

# Error Is Pervasive, Subtle, and Damning

by Tom Chantry

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*Error is a pervasive, subtle, and damning thing that can lead to the damnation of the soul and is a form of blasphemy against God.*

**Duration:** 14:32

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 1:19-20, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 4:16

**Topics:** "False Teachings", "Christian Doctrine"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of Christians promoting a Roman Catholic movie as a witnessing opportunity. He warns against the movie's intent to elevate Mary to the level of the fourth person of the Godhead. The speaker also highlights the danger of false teachings, such as modalism and the combination of faith and works for justification, which can damn the soul. He emphasizes the importance of keeping a close watch on oneself and one's teaching to avoid falling into error and blasphemy against God.

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## Transcript

And we see Paul defending that authority time and again in his letters, defending his apostleship, which gave him a unique authority to speak to what is true and false doctrine. And with these men active in the church, you would think that error would be held at bay. You would think that there would not be such a problem with false teaching back then as there is today.

And yet, this is the situation that we see. Church is embroiled in false teaching and everywhere that Paul went, he runs into false teaching again. And he has to be constantly warning against it.

And he says there are worse things coming that you haven't even seen yet. There are pitfalls on every side. Brethren, if that's the way it was with the apostles roaming about the earth and carrying out their divine commission, what do we expect in the church today? Certainly, if error was pervasive then, it is going to be pervasive today.

And I tell you, it is pervasive today. Now, just in contemplating what is going on in the church today, and there is truly error at every side. Now, I think over the few brief years that I have been involved in gospel ministry already, and I'm just confining myself to thinking of things that have been taking place within the evangelical world, and that have grown and become pervasive errors in the evangelical world.

Not even to pay attention to what's going on outside evangelicalism, but just looking at what is happening amongst those whom we would like to accept as our brothers in the faith. Already, when I was entering into the ministry just a little over a decade ago, already there was a radical libertine doctrine throughout the church that taught that you can be a Christian and it can have absolutely no impact upon your life whatsoever. You can be a Christian by calling on the name of Jesus Christ, and then you can go on living however you wish, and it doesn't matter because you've exercised faith in Jesus Christ.

And so, whatever wicked, awful lifestyle you engage in, that's not a problem because you believe in Jesus Christ. That was already pervasive in the church when I was entering into the ministry. And what has happened in the last decade? Well, we've suddenly seen this growth of the doctrine that is called open theism.

Now, that was something that was already being proclaimed at that time, but it has grown and it has spread and it has moved throughout the church. And in essence, what open theism is, is the idea that not only is God not sovereign over what's going to happen tomorrow, God's not sure what's going to happen tomorrow. And tomorrow's events may very well come as a surprise to God, which means that God might have to pause tomorrow and think to Himself, well, I wonder what I ought to do in response to this.

And He might have to adjust His plan around the actions of men. Now, this is a doctrine which the church through the ages has called heresy, and it is heresy. It strikes at the very foundation of the Christian religion.

Who is God? What is God? What is His knowledge and His power and His might? But this is beginning to spread in evangelical churches. And there are people who insist that they are evangelical Bible-believing Christians who now are convinced of this. And in the wake of the open theists, what else should happen? But you begin to have the promulgation of this new idea, which is not new at all, that we are justified through a combination of our faith and our works together.

We have writers outside the evangelical world writing that everyone in the church for the last 500 years has completely misread and misunderstood the Apostle Paul. That we've misread the book of Romans, that we really don't understand what Paul was saying about justification, and that in fact, if we just understood it a little bit better, what Paul is really saying is that we are justified by our works and our faith working together. And this is called a new view.

Of course, if you know anything of church history, it's a very old view. It's called Catholicism. But this was written outside evangelical circles a little bit more than a decade ago.

But what has happened? Increasingly throughout the evangelical world, and even throughout the Reformed world, we see people embracing this and saying, that's right. That's right. That's what justification is.

And that has led to all sorts of nonsense. We have people who are baptizing in the absolute conviction that by baptizing someone, they're bringing him into the kingdom. That by the application of a bit of water to the forehead, they are bringing someone into the kingdom of God and justifying Him by that work.

This is happening in churches that were, ten years ago, unabashedly conservative Reformed evangelical churches. And is it any wonder then that there has been increasingly a loss of any sense of a distinction between the true gospel and the gospel as it is preached by the heretic church of Rome? And

increasingly, we have Christians who are unwilling to acknowledge that there is any distinction between the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the heretic church of Rome. So that when one of the heretics of Rome puts out a popular movie, which was primarily written and produced in order to exalt Mary and to show the world what a wonderful Saint Mary was while her poor helpless son was being tortured, this is put out and what happens? The evangelical world says, witnessing opportunity.

Let's get Christians to go see this movie. And you try to sit down with evangelicals and say, do you realize that that's a Roman Catholic movie? They say, so? Do you realize that it is a Marian movie? Do you realize that its intent is to elevate Mary to the level of being the fourth person of the Godhead? Well, I just didn't see that in the movie. I don't see why we can't use this as an evangelistic tool.

This is what is coming in the evangelical world. This is what is going on around us in our generation. Now we have pastors who are acknowledged and accepted by everyone as evangelical pastors who are modalists.

If you're not familiar with that, it's the idea that there is no Trinity, but God sometimes is a Father and sometimes is a Son and sometimes is a Holy Spirit. It kind of moves back and forth between those various states in the way that the chemical compound that we call H<sub>2</sub>O can sometimes be vapor and sometimes be water and sometimes be ice, but never all three at the same time. That idea, again, something which the church rightly called heresy because God is one God existing in three distinct persons.

The scriptures very clearly teach that. But now we have people that don't even understand that. The one thing that we thought all Christians had in common, we have people on TV preaching who don't believe it and the evangelical world is blind and they have no idea that these men are not Christians, but they are teaching and preaching a false gospel.

And we haven't even begun to talk about the emerging evangelicalism. We haven't even begun to talk about the idea that there is no truth in conversation. And the idea that has now entered in and is attacking evangelicalism from every side, that there are no absolute truths, there is no certainty about what Scripture teaches, that in fact, God Himself regularly changes, His revelation regularly changes.

This is the last 10 years in the evangelical church. Error is a pervasive thing. It's all around us.

Now, I am not going to stand here and tell you that things are particularly bad right now. I don't believe they are. I believe this is the way the church has always been.

This is indeed what the history of the church has always been. What Paul himself experienced in his ministry with false teachers coming at every side and undoing the good work that he had done, that same thing was taking place in the lives and ministries of his lieutenants who had gone out after him once he was in chains. And it would continue and it would accelerate after Paul and the other apostles were gone.

And it has been going on now for nearly 2,000 years and it's going to continue to go on until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again. Error is on every side. It is all around us.

It is pervasive. Not only that, but error is also very often a subtle thing. Subtle.

In other words, it's sneaky. Do you ever long for the days when the Mormon church would go door to door trying to read sections to people out of the Book of Mormon? Do you ever long for those days to come back? Now that we're in the days where they advertise toll-free numbers where you can call and they'll

send you a copy of the King James Bible because they have learned that if they can take things out of context off the pages of Scripture and argue their false religion off the pages of Scripture, it's much more subtle and they get into many more homes that way. And this is what happens with false teaching.

Similarly, I long for the day, I wish we could go back to the day when everyone who had a postmodernist approach to life and philosophy was a flat-out atheist. Those were wonderful days in a very real sense. Now we have people who are taking a postmodern approach to Scripture and saying we're evangelicals.

This is subtle stuff. And error is often a subtlety. Timothy was dealing with an error that was subtle because he had to attack the false teachers of the law and at the same time uphold the law as a good thing and teach everyone how to use it lawfully.

It was complicated. It wasn't a simple problem to address within the church. So error is not only pervasive, error is subtle, but more than that, one more thing about error, error is a damning thing.

Error is a damning thing. Look at what the apostle has said up to this point. The proponents of falsehood are to be banned from teaching and from speaking and from spreading their ideas within the church.

And those who refuse, those who refuse to step down after they have been removed from teaching positions in the church are actually to be put out of the church. And Paul uses the strongest language ever used in Scripture for church discipline at the end of chapter 1, verse 20. Among those who have done what? Made a shipwreck of their faith.

That was in verse 19. But among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have handed over to Satan that they might learn how not to blaspheme. False doctrine is blasphemy against God.

The worst crime anywhere in Scripture is blasphemy against God. And these men have blasphemed by teaching their falsehoods and Paul has kicked them out of the church to the point of handing them over to Satan. And then he speaks of those who are yet to come.

And he says that they are devoting themselves, chapter 4 and verse 1, to deceitful spirits. Well, what does that mean? Who are the spirits that deceive? They are the spirits that are aligned with the father of lies. And he makes it as clear as it can be at the end of the verse.

Deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons. This is what error is. This is what false doctrine is within the church.

You're talking about these falsehoods which, as our confession puts it, evert the foundation. Lovely phrase. To evert means to take something and turn it upside down.

So, you think about a doctrine that takes the foundation of Christianity, the Gospel itself, and turns it upside down. And what happens then? If someone were to come and come up with a way to evert the foundation of this building, we would not want to be inside when it happened. And there are false teachings which evert the foundation.

They tear at the very heart of the Gospel of how men are saved. Such false teaching is dangerous to the soul. It comes out of hell itself.

It is the doctrine of demons. It is blasphemy against God. And it is deserving of the very sternest penalties which the church can possibly enforce.

And all of that underlies verse 16 of chapter 4. This is why Timothy must keep a close watch. Because error is pervasive and it's subtle and it is nothing to be trifled with. Error has the capacity to damn the soul.

Now, in that context, Paul says, Timothy, you keep a close watch on yourself. You keep a close watch on your teaching. Persist and you will save both yourself and your hearers.

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