

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

**(Part 25 – If the Word You are
Hearing Does not Set You Free,
it is not the Word of God)**

June 19, 2016

Sermon Text: Ps 19

Scripture Reading: Matthew 4:1-25

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." (Mar 1:27)

Evil distorts, perverts, twists and morphs the Word of God into an evil counterfeit that brings people into bondage, rather than into the freedom His truth delivers –

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and

you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Joh 8:31-32)

Our subject this morning is this:

Evil loves to quote God's Word, but always does so with the method and intent of using it to deceive and enslave.

We are surrounded by phony religion today, just as was the case in Jesus' day when the religious establishment in Israel was corrupt. The temple was not the Temple, but had become a den of robbers. The righteous were put out of the temple while the wicked not only remained members in good standing but were exalted with trumpets. When the Lamb of God came to that "church" He was rejected, scorned, and ultimately executed.

And so it is today. We see it constantly. The very same dynamics being wickedly carried out in the name of "christianity." The thing is disgusting. The Lord sees it all.

However, in the face of all this evil we must not spurn the true church, the true people of God, or despair that they are to be found. Elijah thought he was the only one left, but he wasn't. Christ

always has His true remnant, His true Bride. Always.

Furthermore,

...we must never allow the wicked who parade as righteous eminent "saints" to cause us to distrust the Bible, God's Word.

Oh yes, they are constantly quoting Scripture to justify themselves and to condemn Jesus' true flock, but like the devil in the wilderness tempting Christ, their use of Scripture is perverted and twisted, turning it into a devilish tool by ripping texts out of context and through other diabolical methods.

God's Word is truth. Truth that sets us free. Truth that is light that exposes evil no matter how dark it is. God's Word is food for the soul and living water for our thirst. It is life-giving – even when it brings heavy conviction for actual sin it's goal is LIFE by leading the sinner to repentance and salvation.

IF WHAT IS BEING TAUGHT TO YOU IN YOUR CHURCH IS NOT SETTING YOUR SOUL FREE, IF IT IS BURDENING YOU WITH A HEAVY YOKE, IF IT IS DEMANDING THAT YOU REMAIN IN OPPRESSION, IF IT IS

INSISTING THAT YOU KEEP SILENT ABOUT EVIL, THEN IT IS NOT THE RELIGION OF CHRIST, IT IS NOT THE WORD OF GOD.

This....THIS....is the nature of God's Word which we hold in our hands....

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psa 19:7-11)

Listen carefully, let me say it again –

If the religion that you are being taught, the Bible that you are being instructed in, the understanding that you have of God's Word, is not leading you to wholeness, to life, to freedom, to joy and peace, then that religion is not of Christ, it is not faithful to His Word, and you are being robbed of the freedom Christ

has promised to all who follow Him in truth. His truth sets us free.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psa 19:7-11)

Listen to this true account of a Christian lady who learned after more than 20 years of oppression and bondage that the “Christian” doctrine and the “bible” teachings she was taught in her local church were not the Word of God at all. Her comment was in reply to a post we ran on the blog quoting a lady called “GratefulBride” who quite arrogantly told abuse victims that their misery was due to not choosing a husband wisely, as she had done:

I have been out of a 2+ decade marriage for more than 10 years and remarks like GratefulBride’s

still can trigger me so much. I STILL have problems with giving myself credit for leaving a marriage that ultimately gave me a breakdown. How can I still be so lacking in strength so many years later? (Because of how subtle and powerful the minute daily abuses were, piled up day after day, year after year.) Many of us, with no broken bones or blackened eyes, have nothing to prove the abuse to those who WERE our friends in church and Christian groups.

I, like many, was SO controlled by what I heard from my husband, the pulpit, the Sunday School classes, the women’s meetings, the books, the seminars, etc. that I STILL have problems feeling justified in making the hard decision to walk away from it finally.

I wonder if I’ll ever recover from the damage that was done.

I long for the clearheadedness to stop questioning my past valiant attempts at submissiveness. I long for the time when I stop trying to justify my ex’s actions in my head. I long for people to finally “get it” and tell me that they are sorry for how I’ve been treated and effectively shunned. (That will never happen.) I want to be strong, but I think that by staying SO long the damage is SO deep that I won’t recover. (I

constantly pray that this is not the case.) It's bad enough to have suffered the church abuse while we were in abusive marriages and after we made hard decisions to leave, but to suffer the abuse from women is so sad.

The Word of God does NOT do this to people! God says so Himself repeatedly in the Scriptures. Yes, the Sword of the Spirit brings us into conviction, sometimes very painful conviction when we stray, but for the wonderful purpose of bringing us to repentance and life –

As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (2Co 7:9-10)

See it? The “grief” or sorrow that false religion brings does not lead to true repentance and life and joy, but to bondage and death. And that is exactly what this lady is describing that happened to her, right within the walls of her “church” –

I, like many, was SO controlled by what I heard from my husband, the pulpit, the Sunday School classes,

the women's meetings, the books, the seminars, etc. that I STILL have problems feeling justified in making the hard decision to walk away from it finally.

I can tell you without any doubt that she is not exaggerating. What is being preached and taught and written about in books and Christian education literature is very, very commonly not the Word of God. It opposes freedom. It enslaves. It really is the law. “Do this and live.” It parades as God's Word, citing chapter and verse, but it has twisted His Word –

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal 3:1-3)

An Illustration

I took a photo last week of the kennel we keep our dogs in when we are gone.



Food, water, cushy beds, heat lamps when it is cold, out of the weather, with a view. As I closed the latch on the gate, the thought came to my mind that this fence is either like God's Word, OR it is a prison.

Like the Word of God, this kennel provides firm boundaries. Why? Because we want our pets to be safe. We don't want them taking an unauthorized excursion to the river or out on the road or through neighbor's yards. Those are dangerous areas for them. They could get hit by a car, poisoned, shot, or they might do damage to a neighbor's property in some way. The kennel locked gate is good. The motivation for it is good. Therefore, *it is not a prison*. Furthermore, they know that the gate is going to be opened before long. It is a place of refuge, the place where they get their food. And so when we say "kennel" to them, they go right in.

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (Joh 10:7-11)

BUT, if the motivation of the "gatekeeper" is evil, the fence does indeed become a prison, and its occupants become prisoners. Same kind of fence perhaps. But now it is evil because the gatekeeper is not a true shepherd, but a thief and a robber come only to oppress and use the sheep.

In the case of dogs, you might compare the evil gatekeeper to the owner of a puppy mill that only exists to make money with no regard to the health and welfare of the animals. Their kennel is not a life-giving refuge of safety. It is a prison.

And so it is with the Word of God. When the Lord speaks, His Word comes to give life, to effect justice, to speak truth that sets people free. Like the kennel we maintain, His Word sets very firm boundaries, but all motivated by His love for us. *God's Word always*

speaks life and justice. It sets His people free and it rightly condemns and exposes the wicked.

Not so when the wicked pervert and twist the Word.

They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. (Gal 4:17)

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. (Gal 6:12-13)

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. (Col 2:20-23)

False religion, you see, distorts and perverts God's Word. And you can

KNOW this perversion is happening by carefully considering the end to which it is leading. Joy and freedom? Or oppression and bondage? Judgement and condemnation? Or justification and full acceptance?

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:1-2)

Who then is the gatekeeper of your religion? Christ the Good Shepherd? Or the prince of darkness parading as a servant of righteousness? Many foolish Galatians today are in bondage to wicked ones who come in, claim to be servants of Christ, but who want to bring the people back under the law for their own selfish glory and flattery.

Let me give you some true examples of Scripture being perverted in order to keep people in bondage. These kinds of things happen very commonly in churches. In fact we can say they are typical, widespread traditions that have usurped God's truth –

I had Matthew 5:25-26 misquoted at me by a teacher I once deeply respected, in order to convince me

not to cooperate with the police against a young man, the son of popular church leaders, who sexually assaulted my daughter on multiple occasions while she was sleeping. When I challenged him that, "The scripture didn't apply to cases like ours." He responded, "Jesus didn't qualify it." He did admit though, that in the hypothetical case of his own granddaughter being raped and murdered, he would not be expected to settle with his adversary before going to court. I told him his arrogance and ignorance were dangerous. I haven't spoken to him since.

with the oppressor. It is not the Word of God.

I got "the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God (Jas 1:20)" as a prooftext that anger was wrong. This was after I complained in sabbath school that the speaker was wrongly equating anger with idolatry. I said that we have a right, as image-bearers of God to respect, and that anger is an appropriate response to disrespect. That is different from anger that is expressed when people don't treat us like royalty, which IS a form of idolatry.

Here is the Scripture that was twisted:

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. (Mat 5:25-26)

Consider what kind of bondage that twisting of Scripture will do. It prohibits justice. It enables evil and hides it. It tells the oppressed that God does not want them to be free of such evil but requires them to be "friends"

Here is still another very widespread lie that is produced by the wicked who warp the Word of God to their own evil ends. The Spirit of God in the believer moves them to righteous anger, moves them to seek justice, but this lie forces them to admit a false guilt in themselves for allegedly sinning by being angry. Several evil people parading as Christians whom I have known over the years loved to misuse this very Scripture. It is a terrible bondage to be prohibited from expressing the very emotions God Himself expresses.

Here is another true account of how the evil misuse of Scripture (which evil constantly practices) causes great bondage and harm to the afflicted:

I agree completely about being careful regarding quoting scriptures, carelessly. I have been misquoted scriptures for quite a few years during my childhood and adolescence about learning from my father how to be a “good” wife. This means being completely submissive and compliant to whatever requests he asks of me to do or I will suffer the consequences of not obeying him by getting punished.

These verses included the ones that say a woman is to submit to her husband and a daughter is to honor her father, [my father would say this] any time I attempted to defend myself, even by pointing out that abuse was a sin in the bible... and [he said] that a woman was not to gossip or to slander her own family when I asked for help from others.

This was along with being lectured about lying or exaggerating just how badly my dad treated me, even though I was telling the truth the whole time.

When I described what I went through to other well-meaning but misguided Christians, I was asked how bad the abuse was and was told that being physically abused every once in a great while and

being emotionally abused for months on weekdays during the school year didn't qualify as severe enough abuse for anyone to assist me. After all, it wasn't like I was physically or sexually abused, there were people who went through much worse trauma than I did.

I was furthermore scolded by being quoted scriptures about waiting on the Lord for Him to come and save me and to rejoice at the persecution I suffered through, because my reward would be great in heaven, with the command to not complain about my trivial problems, as well as being told the same scriptures my dad told me, along with, “Oh but you love your father and your father loves you, he's just doing what's best for you, you won't understand until you are older. A wife is supposed to submit to her husband, your father is just teaching you how to be a good future wife. So stop being so stubbornly rebellious toward him, instead, honor your father like the bible says, by doing what he commands.”

I was also told, I might add, that I wasn't faithful enough, because God hasn't answered my prayers and told to pray harder, even

though I was praying as hard and as fervently as I could for God to get me out of there. When I was told this, I felt guilty for bringing up the subject to ask for help and support in the first place, angry and hurt at being disbelieved, guilty for not being a “good enough Christian”, humiliated at being quoted the same scriptures that my Dad used on me and finally, cynical that anyone but myself would get me out of the vicious cycle of abuse I found myself in.

Any time I talk about what I suffered from growing up to anyone now, I’m asked why I hold onto the past of my childhood so tightly and told to let it go; as if I’m still not suffering from the cycle of abuse I’m in from working under my dad. It’s either that or I’m completely ignored, like when I asked to tell my story on the childhood abuse page but didn’t get a response because my experience was never brought to a court of law, unlike everyone else, whose experiences had.

Wow! How MANY Scriptures were twisted and distorted to this young woman as she grew up. And people are still putting them on her today. You see that sometimes people don’t even cite a verse, but speak the same old lies that have become common currency so

widely in the churches that they are accepted without any thought that they might be false.

One more example:

Honor your father and mother was a good one quoted often. As a teen, [I knew my mother was being immoral with a man] whom she’d met in the bar the night before.... I told my mom how upset I was and how I felt disrespected. She responded by becoming threatening and snarky, telling me she was the adult and she paid the bills and it was HER house and she could do anything she liked and didn’t answer to me.

So I took off to the home of some christians I was associating with at the time and told them what had happened and how I had been treated. They listened with completely straight, almost disapproving faces and then told me that my mom was not saved and that I had to go home and submit to my mother....

On another occasion, we had some weirdo she was dating ringing our doorbell for over an hour at two am because she dumped him and he wouldn’t take no for an answer. My christian friends quoted the scriptures about honoring our

parents and about submission to authorities and shamed me as a gossip for telling them her personal business. This was pretty typical church fare if you told . I felt like a schmuck for telling on my mom and putting her in a bad light but it seemed unfair that I had to live with this.

She was a very broken woman who had been molested since early childhood and then married my dad, who also was abused and became an abuser. She herself could be abusive. It sounds right in line with Jay Adams belief that no matter how horrible your family is, you aren't allowed to disassociate from them because you are supposed to have kingdom priorities and be evangelizing them. If you take yourself out of the picture you have deprived them of the only witness they may have. He seems to think that if you are saved, then there should be no problem with having the strength to endure their evil and stay in contact. Arrrrrgggh. Sometimes I hate christians and church and don't want much more to do with it . Not going to go with that but it's a tempting feeling. Just so much heavy duty guilt trips that make it seem selfish if you want to be happy and not have to live with

miserly all the time. How do you tell the difference between actually being guilty of this and not being guilty?

Do you see the bondage these people have suffered from? This is not what the Word of God effects. Hear it again:

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much

fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (Psa 19:1-14)

There! That is the Word of the Lord. That is the Word of God made flesh and come among us, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is His truth that sets us free. Reject anything that does the opposite and rebuke the one who is twisting God's truth into something that enslaves.