

Christians who contribute to misunderstanding by an inconsis-tent and often contradictory life-style in attitude and action.

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Good morning. Good to see everybody here today. The scripture this morning is back a ways in the New Testament. I'd like you to please turn to the book of Titus.

Titus 2, verses 6-15.

Likewise, urge the young men to be sensible. In all things, show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

Urge bond slaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that they will adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior, in every respect.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires, and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds.

[2 : 39] These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Thank you, Gary.

For the past couple of sessions, we have been entertaining answers to the question that is posed, How is it that there yet remains so much confusion about Christianity, even after it has been around for 2,000 years?

What has prevented all of the clarity and understanding that should accompany a message like this?

How is it, and what is it, that can dispel this confusion? And I proposed for you that there are at least three major reasons why this confusion exists, and I'm sure that there are many more, but these at least are those that come to my mind.

[3 : 55] And one would think, would you not? After a message being around and being proclaimed for 2,000 years, everybody should pretty much have it down pat. But the confusion and the differences are incredible, and I think we all know that.

All you have to do is go out and talk to a half a dozen different people on the street. You'll get all kinds of responses to the issues surrounding Christianity. The first one we gave is, and I think this is largely responsible for confusion, God's logic transcends man's logic.

Biblical Christianity is simply contrary to the way we humans think, because virtually all of our associations in life have to do with behavior, performance, reward, and punishment.

And we know that when you be good and do good, the results are favorable, and when you are not good, the results are going to be not good.

And therefore, we extrapolate and we think that's the way it is with God. If you want to connect with God, be good, do good, God will reward you.

[5 : 10] The reward is heaven. That's very logical, but it's very unbiblical, and it is not the way God thinks at all. When we looked at the passage in Isaiah 55, where the Lord said, So when you bring human reasoning and human logic to the issue of connecting with God, it is deficient, it will lead you astray.

Because God connects with people on the basis of grace, and it is completely opposite to the idea of a performance-based salvation. In fact, grace says you have to recognize, first of all, that your performance is to no avail.

Your performance of goodness, of good intention does not impress God in the least, because everything we do is contaminated with fallen humanity.

God cannot and will not accept it. But he has provided, instead, a grace-based operation, whereby, on the merits of another, it is a vicarious thing, on the merits of another, even the person of Jesus Christ, we can approach God because of who Christ is and what he did.

We put our simple faith and trust in him, and it is simple. It is not complicated. It is not terribly involved. This is not rocket science. It is simple, childlike faith, trust, confidence, reliance, dependence upon Jesus Christ, who he is, what he did, and why it matters.

[7 : 03] You put your faith in him as your substitute, as the one whom God will accept, while he cannot accept you and your sin.

And he accepts you and his beloved son. That is completely contrary to the way people think. We just cannot escape this idea of trying to be good and then God rewarding our good behavior with heaven or whatever else.

But that is not biblical Christianity. That is pure human thinking, human logic. But as I said, God's logic and God's wisdom transcends man's logic.

Now, if you understand, and I am not saying, I am not saying that God's logic is illogical. It isn't illogical at all. If you understand the ingredients that go into why a grace-based salvation is required, you'll see that it's very logical.

It isn't illogical. When you take into consideration the fall of humanity, the death of the entire human race, because we all sinned in Adam, the provision that Jesus Christ made for our sin, and why a holy God is able to accept unholy people who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, then you have those ingredients in place, and all of a sudden, God's plan of salvation becomes very logical.

[8 : 32] You see, it's the only way that he could go, and that's the way that he went. So, I am not at all suggesting that it is even humanly illogical.

I'm saying God's logic transcends or goes beyond human logic. Secondly, there is a great deal of confusion that still exists regarding what Christianity is all about, because, and I say this with a tinge of embarrassment, many churches have confused themselves with being the message itself rather than the mere propagators of the message.

This results in confusion on a grand scale, and Christianity is replaced with churchianity. There is a great deal of churchianity going on out there, and many people have naively placed their faith, their confidence, their trust in their church rather than in the Christ whom the church is supposed to be proclaiming.

This is tragic beyond belief. It goes on in Roman Catholic churches. It goes on in Protestant churches. It goes on in non-denominational churches.

It goes on everywhere, so that people have the mistaken notion, look, all I have to do is be a member in good standing in my church, and I'm automatically a member in good standing with God.

[10 : 11] No, you aren't. To be in good standing with God, you have to be in Christ, not in a church.

The difference is immeasurable. Yet there are multitudes of people all across this nation, all across the world, who think that as long as all is well with me and my church, all is well with me and God.

And churches have contributed to that confusion. And sometimes taking advantage of the opportunity to manipulate and to create an unhealthy dependency upon the church.

It is sad beyond words. But sometimes the church contributes to that. And today is the third and final consideration in this series. I'm sure, as I've said, there are more than three, but these are the three that stand out in my mind.

And reason number three, why there is still so much confusion in our world as to what constitutes Christianity is because Christians, with an inconsistent lifestyle in attitude and actions, can contribute to the confusion in our culture.

[11 : 40] we are at fault. There is a little song, a little ditty, that used to be sung years ago, and I haven't heard it for a long time, but the truth of it has not changed, and it is this.

What you do, speak so loud that the world can't hear what you say. It is possible, very possible, for true Christians to make it very difficult for non-Christians to believe.

And the opposite is also true. There are Christians, happily there are some, who also make it very easy for unbelievers to believe because they have a gracious spirit, disposition about them. They are winsome. They are not pushy or intimidating or rude. They are kind and considerate. And they are the kind of people that can cause a non-Christian to look at them and say, I don't understand exactly what it is about this person or what it is that they have, but I'm attracted to that. I like that. I would like to be like that. I wonder what it is that makes them the way they are. How did they get that way? Their attitude, their disposition, their demeanor.

[13:14] I like that. Christians, Christians have no excuse for being unattractive and unappealing.

We, of all people, should be the most winsome, the most generous, the most gracious, the most kind, the most compassionate, because God has invested in us the wherewithal to be those things. I'm not talking about personality quirks or differences. Oh, that's just not my personality. Well, God has provided us with everything that is needed to be the kind of person I just described.

Am I always that kind of person? No. Absolutely not. Why not? Because I have this dimension about me that is called Marv Wiseman's flesh and his ego.

Sometimes it gets out of control. And when it does, it's terribly unbecoming. It is not pretty.

[14:43] No one would want to imitate it. And when I do that, I have no excuse for doing it. I am accountable for doing it.

We all are. There is no justification for a believer to be mean and nasty and inconsiderate. But we all know we're capable of that, aren't we?

And do you know what that does? It causes unbelievers looking on to scratch their head and say, and he claims to be a Christian.

Hmm. I thought Christians were supposed to be nice. I thought Christians were supposed to be and do you know what they label us?

Hypocrite. are you aware that there is no such thing as a hypocrisy-free Christian?

[15:51] We are all tinged with the ugly reality of hypocrisy only to one degree or another. We all are.

a hypocrite is someone who fails to do what he says or what he thinks or what he knows. We come short sometimes in our behavior.

We can be unappealing and unattractive and when we are it creates confusion among people who we're looking on because as I've said before if you want to know what a Christian is supposed to behave like and be like ask somebody who isn't one.

Now usually they have unrealistic expectations of a Christian. As I said earlier many non-Christians think that a Christian is an insufferable paragon of virtue who never says anything wrong never does anything wrong and never thinks anything wrong.

But in reality we don't have any such people like that. And any Christian who is like that is already in heaven where they are no longer subjected to the temptations and foibles of humanity that we are.

[17:08] But here we are all earthen vessels and we are all flawed and sometimes we irritate each other to no end. Sometimes we irritate unbelievers too.

And when we do we do not draw them to Christ we drive them away. they look at us and they say well if that is what being a Christian is I don't want anything to do with that.

I don't go to church on Sunday but I am just as good as the people who do and I know so and so and so and so and he is a Christian and he is always passing out these little papers and talking about Jesus and everything but he won't pay his rent.

and that confuses me because he talks about Jesus this and Jesus that and he doesn't even pay his bills. What does that do?

Creates confusion. Sends mixed messages, wrong messages to people who are looking to us to be an example. Let me tell you something.

[18:14] It is an incredibly awesome responsibility to bear the name of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy and said everyone who names the name of Christ let him depart from iniquity.

Now this isn't a demand for perfection because Paul had no illusions about perfection in the flesh. He himself was subject to the flesh as he writes in Romans 6 and in Romans 7.

As believers walk in the spirit we manifest the fruit of the spirit and when we do we are incredibly attractive because that's the character of Jesus Christ.

When we walk in the spirit fruit of the spirit of love joy peace long suffering goodness gentleness meekness temperance against such things there is no law and when we walk in the flesh the ego

takes over the old man the Adamic nature we can be mean critical nasty judgmental unforgiving all of those things and the world looking on scratches its head and said I didn't think Christians were supposed to be like that and he's a Christian well I'm not even a Christian and I'm not like that I don't believe I don't do those things so what do they they have this enormous question mark about what is this anyway I thought Christians were supposed to be different but they're just like everybody else Jesus said to his disciples men shall know that you belong to me by your love one for another behold how they love one another can sometimes be translated into behold how they club one another and that's not what the

Lord had in mind unbelievers actually think that if you profess to be a Christian you should act like one you ought to be different and the difference should be obvious someone claiming to be connected to God should have a difference about them and the world is entitled to see that difference told to let our light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven now I want to make something very very clear because even Christians can be confused about this your testimony and your lifestyle are not the gospel they are a reflection of the gospel they are a product of the gospel but they are not the gospel the gospel is [21 : 28] Jesus Christ died for our sins and our trust and our faith is to be placed in him that is the gospel but as we live our lives we are to have about us a gracious joyful confident disposition for all to examine and scrutinize on a daily basis and they are watching passage that Gary read from Titus 2 contains a phrase that is often looked over verse 10 Paul says that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect what does that mean when you adorn something well the Pharisees know a whole lot more about adornment than what we do because every time they put on their face and put on their makeup and put on their clothes that they're going they are adorning themselves and Paul said that as believers we are supposed to adorn the doctrine of

God how do you do that it means that you live your life and you express your values in such a way that you dress God up you make God attractive appealing not everybody sees in that way there are people who see God as a bully an ogre of some sort a tyrant blood thirsty individual especially in the Old Testament who demands his pound of flesh that's the way they view God he's a meanie he isn't in reality but that's their misperception of him and we as believers are supposed to live our lives in such a way and in such a consistent manner that we make God and everything about him attractive and appealing when you adorn the doctrine of

God you dress God up now I'm aware and I know you are aware God doesn't need us to dress him up but God is pleased to use us to dress him up God doesn't need our help to do anything but in many areas he has chosen through his grace to implement us and to partner with us in a process and we are incredibly privileged to be able to do so so it isn't out of a sense of need but it is a sense of desire on God's part that we are able to do that and believers sometimes can really go astray with this come back a few pages to Galatians chapter one perhaps one of the most outstanding instances in all of scripture where we have a clear cut case of hypocrisy among the apostles now one wouldn't think that an apostle could be a hypocrite they are those paragons of virtue aren't they well in

Galatians chapter two and verse eleven we have this bonny brook that took place between two heavy weights Peter and Paul verse eleven but when Cephas that's Peter the apostle came to Antioch I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned now this has nothing to do with his salvation he isn't saying that Peter is on his way to hell he is saying that Peter is blameworthy Peter has engaged in behavior for which he should be accountable he is blameworthy and here's what he did prior to the coming of certain men from James now if you know anything about James the half brother of our Lord he presided over the church that was at

Jerusalem and he presided over the council of 15 that met to discuss the issue of circumcision James was well connected well respected very authoritative very Jewish and prior to the coming of certain men from James that would have been in Jerusalem Peter used to eat with the Gentiles but when they came he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof fearing the party of the circumcision that means Peter had been fellowshiping going into the homes of Gentiles which always always had been verb open no no you don't do that as a Jew you have no business going into the home of a Gentile uncircumcised

[27 : 16] Gentile dogs sitting down at a table and having a meal with him you just didn't do that that was not acceptable but when Peter had that experience about Cornelius in Acts chapter 10 and his great sheet let down from heaven and then he went to the house of Cornelius the Roman centurion

instructed him and it became very obvious that God the message and what's he doing here he's backsliding he is turning his back on what he knows here they are in Antioch this is Antioch of Syria home base for the church and Peter is fellowshiping with these non-Jews going into their homes eating meals with them having cookouts with them now it doesn't say they were eating pork chops or anything like that but anyway it was bad enough just to eat with Gentiles but then when he heard when he heard that brethren were coming from

Jerusalem the Jewish establishment Peter all of a sudden starts distancing himself from these Gentiles and he no longer associates with them when he sees them coming on the street and he's walking with someone from James he looks the other way so he doesn't even have to acknowledge them Peter was simply being hypocritical and the reason he was being hypocritical was because he was scared do you know what this is this is apostolic peer pressure he was afraid of what the mucky mucks from Jerusalem would say so he caved he just knuckled under the big fisherman blew it big time and

Paul said and I wasn't going to let him get away with it there's too much at stake I called him on the carpet imagine this imagine two titans of the faith going toe to toe on an issue like this in public ooh this wasn't done privately one would think that the very least that Paul could have done was sidle up to Peter and say brother Peter could I have a word with you in private take him in a room aside and chew him out there avoid all possible embarrassment but he doesn't do that he confronts him publicly why because Peter's hypocrisy was public and it needed public resolve public rebuke and Paul was going to give it and make no mistake about it I am absolutely confident Paul did not enjoy this in the least he did not relish the opportunity oh boy I get to really tell Peter the big fisherman I get to tell him off in front of all these people he did not relish it for a moment but he did see the necessity of it let me tell you something it took nerve for Paul to do this because who between the two was the more established who had the credentials not Paul Peter he was one of the original twelve and of the three Peter James and John who was number one Peter and for Paul to do this I assure you it was no small thing but he makes it very clear that he was to be blamed and he said to Peter and verse 13 tells us that the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy you see what happens here this is leadership leading the following astray and they are just going right along after Peter partaking in his hypocrisy and Paul is not going to allow to go on and Barnabas Barnabas Barnabas is this the guy that was with Paul at Philippi in the Philippian jail falling for this kind of hypocrisy that's exactly what he says even Barnabas even Barnabas I couldn't believe it Barnabas was sucked into this hypocrisy he was carried away with when they when

[32 : 43] I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel they shied away from the pure grace of God I said to Cephas in the presence of all now Peter listen if you being a Jew live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews what does he mean by that he is talking about his fraternizing with the Gentiles and his accepting the Gentiles and his eating with the Gentiles you a Jew you go and sit down at table and eat a meal with Gentiles you are living like Gentiles if you are doing that how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews we are Jews by nature and not sinners among the Gentiles nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by through faith in

Jesus Christ even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we must be justified by faith in Christ not by the works of the law since by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified and all you are doing here dilly dallying around separating yourself from these Gentiles with whom you earlier ate but now you won't you are falling back into the old dictates of the law separation division so on what got into you Peter you can't do that I tell you we are not told what Peter's response is if I were to read in the white spaces this is a wise man opinion be careful it may be wrong I can just see this big fisherman hang his head swallow hard and say to himself

I don't know I don't know what came into me I just forgot I just I guess I was just too worried about what they would think and later to his credit in his epistle second Peter I think it is Peter talks about Paul and says our beloved brother Paul has written some things that are hard to understand but there doesn't seem to be a tinge of recrimination or revenge or nastiness on Peter's part about Paul you know when we are rebuked in a loving way by a caring brother or sister in

Christ our reaction should be one of gratitude rather than resentment somebody cared enough about us to call us to account and that's exactly what Paul is doing here not only did he care about Peter but he cared about the truth of the gospel and if this barrier is really truly done away so that in Christ there is no Jew or Gentile bond or free male or female if that is true then this thing has to be

stopped right here and he stopped it and the whole church is the better for it back then and even to this day but this is just do you know what this creates confusion do you know what's going on in the minds of the people who are looking at this whole scene whether

Jew or Gentile they're wondering what is this now what is the truth how is this supposed to be was he right in doing this was he wrong in doing it is Peter is Paul wrong is Peter wrong who who's confusion and let me tell you thrives on creating confusion all that's possible because the more people are confused the less likely they are to reach right conclusions about anything because they don't understand the facts they either don't know the facts or they don't understand the facts and they are unable to reach a confident conclusion all they can get in their head is a big question mark and

[38 : 00] Satan loves that he is a master of deception and confusion you will not take a step in the right direction if you don't understand the issues that would enable you to do that it goes on in Acts chapter 2 in verse 24 and I'll not ask you to turn to it for time's sake but here Peter is speaking that's right the same one who was guilty of hypocrisy as a believer can be guilty as well of soaring to wonderful heights of expressing the faith and sink to some unfortunate depths in denying it even as he did same man he's talking about the name of God is blasphemed among the

Gentiles for inconsistent behavior on the part of the Jews and let me assure you this occurs across the board this isn't just in spiritual things this isn't just in religious matters this is in politics as well it's the same thing what happens what happens if someone promotes and pouts the candidacy of a candidate for a particular party and tries to encourage everyone to vote for this particular person and they go door to door and they distribute their political literature etc.

trying to get people out to the polls to vote for this man and then you ask him how he voted and he says he voted for the other guy what how could you do that when you were promoting this guy you voted for the guy that was running against him that's crazy why would you do that that's so inconsistent that's but that's exactly the way it worked here here's a man who makes his livelihood selling Fords thinks that the Ford is the best automobile that ever came down the pike that's what he tells everyone he positions himself there in the showroom and every time somebody comes in with that new car gleam desire in their eye he latches on to them he starts pointing out all the features of this Ford and the cost of it and on and on and on he gives his big spiel and he signs on the dotted line this man's a happy camper and he drives out of there in that brand new Ford and it's wonderful and the salesman goes off and collects his commission check and when it comes time for him to go home what does he do he goes out in the back lot and he gets into his Chevy and he drives home and somebody asks him what is this you driving a Chevy you sell Fords that's your bread and butter and you driving a Chevy what why are you driving a Chevy oh it's a much better car what after I bought into your sales spiel for the Ford being the best thing on four wheels and you drive a Chevy where do you get all of that stuff you are a hypocrite you're a liar you say one thing and do another now that's pretty glaring but that's exactly the way some Christians conduct their testimony we say one thing and do another it works in politics works in business it even works it even works with atheists

I don't know if you're familiar with the name or not but Anthony Flew F-L-E-W Anthony Flew I'm quite sure has European origins connections he had established himself worldwide as a leading atheist atheist I mean he was a top drawer atheist one of the most articulate and one of the most respected and one of the most intelligent atheists throughout the world and the atheist community looked to Anthony Flew almost as they would a deity except they don't believe in deities but you get my point and it was about I think three or four years ago that the atheist community was shocked to their toenails when

[43 : 00] Anthony Flew came public with the admission I have examined the evidence and I have concluded that I can no longer support my contention for atheism there has to be a God nobody is saying the man became a Christian there's no indication that he did but he had already made a quantum leap just coming from atheism to denouncing it and atheists throughout the world were what you're right confused shocked what is going on this is the man who has written books and published articles and given lectures on the proof quote unquote that there is no God and now he walks away from that and says he can no longer support the atheist contention there has to be

God and it just rocked the atheist community best they could come back with this well he's an old man he's in his 80s and he's getting senile but you know really it created a great deal of confusion and that's the way it is but in no area is it felt so tragically with such enormous consequences as in

the Christian community and we are all aware of how badly the evangelical community was rocked some years ago with the Jim Baker scandal and the PTL and the Jimmy Swaggart and this was nothing but gotcha gotcha for the non-Christian community see that's the way all these Christians are they're all a bunch of phonies they're all a bunch of hypocrites they have their women on the side they have their mansions their

Mercedes Benz they drive around from bilking the public they're all like that confusion is created animosity then we had the utterly painful tragic incidents with the Roman Catholic priesthood and the abuse of all of those children over the years that caused caused the Roman Catholic Church hundreds of millions of dollars to be paid out in reparations and damage for having damaged so many young lives and it is viewed as hypocritical here are these priests supposed to be protectors providers for children and look at what they did and it is easy for the non-Christian community to just brush it aside and say you know what that's the way

Christians are they're all just a bunch of phonies can you not understand how the world at large doesn't really get our message we send out such mixed signals it's a wonder anybody believes because there is so much confusion out there so what can we do all we can do and all God has commissioned us to do is just continue to crank out the truth as we know it to the extent that we can wherever we can preach the word in season out of season rebuke exhort with all long suffering and doctrine that's all we can do and God will use his word to not return void and somehow cut through all of the haze that is out there and people still get the message and still come to Christ you did you did so did

I in the midst of all the confusion out there so all that means is that ultimately God's word will prevail we are not responsible for the results of proclaiming the word but we are responsible for proclaiming it God will take care of the results nothing will dispel confusion like the clear teaching of scripture and I want you to know I take that responsibility as gravely as I can I've often told you that every preacher should have two principal fears one is the fear that people will not believe what he says and the other is the fear that people will believe what he says both have tremendous consequences it's an awesome responsibility you have an equal responsibility you may not be in the pulpit but you're in a body and you circulate and you talk to people and they look at you they are watching and they have one real question in mind regarding

[48 : 56] Christianity and that is is this stuff real is this stuff true does it really make a difference in someone's life I'm going to hone in on so and so he she professes to be a Christian and I'm going to watch them see what they do see how they act I really wonder if there's anything to it questions or comments anyone we'll take an extra three or four minutes I'm already over on my time I can blame that on giving the Gideon some extra minutes yes can we have a mic is there a mic thank you go ahead just a quick example of something that happened to me recently I look back 20 25 years

I had a really bad temper and I did not give a good example to people actually acted very foolish I was in a restaurant a few weeks ago and I had a hamburger and french fries and I was with a business associate of mine and ate about a quarter of the hamburger and started eating the french fries and I looked at the plate and the plate was dirty it had egg yolk on it this was at lunch so that was a breakfast plate terribly appetizing and so I called the waitress over and I showed the tour and the manager came over and I was surprised how calm I stayed whether that's me being older and my testosterone levels dropping now or it's just that you know just try to stay calm about things I think that's a key thing is just try to remain calm and not let your emotions get the best of you and I pointed out to the manager I that's just the way I reacted to the situation and when I got back to work I got to thinking about that that was pretty good but I'll never eat there again but I mean you know what I mean you need to be calm and act appropriately and still get your point across so I just wanted to share that I appreciate that and the difference between the way the old jock knowledge of Jesus Christ that's the difference yeah thank you appreciate that anyone else comment or question or something share may we stand please father we recognize once again that it is indeed an awesome awesome responsibility to bear the name of

Christ and it is an incredible privilege as well and we simply ask that as a result of what we have considered this morning you will allow each of us beginning with me to reexamine our lives our testimony our behavior our demeanor our attitude as to how we conduct ourselves toward those who are without help us to be sensitive to the need that people have who are looking to us to see if there is really anything of substance behind what we claim we want so deeply and so much to be the salt and light that we are supposed to be and we recognize that the flesh is still with us and yet

greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world and that the provision you have made to overcome and disarm the flesh is more than adequate if we will but implement it thank you for your every gracious provision in and through our Lord Jesus Christ amen you are dismissed would every other is married in the line so can't