

I Will Build My Church

The Purpose and Characteristics of Christ's Church

4 The Church is "One", "Holy", "Catholic", and "Apostolic", Part 3

January 26, 2020

Ephesians 4:4-16

4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

8 Therefore it says, "*WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.*"

9 (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

To the Glory of God

Now over the last several weeks, we have been looking at the four Characteristics of a true, biblical Church as defined by the Nicene Creed (AD325).¹ And this attempt by the early Church at arriving at "Orthodoxy" (Right Believing) was that a real Church was:

1. One
2. Holy
3. Catholic
4. Apostolic

And to try to grasp what the men who led the Church some 1700 years ago meant by the term "One", we began to look at the four aspects that Dr. Luke was "carried along" by God the Holy Spirit to pen down in **The Acts 2:42** that actually made the Church to be "One" that says:

They [the people of the early Church] **were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

Here, Dr. Luke, who was commissioned by the Apostle Paul, tells us that the Church of Jesus was "**continually devoting**" themselves to four aspects:

1. The Apostle's Teaching
2. Fellowship
3. The "Breaking of Bread" (the Lord's Supper)
4. Prayer

... and these four aspects are what made the Church to be "One".

So, last week, we began to examine what Luke meant when he talked about the "Apostle's Teaching". And in order to go further into this, we need to ask and answer a very important Question:

Does the Church *Need* Doctrine?

¹ The Creed was updated in AD 381 at the *Council of Constantinople*; but the section concerning the Characteristics of an "Orthodox" Church remained the same.

And, in order to answer that Question, we *first* need to find out just what the word "Doctrine" means. The word that was translated as "Teaching" in **The Acts 2:42** comes from a Greek word *didachee* (Strong's #1322), that means: *Doctrine; or Instruction; or Teaching*. So, the word "Doctrine" means: *Teaching or Instruction*. So, when **The Acts 2:42** says that the people of the Church devoted themselves continually to the "Apostle's Teaching", that could also read the "Apostle's *Doctrine*", or the "Apostle's *Instruction*".

But, in the Bible, we find two different kinds of Doctrine:

1. The Apostle's Doctrine (Divine Truth of Scripture)
2. False Doctrine (Man-made)

Now, what the people of the early Church were devoting themselves continually to was the "Doctrine", or the "Teaching", or the "Instruction" of the men that Jesus called to be Apostles. And, by *accepting*, or *receiving*, or by *believing* the Teaching or the Doctrine of the Apostles, by default, that also means that the early Church was also *rejecting* the False or Man-made Doctrines that existed at that time.

So, there were two things going on, *simultaneously*, in the early Church about this Issue. There was an ongoing and continuous effort by the Leaders of the early Church to *receive*, and *accept*, and *believe*, and *teach*, and *obey* the Doctrine that God the Holy Spirit had "carried along" the Apostles² to write down. But there was also an effort, by those same Leaders, to *reject*, and to *denounce*, and to *cast away* all False and Man-made doctrines that were being developed.

And that tells us that, at the time that Dr. Luke wrote **The Acts 2:42**, there was already an established, fixed, body of Teaching that was used by the Leaders of the early Church to instruct the people of the Church in the Christian Faith. And because everybody was being taught the same thing, the result was that the Church was "One". So, one of the biggest contributors to the Church being "One" is that the Leaders of the Church only *teach* and the people of the Church only *believe* the Apostle's Teaching.

False or Man-made Doctrines will *never* allow the Christian Church to be "One". And that is pretty clear. But we also have to know

² Five New Testament Books were written by men, who were commissioned by the Apostles.

that haphazard, confusing, or contradictory Teaching, by the Leaders, will *never* lead to the Church be “One”, either. And, by allowing people to believe whatever they want to believe, the Church will also *never* be “One”.

So, if we hope to achieve biblical Orthodoxy in this Church, then the Leaders of the Covenant of Peace Church have to first, *learn*, secondly, *believe*, and then thirdly, *teach* the very *same* Doctrine. And the people of the Covenant of Peace Church must agree that they will only believe that single Doctrine, the Apostle’s Teaching, if we ever hope to be “One”.

So, to ask the Question, “*Does the Church NEED Doctrine?*” is to ask, “*Does the Church NEED Divine Truth?*” And if the Answer to that Question is “Yes!”, then we should then go on to the *second* Question: “*Whose Doctrine, What Doctrine do we NEED?*” Does the modern Church on the earth in the 21st Century NEED the very *same* Doctrine, the very *same* Teaching, the very *same* Instruction that the Apostle’s gave the early Church?

And to do that requires the effort that this Church has been engaged in now for over twenty years:

1. *Re-discover* the Apostles’ Teaching
2. *Believe* the Apostles’ Teaching
3. *Love the Apostles’ Teaching*
4. *Teach* the Apostles’ Teaching
5. *Reject* all false and Man-made Teaching

Now this effort doesn’t mean that we have a quarrel with other Protestants. I don’t. It simply means that we are engaged in an honest, sincere, and ongoing effort to *rediscover* biblical Christianity so we may be pleasing to the Lord. So, I’m not interested in simply agreeing with what somebody else has already determined to be true so we can fit in with a Denomination or a spiritual Movement. I desire Truth. I want *whatever* the Scriptures teach. And if, by doing this, we fit in with others, then praise God! But, if by seeking after orthodox Christianity we may differ from others in secondary or third-tier Issues, then we should praise God for that, too.

It simply *cannot* ever be wrong to try to be Biblical. It is *always* correct to seek to be in accord with Scripture. Now we may not always

succeed, but the effort to try to *only* teach, and *only* believe what the Bible actually says can't ever be wrong.

So, "Doctrine" is the Divine Truth that the Church should teach, and what Christians should believe. It is what Dr. Luke meant in **The Acts 2:42** when he talked about the "Apostle's Teaching". And that seems to be elementary to me, but there is an amazing phenomenon occurring in much of the modern Church that teaches things like:

- ✓ Doctrine is dry, dusty, boring, and man-made religion
- ✓ Doctrine divides people
- ✓ Doctrine is Pharisaical
- ✓ Doctrine is Legalism
- ✓ Doctrine hinders the Move of God's Spirit
- ✓ We don't need Doctrine, all we need is Jesus

Let's examine these:

Doctrine is Dry, Dusty, Boring, and Man-Made Religion

Now, I would agree that Man-made Doctrine *is* bad and wrong, because it *doesn't* honor God at all. Because, God went to great lengths to give us Divine Truth, and that is what the Apostles' Teaching is, Divine Truth. And so, for anyone to believe a lie, when the Truth of Scripture is *available*, is to spurn the Love of God that gave us that Truth. But we also have to understand that, ultimately, a lie is *destructive* to people. So, we should all work very hard to *eliminate* all Man-made Doctrine from the Church and devote ourselves *continually* to the Apostles' Teaching. And there is nothing dry, dull, or boring about that. Learning about eternal Matters has been the most thrilling exercise of my life.

And *that* is what the Christian Church believes and teaches. So, Biblical Doctrine (the Apostles' Teaching) is what God the Holy Spirit revealed in Scripture about all the issues of Life and Godliness. And, based on *that* definition, to not have *any* Doctrine at all would mean that the Lord of the Church has not loved His Bride enough to help prepare her to be what He is coming back for in **Ephesians 5:25-27**:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave

Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

When John saw the Church in his vision, he didn't see a *wayward*, *rebellious*, or *unprepared* Bride. No, he saw a Church that had...

The Revelation 19:7b&8

... made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

... so, it is *unthinkable* that the Church of Jesus would be ignorant of what God has revealed about the Issues in Scripture that would help her become a church like that. And it would be *equally* unthinkable for the Church of Jesus to not care what God has said.

So, Divine Truth (the Apostles' Teaching) is as much a part of the true Church as people are. Without people you don't have a true Church. But without the Apostles' Teaching-, you also don't have a true Church.

Now the Holy Bible makes the claim that it is "Inspired". And this word (Greek *theopneustos*) has to do with the mysterious way in which God the Holy Spirit "carried along" the 40 writers of the Scriptures. They wrote, using their own language, their own logic, and using their own terminology and colloquial phrases, and yet, what they wrote down was *exactly* what God wanted.

But it wasn't dictation. Nor did God sovereignly take their hands and cause them to write what He told them. No, these men were free to write *whatever* was in their minds. And yet, the Words of Scripture are the most unique and special Words of any words on earth because they were "exhaled" out of the Mouth of God. And this distinction gives the Scriptures a *higher* Value and Worth than any other book or writing.

2 Timothy 3:16&17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

And an *extension* of the concept of Inspiration is that the Words of Scripture are also:

Inerrant	Scriptures <i>does not</i> contain Error
Infallible	Scripture <i>cannot</i> contain Error
Authoritative	Scripture has the Authority to “bind the conscience” and bring Conviction to the soul
Eternal	Scripture has <i>always</i> been; and <i>will always</i> be true
Relevant	Scripture is as useful for our lives in the 21 st Century as it was when it was first written
Sufficient	Scripture is all the Church needs in order to understand God’s Will and Ways

Now, sadly, it is true that through the years many “churches” (and individual believers) have chosen to completely *ignore* what the Bible says, or take what it says out of context, or add to what it says. And what they developed was NOT inspired. God didn’t speak it. They simply *invented* Beliefs that they were NOT authorized to teach.

And this is what is called “False/Man-made Doctrine.” And however sincere they may have been, *nobody* has the right to invent Doctrine. Nobody. God revealed all that He desired to say to Mankind about Divine Truth to 40 men by way of Inspiration, and these men wrote all that Revelation down in 66 Books. So, there is no more Divine Truth to receive or learn or teach other than what has already been written down in the pages of the Holy Bible.

So, from that standpoint, the ability that *anyone* may have to receive new Revelation from God is over. The Scriptures are closed, and the Canon is complete. And it isn’t over because God, somehow, lost His Power. Nobody today receives new Revelation because all that God chose to reveal to us was revealed, and God has no more Revelation to give to us. Now, in case you doubt what I am saying, please hear what Jude said about that in **Jude 3b**:

... I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Here, Jude infallibly teaches that the people of the Christian Church are to “**contend earnestly**” for *the* Faith which was “**once for all**

handed down to the saints”. And the Faith that Jude was talking about here is the *true* Faith, the *Christian* Faith. So, we are commanded here to earnestly contend for the Christian Faith. And then Jude goes on to say that the Christian Faith was:

... once for all handed down to the saints.

In other words, we are to continually strive for Orthodoxy. We are to forever seek what God gave to the Apostles. And the fact that Jude says that the Faith that we are to “earnestly contend” for was “once handed down to the saints” tells us that the body of Teaching that makes up the Christian Faith that was “once handed down” had *already been received*, and it *had already been confirmed*, and *articulated*, and *developed*, and *written down*, and was *already being taught and learned* at the time that Jude wrote this Epistle, or else we wouldn’t know what we are supposed to “contend earnestly” for.

And Jude used a very interesting word here. He uses a Greek word (*epagoonizomai* Strong’s #1864) that was translated into English as “**contend**”. And to “contend” for something is NOT to “receive” something. It is *not* to “acquire” something, or to “initiate” it, or to “create” a thing. No, to “contend” for something is to: *strive for something that already exists, against great opposition or difficulties*. And this word also means: *to defend something that already exists, against attacks*.

So, Jude never tells anyone to go out and get “new Revelation”. Rather, he commands the Church to strive for *what already exists* against great opposition, and then to defend *what already exists* against attacks. And, in this case, Jude wants us to contend for the Christian Faith that is being attacked and warped and ignored and altered by the false Teachers and apostates.

But he doesn’t even stop there. Jude then goes on to command the Church to contend *earnestly, sincerely, with gusto, relentlessly, and without hesitation*. And there is, not only, a *seriousness* to Jude’s words, but there is also an *urgency* in them. So, in every sense of the word, “contending earnestly for the already handed down to the saints Faith” is truly a “Life and Death” Issue. So, this, “contending” is the *primary* Function and Duty and Obligation and Joy of the Church: To continually strive to *possess* the Truth, and then to *maintain* that Truth, and to *herald* that Truth, and to *believe* that Truth, and then to

love that Truth, and then to *obey* that Truth, and then to *defend* that Truth from all who would pervert the Right Way of the Lord. Everything else that the Church does is a distant second to this one thing.

So, for anyone to say that God has given them “new Revelation” is to say two things:

1. The Revelation that we already have is woefully inadequate and requires additional Information.
2. The Christian Faith has not yet been established, but is still being developed through that new Revelation.

... which means that what Jude and others have taught in Scripture is wrong. But if that is true, then I have a Question: *What area of Christianity is not clear?* For example, “*Do we still need Information about the Nature and Attributes of God?*” “*Are we lacking something about how lost people are saved, or about how saved people are sanctified?*” And “*Are we unclear about the Qualifications of what a true, biblical Church looks like?*” No. No. And, No. We may want more Information, but we certainly have not lacked for Truth. God has been Gracious and Good, and has given us *everything* we need to go from this earth all the way to Heaven.

And yet, all through the Centuries, people would periodically rise up, who said they had a *new*, or a *unique*, or a *different* Revelation from God that was *apart* from the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. And this is the foundation of all the many cults and false religions that the lost, pagan world has embraced. So, even though these cults and false religions don’t agree with each other, they all agree on one thing: The 66 Books of the Bible are wrong, and God has raised them up to give us what we’re missing.

Yet, with a horrific track record of abuse, scandal, and deception, amazingly, some today still lay claim to be hearing or receiving new Revelation from God that is *outside* the orthodox Canon of 66 Books. But even among those who lay claim to believe that the Bible is true, many of these groups promote human logic, human intellect, and human reasoning to be of an equal (or even higher) standing as Scripture. Others seek to elevate Church History and Tradition to be of equal validity as Scripture. And still others seek to *spiritualize* their

wayward behavior in adopting unbiblical Teachings by saying that God “revealed” or “showed” or “spoke” these “new Revelations” to them, and, thus, they are to be accepted and taught because of their supposed Divine Origin. And still others say that we live in a radically different culture than the people of Bible times, and, therefore, we must “alter” or “change” or “update” the Bible to suite our present circumstances.

But, in all of these cases, no matter how sincere the people may be, they all agree with one thing, the 66 Books of the Holy Bible are *insufficient* to give us what we need to know and believe and teach, and, thus, we need other “sources” of Divine Revelation *beside* the Bible to either *supplement* or *replace* Scripture as the origination of all Doctrine. But we must understand that when any Church or any individual does that, they are wrong, and they are operating *outside of* and in *contradiction to* God’s Will. The Apostle Paul wrote to the young Pastor of the Church at Ephesus, Timothy, to tell him that all Scripture is:

... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Nothing else in all the earth provides that kind of Information that, when properly trained in it, the man of God may be adequate and equipped for every Work that God has for him to do, beside Scripture.

The truth is that everybody on earth, whether they are saved or lost, already *has* a Doctrine. Everybody *already* believes certain things, and they *already* disbelieve or reject other things. As we go through life, our parents and teachers and other people along with songs, books, movies, television programs, and other things all contribute to what we accept (believe) and what we reject (disbelieve). And if everybody was to formally write what they believed down on paper, what you would have is “Doctrine”. So, it simply isn’t possible for us to live in this life without Doctrine.

So, the problem is not Doctrine itself. It is *false* or *Man-made* doctrine. Because it is not as though *some* people have Doctrine while *others* don’t. No, *everybody* already believes certain things, and they *already* reject or disbelieve other things. So, everybody *already has* a Doctrine that they go by. The problem is that *some*, *much*, or *all* of

what we already believe is either not in Scripture at all, or it is inconsistent and/or contradictory to what is in Scripture. So, the ongoing effort to earnestly contend for the "once handed down to the saints Faith" is to *systematically* cast out the parts of what we already believe that are false, and to become more and more biblical.

So, part of what it means for the Church to be "One" is that we are engaged in an ongoing effort to honestly examine what we already believe and teach, to make sure that our Doctrine is in accord with the Apostles Teaching in Scripture.

How Do We Do That?

And the 16th Century Reformers put forth a Concept during the Reformation that will aid us in this endeavor. They called it "*Sola Scriptura*", which in Latin means: "*from the Scriptures alone*". The idea is that the Church should be engaged in an ongoing struggle to make sure that everything it believes and everything it teaches is "from the Scriptures" and "from the Scriptures ALONE".

There is no belief, no matter how sincerely we believe it and no matter how long we have believed it, that we should not be willing to let go and cast down as the Truth of Scripture becomes clear to us. All of our Doctrine, all of our Beliefs should be based firmly in the Word of God, for only God's Word is inspired.

So, a true Church will be devoting themselves continually to the Apostles' Teaching by practicing the concept of Sola Scriptura in what it believes and teaches.

Doctrine Divides People

Another Argument as to why we don't need and should not want Doctrine is because Doctrine divides people. And this logic says that "Human Relationships" are infinitely more important than Doctrine. And God has repeatedly told us to love each other, and, so, God would *never* divide people over Doctrine.

Now, first, we need to remember that the word "Doctrine" simply means; *what the Bible says*. So, Doctrine is "Divine Truth". And the fact that this Argument is based on "what the Bible says" means that the people, who make this Argument, believe in Doctrine. They believe that

we should all know and obey "what the Bible says". So, in reality, their Argument is: *"One part of Divine Truth teaches us to love each other. And so, we should reject other parts of Divine Truth because those parts force us to not obey this part."* So, in reality, this Argument simply seeks to elevate one part of Scripture above another part. But what would be much better is for us to obey *every* part of Divine Truth.

The reality is that Doctrine *does* divide people. But not in the way that these people think. But to find out, we need to ask, *"Why?"* Why does Doctrine divide people? Doctrine separates between people who believe what the Bible says is true and who seek to obey what the Bible says, from those who either don't believe the Bible is true, or who don't seek to obey the Bible, or both.

You see, if "Doctrine" is defined as:

What God the Holy Spirit revealed in Scripture about all the Issues of Life and Godliness, What the Christian Church believes and teaches.

... then why would *that* ever divide any truly born-again believer? Why would *any* genuinely saved person object to the Church of Jesus teaching only what is in the Holy Bible? There is only one reason: some people refuse to believe that the Bible is true, and they insist on "doing what is right in their own eyes". So true, biblical Doctrine (the Apostles' Teaching) only divides between rebels and slaves of Jesus. It separates between sheep and goats. It distinguishes between those who find Joy in obeying Jesus and those who are in hostile rebellion to the Truth of Scripture. So, Doctrine is what makes the Church to be distinguished from the pagan world and to be that shining City set on a hill.

If everybody in the Church believed the Bible to be the infallible Word of the one true living God, and they read it and studied it sincerely and honestly to find God's Will concerning Life and Godliness, there would be absolutely no division about the Essential Elements of the Christian Faith, none. The only areas where there might be slight differences would be in the *application* of that Divine Truth, not in whether it is Truth.

The members of a true, biblical Church have an ongoing responsibility and privilege to crucify their flesh, mortify the deeds of their bodies, and decrease in their own importance to the degree that they struggle against the lusts of their flesh, by the Power of the Holy

Spirit, to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in their daily lives, all to the Glory of God. And among people like that, there are no Divisions of any eternal significance. And those people are all "One".

Divisions exist among false converts, and among tares, and among those who are deceived about their own Conversion. But those who know and believe the Apostles' Teaching are *ongoingly* repenting, they are *ongoingly* believing, they are *ongoingly* striving, and they are *ongoingly* obeying. And that is what allows them to be "One".

Doctrine is Pharisaical/Doctrine is Legalism

These two are basically the same argument. And to respond, we must first define what "Legalism" is and is not. First, let me say that Legalism is evil. It is sinful and false. Legalism is a heresy. In fact, Legalism is the very *first* heresy to attack the Christian Church in its infancy. It is described in **The Acts 15 1&2**:

Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

Legalism reared its ugly head here in the Church that was in Jerusalem, and is also called the "heresy of the Judaizers". Legalism is the single most prevalent heresy on earth. It is a *perversion* of Grace. Legalism teaches that God's Sovereign Grace is not enough for Salvation, and so, lost human beings have to "do something" to earn God's Favor and deserve Salvation. So, Legalism *ignores* the Grace of God. It is being a Pharisee.

But Legalism is, very *narrowly*, an attack against God's Grace in Salvation. And so, it should be confronted and defeated by Scripture every time it tries to come into the Church. The Elders must keep diligent watch over God's sheep so that this evil is recognized quickly, exposed, and cast out, or the result will be a loss of Biblical Truth about Salvation in the mind and heart of the people.

Now the flip side to Legalism is another equally evil heresy that attacks God's Grace in Salvation called "Antinomianism". And Antinomianism is also called "Lawlessness". This heresy perverts the correct understanding of God's sovereign Grace by *abusing* it.

Antinomianism teaches that since we are saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone, that we are then free to live according to the dictates of our own hearts, and are under no obligation to obey the Bible, and live in subjection to its Commands and Prohibitions after we have been saved.

And if Antinomianism is not confronted and defeated, it results in terrible sins and pagan immorality becoming common place in the Church. God used the Apostle Paul and James to confront and expose and defeat Antinomianism:

Romans 5:19-6:22

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall

not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

James 1:21-25

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

James 2:10-26

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, "*DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY*," also said, "*DO NOT COMMIT MURDER*." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. But

someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "**AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,**" and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Now many people, through the years, have pitted James against Paul when discussing Salvation, as though they were teaching two different ways of being saved. The reality is that, when Paul was teaching so forcefully that we are Justified by Grace ALONE, through Faith ALONE, in the finished Work of Christ ALONE, he was doing battle against the Legalists who were teaching that Grace was *inadequate* to save. And so, when James speaks here and says (in verse 24):

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

... he was NOT contradicting Paul. James was doing battle against the Antinomians and refuting their heresy that said that once a person was saved (by Grace through Faith ALONE), he was then free to live anyway he chose. James said, "*No!*", and gave several examples of how already saved people are supposed to live their lives: in humble obedience to God.

So, James and Paul were NOT facing each other and disagreeing on how lost people are saved. Instead they were standing back to back and *defending* the Christian Faith against attacks against the Grace of God. Paul was emphasizing Faith in his defense against the heresy of Legalism, while James was emphasizing Good Works in his defense against the heresy of Antinomianism. But both men believed that lost people are justified by Grace through Faith, and NOT by any Good Works. And both men also agreed that once a lost person was saved, he

then should live his life with abandon to the Glory of God and produce many Good Works (fruit).

But the heresy of Legalism is only, very *narrowly*, associated with how lost people are justified. Yet most of the time people scream "*Legalism!*" in our day, they are talking primarily about *Sanctification*, how already saved people should live their lives on the earth. Look what Jesus said about this in **Matthew 7:13&14:**

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Here, Jesus is speaking to people who are already saved and telling them how they are to live their lives, now that they have already experienced the Miracle of the New Birth. Regenerated souls are to reject the "*wide Gate*". Instead we are to love and cherish the "*small Gate*" and the "*narrow Way*". Why? Because the Way that is "*broad*" has to do with living our lives "*according to the dictates of our own hearts*". It is "*doing what is right in our own eyes*". It is a way of life that always justifies what it does based on human logic, pragmatism, and what brings us the most immediate Benefit.

The saved soul seeks to live his life to God's Glory, *regardless* of what that might mean to himself. So, he seeks to be submissive to the Authority of Scripture, not his own logic. He prays, "*Not my will, but Yours be done.*"

It is imperative that we understand that Salvation does NOT eliminate the desire we all have to be happy and contented and satisfied. No, Salvation is the only thing that allows human beings to experience the fullness of Joy! But, it does so NOT in us becoming more and more Self-centered, but in us *selflessly* living in such a way that displays the Worth and Value of Jesus. So, we enter into the highest and deepest and widest and broadest experience of Joy and Delight and Happiness and Satisfaction in God ALONE being magnified above all else. And so, the Gate to true and lasting Joy is very "*small*". And the Way of Delight to the highest degree is very "*narrow*". And Jesus said:

... there are few who find it

... and so, seeking after *that* Way and striving to enter *that* Gate is NOT Legalism. It is humble Obedience. But to those who do NOT seek that Gate, and who see no Benefit in that Way, at all, this Path looks hard and cruel and lifeless and dead and dreary and dull and boring, and would never attract them in a million years. And so, they love the *broad* Way and they delight in the *wide* Gate. And they perish.

We must understand that it is NOT Legalism to obey the Bible. It is rebellion not to. So, when the Bible speaks like this:

Romans 8:1-13

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

... it is NOT promoting Legalism. But, if you're not truly born again, and/or you are in a false and worldly church that doesn't teach these things, talking about how we can "put to death the deeds of the body" seems terrible and pretty draconian. And so, those people label this part of biblical Truth as being "Legalism". Yet, Paul said if we do these things:

... we will live.

So, by holding fast to what the Apostles actually taught, we will avoid the heresy of Legalism, and we will enter that small Gate and we will walk on the narrow Way, and we too, will live forever!

Doctrine Hinders the Move of God's Spirit

Now this is an interesting Argument. People, who lay claim to hear directly from God seek to instruct the Church on how to "move" under the Leadership of the Spirit of God. And they seek to introduce all sorts of strange, weird, and unbiblical practices that, they say, is in accord with the "Will" of the Spirit. Some examples are uncontrollable laughter, falling on the floor, and uttering "prophetic" messages. Many, who engage in these activities lay claim to be "led" by God the Spirit. And so, the logic goes, those who *oppose* these things are labeled as "*quenching the Spirit*", and some even suggest that if anyone doesn't immediately agree with whatever is being taught, they are actually "*blaspheming against the Holy Spirit*".

And one of the biggest objections these people have is Doctrine. They say, "*Doctrine hinders the Move of God's Spirit in the Church*". And that is amazing since the definition of Doctrine is: "Biblical Truth". So, these people are actually teaching that too much "Biblical Truth" will hinder the Move of God's Spirit. So, are we to believe that the only way to have a great Move of God's Spirit in the Church is for the people to either be ignorant of Divine Truth or to ignore it?

But why would God the Holy Spirit be so against the Holy Bible? Well, He isn't, because the 66 Books of the Bible are the most important Product that God the Holy Spirit ever produced on the earth. Remember that Scripture came by way of "Inspiration". God the Holy Spirit "carried along" 40 men to write down these words.

So, *why* do these people say this? Well, primarily, because the Bible does NOT teach what they are teaching. In other words, these people are teaching things that are NOT in Scripture. And, normally, that would be an immediate give-away that the Church is NOT to go along with that. But these people justify that obvious problem by saying that God either "showed" them to do this, or directly "told" them

to do it. And since God told them, anyone who disagrees with it is fighting against God.

But the reality is that when we fight against what the Bible does not teach, we are in one mind and one accord with the Spirit of God. Because God the Spirit will never “lead” or “do” or “command” or “promote” *anything* that is contrary to what He has already inspired in Scripture. No one has been authorized by God the Spirit to engage in any activity that is not clearly commanded by the Holy Bible. And developing a purely biblical Doctrine (the Apostles’ Teaching) will guard against unbiblical practices.

We Don’t Need Doctrine; All We Need is Jesus

Now I actually agree with this one to some extent. I agree that, *ultimately*, the only thing that matters is that we love Jesus. Because if we truly *love* Jesus, we will *obey* Jesus. But we have a problem. Because in order for us to love and serve and follow Jesus, we have to, first, know Who Jesus is. And finding out Who Jesus is is Doctrine.

You see, all of the false religions and all of the cults have developed and manufactured a “jesus” that is different from the Jesus Who is revealed in Scripture. For example, the “jesus” of the Mormons is the half-brother of Lucifer. The “jesus” of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is an exalted angel, but NOT God. The “jesus” of the Muslims is a imam, but NOT Deity. The “jesus” of the Jews was simply a wayward rabbi. To the Hindus, “jesus” was one of many gods. And to the hippie, “jesus” was a long-haired rebel who fought against the established Order.

So, in order to know, and believe in, and love, and obey the *real* Jesus, so we may worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, we must read and study the Bible so we can develop a full and accurate *understanding* about Who Jesus is, and what Jesus did while He was here, what He is doing right now, and what Jesus will do when He comes back. And the development of that full and accurate understanding about Jesus is Doctrine. So, having a biblical Doctrine (the Apostles’ Teaching) will help us to know Jesus rightly, so we may worship Him fully.

The Bible is crystal clear about this, dear friends. The early Church was “One”. And part of what made them “One” was that they were *continually* devoting themselves to the Apostles’ Teaching. And so, if we hope to be “One”, if we hope to be a real, genuine, biblical, and

orthodox Church, we, too, must devote ourselves *continually* to the Apostles' Teaching. And, right now, we are. And, by God's Grace, we always will.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.