

A Simple Answer

Ever heard the story of the boy who cried wolf? My mother used to tell it to me when I was younger whenever I would fabricate a story with the intention of getting my brother a whooping. It is a simple story that talks about a young man who would alarm the people in his town by falsely yelling that a wolf was nearby, then laugh when they reacted to nothing. After a few times of doing this, and the townspeople getting very annoyed at him, a real wolf showed up. This time, when the danger was real, the boy cried wolf one more time, only to have the people not believe him. Your imagination can fill in the rest of the tale.

The first century was filled with people who cried wolf at their own pleasure, just to have people pay attention to them. Jesus warned of similar things in Mark 13:21-22, when He advised the Apostles not to listen to false appearances of the Messiah, because these things were brought up "to deceive, if possible, even the elect." But deception lies not only on the exterior, but even on attacks towards within. Paul constantly battled accusations that he was not an apostle, did not have authority to speak, and taught error. For this reason, in nearly every letter, Paul reinforces his standing, and casts the light back onto his accusers, displaying plainly where the true error lies.

Even in our own world today, double-mindedness is still very much active, with apparent contradictions rationalized and un-cooperating theories existing due to its convenient nature; it is not new to say two different things to accomplish a purpose. This is simply the product of philosophies of man, as man does not have the foresight to establish an ultimate truth that will apply in every situation. But God does. Because of this, Paul reinforces once again his trustworthiness regarding the Gospel, in 2 Corinthians 1:17-20, that the doctrine of Christ is not "yes and no," but simply "yes," claiming they are not of himself but of God. Not only are the words spoken by His true messengers "yes," as they originate from Him, but the promises that they proclaim regarding the end result of the message found to be "yes" as well. With Paul, and in essence with the Bible, no more do you have to worry about hidden agendas, false motives, or personal plans, but the simple and unadulterated cause and effect testimony of obedience fulfilling into reward.

But why spend so much time harping on this? Why would Paul, who was "contemptible in speech" but wrote "weighty letters" (2 Corinthians 10:10), spend so much time discussing the truthfulness of the Gospel? An examination of the Colossian letter will help us to discover this. One of the

main themes of Paul's letter to Colossae is the distinction between false and true doctrine, the doctrine of Christ. After spending chapter 2 discussing what is false, he addresses the things that we are to put off, highlighting in 3:9 the command to "not lie to one another." The distinct separation here from the other things to be put off can be better understood when taken in context of the situation that existed then and now as well. People coming in, claiming to be teachers, but misleading the church toward their own doctrine (reference also 2 John 7-11). Did these people come from without? Possibly, but I would put forth that many of them came from within the church itself as well. It is important for new Christians (and old ones) to put off the temptations of this world, but it's also important to put off especially a deceptive tongue. We must be able to trust each other with the words that we say, or else how can we help one another? If one always deceives and lies about the things of this life, how can we ever expect to trust them about the things of the next?

It has been said that archaeology can never prove that God exists, but simply that the historical events talked about were true. That being said, there is not a book on earth that has been proven as accurate as the Bible in its historical context. What does that say about its spiritual aspects? We should strive to be the same in regards to our lives with others. Do our conversations and actions testify about the Gospel and its accuracy, or do people see a contradiction between what we say and what we do? If those in the world can not trust Christians, who can they trust? These are questions that deserve a heart searching, and a serious examination of our actions every step that we walk. Let it be your goal to make your "yes, yes" and your "no, no."

Brady Cook