

December 21, 2021

Dear Co-workers and Brethren,

Coming to the end of the calendar year, many people are contemplative of the events of the past 12 months. There's not much argument about it being an especially eventful year. Covid 19 dominates headlines daily; lockdowns and fear cause psychological damage by isolating people in their time of need; political maneuverings abound following administration changes in the US and European nations; racial tensions are magnified. Sadly, the things that stand out the most are grim.

What emerges as a theme for the year is that ideologies have become bastions that polarize the populous. Picking a side to affiliate with is an expectation in our society, while holding a balanced point of view is considered weak. Or at least, this is what our media outlets would have us believe. It is the extreme points of view, with the loudest voices that get the most attention because of their titillating, sensationalist presentations of the so-called "truth". Of course, we observe the opposing sides present a different "truth" with equally strong rhetoric vigor. While the so-called "truth" is everywhere, the actual Truth gets no attention by the media, whatsoever.

The problem is that we live in a world where deception of all kinds proliferates. As a result, the Truth becomes hidden in plain sight. People cannot generally see the Truth because of the swarm of lies that clouds the view. The Bible explains the reason why this is so. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:19-20). Satan has a stranglehold on the world right now, controlling the minds of the unwitting who are swindled into believing the lie.

The lies take many shapes, all designed to turn people away from the teachings of God. All of these lies pervert reality and twist facts in the name of virtue to promote the kinds of effects Satan desires. He sows hatred, division, discouragement, and disobedience that have an ultimate end in death, rather than life.

During this time of year, the most prevalent lie involves the Christmas holiday. The world at large presents the holiday as one that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ in ways that honor Him. But nothing could be further from the Truth. It doesn't take very much research to discover that the origins of this holiday have no roots at all in the Bible. On the contrary, everything having to do with Christmas is made up by man, and even worse, directly traces back to the worship of pagan gods. Why would Christians participate in the holiday celebrations, knowing these facts? The reason has to do with the deception of Satan, that convinces people that it is no big deal. We present this, and other common lies, in a recent *StandingWatch* program titled, "Why Do We Lie to Our Children?"

The contemporary politicians who run the nations of the world have never been known for their truth-telling virtues. Yet, their lies become more egregious with each passing day. Whether those lies involve commitments to other countries, the so-called facts surrounding the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the effectiveness of Covid 19 measures, or just about anything else, it is many times difficult to know what to believe. Facts are figuratively and literally redacted, being hidden from view.

The media is perhaps the worst culprit when it comes to the presentation of deception. Each outlet selectively presents facts to draw their pictures, and colors them with strongly biased interpretations,

which push forward an agenda aimed to influence the hearts and minds of the consumer. These presentations are undeniably slick and seemingly convincing. While claiming adherence to truth and invoking science, the presentations by the mass media mostly deceive. Big tech is complicit as well, implementing gatekeeping policies to prevent any facts from coming to the surface, which might contradict the narratives of their agenda. What's crazy is that these biases are generally known by media consumers! People are effectively choosing to be deceived.

These examples of the deception that surround us could go on and on. The whole point is that we live in a world where it is hard to know what to believe. With Satan in control of the narrative, we shouldn't be surprised. "... He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). As a result, while living in this world, as we wait for the return of Jesus Christ, we cannot escape the influence of deception.

The question then becomes, what do we need to do to protect ourselves? Jesus Christ Himself warns us about the need to be on guard against deception. "Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" do not believe it" (Matthew 24:23-26). We need to be aware that as those converted, baptized, begotten members of the Family of God, we are in Satan's crosshairs. We are his most valuable targets, and he will do whatever he can to prevent us from completing our journey, with faith, to inherit eternal life.

Our protection of course involves our close adherence to the Truth. The very first item in the armor of God that protects us is the Truth (compare Ephesians 6:14). By becoming intimately familiar with the Word of God, and praying to God for understanding, we will build for ourselves a foundation of knowledge that we can use to guide our decisions and actions. By putting the Holy Spirit to work to help us develop the mind of Christ, we will learn how to correctly apply what we learn so that we can walk in the Spirit (compare Galatians 5:16). Our love for the Truth is our base layer of protection against the deception espoused in the world around us.

We in the *Church of the Eternal God* and our international affiliates have a commitment to support your search for the Truth. With the Word of God as our source, the Holy Spirit as our guide, and the history of the Church doctrine as our benchmark, we work to fulfill the commission given to us by God – to feed the flock and preach the gospel to the world as a witness. We continue to use the resources that God grants us, knowing that we are accountable to God the Father and Jesus Christ to share the Truth as strongly as we can. It takes a great deal of work, but it is our great privilege to have the opportunity.

We face a dire situation in the world right now. The noise of deceit drowns out the voices that speak the Truth. The world has little tolerance for hearing the Truth, and cannot even recognize it. "Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter" (Isaiah 59:14). Yet, we cannot give up. We all work together to hold fast to the Truth and participate in the ways that we can to amplify it. The work of the ministry will continue to present the Truth with a strong, unified, and clear voice. And you as co-workers have an important job as well. Your prayers for the work of the Church are vital. Only by working together can we be effective in fulfilling the job that God has given us – to uphold the Truth without compromise.

In Christ's Service,



Eric Rank