



You Could be Wrong!
Mark 12:18-27
October 7, 2018

People who think they are always right annoy us, but could we be like that? This passage contains several beneficial messages, but there seems to be an emphasis on being wrong (vv. 24, 27). Obviously others can be wrong, but the most authentic way of applying this passage is to ourselves. I could be wrong (Proverbs 14:12). While I don't think God is looking to disqualify us based on technicalities, what we think and believe does matter and being wrong about spiritual things can have serious repercussions (Matthew 24:24; Romans 10:1-3; Colossians 2:8, 16-23; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 16). Of the many ways we can be wrong, we'll focus on the ones mentioned here, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God (v. 24).

One way of being wrong about the Scriptures is to not accept them in their entirety. The Sadducees only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament. Today we officially accept the whole Bible, but in practice we may only accept certain parts: just the NT, just Acts-Jude, just the Gospels, just the parts I agree with, just the parts that make me feel better, etc. We must accept the entire Word, both in what we say and in our actions.

Another way we can be wrong about the Scriptures is to have a settled view on some matter to the point that we are not open to anything that challenges it (v. 18). If we also invest our identity into our stance, it will be even harder for us to reconsider it. So, if we see ourselves as "the church that believes ___" or "the member who thinks ___," we are setting ourselves up for trouble. Our identity should not be that we are a certain kind of Christian (liberal, conservative, legalistic, active, egalitarian, traditional, etc.) or that we have some unique stance. We are simply "Christian" (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-12). Strong stances also make us susceptible to "motivated reasoning." Studies have demonstrated that people often

reject factual evidence if it contradicts their current beliefs or preferences (Google Dan Kahan math study). This should make us more aware of our feet of clay (Jeremiah 17:9). So, when we hear words from Scripture that don't fit well with our current conclusions, we need to listen to them closely and allow them to challenge our synthesis. And when other Christians have a different understanding than us, we should argue less and learn to discuss and discern God's truths together.

We can also be wrong by not knowing the power of God. The Sadducees thought the story they told Jesus clearly proved them right about not believing in resurrection. But the power of God can handle the most extreme situation we can think of. What the Sadducees did here suggests we are in danger of minimizing the power of God whenever we find ourselves using stories or logic to undermine someone else's perspective or to question something in the Bible itself. Remember, God can do anything and his ways are beyond us (Genesis 18:14; Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 131; Isaiah 55:8-9)

In today's society, where we fear being judgmental or hurting people's feelings, it's easy for Christians to become tentative and hesitant to speak up or act on their beliefs. When we add to that the possibility that we could be wrong, we may become even more tentative and uncertain. Still, God does want us to speak and act on the truths he has shown us (Luke 6:46; John 13:17; Acts 4:20; 2 Corinthians 4:13; James 2:14-26).

Perhaps a healthy balance is to speak and act on what we understand and believe, but to do so humbly, with hearts that are open to keep learning. God has more truth he wants to help us see, but he reveals his truths to humble people not those who think they have it all figured out (Psalm 25:9; Matthew 11:25-26). Most of us can look back in embarrassment to self-righteous actions or confident assertions we made when we were less mature. Humility can prevent us from adding additional examples to our shameful resume' of zeal. Avoiding the mistakes of the Sadducees will also help steer us in the right direction: reading all the Scriptures, pausing to meditate and pray over passages that don't fit in well with our current understandings, and honestly believing that God is powerful enough to do way beyond what we imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

