

P R E F A C E I I

A Confession and a Caution

In the battle to see, understand and finally embrace the premise of this book, I have passed through a number of stages over the last two or three years. My co-author came to this thesis decades ago and, back then, even I thought he was a little nuts. In fact, I was one of the people who told him he was *crazy* for throwing “his career” away and that he’d “never be able to work in the Church,” a prophecy that has proved more or less true. So I understand if you draw that same conclusion initially as you begin to grapple with this subject.

More recently however, as I began examining the concept again in more detail, it became clearer and clearer that this subject had substantial support in Scripture, and *that* almost entirely from the lips of Jesus (though Paul supports His view valiantly and consistently). Jesus expressed considerable ire over this issue and He did so repeatedly, and so one can say with some certainty that it is actually *godly* to be angry about this development in the Church. That fact alone makes it worth studying in detail and attempting to embrace.

I have since made a fairly radical shift in perspective, to the point that I now congratulate my co-author on his insight and wisdom as well as his commitment to truth, and rejoice with him that he is free of the encumbrances and limitations of professionalized ministry. And the fact that he was willing to surrender the good opinion of almost everyone he knew—family, friends and mentors alike—for the sake of obedience testifies to me of his genuine Christlikeness and godly character.

But nevertheless, I have to say, this has not been an easy transition for me. Not easy to see. Not easy to comprehend. And certainly not easy to embrace. Not by a long shot. It has been a struggle from the git-go. All my natural (and often dysfunctional) inclinations toward mercy, rationalization, peacemaking, people-pleasing, accommodation, and avoidance of conflict have conspired to prevent me from seeing it, let alone making it my own. It has taken many months of active processing of both the evidence from Scripture and my own experience in the Church and churches to arrive at the settled conviction that I now enjoy.

My co-author and I, however, though we share the same basic premise, come at this subject from slightly different angles. I tend to focus on the underlying demonic deception and seduction that has perverted the Church from its earliest days in an attempt to destroy God’s Bride and rob her of effectiveness. In other words, I filter the concepts to some degree through a spiritual-

warfare grid, partly because it permits me to indulge my own tendency to “give people grace,” especially if I know anything about their personal history.

For my co-author, Jesus is the benchmark for his views and he is resolved not to go beyond *His* perspective on the matter. This means that, on balance, though he expresses *less* anger and *less* judgment than Jesus did, he still follows the same emphases overall, putting the blame squarely on the humans involved rather than the devil. So he sees Pharisaism as primarily a human activity embraced for personal gain, though he would never deny that there are satanic influences behind it.

Now to the caution.

You may not be able to accept every premise or perspective presented here. That’s to be expected. Some of you will have difficulty with 90% of the content of these discussions. Others will find themselves in agreement with 90%, but challenged to their core to embrace it on a heart level. Do not let the parts you *can’t* embrace drive you away from the parts you can. We’ve discovered in our own journey, it is often the things we are most guilty of ourselves that we find most offensive in others. Therefore, take a closer look at those concepts to which you find yourself most reactive.

As inflammatory as some of this material will appear at times, please do not draw any permanent conclusions until you have read the entire book and hopefully spent some time mulling over the concepts. As I said, it took me a long time to accurately see, let alone fully embrace, the ideas presented here and I suspect the more merciful among us and those with strong relational or occupational ties in the churches will have the greatest difficulty. It is *very* hard to see, let alone accept, this. I cannot emphasize this enough, especially when we are blinded by personal affections, our own ambition or self-interest, our personal history, or a false sense of what godliness looks like. Some people abhor judgment of any kind¹ and already struggle with the harsher statements of Jesus, John the Baptist or Paul along these lines. They may have to remind themselves that these men are our greatest examples of truth and righteousness, as uncomfortable as their perspectives may be at times.

If you cannot accept all of the premises in this book, try not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Surely *some* of it will be true. Should you accept what we say here, be prepared to lose relationships, some perhaps permanently. Think carefully about how² and with whom to

¹ Even though Paul gave us all the responsibility to judge the Church in 1Cor.5:12,13.

² Obviously love, patience, gentleness, humility, transparency, and sensitivity to Spirit are prerequisites to any effective sharing of these concepts.

share these ideas before you do so. If you begin sharing them with those who are not ready or willing to embrace them, there will be fallout. This subject can be very threatening to some people. We ourselves have had to work through more than one relationship that went sideways because of it. It isn't fun or pleasant.

Once you apprehend it though, you will be stuck with your own awareness. You will begin to see it in more and more places—not just in the churches—but in business, medicine, academia, government and politics. It's everywhere. But it is most disconcerting in the Church where the practices of Pharisaism have a tendency to snuff out God's truth when it gets too uncomfortable or threatening to the status quo.

And if you happen to both *see* the truth and *be* a truth-teller, you will eventually find it very uncomfortable to remain silent as these practices become more and more offensive to you. Once you become convinced of their significance, you will have basically three choices: 1) take the truth out and execute it (in other words tell your own heart to shut up and go back to living the lie); 2) stay in the church you attend and try to agitate for change (if you find it is leavened); or 3) leave and try to live what you believe as fully as possible. None of the choices are easy or without peril, but we have found a freedom that is its own reward.

Thank you for being willing to take this journey with us. As challenging and provocative as it is, never forget, you are in good company.

K.C.