

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Men of Grace:

## In doctrine showing Integrity: True Doctrine that Resists Ancient Heresies Titus 2:7

Since the Garden of Eden, the Liar from the Beginning who wouldn't abide in the Truth has sought to corrupt the truth of God in humans with his devilish lies. Just like rat poison that is 99 1/2% good grain mixed with 1/2% strychnine is deadly, so just a small lie, a little error added into good doctrine can also become deadly to the soul.

Open with me to the first time deadly poison was added to God's Truth, the result brought death to all humans because of sin. Genesis 3 is where we begin with the Serpent from of old deceiving Eve in the Garden.

As we turn there, we are looking at what can be described as Satan's spiritual flaws. These four lies are usually a part of his attack on humans to make us think wrongly about God!

### Satan's Four Spiritual Flaws

We all know about the fall of the human race into sin in the Garden of Eden; but let me just state them in a fresh way for you as we prepare to see them in action as we read our text. Satan wanted them and us to—

- ***Doubt God's Word as Absolutely True:*** v. 3a "Has God indeed said" (An attack on whether God has even spoken, and that His Word is Truth.);
- ***Doubt God's Plan as Absolutely Good:*** v. 3b "you shall not eat" (An attack of God's plan that it is too harsh, too restrictive, too narrow. Is it really right that He should say that something that feels or looks good is wrong?);
- ***Doubt God's Salvation as Absolutely Just:*** v. 4 "you will not surely die" (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God's Substitute can be saved.);
- ***Doubt God's Authority as Absolutely Right:*** v. 5 "your eyes will be opened" (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the only source of eternal truth for the right way to live life.)

Now, as we read, note those attacks, and see the poison Satan has added to the truth God had already given. Please stand with me and follow along:

Genesis 3:1-8 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "**Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat** of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "**You will not surely die.** 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it **your eyes will be opened**, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

## Pray

Genesis 3 is the foundation for all we learn in God's Word today, so remember:

SATAN'S FOUR SPIRITUAL FLAWS: (Gen. 3)

- **Doubt God's Word as Absolutely True:** v. 3a "Has God indeed said" (An attack on whether God has even spoken, and that His Word is Truth.);
- **Doubt God's Plan as Absolutely Good:** v. 3b "you shall not eat" (An attack of God's plan that it is too harsh, too restrictive, too narrow. Is it really right that He should say that something that feels or looks good is wrong?);
- **Doubt God's Salvation as Absolutely Just:** v. 4 "you will not surely die" (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God's Substitute can be saved.);
- **Doubt God's Authority as Absolutely Right:** v. 5 "your eyes will be opened" (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the only source of eternal truth for the right way to live life.)

For each of Satan's lies, God has declared His truth. I call these:

## GOD'S FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS

- TRUST **God's Word as Absolutely True:** because it is God-breathed as Psalm 119:89 says "forever settled in Heaven."
- REST in **God's Plan as Absolutely Good:** because as Romans 11:33 says "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things."
- SUBMIT to **God's Salvation as Absolutely Just:** because Acts 4:12 says "Neither is there Salvation in any other, for there is no other Name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- FOLLOW **God's Authority as Absolutely Right:** because in John 14:6 Jesus

Himself said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through Me."

Satan has not stopped, nor has he changed. He is still sowing poison alongside of truth, trying to deceive, and his efforts are only getting stronger. In fact when Paul was writing his final letter, just before a Roman soldier would behead him (the only form of capital punishment allowed to Roman citizens), he warned that truth would be waning at the end.

Turn with me now to II Timothy 3:1, and then 4:1-4 to see what God said we would face at the end of days.

## **Perilous Times Have Come**

3:1 But know this, that **in the last days perilous times will come:** 4:1-4 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine,** but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and **they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

So Paul says one of the characteristics of the end is when believers want to close their ears and minds to sound doctrine, and instead they want to have Bible teachers that make them feel better, live a happy and carefree life, and focus on personal pursuits of materialism and pleasures instead of godliness with contentment.

Please turn back with me to I Timothy 3:15.

***1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God [lit. 'household'], which is the church of the living God, the pillar [Timothy was pastoring in Ephesus that had the Wonder of the World, Temple of Diana (Artemis) with 127 gold covered columns] and ground [only here in N.T. and means foundation] of the truth.***  
**NKJV**

Have you ever wondered how God looks upon us as we come together each Sunday here at CBC<sup>1</sup>? God has said that He looks at us as His family or household, gathered as pillars that hold up truth because we are solidly grounded with a foundation of truth. That is how He sees us, and we should remember that as we gather.

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<sup>1</sup> 080203AM GEM-12

This morning we have gathered as Christ's Church. We are members of God's household and part of His family; and our purpose is to uphold by what we live and say, God's Truth as recorded in the Bible.

We are to know, believe, live, and proclaim truth as Christ's church. We are indwelt by the Spirit of Truth, and hold a copy of the inspired Word of Truth.

Note Paul's charge in the opening of v. 15 "you ought to conduct yourself". That is exactly what we are looking at this morning, the way saints should conduct their lives.

## **Living out God's Truth In a World Adrift from Truth**

And that takes us back to Titus 2:6-7, where we see again God's call to guard the truth. God is pleased whenever His Church **lives out His Truth in a World Adrift**. Remember what God expects from younger men:

v. 6 "Likewise exhort the **young men**":

1. "to be sober-minded", v. 7: First in any godly man's life is a firm resolve to **Live a Restrained Life in an Unrestrained World**;
2. "in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works": Next, these men seek to **Follow Christ In A Christ-less World**;
3. "in doctrine showing integrity"<sup>2</sup>: This is the call to the personal integrity of **Believe Right so we Behave Right**;

Just as God is Love, and is Holy, and is Righteous, so also God is TRUTH.

Truth is defined by our dictionaries as: "conformity to fact or actuality; proven to be or accepted as true; reality; actuality; often truth is defined as that which is considered to be the supreme reality and to have the ultimate meaning and value of existence." (The American Heritage Dictionary)

We worship a God who calls Himself the **God of Truth** (Deut. 32:4; Psalm 31:5).

*Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He. NKJV*

## **Our God is a God of Truth**

We trust a Savior, God the Son who calls himself **The Truth** (John 14:6), and came to us **full of grace and Truth** (John 1:14, 17).

*John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV*

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek text is: en te didaskalia (1319) aphthorian (90).

We are indwelt by God the Spirit who calls Himself the **Spirit of Truth** (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

*John 14:17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. NKJV*

We read and study God's Word which is called the **Word of Truth** (Psalm 119:43); and as God's children are called followers of the **Way of Truth** (Psalm 119:30); because we were born again by the **Word of Truth** (Eph. 1:13; James 1:18; I Peter 1:22).

*Psalm 119:43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I have hoped in Your ordinances. NKJV*

*Psalm 119:30 I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me. NKJV*

*Ephesians 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, NKJV*

*1 Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, NKJV*

Our entire life in Christ is to be built upon the solid rock (Matthew 7:24) of **Christ's Truth**. Jesus came **full of grace and Truth** (John 1:14), to lead us to the God who **can only be worshipped in spirit and Truth** (John 4:23-24).

*Matthew 7:24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: NKJV*

*John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. NKJV*

*John 4:23-24 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." NKJV*

As believers we are to: **speak Truth** in our hearts (Psalm 15:2); and live lives that have been set free from slavery to sin **by The truth** (John 8:32); as we become more and more **sanctified by Truth** (John 17:17, 19); and always growing in our spiritual lives feeding on **the Truth is in Christ Jesus** (Eph. 4:21).

*Psalm 15:2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; NKJV*

*John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." NKJV*

*John 17:17-19 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. NKJV*

*Ephesians 4:21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: NKJV*

We were saved by **the Word of the Truth** of the Gospel (Col. 1:5) and all who are truly saved have **received the love of the Truth** (II Thes. 2:10); and live a life of purifying their souls through **obeying the Truth** (I Peter 1:22).

*Colossians 1:5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, NKJV*

*2 Thessalonians 2:10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. NKJV*

*1 Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, NKJV*

Salvation comes through sanctification of the Spirit and **belief of the Truth** (II Th. 2:13).

*2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, NKJV*

## **Satan: the Truth-obscuring, Mind-blinding Devil**

Turn back with me to Christ's piercing words in John 8:44. Facing the truth-obscuring religious leaders of His day, Jesus declared that God's Truth has been under attack from the beginning. God's enemy and ours is the Devil who **abode not in the truth** (John 8:44), neither can he because he is a liar and the father of lies.

*John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.** When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for **he is a liar and the father of it.** NKJV*

Our enemy wants to **snatch the truth** (Matthew 13:19) from our minds.

*Matthew 13:19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. NKJV*

So we all face a dangerous truth-obscuring, mind-blinding Devil who can influence people to:

- **Hold down the truth in unrighteousness** (Rom. 1:18); *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, NKJV*
- **Change the truth into a lie** (Rom. 1:25); and twist it to their own destruction (II Peter 3:16). *Romans 1:25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. NKJV; 2 Peter 3:16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. NKJV*
- **Stray from and spread error about the truth:** *2 Timothy 2:18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. NKJV*

- **Resist the truth:** *2 Timothy 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; NKJV*
- **Turn away their ears from listening to the truth:** *2 Timothy 4:4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. NKJV*

So that is why God always seeks to ground His children in truth. God wants firmly holding onto His truth.

## **Jesus is the Ultimate Expression of Truth**

Then the Truth Incarnate, the Living Word of God is wrapped in humanity and sent to earth. Jesus is the exact and true representation of God (Heb. 1:3). If you see Jesus you have truly seen His Father.

The only link we have to God comes by faith in His Word (Romans 10:17). God's truth saves us, sanctifies us, and defends us from all attacks. Truth is of the essence. It is what we build our lives upon and place our hope in. God is Truth, Christ is the Truth, and His Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. Lost people never receive the love of the truth. And sadly, in the last days (in which we live) many will turn away their ears from listening to truth.

God's eternal plan is that all believers serve Him as truth beacons in a world of lies. Both Peter and John (1 Peter 2:9; Revelations 1:6) describe our calling to that life of worship in spirit and truth as each of us being 'priests' to God.

We believe, affirm, and strongly guard the truth that Jesus Christ gave us: He is the Way, He is the Truth, and He is the ONLY Way. But that absolute assertion of Christ in John 14:6 is not widely held by modern Christians. George Barna recently reported that in America,

"Christians have increasingly been adopting spiritual views that come from Islam, Wicca, secular humanism, the eastern religions and other sources. Because we remain a largely Bible-illiterate society, few are alarmed or even aware of the slide toward syncretism - a belief system that blindly combines beliefs from many different faith perspectives with God's Word."

That leads us to consider the—

## **Ancient Heresies in The Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

It's axiomatic to say today that "There are no new heresies". For example, looking closely at us we can see elements of the following ancient heresies in modern religious movements around us today. Because of a growing ecumenical, try-to-not-offend

anyone (but God) movement around us today, we are often asked to overlook the deadly false teachings of groups that often are such warm and gracious people.

- We can see elements of the Arian Heresy in Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses.
- We can see much Religious Syncretism in the Roman Catholic Church, the Emergent Church Movement, and the Unification Church (Moonies).
- We can see elements of Marcionism, Syncretism, Universalism, Gnosticism, and Nestorianism in all the New Age versions of "Christianity".
- We can see elements of Islam's view of Jesus are similar to the Docetist and Ebionist Heresies.
- We can see elements of Roman Catholics fall into Semi-Pelagianism and, often, Mariolatry (the worship of Mary as equal with Christ and holding Divine attributes).
- We can see some Charismatics fall into Glossolalianism and Montanism.
- And many modern media-based ministries, especially televangelists, fall into almost every heresy known and unknown!

## **Cling to God's Truth IN a World Adrift**

Resist each of Satan's attempts to make us:

- ***Doubt God's Word as Absolutely True;***
  - ***Doubt God's Plan as Absolutely Good;***
  - ***Doubt God's Salvation as Absolutely Just;***
  - ***Doubt God's Authority as Absolutely Right.***
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- TRUST ***God's Word as Absolutely True;***
  - REST in ***God's Plan as Absolutely Good;***
  - SUBMIT to ***God's Salvation as Absolutely Just;***
  - FOLLOW ***God's Authority as Absolutely Right.***

Among the most precious words Jesus ever spoke are His words in John 14:6. As we open there this morning, let me underline in your minds what He said.

*John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am **the way, the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV*

Jesus is **The Way** you must follow; He is **The Truth** you must believe; and He is **The Life** you must live.

***Hold Him close today!***



## APPENDIX:

Here is a concise list of the false teachings that can be found in the writings of the early church. This list is a good reason to be very careful in embracing the writings of someone just because they were an early Christian leader.

### The Known Heresies of the Early (Post-Apostolic) Church

#### 1. "The Way" or Christ's Death as the Substitute for sinners was under attack. These heresies were those that led to damnation.

- **Arianism** (Arius, Eudoxius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Eunomius): Reduces Christ to the first created being. God-the-Father existed prior to God-the-Son. This is the false teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses. **Semi-Arianism** (Basil of Ancyra, Gregory of Laodicea): Christ is similar in essence with the Father, but subordinate to Him. **Eunomianism**: Version of Arianism where Christ is not only unequal with God, but unlike Him.
- **Docetism**: The Son-of-God didn't become flesh, only appeared to die on cross. Christ descended upon Jesus at baptism, but exited just prior to crucifixion. This is in Neo-Orthodoxy and Liberalism today. The popular writer William Barclay held this view.
- **Ebionism** (Athanasius): Jesus only seemed divine, but was a prophet not the Son of God. This is partly reflected in modern day Islam.
- **Gnosticism** (Greek mystery cults, Jewish Kabbalah, Zoroastrianism, Egyptian religion): Salvation is acquired through secret knowledge outside of the Bible. Envisions a hierarchy of spiritual beings that are progressively further from the evil material world. Matter is inherently evil. This is seen in so called New-Age Christianity today.
- **Nestorianism** (Nestorius): Christ was a god-bearing man (as we might become), rather than both fully-human and fully-God. This is reflected in Haganism today.
- **Pelagianism** (Pelagius, Julian of Eclanum Coelestius): Man is born essentially good, and is capable of doing what is necessary for salvation. This was the classic Albert Schweitzer type of Liberalism in America. **Semi-Pelagianism** (John Cassian): God and man both cooperate in salvation, but man must take the initiative. This is seen in extreme Arminianism.
- **Perfectionism**: (AKA: Legalism) Belief that our works bring us to salvation, or are necessary to maintain our salvation. Modern Pelagianism.
- **Unitarianism**: Denial of the Trinity. This is all around us today.
- **Universalism**: The belief that all persons will ultimately be saved, and no one will be eternally punished. The belief is growing among well-known Evangelical groups today.

#### 2. "The Truth" of God's Word was under attack today. These heresies were those that led to confusion.

- **Apollinarianism** (Apollinarius): Christ had no human spirit, the Logos replaced it. Sort of Jesus as God clothed in flesh. **Eutychnianism** (Eutyches): Human nature of Christ absorbed by the Logos. And also closely related was **Modalism** (Sabellius, Praxeus): The trinity is three facets of the same person, and not three discrete persons with one essence. This is also known as **Sabellianism** (Sabellius): Father, Son, and Spirit are three facets of same person.
- **Baptismal Regenerationism**: The belief that baptism is essential to, and seals, one's salvation. Present in many denominations today such as the Catholics, the Orthodox, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Church of Christ, and so on.
- **Glossolalianism**: The belief that only speaking in tongues proves a person's salvation.
- **Macedonianism** (Macedonius): The Holy Spirit as a created being similar to the angels.
- **Manicheanism** (Manicheus, aka: Mani or Manes): Gnostic variant believing matter is evil, God created our souls but rejected our bodies.
- **Marcionism** (Marcion): Gnostic variant distinguishing two Gods: An angry, vindictive one of the Old Testament, and a nice one in the New Testament. The OT god having no validity for Christians. This was also an early tenet of Liberalism. This gave birth to **Judaistism**: Combines Jewish civil and ceremonial laws with New Testament Christianity.
- **Monarchianism** (Paul of Samosata, Theodotus of Byzantium): Jesus became Christ at baptism, was made Son of God at His crucifixion, God according Him these things because of Jesus' righteousness. This is just like Docetism. This is in Neo-Orthodoxy and Liberalism today. The popular writer William Barclay held this view.
- **Monophysitism** (Severus, Julius of Halicarnassus): Christ fully God, not human at all. And closely related is **Monothelitism** (Sergius, Theodore of Arabia): Christ had no human will, only divine will.
- **Montanism** (Montanus): Promotion or practice of extreme and disorderly manifestations of the "Holy Spirit". Present in some far out fringe Charismatic groups.
- **Noeticism**: God-the-Father was crucified as Christ. And closely related, **Patipassianism**: God-the-Father and God-the-Son BOTH died on the cross.
- **Subordinationism**: Any subordination of one member of the Trinity to another (in position, not role).
- **Syncretism**: The combination of Christianity with anything else (esp. Judaism in the Early Church). We see this today in RCC, the ECM, the Contemplative Prayer Movement, and many other places.

### 3. "The Life" as set down for us in God's Revelation to mankind was under attack. These heresies were those that led to frustration.

- **Antinomianism**: We can freely sin because grace forgives all. We can see this today in the hyper-grace heresies that advocate "anything goes" in groups associate with Christ's church.

# Why does Christ's Church still Stray from "Sound Faith"?

There are four dangerous trends I see in modern evangelical culture. Each of these can be observed in nearly any Bible teaching fellowship. All are dangerous and were clearly warned of by Jesus Christ in His ministry.

## **Danger #1: Unsound-Faith starts with an Improper View of Assurance**

*John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; KJV*

First of all, many professed Christians—and even many true Christians, have unsound-faith because they hold a false doctrine of assurance. Often it is because the person who witnessed to them told them that all they had to do was make a profession of faith, walk an aisle, raise a hand, say a prayer, and never doubt what the Lord had done in their lives. Perhaps they have been taught that to ever doubt their salvation is to doubt God's Word and integrity.

But we have no right to assure a person of something we cannot be certain is true. God's own Holy Spirit will witness His reality to those who truly belong to Him (Rom. 8:14-16)<sup>3</sup>. [112 words]

## **Danger #2: Unsound-Faith continues with an Improper Understanding of Grace**

*1 John 3:6-7, 10 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. NKJV*

A second contributor to unsound-faith is failure of self-examination. Through a faulty and presumptuous view of God's grace, some professed believers blithely go through life oblivious to and unconcerned about their sins. Yet the Lord tells His people to examine their lives each time they come to His table (1 Cor. 11:28)<sup>4</sup>. [52 words]

When a couples choose to live together without being married—they commit the sin of fornication against a Holy God. When a person practices homosexuality—they commit the sin of sodomy against a Holy God. When a person is deceptive and dishonest in business—they commit the sin of lying just like the Devil against a Holy God. When a person is hateful and vengeful—they commit murder in the sight of a Holy God.

God's Word is very clear about those who never turn from their sin:

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<sup>3</sup> Paraphrased and quoted from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 7*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Paraphrased and quoted from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 7*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

*1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. NKJV*

### **Danger #3: Unsound-Faith continues with an Improper Conviction about the Priority of Activity**

*Matthew 7:22-23 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. KJV*

A third cause of unsound-faith is inordinate concentration on religious activity. Attending church, hearing sermons, singing songs of the faith, reading the Bible, attending Bible studies, and many other perfectly good and helpful activities can actually insulate a person from the very God he is supposedly worshiping and serving. Those things can cause a believer to think he is being faithful and obedient, when in reality he may not be; and they can cause an unbeliever to think he is saved, when in reality he is not.

This group includes those who are more committed to a denomination or Christian organization than to the Word of God. It includes those who are academically interested in theology-even orthodox, biblical theology-but not in obedience to the Bible on which that theology is based<sup>5</sup>. [131 words]

### **Danger #4: Unsound-Faith continues with an Improper Habit of Rationalizing Sin**

*2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. NKJV*

A fourth cause of unsound-faith is what may be called the fair exchange, or balancing out, approach. Instead of confessing and asking forgiveness for his sins, a person may give himself the benefit of the doubt and rationalize his salvation by thinking that the good things he does balance out the bad, that the positive cancels the negative.

Whatever good we might somehow accomplish would not cancel those consequences of sin, any more than eating right and exercising will save the life of a person infected with a deadly disease. His only hope is in receiving a cure for the disease, not in trying to balance off its deadly effect by keeping his body otherwise healthy. This is the superficial person, the one who has had little or no instruction in the gospel and who thinks that his attending Sunday school as a child, having been baptized, being a church member, or other such things put him in good standing with God<sup>6</sup>. [162 words]

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<sup>5</sup> Paraphrased and quoted from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 7*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

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