

## HOW MUCH FALSE TEACHING CONDEMNS?

How much "false teaching" can I preach before God will condemn me? Have you ever noticed that anything false always hides behind something that is true? A lie always seeks to hide behind truth. Remember how Satan tempted Eve? Satan told Eve that the fruit from the tree of "The Knowledge of Good and Evil" would make her as wise as God. But the fruit did not make her as wise as God. It was a lie! It did not give her any wisdom in knowing the difference between good and evil. However, the fruit did bring upon her the burden of finding out what was good and evil. And so friends, even today we humans are still charged with the burden of sorting out the difference between good and evil, between truth and lies. How many lies can I believe and preach before I am condemned for it?

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What is good to one person seems evil to another. And what is evil to one person seems good to someone else! And so there are conflicting opinions about what is right and what is wrong!

King David once wrote a song in which he asked God to "Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law!" (Psalm 119:29) Notice that David thought that "false ways" would hurt him, and he believed the remedy for false ways was to know God's "law," God's Word. This idea comes out again in this same song, the longest song and the longest chapter in the Bible. David wrote, "Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." (Psalm 119:104) David's affection, his love, for God's truth caused him to despise everything false. A proverb reads, "A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies." (Proverbs 14:5) Another proverb reads, "Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit." (Proverbs 12:17)

Most of the time when you hear a lie, it comes from a person who is trying to deceive you! And friends, that is Satan. Jesus said that the Devil is the "father of lies." Jesus told some people, "When [the devil] lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) And Jesus continued, "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me." (John 8:45) Evidently, the people to whom Jesus was speaking loved the lies they were hearing from the devil. They were displeased with Jesus' truth. Can we love a lie more than truth?

Jesus warned his followers to "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15) Notice that these men would be in "sheep's clothing". In other words, they would look like believers; they would look like Christians. Jesus predicted that "many false prophets will arise and lead many astray." (Matthew 24:11) When a believer is led "astray" then he is not where he is supposed to be! The believer should be standing in truth, not lies. "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." (John 8:31-32) Only the truth, friends, can set you free from your sins. Lies can only leave us in our sins!

What I believe always leads to what I do! If I believe a lie it will soon show up in my life. Let's return to our first question, "How much false teaching can I believe and/or practice before it condemns me?" Jesus' Apostle Paul wrote a letter to Christians who lived in Galatia, a Roman province in modern-day Turkey. Paul wrote about the influence of false teaching and what results it would have.

The churches of Christ in Galatia were in grave danger of believing and practicing false teaching. They had teachers who were leading them astray! The Galatians were not Jews; they were Gentiles. Paul and his helpers had converted them to Christ out of paganism. Being Gentiles, the men were uncircumcised and being Gentiles both Christian men and women had not and were not keeping the ceremonial requirements of the Law of Moses. Paul had preached the Gospel of Christ to those Gentile people. They had believed it and turned away from their pagan lifestyles. When Paul baptized these people into Christ, they put on Christ. (Says Galatians 3:27) Their baptism marked their transition from the bondage of sin to the freedom of Jesus Christ.

However, some Jewish Christian teachers came to Galatia after Paul had left. Those Jewish teachers had a definite opinion about how to live for Christ. However, those teachers were teaching the Galatian Gentiles **how** to live as Jews, how to become **heirs** to the promise of Abraham. These Jewish Christian men were teaching false doctrine! They were teaching that the Galatians must become Jewish in their customs and daily practices in order to be saved! For instance, Gentile Christian men needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. The implication of this teaching was that Jesus' "faith", that is, Jesus' crucifixion for their sins, was NOT enough. According to these Jewish teachers, in order to

be saved, in order to be heirs of God, the Galatian Gentiles would have to learn to follow the Law of Moses. This teaching was false. The men who were teaching that doctrine did not receive that teaching from Christ or one of Jesus' apostles.

In his letter, Jesus' Apostle Paul reasoned with the Galatians so as to teach them the truth on this subject. He likened their temptations to follow the Law of Moses to their former way of life as Gentiles. Paul wrote, "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God--or rather are known by God--how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?" ([Galatians 4:8-11 NIV](#)) These Galatian Christians were being taught to not only to be circumcised, but also to observe the Jewish religious calendar! Even today, friends, believers in Christ are taught to observe what they say is the "Christian calendar." The only calendar item that Jesus taught His followers to observe was the "first day of the week" observance of the Lord's Supper! Jesus nor His apostles, nor the example of first century Christians ever taught Christians to observe Easter, or Pentecost, or Christmas, or the advent, or Lent, or any other day or season of the year! That's right! It is false religion to hold Christians accountable for any other observance than the one that takes place on the first day of the week. And isn't it ironic that the Lord's Supper is missing from Protestant Sunday observances?! From Acts 20:7 we learn that it was the practice of the disciples of Christ to meet on the first day of the week in order to "break bread", a reference to the observance of the Lord's Supper. The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews commanded Christians to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **not** neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#)) Friends, do you place your confidence in any other observance than the one Jesus and His apostles observed? Do you place your confidence in observance of Easter? Or Christmas? Or some other holiday? The Lord's Supper observance is a remembrance of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the very actions of Christ that saves us.

The Galatians were being taught to put their trust in circumcision and items on a Jewish calendar, rather than the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul sternly warned them, "Look: [he wrote] I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are

severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace." ([Galatians 5:2-4](#)) Is false teaching bad? You mean that I can fall from grace by observing false teaching? You mean I can be severed from Christ by putting my confidence in the commands of the Law of Moses? Friends, false teaching endangers our souls!

False teaching distorts the truth taught by Jesus and His apostles. Paul was surprised that these Galatian Christians actually believed and practiced this false teaching! Paul wrote, "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. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you [first] received, let him be accursed." ([Galatians 1:6-9](#)) Friends, to be accursed is to be condemned! "Accursed" is as bad as it can get!

And notice that Paul says that even if an "angel from heaven" should preach a different gospel than the one he preached, "let him [the angel] be accursed." Even angels will be condemned if they were to teach something contrary to the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

The Truth taught by Jesus and His apostles is the remedy for false teaching! Only this truth can set us free. Only the truth can lead us to the right practice. Sooner or later, we practice what we believe. The truth of Jesus Christ is found in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Paul trained the young preacher Timothy to always preach the truth. Paul told Timothy, "Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." Paul continued, "Practice these things; immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." ([1 Timothy 4:11-16](#)) Friends, the gospel truth of Jesus Christ saves. False teaching condemns. Give yourself to the study of the Word of Christ and His Apostles. Do not fall prey to false teaching.