of Christ. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Conversely, whosoever transgresses and doesn't abide in the doctrine of Christ doesn't even have God. We cannot separate the doctrine from the person of Christ. Listen to me carefully.

Not to have the doctrine is not to have the Father or the Son. So many preachers and leaders, not to speak of church members, are so nebulous on this crucial matter. They say, they say, forget the doctrine,

forget the doctrine, forget the doctrines.

Listen, that's perilous. Such a notion is serious error. We have to accept the doctrine of Christ if we're going to abide in the doctrine of Christ.

Number one, we must have orthodox doctrine. Two, we must hold orthodox doctrine. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

And the verb to abide here in a human's language, continue in it, stay in it, stick in it, it leaves no room for vacillation. The word of God is punctuated with exhortations to stand fast in the Lord, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, to stand fast in the faith. Alfred Plummer, that wonderful theologian and expositor, trenchantly puts it, to advance beyond Christ we need to keep this in mind in a day when we hear so much about the word of prophecy without a biblical base.

So let us hold fast the pattern of sound words, hold fast the faithful word, hold fast till Jesus comes. But I couldn't possibly sit down without saying, yes, hold it, have it, heed it, heed the doctrine of Christ. Whosoever transgresses and doesn't abide in the doctrine of Christ is not of God.

The temptation is to advance beyond the boundaries of faith, yes, intellectually, but I want to tell you something. Having said that, we must watch the opposite danger. We can deny our orthodoxy by failure to obey the truth.

You can preach until you're blue in the face about the inerrancy of scripture and be living with another woman. And you deny the very thing you stand for if you don't obey it. If it's so important, if it's so orthodox, if it's so important, what are you doing about obeying it? There is a progression in the truth which is biblical and beneficial.

The Christian's development is not to progress beyond Christ's teaching, that's true, but to progress in the understanding of it. I close with words from the fifth chapter of Hebrews, and I'm going to give this to you as your homework. Read the whole fifth chapter, so don't even look at it now because we're through.

Fifth chapter of Hebrews, and at the close of that chapter the writer says this, everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness. Notice that, the word of righteousness. For he is a babe but solid food belongs to those who are of full age, mature.

That is those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let's go on to perfection. What is he saying? He's saying this, let me take it in the reverse order.

He's saying this, discernment, discernment, biblical discernment of what's wrong or what's right. Biblical discernment comes surely, sometimes slowly, but surely through biblical advancement. Leaving the bottle, milk, going to the meat, growing, growing.

And biblical discernment comes through biblical advancement. But biblical advancement comes first and foremost through biblical commitment. I'm committed to the word of righteousness.

And I leave the milk and the nappies and the cots and I go to real steak and I eat the word of God and grow. And my senses are exercised to discern both good and evil. And I know what's wrong, what's right through the power of the Holy Spirit.

My challenge to you is quit the bottle, take the Bible, grow, grow, and then go. Amen.

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