

The Power of Error

by Bill Crews

Two common, but unfortunate mistakes made in life are these: (1) Failure to ascribe to the truth of God's Word the tremendous power for good inherent in it, and (2) failure to acknowledge the awful tragedies of which religious error is capable. And, usually, the very people who make the first mistake are also the ones who make the second. In other words, the people who do not believe that only the truth can save also do not believe that religious error will condemn.

As surely as the universe exists and men live, as surely as God is real and the Bible is His word, the truth of God's word possesses the power to accomplish good. The word of God is living and active and is sharper than any double-bladed sword in its penetrating and discerning potential — even the thoughts and intents of the heart (read Heb. 4:12). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to those who will believe it (Rom. 1:16). The word of God is able to save souls from sin and punishment (James 1:21; Acts 11:13-14). With the Scriptures our Lord defeated Satan and resisted his temptations to sin (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10-11). With the Word of God He conquered human attempts to entrap Him (Matt. 22:15-46). With the Word of God Stephen prevailed against men armed with human sophistry, wisdom, traditions, and lies (Acts 6:9-10). With the Word of God the apostles of Christ invaded Satan's domain, convicting the lost of their sins, exposing religious errors, producing faith in Christ, leading men out of the power of darkness and into the kingdom of God's Son.

But because only the truth has the power to save men from sin, let us not conclude that error possesses no power at all. As surely as men are free moral agents, capable of exercising choice between right and wrong alternatives, as surely as the devil is real and committed to man's downfall, religious error possesses the power to accomplish evil. Such error is attractive in its appeal (Acts 8:9-11), deceptive in its promises (2 Pet. 2:19; Eph. 4:14), powerful in its hold upon men (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Jn. 5:19), and tragic in its consequences.

As long as the truth can make men free (Jn. 8:31-32), error can enslave (Col. 2:21-22). As long as the truth can save (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Thess. 2:10), error can damn (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 2:8-9). Ignorance of the fact that error is error will not change error into truth or remove its tragic consequences. Honestly thinking that error is truth will not change it into truth or remove its tragic consequences. Sincere intentions will not change error into truth or remove error's tragic consequences. Error honestly taught, honestly believed, and honestly obeyed will not bless, but will rather curse. It seems that men recognize these unchanging principles in every other realm, but not in the religious realm. Jesus warned, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves"* (Matt. 7:15). Paul cautioned, *"I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them"* (Acts 20:29-30). With heavy heart Paul prophesied, *"For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables"* (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Jesus quoted, *"This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men"* (Matt. 15:8-9; Isaiah 29:13). He also said, *"Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit"* (Matt. 15:13-14). Hear the solemn words of the apostle Paul, *"But though we, or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema"* (Gal. 1:8-9). Do not think for one moment that error possesses no power — on the contrary it possesses much power, all of it capable of much harm to man, here and hereafter.

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