

False Teachers

The International Churches of Christ has become a safe haven for false teachers. Between 1988 and 2003 the ICOC, by insisting that one-over-one discipling was necessary for salvation, added a works element to the gospel and perverted the grace work of God in Christ. The shepherds, who are supposed to protect the sheep from wolves like these, are corrupt and until they deal openly and publicly with the theological skeletons in their closet through sound biblical exposition, the heresy will continue.

The bible offers at least two examples of law-keeping movements like the ICOC: The Galatian churches, and the Colossian churches. The Colossian false teachers were teaching that in addition to faith in Christ one also needed to observe certain religious and ascetic rules (Col. 2:4, 6-23). The Galatian false teachers taught that in addition to faith in Christ one needed to be circumcised and keep the Jewish ceremonial law (I Tim. 4:3-6, Gal. 4:10, Acts 15:1). These false teachers are commonly referred to as the Judaizers (the circumcision group) and the Gnostics and Paul warned Christians to **“keep away from them” (Ro. 16:17)**.

Both groups sought to bind these man-made additions on Christians in order for them to be saved or sanctified or both. The ICOC insisted that seekers give a works demonstration of discipleship prior to baptism in order to be saved. The ICOC false teachers have taught that in addition to faith in Christ one needed to be “discipled” by another church member in order to be saved. The call to one-over-one human discipleship was taught by every staff member of the church from 1988 to 2003, with only a handful of exceptions. These exceptions were expelled from the church, marked as heretics, or left.

This addition to the gospel is found within the group’s own literature. *Shining Like Stars*, by Douglas Jacoby, states that “baptism is for those who want to be disciples.” Using improper exegesis of Mt. 28:18-20, seekers are told that this passage teaches that to obey Jesus here means that “everyone is discipling others and being discipled”-something Jesus never told anyone to do. This subtle but damaging spin on the passage can be found in the group’s only other conversion manual, *First Principles*, by Kip McKean. It is there where seekers are told, “you need someone to disciple you to maturity in Christ” and “Who is a candidate for baptism? Disciples” is found.

Not only has “disciple’s baptism” been a prerequisite to salvation but this group of false teachers has bound (required or taught as necessary) seekers to submit to the group’s laws in order to be saved. These man-made rules or laws are mainly found in their pre-baptismal literature. There is no difference between this and the Jewish false teachers’ insistence that “unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

ICOC law has come in the form of binding interview questions and ongoing “tests” of a seeker’s willingness to follow a works oriented “system” of performance Christianity.

The following is a short list of ICOC laws and by no means includes all the extrabiblical hurdles prospects had to jump through in order to be saved. The first law was absolutely binding all of the time; the others varied from church to church. Failure to submit to any of these usually meant the outreach process was stopped and salvation denied until compliance was achieved.

They are:

Law #1: Submit to a human discipler based on the misteaching of Matthew 28:18-20

Law #2: Must come to all meetings based on the misteaching of Hebrews 10:23-25

Law #3: Admit that your family, friends, and Mother Theresa were lost (no scripture)

Law #4: Must live/move to ICOC churches only (Matthew 6:33)

Law #5: Dating was limited to ICOC members only (II Co. 6:14-18)

Law #6: Must have a job to be baptized (II The. 3:10-13)

More than a few ICOC leaders have now admitted to teaching a works-oriented message. There are two usages for the word “different” in Galatians 1:6-10. Paul used the stronger usage for different (*heteros*) which means “another of a different kind.” Paul used the latter to mark the contrast between his gospel and the one the Galatians had accepted. That is why Paul quickly added that this different gospel was really no gospel at all.

Similarly, Paul used the term “pervert” which in this instance means to “reverse or change to its very opposite.” Paul’s opponents had reversed the very nature of the gospel and perverted the message of grace by adding do’s and don’ts to the gospel. The law from Mount Sinai was a “do and live” religion. After doing or performing, you earned a right to life (Ga. 3:12). The covenant from Mount Calvary is a “live and do” religion. Because you have been given life, you perform or do. You serve because you are saved, not in order to be saved.

Some ICOC leaders have begun to suggest the Galatian letter does not apply to the ICOC’s works oriented message because the group does not observe the Old Testament law. Paul’s attack on the law of Moses isn’t limited to only the Mosaic law system but includes **any man-made law-keeping system promising a relationship with, or approval by, God.** Paul’s polemic against the law of Moses is **broad enough to include any law system-past, present, or future.** The law of Moses is purely an example of the principles that Paul was challenging.

Other leaders have said that Paul’s condemnation in Galatians Chapter One does not apply to them because the Jewish false teachers bound the whole law on prospects. However, the bible is clear that this is false. The Judaizers insisted on circumcision and the keeping of Jewish ceremonial law, not the whole law. Finally, some suggest that ICOC prerequisites to baptism are extra-biblical not unbiblical, yet this too is false. The bible disallows adding to the Bible (Deut. 4:2, Proverbs 4:2, Proverbs 30:5-6, Rev. 22:18-19). Leaders have added to the commands of God by preaching a gospel of human regulations and law-keeping.

Why are the Jewish false teachers no different than the ICOC leaders of today? The answer is their evangelistic method consisted of preaching the same facts about Jesus that Paul had preached, and they also agreed with Paul’s teaching on faith and baptism (3:26-27). However, they felt additional works were necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). Since these works were considered to be redemptive, the false teachers implied that the gospel of grace was insufficient. The clash between Paul and the false brothers was rooted in the essence of the gospel. Paul preached salvation by grace (plus nothing), and his opponents preached salvation by grace plus law (circumcision and ceremony).

Other striking similarities are that Paul's opponents' motivation was good. They never intended for the new Christians to keep the whole law (5:3), but just enough of the law so the new believers could have the same orientation as they did. The emphasis on law provided a checklist for the "older brothers" to decide if the new brothers were really orthodox in all their Christianity.

Conclusion

*Watch out for false prophets [teachers], they come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **By their fruit you will recognize them** (Mt. 7:15-16a).*

Below is a brief list of some of the fruit that this false teaching has produced.

Twisting Scripture (2nd Peter 3:14-18), Indianapolis Markings (Romans 16:17-18) (3rd John 9-10), Minimizing Bereans (Acts 17:10-11), Lack of leader's integrity (Proverbs 10:9), hollow and deceptive philosophies" (3rd John 9-10), Hierarchy where all the authority is on a few individuals (John 13:12-17) (Luke 20:5-47), Discipling (Acts 8: 26-40, Mt. 28:3), Greed (1st Corinthians 5:11) (Luke 12:15), Slandering people who have left (3rd John 9-10), Unloving toward the weak (Luke 15: 1-7), Idolatry of man (Hosea 4:5-14), Self anointing (Jeremiah 23: 16-32), Leading the flock astray/ false shepherding (Ezekiel 34: 1-24), Covering the sins of the leadership (3rd John 9-10), God's Modern Day Movement=God's Modern Day Pharisees (Philippians 3:1-11), Withholding baptism (using sentimentality as a requirement to get baptized) (Acts 11: 15-17), Withholding restorations (beg for forgiveness) (1st Corinthians 3:6-7) (2nd Corinthians 2:5-11).

Lack of spiritual maturity in the church (Hosea 4:5-14), Judging other churches we don't even attend. (James 4:11-12), Grieving the Spirit (not using the gifts that God has given people in the congregation because their plans are not as sharp as the leaders plans) (Ephesians 4:30) (1st Thessalonians 5:19), Counting the cost (estimate the cost occurs in the NIV) is only in the KJV. Asking Christians to use the NIV but using terms from other translations where they fit the purpose of the church. (Proverbs 1:23), Radical repentance is expected from the membership but not the leaders. (Luke 12:41-48), Elders are never publicly rebuked like the Bible says to do. (1st Timothy 5: 17-20), Speaking for God when the Bible is silent. Shouldn't we be fervently searching the scriptures to find applicable circumstances that we can draw parallel lines to? (1st Corinthians 4:1-5), Fear of men instead of fearing The Lord (John 9: 20-23), and Glorifying the church instead of glorifying God. (Psalms 22:22-23).

Question: Do you know of anyone who refused to have a discipler yet was baptized in the ICOC? Did Jesus teach having a discipler as necessary to salvation?

For further study on false teachers in the church go to:

http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2591

Pass this on as you see fit,

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