

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

Vol. 33

February 2003

No. 10

EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

***"He has sent redemption to His people;
He has commanded His covenant forever;
Holy and awesome is His name."***

This passage from Psalm 111:9 speaks of God, that He has sent redemption; and that He has commanded His covenant forever; and that His name is Holy and awesome. The word awesome means: the most fearful and worshipful. Hence, God's name is the most fearful and worshipful name. The word awesome has been translated in The King James Version of the Bible as: "reverend". In fact, The King James Version of the Bible is the only translation wherein awesome has been rendered as reverend. In no other translation or version it is reverend. As a matter of fact, the word reverend appears in the entire Bible, and that too, in The King James Version, only once, in the passage cited above, and it says that God's name is holy and reverend.

Think! was Christ ever called reverend? Was any of His disciples ever called a reverend? Was any preacher, in the Bible, ever called a reverend? In fact, once, when a man had called Christ, "Good Teacher," the Lord had immediately retorted by saying to him, "Why do you call me Good? No one is Good, but one, that is God." (Matthew 19:16,17).

Man is looking for honor, dignity and distinction. Man want

pre-eminence, superiority and exaltation. He loves to be called by distinguishing titles and names. But Christ taught His followers, as we read at Matthew 20:28: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Those who claim to follow Christ must at first learn to emulate Him, and that is more expectable from those who project themselves as preachers or teachers of His message. The Bible says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5).

How Does God Speak To Man Today?

J.C. CHOATE

Most people do not stop with the written word of God—the Bible—when they are considering the question of how God speaks to man today. It is very common to hear one say that God has audibly spoken to him, and then he may go on to tell what God said to him. Some say that He spoke in a dream or by some sign. But why would God choose to deal directly with one person when He has already spoken to all people through His word, as recorded in the Bible? Doesn't He teach us in Acts 10:34,35, "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

The Hebrew writer declared, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1,2). The Bible is inspired by God and completely furnishes man unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Peter tells us that the Lord has given to us "all things

that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3).

Christ said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Then Paul said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Now if God has spoken, and if all of His word is inspired, and if it is the truth, and if faith comes by hearing that truth, what more does anyone need? What more can God reveal? According to 2 Peter 1:3, God has already revealed all of His will to all of mankind for all time. All that is left for us to do is to believe it, obey it, and to be faithful to the Lord unto death. (John 20:30,31; Mark 16:15,16; Revelation 2:10). Finally, Christ said, "He that rejected me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Notice—it is not some private message that we are commanded to obey, or by which we will eventually be judged, but it is by the New Testament—the written and confirmed word of God.

If God has spoken, and His word has been written down and delivered to man, then why would He speak directly to someone today, separate and apart from that word? And why would He give a message that is different from what has already been revealed in the Bible? That would be a contradiction! But all of those who claim that God has spoken directly to them say that God has told them things that are not written in His word. If you are familiar with what the Bible teaches, compare what they say God told them with what He has already said on that subject in His word. If you will do that, you will find that what they say God said to them is usually in direct contradiction with what God has written in His word. Now what will we believe? God's word, or some man's addition to it?

Repeatedly we are warned in the Bible against adding to God's message or taking anything away from it. Deuteronomy 4:2 says "Ye shall not add the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." Proverbs 30:6 repeats the warning in words that are even more appropriate for the claims being made today, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

The very last warning in scripture deals with this subject, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The fact is, God does not speak today to anyone, separate and apart from His word. Those who make such claims are either hearing things, seeing things, or imagining things. Paul warned about just such contradictory claims: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). If the message these people claim to hear is the same as has already been revealed in the New Testament, there is no need for it. If it is more than has been revealed, it violates the passages in Deuteronomy, Proverbs, and Revelation. If it is a diminished message, it also violates these passages. If it contradicts what has been revealed, it violates Galatians 1:8. So, according to the confirmed word of God, no one is receiving direct revelation from God today.

Does God speak to us today? Yes, definitely, but He speaks through His inspired written word, so that there can be no misunderstanding, no contradiction, and no partiality. That is why we are commanded to read and study the scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15), to hear and believe the word (Romans 10:10), to be doers of the word (James 1:22), and to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person. (Mark 16:15,16; 2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 28:19,20).

Mark it down: when someone says that God has spoken directly to him/her, you may know for sure that such a person has been deceived, or is attempting to deceive you. Don't believe him or anyone else who claims that God is speaking today separate and apart from the New Testament. God's word alone is truth. (John 17:17).

When Trouble Comes

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

We live in a troubled world. Statistics of hurting people bombard us daily on the news. We learn of problems closer to home, besetting friends or relatives, and they trouble us more than the impersonal statistics. Some seem crushed under burdens too great to bear, and we try to share their hurt.

But how do I deal with it when the trouble is *mine*, or when someone in my immediate family is stricken? How do I cope when there is no relief, day after day, from an overwhelming blow?

I've thought on this question a lot lately. It seems to me that there are three possible responses to be made:

(1) In my hurt, feeling that my prayers are futile, I am succumb to the doubts Satan would raise: "If there is a God, why is He so uncaring? He is not answering my prayers, so *I just don't believe any more that He exists.*" Sadly, some experience a total disintegration of their faith under the pressure of crisis and trouble.

But, regardless of whether or not I feel God's response at this moment to my personal needs, everything in existence cries out that *there has to be a God!* I *don't want* there not to be a God; I *don't want* to live in a world devoid of the authority and control of God. I *don't want* to live without the security of an all-mighty Supreme Being. I *don't want* to believe that this life—these struggles, this hopelessness I am now experiencing, are all of the story. I *don't want* to be convinced that "chance" and "happen-so" are the mindless rulers of this world and of my own existence. I *don't want* to live without the security of believing that good will ultimately triumph over evil.

David wrote in truth, "*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.*"

(Psalm 139:7-8).

So the first answer is not the choice that a troubled soul can make.

(2) My response may be to feel anger that my prayers evidently are not being heard. The answer brings bitterness, so that I turn my back on God. Feeling deserted by Him, I leave Him and His church in defiance. I stop studying and praying. I develop a hardness where religion is concerned. Though acknowledging the existence of God, I determine to live my life without Him.

But, what can anger and defiance toward Him accomplish for me? Can I bluster and bully my way through, causing Him to take away my pain? Will anger make Him ashamed that He has ignored my repeated prayers? Could I force Him to stir Himself on my behalf? Or would I, like Job, be found utterly wanting if God were suddenly to speak words to set my faulty thinking straight?

Job had cried, *"Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, that my Prosecutor had written a book! Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, and bind it on me like a crown; I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him"* (Job 31:35-37).

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 'Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me'" (Job 38:1-3).

Obviously, anger is not the answer. God is too big for me to bully. And, what's more, having a bad attitude toward Him won't force Him to hear and answer my prayers. Anger will only separate me from God, leaving me in this world with no help greater than myself and fellow-human beings. That loss would be a blow in itself, too difficult to deal with.

(3) The third choice open to me is greater surrender to God, and greater defiance of Satan who would weaken and destroy me.

Almost always, crises move people markedly closer to God or farther from Him. In my response, I can deliberately choose to

draw closer to Him, reminding myself repeatedly that there is no comfort, no strength, no hope, no solution without Him. And, in truth, *this third choice is the only option I have.*

How can I draw closer to God? I can combat doubts and questions with these thoughts:

- ❑ In Romans 8:28, God promised that He will work all things together for my good, *if I love Him*. I must rest my faith in this promise, and wait to see how He will fulfill it.
- ❑ I must remind myself that I cannot see the end of this road for me or for those I love. Therefore I cannot know just how God will use in a positive way what seems now to be negative.
- ❑ Neither can I see the other parts yet to come in my life, and how this is important in the over-all fabric God is weaving. I may need the wisdom, the increased faith, the vision or some other molding gained from this experience to help me face other things, or to be able to help others in their challenges.
- ❑ I must realize that *this physical world is not the important world*, and that God sees this even though I am sometimes blinded by the "now." *God has never promised that His children will not face sickness and pain and eventual death.* Because we live in this world, we partake of the human frailness of this life. Eventually every human will die of some accident or some sickness. Because I must leave this world, sooner or later, my prayers for my health (or for the health of loved ones) will someday seem to go unheard, simply because none of us will live forever.
- ❑ Some of the problems I face in life are because of the *poor decisions of others*. Some of them may grow out of *my own choices and unsound decisions*. My health may be impaired because of my choices in habits of caring for the body I live in.
- ❑ My life may be impacted because someone else made a bad decision. An alcoholic may cause an accident which affects me drastically. A loved one may choose divorce instead of working to grow a family. Though I may pray

about the lives of others, and their impact on mine, God has allowed each of us "free will" so He cannot overrule the choices of others in order to answer my prayers.

- ❑ I must be careful how I pray, desirous always that God's wisdom and will be done. In the life of Hezekiah, he did not want to die. He reminded God that he had been a good king and had done God's will. Based on those facts, he asked for more life. Based, also, on the truth of his claims, God granted fifteen years. During those years, Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, was born. He was one of Israel's worst kings. If Hezekiah had known what hurt he was bringing to Israel by asking for healing and life, he surely would have preferred to go instead to be with his God. (2 Kings 20, 21).
- ❑ I must remember, too, that Satan is an active participant in the events of this life. Job made the mistake of laying the blame for his problems at the feet of God. Seemingly, he never once thought that Satan might be involved. In our lives, too, Satan is truly the roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8). If we forget his power and continual efforts to separate us from God, we will leave ourselves open to his attacks.

The bottom line as I deal with the daily twists and turns of life is that *in my human inadequacies I know so very little*. Being in such a position of dependence on God's greater knowledge and vision, I have no choice but to walk in total submission and faith through the dark areas where I cannot see, and to wait with patient hope to see the end of the way upon which He is leading me.

God has promised, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5).

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; . . . Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm" (Psalm 37:7-8).

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you Disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." (Psalm 42:5).

Carried About With Every Kind of Doctrine

FRANCIS DAVID

How wonderful it is to be a Christian. A Christian is the one who follows Jesus Christ. He obeys Him and abides in the doctrine which He has delivered to His people. When a person becomes a Christian, he must go forward and must mature in faith and by doing this he will become more stronger spiritually.

How can we grow as Christians? We can grow by studying the Scriptures. A lot of times we see, Christians do not know the simple teachings and facts of the Bible. Paul, writing to Timothy his associate says: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15). If we read and study the Bible, we would grow in knowledge. Peter writes to the Christians by telling them: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. (2 Pet. 3:18).

How long you had been a Christian? You may be a five years old Christian, or maybe ten, twenty, or may be thirty or forty? Just check, how much growth has taken place in your life. Are you matured enough to defend the truth? Are you ready to give answer to the people those who ask you the reason of your hope which is in you? Again, we see, Peter tells Christians: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. (1 Pet. 3:15). It is sad to see, a lot of time Christians do not grow spiritually and thereby they are easily taken away by the devil. They are not firm, they can't stand against the wiles of the devil. They are carried about with every wind of doctrine. We need to check our Christian growth. Many Christians leave the true church and go back to the same man made churches and doctrines. They left the church because of the lack of growth, they were easily carried away with every wind of doctrine. Paul says to Christians, "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness

by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-CHRIST- . . . (Eph. 4:14-15). There are people who may trick you and try to catch you in their net by the trickery doctrines. We must be careful.

In the Bible we read of the Christians who were at Berea, the Bible tells about these people that they were noble because they searched the Scriptures (Acts. 17:10-11). If you really want to grow as Christian then you must add to your Christian faith, the Christian graces, such as faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness . . . brotherly kindness, charity etc. (2 Pet. 1:5-8). These graces and characteristics will help you to grow more stronger spiritually. Be regular in prayer, the prayer will help us to grow in the Lord. We must pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). Regularly worshipping with the local congregation is very important. We must not forsake assembling with the church. The regular worship and assembling help us to grow as Christians. (Heb. 10:25).

Are you a Christian? Have you grown up in your Christian faith? Are you old enough in your faith so that you can teach others or do you still need the simple basic teachings of the Bible? If you have been a Christian for a long time, then the Bible says through Hebrews letter that you ought to be teachers. Do you still need milk or solid food? We read as the writer of Hebrews says: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

Dear fellow Christian, let us grow so that we may not be carried about with every wind of doctrine. This world is full of doctrines, the doctrines of men. You will find a number of teaching and doctrines which are not based on the Scriptures. We need to guard ourselves and become stronger day by day. If we do this, I know and I believe that we will not be an easy target for the devil.

Longing For God—2

THOMAS R. DOHLING

WHAT IS FAITH IN GOD?

Too many people view faith in God as an assumption. Others would say that you have to close your mind to believe in God. Having faith in God and exercising your intellect are not compatible. Some view belief in God as beyond your control. You either have it or you don't.

HEBREWS 11:1 'NOW FAITH IS ASSURANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR, A CONVICTION OF THINGS NOT SEEN'

How can you be 'convinced' about something you can't see? How can you be assured of something that you don't have? Obviously, something has 'convicted' and convinced you, something has given you assurance, that even though you don't have it in your hands and you can't see it, it's there! That something is *EVIDENCE*.

Modern Application

Most people don't stop to realize how much 'faith' we exercise each and every day. Our knowledge of daily events is, for the most part, "faith" in the statements of journalists. Knowledge of history is, in the final analysis, nothing more than "faith" in the testimony of those claiming to have witnessed events in the past. Court decisions are based upon "faith" in the testimony of witnesses. We readily take medicine, which could even be dangerous, because we have "faith" in our doctor and in the information on the label of the medicine bottle. We are quick to "believe" friends, relatives, teachers and even strangers when they relate some incident to us. In fact it is impossible to live without "faith" in this world. **FAITH IS SIMPLY BEING PERSUADED BY THE EVIDENCE. ENOUGH EVIDENCE HAS BEEN PRESENTED**—that we are 'convinced, assured' that our doctor is really a doctor, our parents are really our parents, this person did commit this crime, or they are innocent, Mahatma Gandhi really did live, even though I never saw him, heard him,

or even encountered personally another human being that did. The Bible says there are REASONS FOR THE HOPE A CHRISTIAN HAS (1 Peter 3:15); i.e., EVIDENCE THAT GOD IS.

The Evidence Above Us:

'THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD (PSALM 19:1)

... SHOWETH HIS HANDIWORK' (ROMANS 1:20).

Both these writers assert that the created universe bears the obvious marks that God made it. It is so clear that God Himself considers it inexcusable for man to be blind to the plain evidence of His existence and His mighty power.

The Existence of the Universe presents us with the following options:

(a) The universe is or isn't eternal. The Bible says it isn't (Hebrews 1:10-12); and science agrees (Second Law of Thermodynamics)

(b) Therefore the universe was created. It either created itself (something came from nothing); or God created it. All the evidence in our world tells us that every effect has a cause, every product has a maker, every living thing came from parent stock, and that zero remains zero unless something is added to it. (Hebrews 3:4).

(c) How do we explain the 'design' and 'exacting conditions' for life upon this planet? Did it happen by accident? Or did it happen because of planning and purpose? (Isaiah 45:18).

A recent computer study simulated conditions that would exist on Earth if minor variations were to occur in our surroundings. Place the earth 5% closer to the Sun and the average surface temperature would be 482 degrees C. Move it 1% in the opposite direction and the earth would be a barren desert like Mars.

(d) Design On A Huge Scale:

Our solar system, our galaxy, which is one of billions in the Universe, functioning in perfect harmony without colliding and crashing—TRY ORGANIZING THAT!

Can A Preacher Hold False Doctrine "Privately" As Long As He Does Not Teach It Publically?

BRIAN R. KENYON

The above question should evoke an immediate response of "No!" to all who know the Lord. However, there are some in the church who think that a preacher can hold false doctrine as long as he does not teach it publically. Some have been known to say, "Well, it's alright for preacher__ to speak hear, even though he holds a false doctrine about _____. Just so long as he doesn't preach on it, it will be okay." Is this attitude Biblical?

Among the various false doctrines that some hold *privately* are the following: (1) the guilty of fornication spouse is just as free to remarry as the innocent of fornication spouse in a Scriptural divorce (contrary to Mt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12); (2) "social drinking" is not condemned by the Bible (contrary to the numerous passages exposing the dangers of alcohol and 1 Pet. 2:11); (3) Christians may participate in modern dance activities (contrary to the many passages that speak against lasciviousness and 1 Pet. 2:11); (4) there will be no bodily resurrection (contrary to 1 Cor. 15:1-58); and (5) the resurrection of Christ and His church has already occurred (contrary to 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thes. 4:13-18 cf. 2 Tim. 2:18). This article will not attempt to examine each of these issues. Rather, it will examine the principles involved with the question in the title above, and it will look at some implications involved with the notion that it is acceptable to hold false doctrine *privately*.

PRELIMINARY TRUTHS

Before dealing with the question, some observations need to be made. First, there is a difference between matters of opinion and matters of doctrine. Preachers may hold different opinions about Bible passages that do not contradict other Bible principles, such as why Nicodemus came to Jesus by night (Jn. 3:2). However, when it comes to the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42), there is no room for opinions that violate plain Bible

principles (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3).

Second, there is a difference between a person who is open for discussion on studying an issue and one who refuses to openly examine evidence. Apollos, at one time, preached what was no longer true (i.e. the baptism of John being applicable to the Ephesians in Acts 18:24-25). Yet, he was open to discussion on further study as is evident by the work of Quila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26). As a result, he thenceforth preached the truth (cf. Tit. 3:13). Others refuse to examine evidence, insisting instead on promoting their doctrine. These are ones "whose mouths must be stopped" (Tit. 1:11).

Third, the truth on the subjects listed above can be ascertained. For example, one can know whether or not the guilty of fornication spouse is free to remarry following a divorce. When one is unbiased and allows the Scriptures to speak, the answer is clear. Yet, many treat the subject as if the truth cannot be known, or that it does not matter what one believes about it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

In determining whether a preacher can hold false doctrine *privately* as long as he does not teach it publically, one must understand the importance of the "doctrine of the Lord" (Acts 13:12). First, the doctrine of the Lord is contained in the God-inspired Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This doctrine is as important as the Inspired Word from which it comes. Paul says of elders that they should "hold fast the faithful word" that they may "be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). Notice how "the faithful word" and "sound doctrine" are inseparable. Because this doctrine is derived from the Scriptures, which are the mind of God revealed (1 Cor. 2:6-16), obedience to it is the only way people can be freed from sin (Rom. 6:17-18).

Second, sound doctrine stabilizes every Christian's life. With the coming of "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . ." (a reference to the complete written revelation of God, cf. 1 Cor. 13:8-13) will come a standard that will keep us from being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . ." (Eph. 4:13-14). That standard is the doctrine that comes from the word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Timothy is told

that if he puts "the brethren in remembrance" of the truths Paul taught he would be "a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine . . ." (1 Tim. 4:6).

From these few references it is obvious that sound doctrine is of absolute importance in remaining faithful to God. How much falsehood can one hold before he or she has made sound doctrine unsound? Indeed, any rational person can understand that there is no room for even the slightest bit of false doctrine in belief or practice. For this reason no other doctrine must be taught (or believed) than that found in the Bible (1 Tim. 1:3).

HOLDING TO UNSOUND DOCTRINE

To see the ridiculousness of the idea that a preacher can hold false doctrine *privately* as long as he does not teach it publically, one must examine the passages that reveal the Lord's attitude against those who do not hold sound doctrine. Consider the psalmist, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way . . . Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:104,128). The Lord clearly *hates* every false way. *Every* includes false ways held publically and false ways held *privately*. The Lord had a "few things" against the church in Pergamos; namely, that some held to the "doctrine of Balaam" and to the "doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:14-15). The Bible does not say whether they taught these doctrines publically or merely held them privately, but one truth is obvious—the Lord hates doctrine contrary to His word! Does He hate it any less because it is held *privately*?

What about those who do not adhere to sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3)? They are to be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17), and faithful Christians are not to have fellowship with them (2 Jn. 9-11). God places "any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" in the same category as lawlessness, disobedience, ungodliness, sinners, unholy and profane people, murderers, "manslayers," whoremongers, "them that defile themselves with mankind," and liars (1 Tim. 1:9-10). To say that one can *privately* hold something "contrary to sound doctrine" is to say that one can *privately* hold any of the sinfulness listed above. False doctrine is false doctrine, whether it is held privately or publically.

No Christian, especially a preacher, has a right to hold false doctrine.

SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS

Some serious implications are present in the idea that a preacher is permitted to hold false doctrine *privately*. First, it is impossible for a preacher who *privately* holds false doctrine to please God. How can such a preacher in good conscious say, like Paul to Timothy, "... thou hast fully known my doctrine . . ." (2 Tim. 3:10)? Should any preacher be afraid of disclosing what he believes doctrinally? If his doctrinal positions are in accordance with the Gospel, he has no reason to be ashamed (Rom. 1:16). Also, how can a preacher who holds to false doctrine *privately* preach "all the counsel of God" publically (Acts 20:27)? He will have to avoid the topics about which he holds false doctrine. Hiding his false doctrine and avoiding discussions on these topics are deceitful, and deceitful people cannot please God (Mk. 7:22-23).

Second, it is impossible for an honest preacher to hold false doctrine *privately* without teaching it at some point in his life. What will he say when he is either privately or publically asked about his position on the subject on which he holds false doctrine *privately*? If he is honest, he will have to teach the false position he holds—thus, to that extent he has taught false doctrine. How many people must it take for him to teach his false doctrine to privately before it is known publically? If he says something other than what he truly believes when asked, he is being a hypocrite. What is worse, one who holds to false doctrine, or one who will not teach his convictions?

SUCCESS IN SPREADING ERROR

The preacher who holds false doctrine *privately* is more successful in spreading his error throughout the church. Consider some reasons why this is true. First, he is free to teach his doctrine *privately* to the brethren. How many churches have been destroyed by false teachers selling their heresy first to individual members and small groups of the local church? Indeed, whether the Boston/Crossroads doctrine or the "anti-Biblical expediency" doctrine, heresies have taken over churches

that were once faithful. Bringing in false doctrine *privately* was also destructive in NT times (cf. Gal. 2:4; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 3-4).

Second, the preacher who holds to false doctrine *privately* does not have to publically answer for it. If these preachers had to publically defend their error, how many would continue to hold it? If more brethren knew that these preachers hold false doctrine *privately*, how often would they be used in meetings, lectureships, or journals?

Third, when the preacher who holds to false doctrine *privately* is not exposed, then others promote his heresy (intentionally or unintentionally) when they use him in meetings, lectureships, and journals. When such a preacher's false position is well known in a particular area, and he appears on a program in another area, he and his false doctrine are endorsed, at least to those who know the situation. Even after the program directors or editors have been warned, some still insist on keeping the preacher who holds to false doctrine *privately* on the program. Why?

CONCLUSION

The idea that a preacher can hold false doctrine *privately* as long as he does not teach it publically is totally inconsistent with Biblical teaching. Christians have an obligation to warn others about preachers whom they know hold false doctrine. Elderships, lectureship directors, and journal editors have an obligation to check into those who appear on their programs to make sure that they are sound. God be thanked for those who have the courage to cancel meetings, or replace lectureship speakers and article writers who are found out to hold false doctrine, whether publically or *privately*.

The Knowledge And Wisdom Of God

FRED DILLON

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom

knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them, that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21).

We live in a world which magnifies human wisdom and technology. Man has come a long way since Solomon's wisdom failed him and he brought division and disgrace to God's people. We have learned to explore the universe and also to destroy thousands with a single super bomb and nuclear weapons.

Some in the church of our Lord have decided that no one should be employed as a local preacher without the possession of at least one and preferably several college degrees. Bible knowledge is ignored or lack of it in favour of superior human scholarship. Whatever happened to the value of the knowledge of God?

Human wisdom failed miserably in the case of the great Solomon. After God had rewarded Solomon with the greatest wisdom, he so lived that adultery and idolatry corrupted his record. Israel became a divided nation, never again to be unified. Idolatry reared its ugly head, even among Solomon's wives and near kin.

By the time of the prophet Hosea, God's people were "destroyed for lack of knowledge" . . . knowledge of God (Hosea 4:6). They had rejected the knowledge of God and had substituted their own wisdom and will for the knowledge of God. God made it clear; He had also rejected them. They were no longer His chosen people.

In the days our Savior was on the earth, it was no different. "The scribes and the Pharisees" sat in Moses' seat and the people were led into a situation where the human traditions and human doctrines caused their worship to be "in vain" (Matthew 15 and Mark 7).

Human wisdom caused them to look upon Peter and John as "unlearned and ignorant men," even as they preached to them the "unsearchable riches of Christ." God's wisdom was cast aside for their traditions.

In this super quest for human wisdom, mathematics, science, computer skills and the Internet with all its trappings have captured the heart and soul, the minds and ambitions of our people.

What about the simple Gospel? What about a learned man like Paul? What about God's chosen vessel to the Gentiles?

(I Corinthians 1:18)—“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.”

(I Corinthians 1:25)—“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

(I Corinthians 1:26-27)—“For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”

(I Corinthians 2:1-2)—“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

(I Corinthians 2:4-5)—“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Paul went beyond human wisdom when he said, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord Knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain” (I Corinthians 3:19-20).

Yes, Alexander Campbell was a well-educated, learned man, a powerful preacher, calling men back to unity in Christ, but he relied on the Holy Scriptures for his foundation of faith.

“Raccoon” John Smith and Marshall Keeble brought thousands to Christ without the benefit of a college degree. With many, they would not fit into our scheme of things today!

Am I diminishing the value of learning? Nay, nay. However, let's put first things forward. A knowledge of God's Word supercedes all the book learning of mankind. If not, then the preaching of the Gospel and the growth of our faith through the Word could be put aside.

Oh, yes! Learn to read and read II Timothy 4 and learn God's charge.

God had a place in His kingdom which "none of the princes of this world knew."

Where Shall We Place The Blame?

CLEM THURMAN

One of the most difficult tasks facing any preacher, in this or any other generation, is to convict people of sin. It is readily agreed by all that sin blights the human race, but there is still not the personal consciousness and acceptance of responsibility which is demanded in order for there to be conversion. It is neither pleasing nor flattering to awaken to the seriousness of personal sin. We acknowledge that sin is prevalent, but we just don't want to admit, even to ourselves, that we are guilty. As a result, only nine times in all of God's Book do we find examples where people openly admitted, "*I have sinned.*"

It is not necessary for one to be a gifted seer or prophet to discern signs on the horizon that bode ill for our society. The fires of uncontrolled lust burn brightly on the front page of our papers and are pictured on television in lurid tales of adultery, fornication, murder, hatred, wrath, strife, lasciviousness, drunkenness, revellings and such like (Gal. 5:19-21). Immoral lives of famous sports people is not only tolerated, but glorified. Movie and television stars flaunt their sexual immoralities, and people still glorify them and make them rich by patronage. These kinds of immoralities even reach into the highest levels of government, and we are told that it is none of our business what such people do in their private lives! It is a mad world, gone even more mad because of the throwing off of the final restraint—the consciousness of the reality and the fatality of personal sin!

If we are to save our society, and ourselves, there are some things we must realize and face about personal sin.

THE RECOGNITION OF SIN

The Wise Man of God, Solomon, wrote in the long ago, "*Fools make a mock at sin*" (Prov. 14:9). Things haven't changed much, have they? But only a fool would make a mock of that which is so serious: "*The wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:23). All the words of anguish, horror, pain, hurt, disappointment and despair could never portray all the ravages of sin. It would take the moan of all the dying, the wails of the bereaved ones, the cries of all the orphans, the lament of all the widowed, the terrorized screams of all the lost, and the shrieks that emanate from the pits of hell—and that would still only be a partial picture of how serious sin is.

It was sin that closed the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3). Sin banished Cain into a foreign land (Gen. 4). Sin brought about the Great Flood during the time of Noah (Gen. 6). It was sin that brought the children of Abraham into Egyptian bondage and later caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. It was sin which prevented Israel's great leader from entering into the Land of Promise (Num. 20).

Sin brought defeat to Israel at Ai and led them time and again into captivity and bondage. It was sin that persecuted the prophets, killed the holy men of God, and finally had its field day when the Son of God was crucified! Thus, the whole panoramic view of man's behaviour is marred and scarred by the inroads of sin. But we must realize that the strain of sin was put on the canvas of the picture by man. God is not a fault.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

We must realize, not only the reality of sin, but its terrible consequences. Maybe this is one reason for the hesitation in recognizing, and acknowledging, our own guilt. Are we so much more righteous than others that we have entirely escaped moral and spiritual pollutions?! How the devil has wormed his way into our consciences to destroy a personal acknowledgment of sin! But the guilt remains. David wrote, "*Jehovah looked down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there were any that did understand, That did seek after God. They are all gone aside; They are together become filthy; There is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Psa. 14:2-3).

But it isn't enough to look at the universality of sins, we must see the results. The fact that *"All have sinned and fall short"* (Rom. 3:23) does not minimize our own guilt. *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die . . . For the wages of sin is death"* (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). The progression of sin in our lives is clearly shown in Scripture: *"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death"* (James 1:13-15). Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2), and if unforgiven, it will bring eternal separation from God.

GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN

It was because of man's departure from God that He determined to send a Savior to redeem us: *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:6). Looking at man's need, the apostle Paul later wrote, *"When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons"* (Gal. 4:4-5).

The preaching of the cross of Christ falls on deaf ears only because people don't feel the need for a Savior. There is not an awakened sense of guilt, and need for relief. Most sermons that speak of the sinfulness of the world is made to apply in a general sense, but not personally. Good moral men are epitomized as examples, and the world asks, "Am I not as good as he is?" But one passage still shows our folly. Regardless of how good or how sinful those around us are, we are still personally responsible for our own sins: *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us"* (1 John 1:8-10). Only when we face up to our sins, and acknowledge them to the Lord, can we receive the redemption that is in Christ.

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

We need strong, forceful, fearless preaching of the gospel of Christ, just as was done in the time of Christ and the apostles: *"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish"* (Luke 13:3); *"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity"* (Acts 8:22-23); *"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out"* (Acts 3:19). But there must also be a consciousness of sin on the part of those who hear. The world must be taught to distinguish between truth and error, between the church of the Lord and those built by men, between Christ and Satan, between righteousness and sin.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever . . . And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10-15). The horrible anguish and torment of those that are lost becomes revolting to some who would impeach the justice of God. But can we say that God is unjust? The terrible price which had to be paid for our sins only accentuates just how awful sin is! Instead of criticizing God for the punishment He has reserved for the wicked, I must learn that sin is such defilement that God cannot admit it into His presence. When we try to minimize the guilt of sin, or its punishment, we are only belittling God, His word and the sacrifice of Christ.

HOW WE ARE MADE FREE FROM SIN

Jesus said, *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). For all of us who were in bondage to sin (and to Satan Heb. 2:14-15), Jesus came to earth and died on the cross to set us free. But it still is up to each of us to accept the freedom He offers. God has done His part in sending Christ to save us (John 3:16). Christ did His work in our redemption when He died on the cross for us. Now it is up to us to heed the admonition: *"And Peter said unto them, Repent ye,*

and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sin . . . And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, *Save yourselves from this crooked generation*" (Acts 2:37-40). Many claim that God has done it all. But we are clearly told, *"Save yourselves."* There is also something for us to do to accept the salvation the Lord makes possible.

The apostle Paul wrote of the gospel which he preached, and named especially the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-4). He then writes, *"Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life . . . But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18).

When one comes to Christ, to benefit from His death, burial and resurrection, he is led by faith to be baptized into His **DEATH**, he is **BURIED** with Him in baptism and he is **RAISED** with Him. When one thus obeys *"the form"* of the teaching, he is then *"made free from sin."* There is just no other way revealed in Scripture to be made free from sin than to obey *"that form of teaching"* as described above. When we realize we are sinners in need of a Savior, we will not argue nor quibble—we will do what He said!

We can continue to grovel in sin and reject the salvation which God offers. We can revel (for a while) in iniquity and drink deep from worldly pleasures. But we cannot escape the results of such decisions. On the other hand, we can rise above the sinfulness that binds us by turning to Christ, Who died for us. The choice is ours, and each of us must make our own choice. But be sure that, if we are lost, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

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