

Doctrine Is Not a Bad Word

by

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In 1 Tim. 4:13, we read. *“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”* And verse 16 continues, *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”*

Doctrine is something we are commanded to give attention to and take heed to. To take heed to it will help save ourselves and those that hear us. It is obviously something very important, then.

Yet in many religious circles the concept of doctrine, truth, and rules to follow is treated as an almost unholy idea. The only thing that is said to matter is sincerity and zeal. To try to do things right is to be accused of being somehow insincere, too technical and legalistic.

No one has ever been able to sell me that bill of goods. And I hope, as we study together, that you, too, can see the importance of our doctrine.

First, let's define what the Bible means by doctrine. In Mark 1:21-22, we read this about Jesus, *“And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he (Jesus) entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”*

What Jesus taught was referred to as His doctrine. That's all we are saying when we say that doctrine is important. We are simply saying that what Jesus taught is important. (How that supposedly makes us insincere is beyond me.)

Of course, there is false doctrine out there as well, that we need to beware of. Matt. 15:8-9, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* True doctrine is what Christ taught. False doctrine is the commandments of men.

So, how can we be sure that the doctrine we promote is what Jesus Christ taught, not man?

First of all, remember that we read above (Mark 1:22) that His doctrine was one of authority. Where did Jesus get this authority? He got it from God.

John 7:14-16, *“Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”*

Jesus, then, gave authority to His apostles. Notice what He said to Peter in Matt. 16:19, “*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*”

He not only gave Peter and the other apostles the authority to bind and loose concerning things of the kingdom. He also taught them what to bind and loose. Acts 1:1-3, “*The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:*”.

The apostles then taught what Christ had taught them, and wrote it down so that we have it today. 2 Pet. 3:1-2, “*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:*”.

All of our doctrine was written by the apostles, and we can read it. From God’s grace offered through Jesus Christ to the many blessings we are blessed with today, to the way we are to treat others, to our attitude, to how we receive His grace, and yes to our worship in spirit and in truth. It is all recorded. We can read it all. To cling to it is **NOT** technicality or legalism. It is simple, humble obedience, submitting ourselves to the Will of God.

The apostle Paul wrote much about grace, zeal, and sincerity. Yet he is the one who also pointed out that obedience to Christ’s doctrine is not anti-grace but a part of His grace. Note Rom. 6:15-17, “*What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*” We want to note three points from these verses.

First, what form of doctrine was delivered them? What the apostles delivered. The apostles received it from Christ, who received it from God. That same form of doctrine was delivered to us through the apostles’ writings.

Second point, we can obey sin, or we can obey the form of doctrine that is from Jesus Christ. But make no mistake about it. We do obey something. We do obey one or the other.

Third, why did we obey that form of doctrine (yes, doctrine) that was delivered to us? Did we obey just to be technical, or from insincerity? Did we obey out of mere legalism? **NO!** Paul said we obeyed from the heart.

So why not obey God? Why not obey the form of doctrine that the apostles received from Jesus? Why not humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God?

Why add things to His doctrine that Jesus didn't authorize? Many things have been added to what Jesus and His apostles taught. They were added by men. Are we smarter than God? Are our ways better than His?

Why not just submit to Jesus?

I realize this article seems somewhat defensive. That's not really what I was hoping for. But, you know what? Sometimes our doctrine (and our attitude towards it) needs to be defended.

When people accuse you of legalism or insincerity, don't buy it. They cannot read your mind, they have no right to judge what is in your heart. They are not trying to justify themselves by doing what the Bible says. They are trying to justify themselves by attacking us.

Wanting to obey God is not evidence of insincerity. It is evidence of sincerity, of humility and zeal. It is the most sincere form of praise and thanksgiving.

Rom. 6:13, "*Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*"

In Christian love,

Bro. Terry Warford

