

The Power of The Lie

Grace and Truth—part 8

June 4, 2023

DAY 1: What's going on here?

*Acts 4:1 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ² **They were greatly disturbed** because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ **They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.** ⁴ But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.*

⁵ The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is

" 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

*¹⁴ **But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.** ¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶ "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "**Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it.** ¹⁷ **But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.**"*

¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

1. A forty-year-old man was publicly healed. Yet, not everyone was thrilled. What reasons did the Jewish religious leaders try to squelch, not only the healing but the teaching?

2. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: “Blind reason”

1. Usually secularists accuse Christians of leaving their brain at the door and just believing on “blind faith.” That is a ludicrous claim. Most people come to Christ in surrender “kicking and screaming,” only coming to Christ after they have tried everything else to make life work.

What secularists rarely admit is the notion of “blind reason.”

2. Yesterday’s story illustrates blind reason. Peter and John healed a lame man. It was a very public miracle. No one could deny what was done. Anybody with good will would applaud what was done for the lame man.

3. Why, then, did the religious authorities try to hush hush the miracle healing of the lame man?

- a. Their prominent position would be undermined. They would lose their lofty status.
- b. Their authority, and the ability to speak authoritatively would be undermined. They would lose their influence.
- c. They were committed to “controlling the narrative.” They went into damage control.

4. It is a very telling story about human nature. Far from being men of “reason,” they utilized “blind reason.”

Human nature won’t even accept
what it cannot deny.

5. It’s one thing to realize the truth. It’s quite another to embrace it.

6. Clinging to whatever you believe will preserve your autonomy, prominence, and hopes for satisfaction on your terms can blind you to the truth right in front of you.

7. These leaders were not uneducated men. They were scholars. But in the efforts of preserving their authority and position, even normally rational people will minimize, understate, or even deny what is obvious.

8. More so, they will cling that which can not quench the deepest hunger in the soul.

9. Everyone has a bedrock view of reality. It is what scholars call a world view. In today’s news, it’s called the “narrative.” it is what politicians and journalists cling to – their benchmark explanation for life.

10. “Argumentative theory” strongly suggests that people use reason, not to discover truth but for defending and validating their already chosen perspective or narrative of life. It’s not just that we rationally hold to our narrative. We cherish it. No amount of proof will dissuade a person from their narrative.

11. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: The Christian record

Matt. 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.... Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and honor your Father in heaven.

1. When you hear about Christianity at the university level, you're likely to hear three things. You'll hear about the Crusades, the Salem witch trials, and the Spanish Inquisition.
2. If I had written a term paper on the subject of the effect of Christianity upon human history, with these three examples as headliners, I would have gotten an "f" on the paper for lack of research.
3. John S. Dickerson wrote a book called, *Jesus Skeptic*. He began his research as a skeptic, hoping to undermine the Christian faith. Much to his surprise, the evidence was overwhelming in the other direction.
4. Christianity has been the number one developer of human compassion.
5. What you likely did not hear at the university are effects like these:
 - Starting and building orphanages,
 - Starting hospitals,
 - Building insane asylums,
 - Building "almshouses" for the poor.
 - Christians were at the forefront of the abolitionist movement in England and America in the 19th century.
 - Christians advocated for child labor laws in England and America.
 - Christians began some of the most prominent universities in America. Harvard and Yale, astoundingly, were begun as seminaries to train clergy.
 - Christians were out in front in bringing about greater literacy,
 - Christians advocated for women's rights
 - Christians worked to free women trapped in a life of prostitution.

The "Benevolent Empire"

6. The "Benevolent Empire" was a term used to describe the work of Protestant reform societies between 1815 and 1861.
7. What was the impetus for all of this benevolence? The Second Great Awakening occurred during this time in American history. For evangelicals, benevolence in its many forms was a way to shine the light of Christ on people in need. They exchanged "self-love" for loving others.
8. Denominations like Presbyterians, evangelical Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, created societies with boards of directors to funnel Christians into each of these endeavors.
9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Breaking the grip of The Lie

1. What does it take to break the grip of The Lie's hold on people.
 - a. Even faced with the public testimony of a changed life, such evidence does not break the grip of secularism in people.
 - b. Even faced with the reality of the Benevolent Empire, or the explosion of Christian ministry around the world, such evidence does not break the grip of secularism in people.
 - c. Even faced with the personal failures of relationships, conflicts, anger, anxiety, or depression, that alone will not break the grip of secularism in people.

2. What can break the awful grip of secularism? The gospel.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life.

3. It is the power of the sacrificial love of God, demonstrated by the voluntary death of Christ that can shake and melt the hardest of hearts.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this—that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

4. It wasn't because we were so loveable that Christ died. He died for rebels, the disobedient, the foolish, the self-centered, for conflict-makers, just like us.

John 3:14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

5. Salvation is a divine work, not a human work.

Ezekiel 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.²⁸ Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.²⁹ I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you.³⁰ I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine.

6. What strikes you about God's heart in Ezekiel 36?

Romans 2:4 The goodness of God is meant to lead you to repentance.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: The power to break the power of the lie

1. The cross of Christ can break the power of sin and Satan.
2. The word of Christ, His teaching and truth also holds the power to break the strongholds of sin and Satan.

*John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “**If you hold to my teaching**, you are really my disciples. ³² Then **you will know the truth**, and **the truth will set you free.**”*

3. Notice, it is not enough to just know the truth. We must “hold” to His teaching. We must put it into practice, apply it to our daily lives, and let God’s wisdom do it’s work inside us.

³³ *They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”*

³⁴ *Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**”*

4. Have you experienced some freedom as a result of putting the bible into practice? How so?

5. God’s word, His truth, also penetrates into our hearts. It is like having an X-ray of our thoughts and attitudes. The bible shines a light on what is difficult for us to see about ourselves, particularly our blind spots that get us into trouble and conflict.

*Hebrews 4:12 For **the word of God** is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

6. What strikes you from Heb. 4:12?

7. God is at work to free us from the power and deceitfulness of The Lie!