



# Northside Proclaimer

*Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord*

1 Thessalonians 1:8

**Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!**

**March 8, 2015**

## **“The Necessity Of Answering Religious Error”**

*Bryan Garlock*

From the beginning of time religious error has existed. It's inescapable. Indeed, God was aware that error would exist, yet He never intended for it to come into existence. However, when He created man, He knew man would and could practice sin. Thus, when error was born, it assaulted the truth in the garden first (Gen. 3), and it continues, even to this day, to suppress the truth (Rom. 1).

Since all religious error is contrary to the truth, all religious error will cause us to be eternally lost. Paul penned, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1.6-8).

It is to these people who believe a different gospel that Paul affirmed, "...God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2.11-12).

Another consequence of error is vain worship. Jesus spoke, "[t]his people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men...'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!'" (Mark 7.6-9)

None would contend that we will receive eternal life by rejecting the commandments of God. John wrote, "...by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected..." (1 John 2.3-5). Therefore, for this very reason, religious error must be answered.

This is first seen in the precautionary work of Jesus. More often than not, Jesus warned of religious error and those promoting such heresy. Notice, "[b]eware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits" (Matt. 7.15-16). And again, "[f]or false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray..." (Matt. 24.24). Jesus, knowing the effects of religious error, cautioned all about the coming apostasy and how to avoid such spiritual catastrophe.

Paul stated, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20.29-30). It was necessary for Paul to warn of religious error creeping into the Lord's Body for those drawing away and those drawn away would be accused. Continued on back...

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## Announcements

- Remember the shut in's.
- Pray for the church and one another.
- Remember the spiritual sick among us
- Men's Bible today @ 3:30 PM
- Kid's drill March 15 @ 4
- Bible study this Tuesday 7 PM
- Call or email me to add announcements, thanks.

### Chronological Bible Reading Plan

Mar. 8 Num. 31-32

Mar. 9 Num. 33-34

Mar. 10 Num. 35-36

Mar. 11 Deut. 1-2

Mar. 12 Deut. 3-4

Mar. 13 Deut. 5-7

Mar. 14 Deut. 8-10

When considering the consequences of religious error and the warnings, it is no wonder why there are many passages teaching the necessity of answering religious error.

Interestingly, while many today claim we are judgmental and hateful to correct a person practicing religious error, Jesus challenged this modern view when the Sadducees approached him. This was a religious group who denied the resurrection from the dead. In answering their religious error, Jesus proclaimed, "[y]ou are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22.29).

The Scriptures teach elsewhere, "...to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that [we] have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive" (Rom. 16.17-18). Paul is speaking of those who, by their own agendas, lead many people astray. Hence, religious error is sometimes unintentional, and also, as Paul teaches here, intentional, that is, promoted for purposes of gaining wealth, power, etc.

Further, Paul penned, "[t]ake no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Eph. 5.11). The question must be asked, if answering religious error is not necessary, why the need to expose? Have we become so blinded by our own agenda that we have lost our eyesight of the purpose of answering religious error? Is it not for the purpose of saving souls? Thus, it boils down to *when* we have an appreciation for truth, we will have an opposition to error.

The pattern continues with Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus. He spends much of his time and effort in grounding these two evangelists to give attention to the reading of the Scriptures and to the sound doctrine found within his and other inspired writings. Thus, the concept of answering religious error is encompassed within these two letters. It is, as we say, Paul's "hobby horse."

Take for instance his command, "[i]f anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing..." (1 Tim. 6.3-4). Was Paul judging or hating the one who does not agree with the sound words of Jesus? Of course not! In fact, to these folks, Paul would say, "[h]ave I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (cf. Gal. 4.16).

As Paul appeals to those who would desire the office of an elder, he instructed, "[h]e must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." Why is this necessary? "For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party [that is, the Jews - BG]. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach" (Titus 1.9-11). If one is to be silenced, one must first be exposed for their religious error.

Continuing his teaching on sound doctrine, Paul commanded, "teach what accords with sound doctrine," also, "[k]eep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching..." and elsewhere "...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths" (Titus 2.1; 1 Tim. 4.16; 1 Tim. 4.2-4). The pattern is obvious. There is much danger in religious error. It turns people away from the truth. It causes its victims to be eternally lost. Therefore, it is necessary we preach the truth and nothing but the truth!

Though error is present, fortunately, so is truth. Jesus declared, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8.32). It is in this profound statement we see exactly what we are set free from, namely, sin (John 8.34). Thus, truth is vital to our destiny. Solomon urged, "[b]uy truth, and do not sell it" (Prov. 23.23). Contrary to the belief of some, it is through the answering of religious error that so many today are set free. BG