

“If Any Man Teach A Different Doctrine”

“... and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questioning and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain ...” (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Some commentaries, following the King James translation, apply all this section to those who teach differently than that which the apostle had earlier written about the duties of servants to their masters, concluding with this command: *“these things teach and exhort.”* However, translators of the American Standard Version begin a new paragraph at this point, suggesting a new subject is now being discussed. Clearly what was revealed in these verses would apply to what had been earlier written about servants *“under the yoke”* (this is, after all, the *“sound words”* which came from our Lord), but it appears, at least to this writer, that the warning against teaching a different doctrine is aimed at all deviations from the doctrine of Christ. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus when he was going into Macedonia, urging him that he might *“charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine”* and thus it does not do violence to the text to presume that the apostle has returned to that early instruction. This often occurs in Paul’s writings: he will introduce a subject, leave it for a time to discuss another, then return to and enlarge upon the subject formerly introduced. It seems this is what he does here in 1 Tim. 6:3-5.

How much the religious world is at variance with Paul’s command in these verses. The “unity in diversity” theory is that we should ignore any doctrinal differences we might have, just be united in love. Love for one another is exceedingly important and in personal dealings and ills, will restore peace and harmony to a church beset by internal strife, but it does not resolve every ill. Doctrinal error will not be resolved by just “loving one another,” it can only be resolved when both disputants are fully committed to abide by the dictates of the scriptures.

The person or persons with which our text deals is one who disagrees with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and His doctrine. Such a one is a “know it all” (*“puffed up”*) but in essence he knows nothing. He dotes about questions and disputes of words (dotes -- sick -- an unhealthy attitude) about certain things. Like the person who thinks of nothing beyond his imagined or real ills, some individuals cannot move beyond something they have a “fixation” on: almost every Bible class will be disrupted by such a one who brings up

his "pet question." And, as the apostle reveals, such dispute of words bring envy, strife, railing (speaking strongly, condemning one's opponent), and evil surmising. Such are corrupted in mind and bereft (destitute) of truth.

We must contend earnestly for the faith which has been delivered (Jude 3). We are warned that "*whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God*" (2 Jn. 9). There can be no dispute that if we teach a different doctrine (gospel) we will be accursed (Gal. 1:69). We must never forget there is one faith to which we must be obedient (Eph. 4:4f; Acts 6:5). We must abide in the words of Christ if we will be a true disciple (Jn. 8:31f). We should remember that we can understand God's words and are commanded to do so (Eph. 3:3f; 5:17). But, we must also remember that with God there are some things that are indifferent. We must be careful that we do not loose what God has bound; nor "bind, what God has not bound." We must be sincere in our search for truth, assured that if we wish to know God's truth, we can come to the knowledge of it.

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