

Prayer List

Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

Where did Assyrian king Sennacherib receive tribute from Hezekiah?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Bethel - Ge 28:10-22

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What Kind of Doctrine Is Essential

Dan Walters

The New Testament speaks of only two kinds of doctrine: that which is of God and is, therefore, sound doctrine; and that which is of man and, thus, unsound. The doctrine which God has revealed to man is called "sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9; 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:3), "the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42), "good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6), "the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9), and "the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Tim. 6:3). The doctrine which is of man's own invention is called "other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3), "doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1), "doctrines of men" (Col. 2:22), and "strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:9).

The doctrine which is of God has a positive effect upon those who believe and obey it. It changes their lives for the better and leads to eternal salvation. The doctrine which is of man has the opposite effect. Teaching and obeying the doctrine of God brings salvation to the teacher and to those who hear him (1 Tim. 4:16). Teaching and obeying the doctrines of men causes one to worship in vain (Matt. 15:9), to "depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1), to have not God (2 John 9), to be childish and unstable (Eph. 4:14), to be "proud, knowing nothing" (1 Tim. 6:4), and to be "accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

Some Christians have become discontent with this simple classification of sound and unsound doctrine. The advocates of unity-in-diversity have found it necessary to divide the doctrine contained in the New Testament into three kinds: (1) that which must be obeyed in order to become a Christian, (2) that which is of a purely moral nature, and (3) that which is of a specifically religious nature and applies to those who have already become Christians. They argue that the first is essential; if this is

disregarded, one remains a lost alien sinner. They say that the second is also essential; one who violates God's moral law and will not repent should be withdrawn from. But they maintain that the third may be violated with impunity; one who is already a Christian may teach and practice man's doctrine without the need of repentance, so long as he is sincere.

The most effective argument in support of this position is that since salvation is by the grace of God and must not rest upon the wisdom of man, a Christian must not be expected to understand all of God's teaching, especially that part that must be determined by deductive reasoning. Some brethren have come to the conclusion that direct commands must be obeyed, but that approved apostolic examples and necessary inferences are optional. But even if this were valid, it would not end the problem of division. "Let your women keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor. 14:34) is a direct command. Yet brethren argue about whether this and certain other commands apply to modern Christians. There is no point of doctrine so clear that it is not disputed by some sincere person who believes that he is a faithful Christian. Thus the unity-in-diversity position must eventually lead to a belief in salvation by faith only.

Pat Boone, the apostate, now believes that a faithful Christian can continue to be a member of any Protestant denomination or of the Roman Catholic Church. He believes that no one should be withdrawn from except for being a moral reprobate. His position is more logical than that of many of our brethren who are following the Ketcherside line. It is a fact that many good and sincere persons misunderstand the action and purpose of baptism. If we insist that they must understand and obey this doctrine to be saved, is not this allowing salvation to depend upon man's wisdom rather than God's grace, according to the familiar logic?

If all the references to doctrine in the New Testament, both sound and unsound, are noted, it will be seen that the word applies to the first principles of the gospel (Heb. 6:1, 2), to morality (Rev. 2:14, 15), and to religious teaching applying to Christians (Col. 2:22; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; Rom. 16:17). All of the directions we have received from Christ are essential doctrine. They are also law. Those who have respect of persons "are convinced of the law as transgressors (Jas. 2:9). First John 3:4 says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law." So if it is possible for a Christian to commit sin, then a Christian lives under the rule of God's law. Under every dispensation of religion God's law has included those things which we call "moral" and those things we call "religious." God has never allowed the religious part of the law to be disregarded. In

fact, religious sins under the Law of Moses were punished even more severely than moral sins. Will any brother affirm that we are no longer subject to any religious laws, or that breaking a religious law of the New Testament is not a sin? If not, then teaching or practicing an unsound religious doctrine is a sin that requires repentance. There is no promise of salvation to those who die in sin, whether they be alien or Christian. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins" (1 John 1:9). Where does this leave the Christian who refuses to repent, confess, and ask forgiveness?

The whole question boils down to whether God has promised to save every sincere believer in Christ, even if he has been deceived into a continual practice of sin, moral or religious. Brethren of the modern persuasion are heading toward "faith only" and "once saved, always saved." There is no scriptural support for the idea that some doctrine is essential and some is not.

One is made to wonder why so many intelligent young men are attracted to this worn-out theory which is the essence of denominationalism. The answer seems to be a widespread disillusionment with the restoration movement because it is assumed to be a failure. This assumption is based upon two facts: (1) that the majority of the so-called Christian world has not accepted it, and (2) that those who have accepted the basic principle are divided into many hostile parties.

It must be realized that numbers are relatively unimportant, and that faithful children of God have been a minority in every age. In the time of Noah there were only eight; in the time of Elijah there were 7,000, still a small remnant of Israel. All the preaching of John the Baptist and of the Savior resulted in only 120 faithful disciples who waited for the kingdom on the day of Pentecost. Yet this does not indicate that John and Jesus were failures!

It must also be realized that religious division and hostility have occurred among God's people since the day of Cain and Abel. 1 Cor. 11:19 says, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." "Heresies" means factions or sects; they will continue to be born, to grow, and to die. Yet this does not prove that those who are faithful to God and His doctrine have failed, or that they are responsible for the divisions. It is our duty to preach and practice sound doctrine without counting heads to see how many are in agreement. If we are in agreement with Christ, it is enough. Truth

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