



Prayer Resources

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The Deception Of Today's Heresies

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 Peter 2:1

Seven books in the New Testament concern themselves with false teachings. That number calculates to one fourth of the New Testament! Since God has placed such a high premium on informing us of heresy, should we not concern ourselves with false beliefs today? Note that each of the seven New Testament books addresses a different error encountered by the Early Church. Like the mythological seven-headed Hydra that refused to die after each head received a fatal wound, these seven errors that threatened the Early Church continue to raise their terrifying faces and attempt to devour today's Church. Notice briefly these seven books, the error that they address, and their counterparts in today's Christianity:

In the book of Galatians, Paul attacked the error of *Legalism*. This damning heresy is the imposing of a set of supposed necessary conditions to salvation. It opposes the *liberty of the Christian*. Within today's Christianity legalistic convictions are often embraced in order to counteract the moral license of others. These convictions quickly become so sacred that anyone who violates them is suspect of not really being a true believer. The exposed marks of this heresy are a false salvation and an uncertain hope.

In the book of Colossians, Paul denounced the error of *Gnosticism*. This deceptive heresy is the synchronizing of religious and secular beliefs. It opposes the *Lordship of Christ*. Gnosticism is built upon several erroneous ideas, but two are of particular interest: a belief in a progressive series of demiurges or angels that separated one from God and a belief that stresses that only the initiated are privileged to a special godlike knowledge. Among some Christian circles today an unhealthy preoccupation with angels threatens to minimize the Lordship of Christ. Leaders who claim a special word from the Lord for other believers that they have received via dreams, visions, or prayer are also a threat to the Lordship of Christ in individual lives. The exposed mark of this heresy is an emphasis upon extra Biblical revelation.

In the book of Hebrews, the writer condemned the error of *Judaism*. This dogmatic heresy is the demanding of ritualistic elements of Judaism upon a believer. It opposes the *legitimacy of the Church*. Today some elements of Messianic Christianity struggle over distinguishing differences between Judaism and Christianity. Renewed interest in the traditions and teachings of Judaism is bearing upon the Church. The exposed mark of this heresy is a segmented Bible.

In the book of 2 Corinthians, Paul opposed the error of *Phenomenalism*. This destructive heresy is the feigning of spiritual, exaggerated experiences as normative Christianity. It

opposes the *leaders of Christianity*. In the midst of today's Christianity, some overlook Biblical doctrine that has been entrusted to Christian leaders throughout the centuries in favor of certain experiences that are foreign to historical Christianity. The former leaders are even derided as limited and ineffective compared to those with today's exaggerated experiences. The exposed marks of this heresy are doctrinal ambiguity and emphasis upon exceptional experiences.

In the book of 2 Timothy, Paul rebuked the error of *Institutionalism*. This dysfunctional heresy is the programming of Christianity until it becomes lifeless. It opposes the *life of the converted*. With today's marketing pressure upon churches either from without through denominational emphasis or from within by controlling elders, many churches have been programmed to the point of death. Church members seek to inflate punctured programs that are rapidly exhaling life. The exposed mark of this heresy is an enslaving organization that leaves the believer as enslaved to the organization as he once was to his sin.

In the book of 2 Peter, Peter denounced the error of *Antinomianism*. This degenerate heresy is the injection of a spirit of moral lawlessness upon Christianity. It opposes the *law of compassion*. The

love of Christ constrains a Christian to live a pure and holy life. Some aspects of Christianity today provide a false security to those whose lifestyle does not show moral evidence of conversion. The exposed mark of this heresy is an uncertain hope and ethical compromise.

In the book of Jude, the brother of Jesus assailed the error of *Sanctimonialism*. This defiant heresy is the display of a false high piety to gain recognition and a position of power. It opposes the sanctioned *leadership within the congregation*. Most of today's local churches are infested with at least one pseudo-leader who has not been chosen nor anointed by God for leadership, but who repeatedly rebels against God's chosen leadership while seeking to enlist his own following. The exposed marks of this heresy are denunciation of others, complaining, and personal gain.

Today is not a time to "toss in the towel" of sound doctrine for the purpose of getting along with other brothers. It is a time to *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Timothy 4:16)*! Be challenged to meditate on each of these seven books of the New Testament to protect yourself and your congregation from the heresies of today.