

WHY WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO MEDITATE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

We encourage each one of the flock to meditate on the importance of doctrine because there are those today who say it is not important. There are those who say preaching needs to be more entertaining and in no way offensive to those who are volunteering their own good time to come to services. There are those who say the Lord's church is in transition and it is best served by leaving out doctrinal matters and preaching only Christ in love and tolerance for all things. There are those who say that doctrine divides, but love in the form of acceptance of all things unites believers – “unity in diversity.” Are these things true? Is doctrine particularly important to the growth and welfare of the church? The Bible makes the following points concerning doctrine.

First, Jesus taught doctrine. In Matthew 7:28, at the conclusion of the His sermon on the mount, it is said of Him, “...the people were astonished at His doctrine.” Webster defines doctrine as teaching, instruction, that which is taught; or a principle or body of principles. To say we don't need doctrine is to say we don't need any teaching or instruction. However, the people of Jesus' time needed it, and we need it today. Jesus taught them the doctrine they needed and He teaches us the doctrine we need. “Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me.” (John 7:16)

Second, Jesus taught His apostles to teach believers all things. Matthew 28:20 tells us that, upon converting the lost, the baptized were to be taught to observe all things the Lord commanded. This includes doctrine – refer back to Webster's (or Strong's or Thayer's) definition. There are those today who want to add their own thoughts to what Jesus commanded. However, the Bible clearly condemns those who do. 2 John 9 admonishes us, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

Third, the early church gave attention to doctrine. Acts 2:42 tells us the church in Jerusalem “continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine...” Paul told Timothy to “speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1) The apostles were condemned by the Jews who said, “... behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” (Acts 5:28) If those in the early church had not proclaimed doctrine, would there have been other congregations? Where would we be today?

Fourth, the doctrine of Christ promotes unity and peace while those outside the doctrine of Christ cause division. Paul wrote in Romans 16:17, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” Paul also told Timothy In 1 Timothy 1:3, “...abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine” Many say that doctrine should not be taught because it cannot be clearly understood, because different men read the same thing and teach different meanings from it. If doctrine was so mysterious and complex, why would Paul tell us to “mark and avoid” those who are contrary to it? (Romans 16:17) Peter speaks to those who knew truth (including doctrine) then, in 2 Peter 1:12, which tells us we can know it today, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth”

Brethren, the Bible teaches clearly that doctrine is important. If we would be Christians (imitators of Christ), then we must teach His doctrine, we must learn His doctrine, and we must obey His doctrine – just the way He taught it and had it written for our learning. Let us remember the words of the Hebrews writer in Hebrews 2:1, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

- The Elders