

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

**(Part 15 – Why Do We Keep
Silent About Evil?)**

March 20, 2016

Sermon Text: Assorted

Scripture Reading: 2 Thes 2

Introduction-

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men.... (Mat 10:16-17a)

Once again as we turn to this dark subject of evil, particularly as it works to creep into the church behind a cloak of the name of Christ, we must remember the promises and victory of Christ over this evil. This is the Easter season when we remember our Lord's triumph over evil at the cross and

especially in the empty tomb. One of the promises God's Word has announced to us is this:

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, **unless the rebellion comes first**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. (2Th 2:3-4)

Rebellion. Falling away. Apostasy. This is not so much in the world as it is in what professes to be the Christian church. You cannot be an apostate (to fall away from) unless you once stood in a profession of the gospel. Apostates are not atheists. They are people who often still parade as Christians, but who have fallen away from the truth as it is in Christ. The Lord has told us that this apostasy is coming and will be on the increase before He returns, finally coming in full fruition in the appearance of this "son of destruction."

And again:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1Ti 4:1-3)

Still more-

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.** Avoid such people. (2Ti 3:1-5)

So as we consider this plague of evil in the visible Christian church today, we must not be surprised nor must we be disheartened. Christ has warned us repeatedly that as His return nears, these things will increase and surely we are seeing it play out right in our very lifetimes.

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. (2Th 2:15)

Fear and the Denial of Evil

Why do people, and in particular professing Christians including pastors and church leaders, deny the existence of evil even when it is staring them right in the face? Here is an incredibly typical example from a lady I spoke with recently, a victim of longtime wickedness:

Last year, when I first began to get out of the fog [i.e., the fog of confusion that evil creates in order to deceive] , our church forced us [she and her evil husband] into their counseling program (I had been on staff and they really left me no choice – though by that time my mind was made up that I was done with the marriage.)

Pretty much right away I sensed that the counseling was going to be empowering to my husband. I sat in a room full of men who joked with each other – man talk – while waiting for my husband to arrive. Once we began, after some preliminaries about why we were all there, my husband was forced to acknowledge his sin and ask forgiveness. (Never mind true repentance.) What followed was an admission of some generalities –

“I wasn’t there for her and the kids much of the time.”

“Sometimes I was a little short with my wife when I was under stress from work,” etc.

It seemed the word “abuse” wasn’t necessary at all. When I tried to bring it up, it was drastically downplayed – one elder acting like I was speaking out of turn.

Then I was “confronted” with the fact that my husband had just asked forgiveness, now what was my Biblical response to be to that? Of course. I was supposed to forgive him...Holding hands. Yes, they actually made me hold hands with someone who just faked his way through an apology while having to say, “I forgive you,” through gritted teeth. Inside I was dying; I was so sickened. I was so invalidated. Twenty-three years of abuse wrapped up in five minutes and now we could all go home happy.

After that day, I showed up maybe three more times. It became sin-leveling sessions [sin-leveling is the tactic of making out that the victim is just as much sinful as the abuser] and I stopped cooperating. During this time the emotional and financial abuse ramped up; they pooh-poohed that, too, when I reported it – making my

husband promise to move the tens of thousands of dollars back to our joint account. He did move it back, but then a week later took it once more, leaving me nothing. Their solution? Making him split the money with me so we could each have our own account.

Soon after, I was not only done with the counseling but the church also. I had already been asked to turn in my keys and my computer from my job at the church, so I just stopped going. Now here we are, almost a year later and my husband is still a member in good-standing, enjoying the support of his sympathizers, and I will be publicly ex-communicated in three weeks. So, my opinion of couples counseling for abuse situations? It’s possibly the worst thing for such situations and may actually result in the further victimization of the victim.

I ask again. Why do people who profess to know and follow Jesus Christ so regularly deny the existence and diabolical schemes of evil even when (perhaps especially when) it is staring them right in the face?

There is more than just one reason:

- Sometimes a church leader may be an emissary of the evil one himself. Ruth Tucker tells of being married to such an evil, counterfeit “pastor” in a

conservative Bible church for many years. He regularly beat her in a rage, even in front of their son. He had been expelled from more than one Bible college and seminary for cheating, yet another would enroll him and grant him a divinity degree. He was arrested for theft *while he was conducting a jail ministry*, yet still another church called him as their pastor. He sexually molested a foster daughter he and Ruth took into their home. Yet Ruth, as she confesses in her book, kept silent when she found out. Why?

- *Unbelief in the Word of God* is another reason evil is denied. When the truth of the Bible is eroded you can be sure that evil will find an open invitation to enter. And what I see over and over and increasingly today are ministers standing in pulpits who simply do not believe the Word of God. How else can an evil, wicked person be considered a child of God? How can wickedness be tolerated in the church and leaders refuse to deal with it according to God's command, except by rank unbelief? Where men do not believe God's word, in such a "church" the oppressed are not going to find help and mercy.

- *Fear* is often a reason for the denial of the presence of evil among us. To cite Ruth Tucker's experience once more, she confessed that she covered for and enabled this evil emissary of the devil for all those years simply because *she was afraid*. She was afraid he would kill her and/or her son. She was afraid of the public shame that would result. She was afraid of losing any means of supporting herself and her son.

Let's think further about this.

Fear. We have all felt it, though perhaps not to the degree as this lady I talked to last week:

"I am very frightened. Since leaving my abuser, his attempts to gain power over us have actually increased. He knows that I come from a background of severe trauma and he is doing all he can to traumatize me further. He is lying to the court about me. I am afraid. I am afraid of the court. I am afraid they will take my child from me. I am so terrified now. He has an army of allies and I have none."

Fear, you see. Instead of seeing the evil, turning to the might and power of Jesus Christ who is All-mighty and facing this wickedness as David faced

Goliath, so many professing Christians choose instead to close their eyes, to yield to the deceptions of evil, and abandon its victims. They leave the beaten, naked man lay even though they claim to serve the Lord.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2:14-15)

This *faith* given us as a gift by God in Christ, is surely the remedy to fear. It is not easy to trust and one of the things we must do as a church for one another is to *encourage one another to persevere in faith in Christ, in His Word, in His promises*. Because the enemy is always working to quench this faith and lead us back into fear and bondage:

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (Joh 14:1-3)

Let not your hearts be troubled is still another way of Jesus telling us, *do not fear. Rather, believe in God. Believe in Me. Believe in the certainty of My promises*.

And so for true Christians who are facing evil and suffering from fear, the remedy is *faith*. Reminding ourselves and being reminded by one another of the truth and unbreakable nature of all the Lord's promises to us.

You may not have one of these wicked abusers oppressing you right now, but evil always has a way of sending its emissaries our way to work to instill this fear in us. Every true Christian will be attacked in such a manner. Let me give you an example that many of you can identify with and eventually all of us will.

As we grow older in this present life, the notions we had when we were young start to dissolve. You know – the mentality for example that we pretty much are going to live forever, that we will be young forever, that those “old people” are in a category and era of their lives that we simply don't see ourselves ever being in. And then, here we are. You are the one with gray hair, with achy joints, with this ailment and that malady. Or perhaps we thought we would not only be young forever, but we would be healthy forever, and then along comes

the diagnosis of some disease. Or an accident and injury. Or just the relentless march of time which we are reminded of when we pull out that old photo album and remember when our children were children and we were young. Here is the Preacher of Ecclesiastes describing growing old, our teeth wearing out, our eyesight dimming and our hearing lessened:

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them"; before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low—**they are afraid** also of what is high, and **terrors** are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets—before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the

earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Ecc 12:1-7)

Remember. Remember your Creator *now*. Live your life always remembering the Lord your Creator, Christ your Redeemer, and the certain promises of His Word He has given us. The author of Ecclesiastes saw these promises dimly, but we see them with clarity. This world is not all there is. In fact, this present life is NOT our real ultimate life:

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Col 3:3-4)

And do not fear. Don't let evil in any of its deceptive forms make you believe its lies. If you are in Christ, you have a new world, a new creation awaiting you. And it is real. And it is certain. And evil will be no more. Stand right up to Goliath-

And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the

name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. (1Sa 17:43-45)

The Righteous Anger of God

Even though this posed some risk to myself, I told local church people that I'd been enslaved and imprisoned. I warned them very clearly about the abuser's real character, his level of deceit and his potential for danger. They all responded by holding me responsible for failing to resolve the "issues in my marriage". They supported the abuser and they helped find him a new victim. It's disgusting.
[ACFJ Commenter]

Why is there an absence, a total and complete absence, of righteous anger among those who claim to serve Christ? We must consider this subject of *the anger of God* as we continue to grow wise as serpents in regard to evil, yet remaining innocent as doves in respect to any of evil's guilt. That is to say, we must *know* evil, but in the right way. That was Adam and Eve's downfall you remember –

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
(Gen 3:4-5)

When the church becomes apostate so that Christ's truth has been abandoned and Christ Himself has departed, you can be sure that there will be no zeal for God's truth, no sense of indignation against evildoers, and instead an accusing of the righteous. God's true people detest wickedness as He does. We hate evildoers:

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. (Psa 5:5)

I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. (Psa 26:5)

Why then is there such a void of this holy hatred in the visible church today? Listen to this excellent summation of the state of the church today:

I, too, have been accused of being angry and bitter, when in reality I am longing for righteousness and justice and truth. I'm tired. I'm weary. I'm disgusted. I'm grieving. I have a knot in my stomach most of the time when going to church, & it feels like watching a B-movie with a lousy script that can't decide on comedy or drama. It's not that I think I'm better or more pious, but rather, that I am thirsty & I have to spit out the lukewarm water. That, or go make a whip.....

I am no longer content with the superficial platitudes of silly sheep who follow blind guides and belch “sunday school” prattle while they plan their predictable little parties and pretend to be holy. I’m sick of the charade. I’m sick of the pretense. I’m sick of the shallowness. I’m sick of watching them “practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them”. (Matthew 6). I’m sick of them ignoring the least of these, while making grand videos about their latest overseas mission while they can’t seem to pour a cup of cold water for their neighbor. And I am angry.

So, it got me to thinking: are there any books or articles about *the anger of Jesus*? Jesus was not a one-dimensional love machine. His emotions were vast and pure and sacred, but we primarily hear about His love, not His anger; the same with God the Father. And I wonder why? The OT especially speaks of God’s anger, yet in modern times we are all reduced to bowls full of mushy “love”. Jesus was not a “hippie” or a pot-smoking, peace-not-war prophet. He wasn’t Ghandi. Jesus had grit. Why do we not hear that from our pulpits? Why is the church so afraid of righteous anger?

Well, the answer is, no. There are hardly any books or articles about the anger of Jesus. Why? Because people

don’t want to hear about it, so Scriptures that deal with this truth are simply dismissed and ignored.

And yet God’s Word makes it plain that His true people are *angry* people.

I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. (Psa 26:5)

And this hatred is particularly directed against the wicked *who pretend to belong to the people of God*. They come and sit as “an assembly.” As a church. Listen to this entire Psalm and see a person after God’s own heart express His plea. Here you have God’s own description of a true Christian. Notice how very different this picture is than what we see so typically today in so many people who claim to follow Christ:

Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind. For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.

****I do not sit** with men of falsehood, **nor do I consort** with hypocrites.

****I hate the assembly** of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.

****I wash my hands in innocence** and go around your altar, O LORD, proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds.

****O LORD, I love the habitation of your house** and the place where your glory dwells.

Do not sweep my soul away with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes. But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. My foot stands on level ground; in the great assembly I will bless the LORD. (Psa 26:1-12)

This is why it is growing increasingly difficult and even impossible for real believers to find a church to worship in. Because a real Christian simply detests and will not be part of an assembly of hypocrites. He will not join himself to an apostate body.

Christ described His people this way:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Mat 5:6)

When we see the wicked, when we see evil creeping in with all its deceptions and abusive tactics, the people of God rise up against it in protest. We hunger and we thirst for what is right and we

hate what is evil and those who do it. Why? Because God does and we are His children. We share His nature. All of the pressure put upon us by apostate Christianity today, that tells us that we must not hate anyone, that we must love and accept everyone...is evil in itself.

It is the holy, righteous anger and wrath of God that is the true Christian's hope!

Psalm 98. Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD! Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. (Psa 98:1-9)