

Current Religious Perils (September, 1888)

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon's sermon addresses the current religious perils of failing to discern and combat subtle errors in contemporary teaching, emphasizing the importance of balancing grace with the reality of divine judgment.

Scripture: Matthew 7:13

Topics: "Discernment", "Truth vs. Error"

Description

C.H. Spurgeon addresses the current religious perils, emphasizing the danger of good men failing to discern subtle errors within their teachings. He warns against the complicity of believers with those who promote the Restoration delusion, highlighting that even a slight drift towards error can lead to significant consequences. Spurgeon stresses the importance of presenting the full truth of the Gospel, including the reality of divine justice and the final separation of the righteous and the wicked. He cautions that the omission of these critical truths can inadvertently promote dangerous errors, particularly the belief in universal salvation. The sermon serves as a call to vigilance and clarity in preaching the whole counsel of God.

Transcript

THE following letter, which we find in a new volume of Joseph Cook's Lectures, so nearly represents our views that we cannot withhold it from our readers at this solemn crisis. There is a manifest bracing up and returning to the old faith among many brethren; but their complicity with those who hold some one or other form of the Restoration delusion is shocking to contemplate. They may not be in error themselves, but they are in brotherly confederacy with those who are so.

"From the Rev. E. K. Alden, D.D., Home Secretary of the American Board of Foreign Missions, Boston.

"REV. JOSEPH COOK. "Dear Sir,--In response to your inquiry I would reply that, in my opinion, one of the religious perils of the hour is the failure of many good men to discern the peril. There is sometimes a drift toward error which is gradual and almost imperceptible, and yet may be so steady and strong that the trend of a man's influence is toward error, although he is continuously advocating the truth. There are times when what a man omits to say is more effective in the wrong direction than are his words in the right direction.

If a person is known to hold a serious error, even though he may seldom or never directly advocate it, that fact that he is known to hold the error will possibly neutralize all his fervid utterances of the truth. This is

particularly the case when the error is a popular current error, which needs to be steadily resisted by all good men. "Indeed, there are times when the exclusive advocacy of certain important truths has the effect of error. And the reason is, that the truths are advocated in the interests of error.

For example, there was a time, as some of us well remember, when the constant reiteration of the importance of saving the National Union was the most deadly weapon in the interests of secession. Nothing is more common, as we are daily reminded, than loud declamation in behalf of liberty in the interests of the worst forms of thralldom. "So at the present time some of the most precious gospel truths are preached in the interest of some of the most pernicious errors. In other words, the unseasonable or disproportionate presentation of certain truths makes for error.

Not that the error should always or often be definitely and directly opposed in a controversial manner, though this is sometimes inevitable; but that the appropriate timely truth best fitted to counteract, here and now, that particular error, should be vigorously presented. "To be more specific, the popular trend just now in certain localities, not a thousand miles from Boston, is toward the unscriptural and dangerous dogma that all men will be finally saved. "This error underlies a considerable part of the teaching and preaching of more than one religious denomination, and of more than one religious teacher whose instructions, in the main, are evangelical.

But these very instructions, which emphasize the universality of the atonement, the universality of the offers of mercy, the Fatherhood of God, and the yearning of that Father's heart toward all his children, 'not willing that any should perish'-- these instructions alone, silent as to the connected warning of the imminent peril of presuming on this superabounding divine grace, ignoring the divine justice and the certainty of the final doom of the wicked, become the persistent preaching of error in its most subtle and seductive form.

Unless a person clearly discerns and strongly believes in the ultimate separation of the righteous and the wicked, in the 'everlasting death' as certainly as the 'everlasting life,' and is known so to believe, emphasizing this serious truth, as did our Lord and his apostles, in association with the precious truths centering in the riches of divine grace, presenting them both with the same tenderness, he will almost inevitably be a continuous teacher of dangerous error. "Herein lies the peril of the unscriptural teaching, even in a hypothetical form, of the possibility, for some, of gracious opportunity for repentance beyond death.

The Word of God is so explicit in so many varied forms in declaring that 'the righteous' and 'the wicked' to whom it alludes are 'the righteous' and 'the wicked' whose characters are formed in the present life, and who will thus stand with unchanged characters in the 'resurrection of the just and of the unjust,' that the omission to declare this momentous truth and to use it as did our Lord himself to give urgency to his word, is a fatal omission, both in the instructions of a theological seminary and of a Christian pulpit, and will, almost without fail, involve the teaching of error under the guise, and even in the utterance, of precious truth. Here certainly is one of our 'current religious perils.'

"Yours respectfully,

"E. K. ALDEN.

"Boston, March 21, 1887."

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