

Sunday, July 28, 2024—The Conspiratorial Mindset: A Scriptural Investigation (Standard of Proof, Evil Surmisings, & Moderation)

Introduction/Review

- Last week we began a new topical series looking at The Conspiratorial Mindset. I did so because of the concerns I have regarding how Conspiratorial Thinking is impacting the body of Christ, particularly men, husbands, & fathers. It is taking people's focus off "things above" (Col. 3:1-3) and causing them to focus, fixate, and obsess on things below.
- We looked at popular/contemporary definitions for the following concepts: 1) conspiracy theory & 2) conspiracy theorist.
- The Bible recognizes the existence of conspiracies.
- The fact that conspiracies do exist does not mean that any particular conspiracy theory is true.
- There are fewer conspiracies than people think. There are two reasons for this:
 - Humans are not good at keeping secrets.
 - Humans are not good at cooperating with one another.
 - Acts 23:12-16
- *Conspiracy Mindset*: The willingness to believe/accept conspiracy theories in the absence of proof. Coupled with the propensity to pattern one's life accordingly.
- I provided the following outline for this course of study (assistance provided by David Reid's message titled "[The Conspiracy Mindset](#)"):
 - Biblical Conspiracies
 - The Trans-Dispensational standard of proof is two or three witnesses.
 - In the absence of proof asserting the existence of a conspiracy is evil surmising and false accusation.
 - The believer should be known for moderation.
 - Focus on worldly matters and not "things above."
 - God will handle all conspiracy theories that actually exist.

- The conspiracy we should be concerned about is the Satanic conspiracy to hide the gospel.
- Last week we considered point one, Biblical Conspiracies and observed the following:
 - The Bible recognizes the existence of conspiracies. The fact that conspiracies exist does not mean that any particular conspiracy theory is true.
 - A “theory” is a speculation or conjecture based upon a “hypothetical set of facts, principles, or circumstances.” (Merriam-Webster.com)
 - Theory of Evolution
 - When the Bible informs us of the existence of a conspiracy we don’t need to conjecture, speculate, or imagine the Bible is explicit.
 - II Corinthians 10:5—believers aren’t supposed to be subject to their imagination.

The Trans-Dispensational Standard of Proof

- A typical conspiracy theory is a video or book where someone gives a speculation or opinion about a conspiracy that they think exists.
 - Consists of opinion or conjectures. It doesn’t have actual proof. No documents or firsthand testimony.
 - Lack of proof is justified on account of secrecy among the participants.
 - There is no proof requirement. It can just be anything anyone says.
- This is an unscriptural mindset. The trans-dispensational stand of proof is two or three witnesses.
 - Deuteronomy 19:15
 - Matthew 18:16
 - II Corinthians 13:1
 - Regardless of the dispensation in effect there is a consist requirements concerning proof.

- This is not satisfied by watching two or three YouTube videos. It must be two or three witnesses who can testify to their first-hand knowledge and not offer a mere opinion.
- Most conspiracy theories do not meet the scriptural standard of proof. Therefore, they should not be believed or promoted.

Evil Surmising & False Accusation

- When one doesn't actually have proof, asserting that a conspiracy exists is evil surmising and false accusation.
- I Timothy 6:3-4—the Bible warns against “evil surmisings.”
 - Surmising—“The action of surmise v.; the framing of conjectures; suspicion, esp. of evil.” (OED)
 - Surmise—5.a. “To form a notion that the thing in question may be so, on slight grounds or without proof; to infer conjecturally.” (OED)
 - To conclude something is true without sufficient evidence.
 - Conjecture—4.a. “The formation or offering of an opinion on grounds insufficient to furnish proof; the action or habit of guessing or surmising; conclusion as to what is likely or probable.” (OED)
- ‘Evil surmisings,’ based upon these definitions is to think ill of someone without proof (two or three witnesses) based upon guess or conjecture. The Conspiratorial Mindset thinks evil of people without proof.
- I Corinthians 13:4-5—by definition the conspiracy mindset is a violation of “charity.”
- Titus 2:1-3—caution us against being “false accusers” i.e., to make accusations without proof. This is the bread and butter of the conspiratorial mindset.
- II Timothy 3:1-3—in the “last days” men are going to be characterized by the behavioral quality of being “false accusers.” This is why conspiracy theories are prevalent in our day.
- Romans 2:15—the flesh is good at accusing others and excusing our own behavior.
- Conspiracy theories are often the result of “evil surmisings.” They steam from false accusations that speak evil of our fellowman without proof or evidence. A believer should not be believing or promoting conspiracy theories without adequate proof.

- Just because you saw something on the internet doesn't make it true in the absence of evidentiary support.
 - Underdetermined

Moderation

- The believer should be known for moderation.
- The conspiratorial mindset produces strong emotions: fear, anger, panic.
- Philippians 4:5— “moderation” is a reference to being temperate and controlled in ones emotions. Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines “moderation” as follows:
 - “The state of being moderate, or of keeping a due mean between extremes or excess of violence.
 1. Restraint of violent passions or indulgence of appetite. Eat and drink with moderation; indulge with moderation in pleasures and exercise.
 2. Calmness of mind; equanimity; as, to bear prosperity or adversity with moderation.”
- Moderation is not given to extremes its “calmness of mind.”
- I Corinthians 9:25—not given to excess
- Luke 21:19—description of the 70th week. Keep your wits about you. Don’t panic. Remain levelheaded.
- Galatians 5:23—“temperance” is one of the fruit of the Spirit. Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines “temperance” as follows:
 - “Moderation; particularly, habitual moderation in regard to the indulgence of the natural appetites and passions; restrained or moderate indulgence; as temperance in eating and drinking; temperance in the indulgence of joy or mirth. temperance in eating and drinking is opposed to gluttony and drunkenness, and in other indulgences, to excess.

Patience; calmness; sedateness; moderation of passion.”
- Titus 2:1-2—the aged men in the church are to be modeling “temperate” behavior for the younger men.
 - Titus 2:6—young men tended to be ruled by their passions. The aged men are to be modeling “temperance.”

- Read passage from *The Screwtape Letters*.
- It's not scriptural to be ruled by emotion.