

## No Other Doctrine But Right Division

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For many years a family in a northern state lived on the banks of a river. As time passed, more children were added until the total was ten, plus the mother and the father. Each year as winter approached the father would gather the children to his side and, in no uncertain terms, explain that no one was to ever go out on the ice. One Monday, three of the children decided to walk across the frozen ice as a shortcut on their way to school. Some of the older children begged them not to, and reminded them of their Dad's stern warning. "Nothing is going to happen to us. Just leave us alone. We'll be just fine." So off the three children went. Because the water was more shallow at first, the ice was quite thick. So, with a false sense of security, the three children began to run. Suddenly, the ice beneath their feet began to crack, and all three plunged into the icy water, never to be seen again. In a spiritual sense, many of God's children are doing something very similar.

When the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy at Ephesus, he says, "I besought thee...that thou mightest **charge some that they teach no other doctrine**" (I Tim. 1:3). What one is taught doctrinally is of the utmost importance. That's why Timothy was to be very careful himself to "hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me" (II Tim. 1:13), then "the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). If Timothy, and those teaching with him, were consistent about teaching *no other doctrine* other than what Paul taught, this sound doctrine would "save" (or deliver, I Tim. 4:16) all who heard it from spiritual error. But the opposite was also true. If anyone taught or exposed themselves to doctrines which were contrary to what Paul taught, it would have devastating effects. In other words, it would be like playing on thin ice.

**What doctrines were so precious and important, that nothing else was to be listened to?** No sermon or article can adequately articulate all of the important things that the Apostle Paul taught. However, let's take a look at a number of things that we must hold dear to our understanding, and consistently demand from the teaching of anyone that we sit under. We learn from Romans 6:14 that we are **"not under the law, but under grace."** The practical impact of this is that we do not try to implement portions of our Bible that were written exclusively to Israel. From Romans 11:13 we see that **Paul is "the apostle of the Gentiles."** Peter, James, and John wrote Scripture, but confined their ministries to the nation Israel. Their writings dealt largely with the tribulation or millennial kingdom. Only Paul claims to be, or calls himself, the apostle of the Gentiles. He further urges that **we are to "be followers of me"** (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17). So, someone who is sound in doctrine will recognize Paul's letters as the exclusive "commandments of the Lord" for believers today (I Cor. 14:37).

Our apostle had no tolerance for anything other than **the pure "gospel of the grace of God"** (Acts 20:24; Gal. 1:6-12). He demanded that it always be taught in a crystal clear manner. That meant salvation being proclaimed as a gift of God's grace, apart from man's works, and received through faith in

the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8,9; Rom. 3:24-28). Beyond this, Paul taught that he was **not sent to baptize**, "lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (I Cor. 1:17). Today there is only "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5 and that is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which places us into the Body of Christ at the moment of salvation (I Cor. 12:13). Once saved, **we are eternally secure**, because we are "sealed" with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit "unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). Our security is not based on our performance but in the power of God. Paul also taught that **miraculous signs such as "tongues" and "prophecies" have been "done away" with** by the completion of Scripture (I Cor. 13:8-11). Therefore, any today who would claim special revelations from God, or miraculous powers, are deceivers. Today God uses His written Word to provide all that we need for our doctrine and daily walk.

Paul asked some of his converts "if ye have heard of the **dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward**"? (Eph. 3:2). They needed to understand that the days in which we are living, and the program we are under, are different from anything at any other time in history. In the preceding chapter, he explained that "in time past" Gentiles were not a part of God's dealings. Israel was His exclusive focus of outreach, and Gentiles were rarely saved, and only then by becoming a Jewish proselyte. "But now" (Eph. 2:13) Gentiles "are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Paul summarizes the above doctrines and more, by telling Timothy that "**rightly dividing the Word of truth**" (II Tim. 2:15) is the only way to be approved unto God. It is not enough to teach about "Jesus," nor to teach general Biblical principles for "Christian living."

Parents are very wise to refuse to allow their children to attend other churches or youth groups, where these basic Pauline doctrines are not understood or consistently taught. This may not be easy or popular, but the Scripture warns us about exposure to wrong doctrine, and tells us to avoid it. If all believers would follow this practice they would not only be obedient to Scripture, but also avoid being "tossed to and fro... with every wind of doctrine."

**What happens when we listen to unsound doctrine?** Three things can happen. One, we can *become a spiritual "shipwreck"* (I Tim. 1:19). Hymenaeus is an example. He had "swerved" and "turned aside" (I Tim. 1:6) from the sound doctrines of Paul, believing and teaching others that the resurrection had already past. Two, we can *"overthrow the faith of some"* (II Tim. 2:18). This happened continually to the converts of the Apostle Paul. The Galatians were so "bewitched" that they no longer understood the gospel that saved them, and they desired to go back under the Mosaic Law. The believers at Colosse, though saved, ceased to properly esteem the Lord Jesus Christ as their "Head," and began the practice of worshipping angels (Col. 2:18-19). Three, believers can *"depart from the faith"* (I Tim. 4:1). This certainly does NOT mean they can lose their salvation. Rather it refers to saved believers departing from the sound doctrines of the Apostle Paul, as their guide for living today. All of this could have been, and can be avoided if we will simply obey what God says about allowing **no other doctrine** to influence us.

In 1970, a woman by the name of Rose heard the gospel of God's grace and trusted Christ as her Savior. Soon after she was introduced to a host of dispensational literature. She was thrilled to see the difference between Israel and the Body of Christ, being under the law as opposed to being under grace. She became a well-grounded Grace believer, and even lead a cousin by the name of Maria into the Grace message. Eventually Rose began to attend a church that believed in miraculous Pentecostal signs. When her husband became ill, those in her church told her with certainty that her husband would be healed of his

cancer. They knew this because they had "heard from God." Even though she had known God's Word rightly divided, exposure to such false doctrine had her so confused that she believed what they told her and became utterly dismayed when her husband died.

Maria became a well-grounded Grace believer also, through years of reading Grace literature and listening to Grace teachers on tape. She regularly listened to Christian radio. Several of the preachers on the radio, though nationally recognizable, had her utterly confused. Some taught that if you didn't live in a certain way you would lose your salvation. Maria spent months in spiritual agony, until she made the decision that she would listen to "no other doctrine" than that of grace. Only then was her peace and joy and certainty of salvation restored.

On October 31, 1983 Korean airlines flight 007 departed from Anchorage, Alaska for a direct flight to Seoul, Korea. Unknown to the crew, the computer flight navigation system contained a one-and-a-half degree routing error. At the point of departure, the mistake was unnoticeable. One hundred miles out, the deviation was still too small to be detectable. But eventually the giant 747 strayed into Soviet airspace. Soviet radar picked up the error, and fighter jets scrambled to intercept. Over mainland Russia, the jets shot down flight 007, and all on board lost their lives. This tragedy occurred because of only being a little off course to begin with. Spiritually we can come to a tragic end ourselves by swerving off the course of doctrine that is consistent with the doctrine that Paul teaches in his letters.

Some will attend other churches and think that it will not have an ill effect upon them. Surely, they think, I can benefit from grace teaching and non-grace teaching. Others will read literature, attend conferences, fellowship in social church events and otherwise generally expose themselves to errant doctrine. But the effect will be the same as it was in Paul's day. The Corinthians began to *question the authority of the Apostle Paul*. They became *confused* about the value of working for the Lord, and *increasingly carnal* in every way. Little by little they became willing to *compromise sound doctrine and justify* associations that they knew were wrong. Later they became *antagonistic and hypercritical of him*. The result was that Paul had to waste valuable time to confirm his ministry and sound doctrine before them. Unfortunately, some were unretrievable. In other words, some *departed from the faith* just like those that Paul warned Timothy about.

Paul warned Timothy in II Timothy 4:3,4 that **"the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"** (a story or teaching that is untrue). In the days just before the Rapture, Grace teaching will not be popular. Even those who know it will begin to think these truths are boring. They will want something new, exciting, entertaining, something that will draw crowds. They will want to soft pedal Grace truth, and have itching ears for other doctrines. Many will abandon a church that stands for sound Pauline doctrine to attend other "ministries" less worthy of their loyalty. I wonder if one of the arguments won't be that what they are doing **makes them feel closer to God**. In Grace circles we are continually hearing this explanation from those who are listening to doctrines that are not compatible with what Paul teaches. Recently, one ministerial student, one college student, and one older mature gentleman commented that attending a non-grace church made them *feel* like they were really worshipping God for the first time. The real issue is how does God feel about what doctrine they are now standing for and with? Now we are reminded of the Scripture that tells us "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48).

Those of us who have been privileged to understand God's Word rightly divided must stand true to what is true, and to allow our emotions to soar with the joy of doing what is right.

Early in aviation history, pilots had to learn the lesson of inertia. When flying through clouds or fog which prevented them from seeing the horizon, they could not feel the plane's wings beginning to bank right or left. Initially pilots followed the myth of instinct: They believed they could *feel* the turn of their plane, and many banked unknowingly into a spiral dive that ended in a crash. Pilot William Langewieshe writes, "instinct is worse than useless in the clouds." The only way for pilots to fly through the clouds is to rely on instruments like the artificial horizon gauge. This is a gyroscoped line that stays level with the earth's surface and unerringly indicates when the wings bank left or right. In the early days of this instrument, the biggest problem fliers had was relying on their feelings instead of this instrument. When it comes to spiritual matters, our feelings, experiences, or what is most popular is not a reliable guide for us to follow. Today God uses the instrument of His Word. It is unerring, if we are willing to rightly divide it and accept **"no other doctrine"** than what is taught by the inspired writings of the Apostle Paul. Stand true to Paul's doctrines of grace.

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