

The Difference Between a Believer and a Deceiver

- 1) Are you willing to confess Christ?
- 2) What is the nature of your obedience?
- 3) What kind of Gospel do you support?

Dear fellow redeemed of Christ, the Savior of the world,

Do you have the faith of demons? It might be somewhat startling to hear that question asked in church, or just to hear the words “demon” and “faith” used in the same sentence. We don’t often give much credence or credibility to demonic activities in our lives; in this sophisticated, logical, and scientific world many would say we know better than to believe that kind of stuff. But, the Bible is absolutely clear about the existence of demons. It was the actions of one such demon, Satan, that led to our sinful demise.

But, what about faith? Why would we link our faith to demons? Well, our text is one of the few accounts of the Bible that speaks to us about what the demons themselves believe. It contains an absolutely stunning admission of the truth; that even the demons confessed Jesus as the Son of God. We read from the Gospel of Luke 4:40-44:

When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. 41 And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ. 42 Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; 43 but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." 44 And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

When we speak of the faith of demons, let’s get a couple things straight right away. We’re not talking about faith *in* demons. That would be obvious idolatry. We’re talking about the beliefs of the demons concerning the person of Jesus. Although demons, as angelic beings, are not human; they do have convictions about Jesus and the truth. Therefore, we’re not talking about faith in the sense of an attachment to Jesus for salvation, but more of an opinion that they hold to be true. Faith in a lesser sense we might say.

What we see from these demons is how even they are brought under the power of Christ. It’s a startling thing, that Jesus can even make His enemies, even the supernatural ones, bow to His will. This is startling, but not necessarily surprising, for the Scriptures say elsewhere: **For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow-- of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth-- 11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).** Not everyone will trust the Gospel of Christ, but God is clear that all will confess it. The truth will not remain concealed forever. Even the demons bend to Christ when directly confronted by Him.

James wrote in a similar manner, using the demons as an example for lackadaisical Christians to wake up: **You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe-- and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? (James 2:19-20)** James talked about exactly what we see in our text, perhaps it was this portion of Luke’s Gospel from which James took his example. The lesson is this. If even the demons acknowledge Christ’s power, so much so that they confess it, what do we say about

Christ? And so we ask ourselves the thematic question of our sermon, *How does your faith compare with the demons'? What's the difference between a believer and a deceiver?* Perhaps we've never bothered to ask ourselves that, since we good, pious Christians are in a completely different league than demons. But, there's much we can learn. Let's take a closer look at the intention of the Holy Spirit, and as we do, think of your life.

Part 1

The most obvious place to start is by asking yourself if you're willing to confess Christ. That's really what we're dealing with right, confession? Well, the answer's simple right? We're all willing to confess Christ, what kind of Christian would say "no" to that question? We talked about this last weekend too, as we considered that familiar text where Jesus says, **"He who is not willing to confess Me before men, neither will I confess before My Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32)."** The examination of our lives in that point is pretty cut and dry. We're here in church. We just made a public confession. Our actions show that we are Christians. We take the name of Christ. The answer's simple; yes, we confess Christ.

Oh, but then we start to think of how God describes the Christian confession in the Bible. He talks about the presence of hypocrites, people who say the right thing but don't actually believe it. No hypocrite is going to be honest about the truth, that's what make them a hypocrite. How do you know that you haven't stumbled into hypocrisy? Furthermore, how do you know that your confession is the variety that is deeper and more meaningful than the demons'? They, too, made confession but it was not because they trusted or believed in Jesus. They were simply confronted by His power in a way that they literally could not deny it.

Now, I can't answer these kinds of questions for you. Only you can search your heart. All I can do is provoke a thought which reveals or leads you to God's truth. If you're confused by contemplating the quality and substance of your faith, that's not necessarily a bad thing. While I don't want to leave you in doubt, nor would I be doing my job if I did, I do want to shake off the rust and rubbish that can build up around your faith. If you struggle with these questions, it shows you have a proper amount of humility and respect for God. If they are easy to answer or if you never consider the possibility that they could apply to you, then you might be too careless in your faith.

Part 2

God also knows your struggles and the difficulty of these questions. That's why He also has more to say about it and that's why we dig deeper. When you ask yourself if you're willing to confess Christ you can test your answer by moving to the next thought, Do you submit to His Word and will?

It's at the point of submission or obedience that we break paths with the demons. It is obedience that shows the difference between our confession and theirs. Now, that may not seem to be the case, after all, the demons obeyed didn't they? They came out of the people they were in. True enough, but the key difference is in the *nature* of their obedience and ours. The demons obey because they are forced to by the power of God. All people will experience that on Judgment Day too, as Paul wrote.

But, God gives us obedience through another means today. We obey through the Gospel. We submit, not out of force, but out of joy; knowing we are fully protected and cared for by God and the best path is always through His Word. Listen to Paul's description of this obedience, **"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live**

no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)." The Psalmist also declared the same when he said, **"How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way (Psalm 119:103-104)."**

Submission and obedience to God is always connected to His Word because it is through that Word we know the truth and we know salvation. God has given us His Word directly, and given it through many individuals spanning many generations and cultures. It does not rely on human authority and therefore we have a great reason to trust it; even though it is so often spurned and maligned in our culture.

This text comes on the heels of Jesus' synagogue proclamation in Nazareth, where He quoted Isaiah 61 and said it was fulfilled; leading the people to try to kill Him. Jesus then moves down to Capernaum in our text and continues to preach the same message and perform miracles. The people of Nazareth, and many from Capernaum, refused to submit to Christ and to obey Him. They rejected the message He proclaimed.

When examining your faith, you would do well to consider the same thing. What is your relationship to the Word of God, because that will help answer what the nature of your obedience is? Do you confess as the Psalmist wrote so simply, **"The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever (Psalm 119:160)."**? Is God's Word true when it says that He created the world in 6 days, each one described in detail as the "evening and morning"? Is the judgment of God that those who do not believe in Jesus will be condemned a righteous one? Did God really mean it when He said that with only food and clothing we could be content? Is the Scripture correct when it tells us that pure and undefiled religion is to visit orphans and widows?

Each of those things come from God's Word, but do you confess them? Do you obey and submit to those principles in your life? Remember that the nature of your obedience is one defining separation between your faith and the demons' faith.

Part 3

Thinking only of what I confess and how well I obey the Lord doesn't leave the greatest feeling in my heart. If you feel that same way, consider our last question, What kind of Gospel do you support? Again, this may seem like a no-brainer for the average Christian. But, let me explain where I'm coming from. Today, what people mean by the term Gospel ultimately goes back to that thing from which they need to be saved. At its most basic definition, the word Gospel means "Good News." Well, that begs the question, what is good news to you? That may be lots of different things. But think of it from the beginning. What is the greatest evil? What is the most serious problem from which you need relief?

For some it's stress of their financial lives, so the Gospel is money and a good job. For others life's greatest evil is being restricted in their personal liberties so the Gospel becomes a matter of civil rights. Still some believe that the physical earth is all that there is so the Gospel becomes a matter of environmental responsibility. None us think that any of these matters are insignificant. We want to be responsible with our finances, we want to be good and fair to all people, and we want to be good caretakers of the earth which God has given us. But, for us who live by faith in Christ, it's comical to think of these things as *the* Gospel. But what do we show priority to in our lives? Do we spend as much time confessing about Jesus as Savior from sin as we do

about temporal and social causes? Are we more obedient to the God who created and redeemed us or to the popular opinions of our time?

The philosophies of different Gospels are not a recent thing either. Ever since the beginning of the church, Christians have had to deal with other belief systems trying to uproot the central doctrine of faith in Jesus. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, **For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted-- you may well put up with it (2 Corinthians 4:11)!** And later to the Galatians, **I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed (Galatians 2:6-8).**

If God put you to the test, what kind of Gospel would your life show to be supporting? Is it the life-saving message of Jesus as Savior, which comes from, defends, and obeys the Word of truth, or would He see your time, talents, and confession placed in other areas? As you consider what kind of Gospel you support, remember what kind of Gospel Jesus supported. Our text says it all.

The Gospel was the very reason why He preached and what He preached. Our text doesn't shy away from the honest truth. It reads that Jesus said, **"I must preach the kingdom of God..."** Literally, He was saying, I must evangelize, or "Gospel" as a verb, to the world. Jesus spent time healing and caring for people, but this was not His Gospel. His was to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name, as the Son of God. Jesus' Gospel was also the basis of the kingdom of God. The only path to heaven is through the Gospel. Jesus' Gospel was "necessary" to preach. This was not an optional thing for Jesus, rather the Gospel was the express reason why He came to earth. And that's why it's not optional for us. He would not be Jesus without the Gospel and we are not Christians without the same.

We began by asking, how does your faith compare to that of the demons? They confessed Jesus as the Son of God and they obeyed Him but not from the Gospel. It's the power of the Gospel that makes the difference between the believer and the deceiver. Many other details may seem similar, but the end result is astoundingly different. And that's because of what Jesus has done for you through the Gospel. When your confession doesn't measure up to bearing His name, He forgives you. When you refuse to submit and fail to obey, He promises to restore you through repentance and faith. Be not ashamed of this Gospel, for as you know, it is the **"power of God unto salvation, for everyone who believes."** There you have it, the power of salvation. The true Gospel of Christ is that which saves us from eternal damnation, a fate we all deserve. It's not about things of this world, or the word of mortal men. It's about taking our greatest problem away, rescue from sin and condemnation. This we confess and believe, because the love of Christ compels us. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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