

The Dangers of Dualism: Fearing the World Instead of Trusting in God



Dualism is a metaphysical belief that looks at life in terms of extremes – physical vs spiritual, good vs evil, us vs them, etc. Sounds reasonable at first glance, and yet this kind of thinking has led to a terrible kind of bondage, not

only in the world but also within the Body of Messiah – bondage that we see in politics, congregations, and all over social media. It is an extreme point of view that has led to paranoia, persecution and unnecessary division throughout the ages.

Dualism is about separation, and most often comes up in terms of “we are good, they are bad,” or “physical = bad, spiritual = good.” It’s the mindset behind the idea that this world can be written off, that it exists simply to be escaped from – where we become “more heavenly focused than earthly good.” Because of this, there has grown up a mistrust in and fear of the physical world as well as a fear of and contempt for anyone who is not in lockstep with ourselves – there are no shades of grey in dualistic religious or political thinking. For example, Catholicism (Judaism, Liberalism, Conservatism, whatever) can’t just be partially wrong, in the mind of a true dualist, it has to be entirely evil. It has to be discredited, destroyed, at any cost, through whatever worldly and even sinful means at our disposal. When we are scared, we are more than willing to allow our morals to slip “for a good cause.” Everything done under that banner has to be suspect, and no one can give them credit for any good works for fear of being labeled as a papist, or at least very dangerous. People from other countries can’t just be “backward,” they have to be subhuman – they have to be, because we, ourselves, are

supposedly good. Or at least I am, in this train of thought. (Hence the American form of slavery as identified and justified by color). This is also the line of thinking responsible for political rancor, racism, and class warfare – people like me are good and anyone else is suspect and most probably inferior (at the very least)

The Bible even seems to support this kind of thinking, because it was written in a dyadic society – hence they had no problem with celebrating the “dashing of enemy babies against the rocks.” They were too extreme for the tastes of people growing up in a post-Cross world which has been largely transformed by the fruit of the Spirit. We take for granted that no decent person would want such a thing to happen, but again, Yeshua/Jesus died in order to bring God’s heart values (and not just outward observances, which are also vitally important) into the world in a massive and unprecedented way.

But, with the advent of social media, we have once again become very much like the paranoid and conspiratorial people who lived before the Cross. Nowhere is it better seen than in politics and the fake news stories spreading all over the internet – reporting conspiracies as though they were fact, citing non-existent news stories and fabricating quotes, data and statistics. Of course, these sites have a LOT of advertisements, and they get money when you visit, a lot of money. Because of this unBiblical dualism, which paints everything in terms of black and white, these stories feed the notion that, for example, government is entirely evil, and anyone who questions it is immediately granted an aura of integrity. That’s dangerous. We can’t attribute virtue to those people who feed our pre-perceived notions and call it something like, “taking the red pill” – instead, it is simply believing, without a thorough investigation, a separate storyline. Believe me, if you take too many red pills, you will overdose.

If you are obsessed with finding all the hidden evil in the world, then your focus is desperately off.

I have seen it used in politics, racism, anti-semitism, intercountry squabbling, religion, you name it. It is rooted

in an absolute paranoia of the different. We want “us” to be good and right, and so we need “them” to be evil and wrong. It’s completely about us, and because it is about us, our moral compass goes off-kilter. We will believe everything good about us and everything evil, no matter how absurd, about them. It goes so far that we read a story and don’t even do a basic fact check – we don’t bother to find out if this celebrity actually even made the interview being quoted, or if CNN is actually the source behind a story, or if there truly is a speech on file that says what the story claims, in context. We are driven by fear and surface-appearances by people who, frankly, would appear to be training us to react and divide without even thinking about why we are doing it, and without asking questions. Who exactly is yanking our strings so effectively, while warning us that others are yanking our strings? Seems to be the perfect disguise for a deceiver, eh?

Think, for a moment, about the paranoia that has to exist within us, in order to believe and propagate anything bad we see reported about our “enemy” when the Ten Commandments specifically tell us not to bear false witness against our neighbors. Think about how compromised we have to be, to forward every bad thing we see about the suspected folks of our choice. That isn’t a godly virtue, or truth-seeking, being informed, smarter, a remnant, or a watchman. In the real ancient world – a watchman who reported false information regularly would die. He was not at liberty to blow the shofar every time he saw a tumbleweed on the horizon. What we are dealing with is a lack of self-control – fear gone wild, manifesting itself in sin through false witness. It’s a blindness brought on by a need to be good and right – but we aren’t entirely good and right – are we?

No. We aren’t. And it is our pride and self-deception that drives this madness of external dualism. But let’s look at a healthier dualism-ish sort of situation.

Within each individual (let’s not bring extremes like psychopaths into the mix), there is a battle of good vs evil. I am certainly no exception – I am trying to be more good all

the time and less evil – but the Bible clearly lays out this struggle in every human being, beginning with Adam and Eve. All of the patriarchs, the kings, everyone fought this battle within themselves. We are not entirely good – only one Man could ever boast of that on His resume. The rest of us are various degrees of what I call a hot mess. It is an unending battle that we have to fight every day, for the rest of our lives. As we begin to see how suspect we are, as we stop seeing ourselves and those who side with us as inherently good, we will begin to see the world and the people in it as more multi-faceted. Honestly, that is the kind of mindset that can take the gospel to the ends of the earth – as opposed to Peter's belief that he couldn't even enter the home of a Gentile, even a decade after the Cross. We can't effectively serve God when our judgment and perception is clouded by extreme dualism.

You know what? The best way to start is to take a break and stop questioning everyone else all the time – the government, religions, races, ethnicities, etc.; we need to question ourselves and what the things we need to/choose to believe – specifically, we need to understand what they tell us about ourselves and our need to believe that we (and those who agree with us) are truly on the unquestionably trustworthy end of our dualistic paranoia.

“Wow, look at that headline, it's outrageous, and it is about X so it must be true.”

Whether it was happening in Nazi Germany or today, it's the same dualistic pride and fear behind the sin – and it is behind our inability to do anything but sit in paralyzed fear of the world around us. One thing is for certain – we can't make any kind of headway in the Kingdom if our constant focus is the world and all the terrible things they must be constantly doing behind the scenes – especially if a lot, or even just a little, of it is just the product of our imagination spurred on by those who are out to make a quick buck, create outrage, and further their own agendas – which we actually should be questioning. After all, if we are so

suspicious of X that we will believe anything that Y says, it doesn't make us particularly well-informed, it just makes us useful to God only knows who, hidden safely and anonymously behind the scenes and hidden behind some computer screen. People we don't know, but whom we place our blind trust in – simply because they appear to be the enemy of those whom we believe are our enemies.

We are the Body of Messiah: worshippers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Who exactly have we been trusting blindly?