

“A bird that you set free may be caught again, but a word that escapes your lips will not return.”  
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### SHOULD WE CHALLENGE EVERY ERROR? Jim Stauffer

There are many brethren who object to what they view as the rigid teaching of the church. This begs the question, “Does the teaching of the church represent accurately the teaching of the New Testament.”

To illustrate this let us look at John 1:17 which says, “For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Some read a passage such as this and see only a generic presentation of God’s goodness with no specifics to be taught.

A close look at how Jesus and God viewed truth tells us there is a very specific message to the truth. In John 8:32, Jesus says, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” John 17:17 says, “Sanctify them through thy truth, they word is truth.”

Jesus came to earth bearing the truth of God. In John 8:40 He says they wanted to kill Him for bringing that message from God. We understand both God and Christ clearly represented the pure unadulterated, unequivocal truth. Men often struggle to admit that anything is perfectly constant and always true. This is not true of God but is evident of men in the exchange between Christ and Pilate. Jesus explains truth to Pilate who asked if He was the King of the Jews. Jesus said, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born and to this end have I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone who is of the truth heareth my voice.” Pilate saith unto Him, “What is truth?”

Of course the answer for Pilate is found in John 17:17; the truth is the Word of God. We need to realize defending the Word of God is defending the truth. One cannot

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Sunday - Bible Classes: 9:30AM  
Worship Services 10:20AM & 6:00PM  
Wednesday - Bible Classes 7:00PM

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be made free from the truth if we are unwilling to defend it. Jesus says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15) Peter then says the Apostles were sent from the Lord and that we need to heed their commandments also. (2 Pet. 3:2) So, what we conclude from Jesus bringing the truth to the world both through His teaching and the teaching of the Apostles is to keep His commandments would be tantamount to commanding us to defend what He and His Apostles have taught.

We cannot then be tentative about challenging error in religious teaching. We cannot be more concerned about the feelings of those who represent error than about our loyalty to the truth revealed by our Lord.

When someone suggests Jesus is not “the way, the truth and the life’, we are quick to defend His claim. Yet we hesitate to be critical of those who claim to believe in Him but do not seek His authority in all they do religiously. (Col. 3:17)

What is the difference? Some seem convinced there is one. Paul said God raised Jesus to be a Savior for Israel. (Acts 13:23) Yet they rejected Him and crucified Him on the cross of Calvary. We see that as a clear rejection of the Son of God and worthy of condemnation.

Paul tells the Christians in Galatia that accepting circumcision as a part of the gospel to please their Jewish friends and relatives would cause them to fall from grace. (Gal. 5:4) He further says those who came teaching such would be accursed. Now I ask you what is so different in this passage from what we see in the religious world today? Circumcision was being carried over from the Law of Moses. Today many religions bring concepts such as instrumental music from the worship of the Israelites under the Law of Moses. Do we view those people as causing one to fall from grace and worthy of being accursed? Is there justification for us to ignore error today that would have been condemned by the Apostles? I think not. That would be very inconsistent.

I understand how difficult it can be to tell our friends and relatives what they believe is contrary to Scripture. It is much easier for me to condemn the Judaizing teachers of the Galatian letter than to lovingly point out the errors of people I love in this present day.

There is no way to avoid the scathing responses of those who practice error and as Paul said, pervert the gospel of Christ. Jesus told His Apostles, and it applies as well to us, that the servant is not above the Master. (John 13:16) We can expect to be treated just as Jesus was if we defend His truth.

Brethren, it is a difficult and often thankless job being disciples of the Savior of mankind. We will all suffer persecution as we stand for the truth. (2 Tim. 3:12)

Know this that it is worth it when one soul is saved. (Mt. 16:26) Jesus warned us the way is straitened and rigid and few will find it. (Mt. 7:13,14) He also said that many

will call Him Lord and not do the will of the Father. (Matt. 7:21) These are the people James refers to as hearers of the word but not doers.

Rest assured the Lord is pleased with those who defend the truth He brought to man.

## No Place to Stop

For a long time we have been warning about the dangers of departing from a strict observance of the pattern set forth in the Scriptures. It has been pointed out that once any departure is allowed, there then becomes no stopping place. If one innovation is tolerated, soon many more will follow it. After a time, any similarity to true New Testament Christianity will be lost.

Some folks have ridiculed our warnings. They have said that we are being “too picky” when we insist on “book, chapter, and verse”. They think we are hindering the cause of Christ when we teach others to “speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent”.

If you have any doubts about the dangers we have been discussing, then take a look at these frightening quotations:

*“Currently there is some controversy among Churches of Christ regarding immersion. Many of us cannot deny that there are many devout Christians who are unimmersed.”*  
**(Gary Holloway, Bible Professor, Lipscomb University, Wineskins Magazine)**

*“We accept all believers in Christ, no matter what their religious heritage . . . we have chosen to emphasize what we have in common with other Christian groups rather than debate our differences . . . if they choose not to be immersed, we welcome them on the journey as part of this family . . . And, so, for those who have never been baptized, we welcome the opportunity to study with you about the beauty and significance of baptism, yet we will also welcome you. We will encourage all believers – all believers in Jesus Christ – to join us on our journey with God.”*

**(Mike Williams, Bible teacher, Lipscomb University, from sermon at Fourth Ave. Church of Christ, Franklin, TN, 3/15/06)**

Can't you see it? This is what happens when we fail to carefully follow Bible authority. God has given us a plain pattern to follow. Let's make sure that “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17).

**- by Greg Gwin**