

Sound Doctrine

by Graham Jones - The Church at Gun Hill

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2 v 42.

In this study we shall be looking at the subject of doctrine, sound doctrine - teaching and instruction. We need to be taught of the Lord. That is what the New Testament sets before us. That is what we need: sound doctrine - safe, healthy, uncorrupted doctrine. What is of God is sound. Right doctrine, and this is the practical side, becomes the foundation, because the sound doctrine is Jesus and Jesus is always the sure foundation. If you have got the right doctrine, you have got the basis for right action and right living. Often, we want to put the cart before the horse. We ask what we have got to do and back comes the list of rules: you have got to do this and that, and, brother, do you think you ought to wear those clothes on a Sunday? People think that if they have got the right list of rules, which, of course, is continually being added to, then somehow or other, they are going to be right with God and God will be pleased with them. But it works the other way round. If we have the right foundation, if we have the right doctrine, sound doctrine, then the right actions and the right life will flow from that. It will not work the other way round.

Jesus is the Foundation

Jesus is at the centre of all this, for if we are talking about sound doctrine, then we are talking about Jesus. So these studies are not a series of 'how-to' messages. This is not a series of easy tips on how to live the Christian life. We are looking at the source of all right living. In our last study we considered the idea of being filled by the Spirit. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. That is the basis of all sound doctrine, especially if we are looking at practical issues. Without Him you can do nothing. It is God Who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. If you leave Jesus out, you are not going to live right, or live lives that are pleasing to God.

So we are thinking about the One who is the answer; we are pointing to the One who is the answer rather than saying, "This is how you do it." Now I have read about and been on the periphery of much of this 'how-to' stuff in churches. There have been courses and sessions on 'how to prophesy' or 'how to dance in the Spirit.' Isn't that amazing? Stick to the Lord and focus your attention on Him, because if you are going to work by a set of mechanical principles, you will be cutting the Lord out. The Lord must be first. Bear in mind that we are talking about the heart and not, in the first place, the intellect. It is not a matter of what you can think or devise. Be filled by the Holy Spirit; we need His teaching; we need His doctrine. In **I Corinthians 2 v 12-14**, it says:

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

And in John 14 v 14, Jesus Himself explained concerning the Holy Spirit: ***"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."***

If you are not born again, all the things that we talk about will appear foolish to you. But when you are born of the Spirit, then the Holy Spirit takes those things that are of Jesus Christ and will show them to you and you can reply, "Yes, that's precious; that's wonderful; I know exactly what you mean." He that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. So we have teaching there. It is the Holy Spirit teaching, showing the things of Christ to us, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual things.

There has been a tendency in recent years to ignore doctrine. At one time people used to say that doctrine was divisive. Of course, there was a lot of influence here in the world of so-called Christian unity. The idea was that, if doctrine was divisive, then it might be better to ignore the doctrine that divides and concentrate on what we all agree on. If people could say, "Jesus is Lord," then that is all they were interested in. That was extremely naïve, for all sorts will make that sort of confession - although not all will understand the same thing by it - from Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons to Hindus. Without sound doctrine, we lack that perception of truth and we cannot live as God requires. Sometimes it is necessary that doctrine be divisive. It separates us from error. It separates us from the world and unto God. It brings us into holy living. But doctrine also unifies, for it unites brothers and sisters in the Lord. To put away sound doctrine is to fail of that unity and to run the risk of embracing error.

Proverbs chapter 4 is very interesting in terms of sound doctrine. Read it all but, for the moment, let us just consider a couple of verses:

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her." vv 5-8.

Wisdom and understanding come from being taught in the things of God. With all your getting get understanding. Sound teaching is important. In **Matthew chapter 28 vv 19/20**, (and this is the Great Commission), Jesus said, ***"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."***

That first word 'teach' is, in the Greek, a word which means 'make disciples of' but the second word 'teaching' is the word we have been thinking about this evening. It means to instruct. Notice that such teaching is to be comprehensive, not selective - "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We centre again on Jesus and on what He taught.

Remember, in **Acts chapter 1**, that Luke wrote referring to his gospel where he had recorded what Jesus had begun to do and to teach. There was teaching in the ministry of Jesus. We find that, in **Acts chapter 11**, Paul and Barnabas spent a whole year in Antioch. What were they doing? They were teaching the new converts and disciples. It was important that they were established with sound teaching, sound doctrine.

In **Acts 18**, Paul was in Corinth for eighteen months. What was he doing there for eighteen months? One often gets the idea of Paul rushing from place to place, but that is not so. Teaching had to be given and teaching requires care and time. So he spent eighteen months there, getting them firmly grounded in doctrine, that they might know the Lord Jesus Christ. In **Acts chapter 19 and 20**, Paul was in Ephesus. It was there that he met those disciples who did not know the Lord. They knew only John's baptism. Paul preached to them Jesus and they were baptised and baptised with the Holy Spirit. Paul spent quite a long time there in Ephesus - teaching. Here is his own record:

"...I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.....For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20 vv 20 & 27)

What teaching! What doctrine! Now in the relatively brief period of time that Paul was with them, he could say that he had declared all the counsel of God. You see, doctrine is not complicated; doctrine is not like some vast encyclopaedic library that you must studiously plough through. We can be established in sound doctrine and all the counsel of God in a fairly short space of time. So much is this the case that, after eighteen months in a place, Paul could ordain elders, to be responsible for teaching others. 'Sound doctrine' sounds wonderful, does it not? It sounds as if you have got to be studying it for years. But it is

simple. And the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, teaches us that it is important. It is not to be neglected. The Lord wants us to be taught in good things. Being thus grounded, you can then continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where there is no sound doctrine, then there is weakness, coldness, and exposure to those things which cause harmful divisions. Paul said in **Romans 16 v 17**,

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them."

By doctrine you can know and take note of those that cause divisions, who teach things contrary to sound doctrine and avoid them. This is separation, you see, from things that are not right. The trouble with people that do not have sound doctrine and claim that doctrine is divisive is that they want to embrace and hold on to those that will cause harmful division; they want to have fellowship with those that have erred from the faith. That is plainly wrong. It says in Proverbs 11 v 14, ***"Where no counsel is the people fall."***

There is weakness. We need that counsel, all the counsel of God, that teaching which is from Him. Jude says, ***"Contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints."*** How? By knowing your sound doctrine. That word 'once' means 'completely' or 'wholly'. All the counsel of God is there for us to know.

What is Sound Doctrine About

Let us examine a few ideas about this sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is about God and about man, fallen and sinful, separated from God. It is about the consequences of sin. It is about God's remedy for sin. It centres on Jesus. How important it is to know Who Jesus is! Sound doctrine has for its focal point Jesus and the person of Jesus. Look at all the errors in the modern church and in the sects. The most dangerous errors are those that concern Jesus.

The denials of the virgin birth and of the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead are two recent examples of errors held by some in the Church of England. There are those also who would deny the perfect, sinless life of Jesus, or who would deny either that He was perfectly man or, that He was God manifest in the flesh. People err as to the person and character of Jesus.

This is sound doctrine: Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, without sin, holy, harmless, separate from sinners; He lived a sinless life; He died for our sins, was buried, rose again, bodily, from the tomb; in that resurrection body He ascended into heaven; He is seated, in that same body, at the right hand of the Majesty on high - there is a man in the glory; this same Jesus will return to this earth in judgment as King of kings and Lord of lords. Prior to His bodily return, the saints will be caught up to be with Him. This is sound doctrine, taken from the word of God. If you deny those teachings concerning Jesus, you are erring from sound doctrine. Sound doctrine shows us that it is by grace that we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God. These things are firmly based on Scripture. Everything centres on Jesus.

Four NT References to Sound Doctrine

Now the New Testament speaks in four places about sound doctrine. In **Jude v 20**, it says, ***"Beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith."*** How can we build ourselves up on our most holy faith, except by sound doctrine? How can you have faith unless you have sound doctrine to believe? It is important. That is why we come together around the Word of God so that we can know sound teaching. How do we know whether it is sound? Is it because I say it? No, of course not. Because some famous preacher declares it? No, certainly not - yet many have erred in following famous names and personalities. We can know by what the Word of God, the Bible, says, comparing scripture with scripture,

spiritual things with spiritual things, the Holy Spirit teaching us, and placing that witness in our hearts. The Holy Spirit will not lead us astray and will not teach contrary to the written word.

First Reference

In **I Timothy 1 v 10**, we have our first reference, reading in from v 9:

"Knowing this that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

These are the things which are contrary to the law of God and they have no place in the life of a believer. They are contrary to sound doctrine. Sound doctrine shows us where we are; sound doctrine shows us who we are. In Jesus Christ we are not those listed in the above text. You may have been once. At the end of a similar list in **I Corinthians 6**, Paul says, ***"And such were some of you."*** But you are no longer like that. Those things are contrary to sound doctrine. ***"But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."*** (I Cor 6 v 11).

Is it not amazing that so much of this which is declared to be contrary to sound doctrine, is now not only tolerated but accepted by church leaders? Yet it is contrary to what the Bible teaches. The Bible says they are wrong. The Bible says they are an abomination to God. The Bible says they are sin. However, the Bible also shows us the remedy for sin, which remedy is in Jesus Christ. Certainly we have no right to go around condemning people. The work of convincing people of sin is the work of the Holy Spirit. But, on the other hand, we cannot condone or justify what the Bible says is wrong. Yes, we are all sinners, but in Jesus Christ there is salvation from sin; there is full cleansing and pardon; there is deliverance from the power of sin. We have no right to alter what the Bible says by saying that something is not really sin but, rather, a falling short of an impossibly high ideal. God says that certain things are sin and that we should not sin.

Now we are not adopting a superior attitude, saying we are better than others. We were sinners but, through God's grace alone, we have been delivered and set free from sin, and by God's help and power we can and must live separate from sin. By nature we were sinners and doomed to die. Of ourselves we have absolutely nothing to boast of. This way of salvation is open to all through Jesus Christ. This holiness of life is provided for, and therefore should be appropriated by, every believer. These so-called church leaders have no business to contradict the Word of God or the Holy Spirit in this matter of sin. The love of God is not being manifested by them, because people will not get saved unless they realise they have sinned and that they need to repent of that sin, putting their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Let us look also at **Ephesians 4 vv 17-19**:

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness"

But in verse 20 he says this: ***"But you have not so learned Christ"***

You have received sound doctrine, ***"If so be that you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off concerning the former way of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"***

(vv 21-24)

Now this doctrine of **Ephesians 4** is based on the new man, which is to do with Jesus Christ. This is not a question of whether you have been able to reform your life. It is no good trying to compare yourself now with how you were last year, or five years ago, and thinking that you are a lot better than you used to be. It is not a matter of trying hard and giving yourself a pat on the back. It is the new man that is important. It is Jesus Christ in your life that is important.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." II Corinthians 5 v 17.

That is a new creation, totally changed by God. What a blessedness that is! This sound doctrine is based upon the new man, based upon the Lord Jesus Christ. If we have sound doctrine, those things which are wrong, which are contrary to the law, which are contrary to God, those things which are evil, which are wicked, which are an abomination to God, will have no place in our lives. What will have place in our lives is the new man, which, as we have seen, is created in righteousness and true holiness after God. Why do Christians have problems with these issues and these things that are wrong in their lives? They struggle against them, and so might we if we fail to yield ourselves to the Lord. Yet sound doctrine brings us into the right place so that present problems are dealt with.

Do not the problems persist because we listen also to the doctrines of men - teachings of our own or of others? Jesus warned again and again about the doctrines of men. He said to the Pharisees, and to the Jews that listened to them, that they followed the commandments of men and that they taught them as doctrines. **Colossians 2 v 21/22** speaks about the same idea, that of teaching the doctrines of men - ***"Touch not, taste not, handle not!"*** What does it mean? Oh, you know the attitude: "You mustn't touch that; you mustn't drink that; you mustn't eat that; you mustn't spend money on a Sunday!" and so on. These are matters of ritual and ceremony, not the holiness of living which the Bible has brought before us. These are the doctrines of men, compliance with which earn merit, in the minds of those that are bound by them. Where do you find it in the Scriptures that you must not drink wine, or must be a vegetarian, or must not spend money on a Sunday? You cannot. People in the Colossian church were plagued by these Judaisers whose approach was, "Now you are a Christian, this is what you have got to do."

In our own days people have reduced Christian behaviour to the accepted norms of 'respectable' society - you ought to wear a shirt and tie, a decent suit and other such similar rules. The apostle Paul would not have got a look in. But then there are rules, which on the surface seem quite good. "Now that you are a Christian you must read your Bible every day; you must pray every day; you must tithe." I would heartily recommend each of these as Biblical principles to be enjoyed by every believer. I would underline each exercise as being based on sound doctrine BUT the moment you make any of these a rule, a regulation, it becomes the doctrine of man, part of man's religious system. It becomes bondage. It becomes a chore. Feelings of guilt will be introduced, as you wonder whether you have done enough. At other times you might rush a reading just to satisfy that guilt feeling that you must read something, but what did you read? Many of the issues that we shall be looking at, whilst being sound doctrine, will, if applied as mere rules, become the doctrines of men. However, if you know sound doctrine, you will know and do what is right and what is pleasing to God. I believe in giving; I believe in reading the Bible and praying at all times; I believe in using the Lord's Day for the Lord. That is between me and the Lord. I cannot impose that on someone else. We should be teaching the Lord Jesus, sound doctrine. After all, if you get thrilled with Jesus, ten per cent will not be enough.

Do you remember when He healed ten lepers and one, ten per cent, returned to give thanks? Jesus asked where the other nine were. Ten per cent? He wants all. If you get thrilled with Jesus, five verses in the morning will not be enough. A quick prayer by your bed at night will not suffice. That is the trouble with rules and regulations: as mere duty they are done leaving you to carry on with what you really wanted to do. But when you get thrilled with Jesus, you do not need man to impose his rules; it is a new creation at work; it is Jesus in you. Paul pointed out that all these rules made by man are to perish; it is the new man in Christ Jesus that is important. What man does corrupts. When man gets hold of the Bible and starts making up rules and regulations, it corrupts. It brings people into bondage and leads them to corruption. Either they cannot keep the rules and in the end they give it all up, or they keep them

after a fashion and then become judgmental towards others and restricted in their service towards God. Anything contrary to sound doctrine must go.

Second Reference

Now look at **II Timothy 4 v 3**, where it says:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears"

So, said Paul to **Timothy**, in **v. 2** of the same chapter, ***"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."***

Paul foresaw the time coming when people would not endure sound doctrine. Who will not endure it? People in these last days, even people in churches, will not endure it. Many today will not put up with it. It is an embarrassment to their learned intellects; it is contrary to the will of the carnal mind. But the Scripture shows us the course they will take:

"After their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (vv 3/4)

The Greek word for fables is myths. That is the character of our days. Why, in our times, the great, so-called theologians, those particularly based in Germany, had the cheek to call the things in the Bible myths. I am so glad that Peter had, by the Holy Spirit, already set that record straight:

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables (myths), when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty..."

Yes, they want teachers to teach them what they want to hear, things which pamper the flesh, things which the human mind can grasp. It is the character of the times in which we live. Turn back a chapter to **II Timothy 3**:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

There are going to be future problems as things get worse. But in a self-dominated society people will not be interested in what God wants to teach them. The time is coming when people will not endure, will not put up with, sound doctrine. Let us not get caught up in the current of the times in which we are living; do not let us start looking at things from the world's point of view and despise sound doctrine. People may urge us to 'pep' our lives up a bit; 'get this; get that; get the other!' is their cry. No, with all your getting get understanding. Get sound doctrine. In **II John v 9**, it says, ***"Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son."***

Let us abide in the doctrine of Christ. That is the doctrine of the Messiah, the anointed One. Then v. 10 warns us to have nothing to do with those who do not bring this doctrine. Can you tell me why, when the Word of God warns us to turn away from such people, that the churches today are so intent on compromising with them, with those that do not abide in the doctrine of Christ? Much of what is done in the name of church unity is embracing not only those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ,

embracing not only those that have erred from sound doctrine, but including those that are not of the Christian faith, not even nominally - Buddhists, Hindus and so on. I can well remember the Queen's mentioning in one of her past Christmas Day speeches, that she loved to attend the multi-faith service in Westminster Abbey or wherever it was. You have heard the argument before: "We all worship one God, don't we?" No, we do not.

Paul refers to God as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' No Muslim would accept that as a description of his god. Our God is holy, separate from sinners but the Hindu Brahman is everything and everything is Brahman (demons included). That is not the one true God whom we worship, for He is Light and in Him is no darkness at all.

People may accuse us of being intolerant, but is God tolerant of the devil? Are we called to be tolerant of false doctrine? Is that the attitude the Scriptures tell us to adopt? The Scriptures we have just read certainly do not. We are told not to receive those that do not bring the doctrine of Christ or to wish them God speed. There is one Truth and one God. There is one Way to God: that is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way. The Bible tells of only one Name by which you must be saved and that is the name of Jesus. So when someone comes along and says that there are other ways of salvation, according perhaps to different cultural backgrounds, we can say they are wrong.

Meditation is not a route to salvation. Nirvana is not salvation. Who proclaimed that method? Well it was the so-called 'Buddha', Siddhartha Gautama. I have news for you. He died some two and a half thousand years ago. And he never came back. Mohammed died. No Muslim would dispute that. But Jesus, who died on the cross, is the only one that defeated death. He rose again, triumphant over all His foes. He is the One and only Way back to God. He is the one Way of eternal life. God demonstrated this to us in that He raised Him from the dead. That is sound doctrine. How do we know that? Those early disciples and apostles witnessed it - but that is another topic for another time. There are enough people listening to this message today, who can say, "He lives, He lives, I know He lives; He lives within my heart."

Third Reference

Now may we look at another Scripture concerning sound doctrine? This is to be found in **Titus 1 v 9**, where it says, ***"...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."***

Who should be doing this? Well Paul was referring to bishops; this is what bishops should be able to do. Now, by bishop, he did not mean a fellow with a funny shaped hat, a gorgeous robe and a staff. A bishop, in the Greek, is **ἐπίσκοπος** (**episkopos**), which means an overseer, an overseer of an assembly, an elder. As such, he must be able to hold fast to the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine to exhort and convince those that would speak against the Truth. In fact, Paul is quite emphatic, in verse 11, where he says that the mouths of the opposition must be stopped - not listened to, notice, not debated with, not given consideration, but stopped. In **I Timothy 4** it says that there are seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.

The devil wants you to believe lies. That is why there are so many religions in the world, because Satan wants you to believe lies. By knowing sound doctrine, we can oppose those doctrines of demons, by holding fast to the faithful word. In **Hebrews 13 v 9**, it speaks about diverse and strange doctrines. The Greek word for 'diverse' means 'multi-coloured' - all sorts of opinions. We should not be interested in all sorts of opinions for doctrines; we want the sound doctrines. Yes, we may have different opinions on certain peripheral, non-important issues, but we must be one on sound doctrine. There, we cannot have differing opinions. There is no place for diverse and strange doctrines in the church.

The enemy is trying to sow those doctrines in the church. In the book of **Revelation**, it speaks about the doctrine of Balaam in the church, it speaks about the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in the church and it speaks about the teaching of Jezebel in the church. We do not want any of them. Balaam taught the people to sacrifice to idols and to commit fornication. He taught people to do that, to get into worldly relationships, so that they would fall and not be living lives that were pleasing to God. The Nicolaitans brought a world order into the church, a worldly way of government. We still have it today. Why is it that

churches have to have business meetings, and agendas, and minutes of the last meeting, and the democratic vote, the voice of the majority? That is the world's way of doing things. It is not the Biblical way of doing things: that is not how they proceeded in the New Testament. They were led by the Holy Spirit. But now there is a world order. Nicolaitans comes from two Greek words: νικαω (nikao), which means 'I conquer' and λαος (laos), which means 'people' and therefore has to do with conquering or oppressing the people. Balaam means something similar in Hebrew 'Lord over the people'. It now manifests itself in the structures and hierarchies of church organisations. These are man-made power structures with the clergy in control and the 'laity' (from laos - people) controlled. Why, I even get material through the post nowadays, inviting me to go on courses and seminars to learn about management principles and how they can be applied in the church. We do not need to know management principles; we are a people that must be led by the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans introduces the world's system into the church, to control, to subdue, to crush. The vast majority are the people, those at the bottom of the stack.

However, Jesus, the Lord from heaven, said, **"I came to serve."** He had just washed the disciples' feet. He taught that great lesson that the greatest has to become as the least. Then, it does not tell us in the New Testament that God has chosen a few to be ministers to push everyone else around. God has given gifts to the church, ministry gifts, Spirit-filled men, to equip the church to serve, to minister and to edify one another. In other words, God wants you all to be ministers, to serve; we are brethren together. After that we come to Jezebel. She introduced those corrupt spiritual things into the church, the world into the heart. Jezebel was that seductress in the Old Testament; her spiritual counterpart in the New introduces spiritual fornication: loving the things that are in the world. Well, these things have got to be thrown out. These mouths of false doctrine have got to be stopped. How can we do that? By sound doctrine; by Jesus; by knowing Him. Paul cried out in **Philippians, "...that I may know Him."** The devil may want to trip us up - the doctrine of Balaam; he may want to subdue and crush us - the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; he may want to control us - the doctrine of Jezebel, but we are having none of it. Sound doctrine is essential.

Fourth Reference

Turn now to **Titus chapter 2 v 1**, which is the fourth of our texts which refer to sound doctrine:

"Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine..."

These are the things which are fitting or suitable for sound doctrine: they tower up in association with sound doctrine.

"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned;.....not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (vv 7-10)

These qualities accompany sound doctrine. Sound doctrine deals with present problems in our life. It deals with future problems, so that when people will not endure sound doctrine, we, on the contrary, will be on a firm foundation. It will put down opposing, gainsaying doctrine. But it will also produce in us a wonderful and glorious fruit that is glorifying to Jesus, the things that accompany, or the things that become, sound doctrine. We will have lives that are beautiful and glorifying to God.

"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, weshould live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (v 12)

Now the Bible tells us that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine - **II Timothy 3 v 16** - and **Romans 15 v 4**, referring to Old Testament Scripture, advises in the context of doctrine: ***"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."***

It is true also that the Holy Spirit teaches us. As we know the Word, the Holy Spirit teaches us. Then in **I Corinthians chapter 14** and **Romans chapter 12** it speaks about doctrine as being given by the Holy Spirit. He that waits upon teaching, according to Romans, should wait upon doctrine - that is waiting upon the Holy Spirit. This sound doctrine is Holy Spirit-given. And it tells us in **I Timothy 6 v 3** that it is according to godliness. Do we want to live godly lives? Yes, of course we do. It is by knowing sound doctrine that we can live godly lives.

The Apostles' Doctrine

This now brings us to the apostles' doctrine. We must know what this doctrine is: it is Jesus. If you go through the **Acts of the Apostles**, you will find that Peter preached at least five times: that is in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10. What does he say? Basically it is the same message. Jesus was a wonderful man, the Man, approved of God, anointed by God, did miracles, lived the perfect life; he died on the cross, slain by wicked men, but all as part of God's eternal purpose. Nevertheless, God raised Him from the dead, because it was not possible that death could hold Him; this was in accordance with the Scriptures. He has now been exalted to the right hand of God; He is both Lord and Christ. He has poured forth what can now be seen and heard, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is the message for people today: **"Repent and be baptised; repent and believe; repent and be converted, and you shall receive forgiveness of sins; you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."** Each message has the same pattern. It is about the Lord Jesus Christ, Who He is, what His work is: it is presenting Him. It proclaims the message of salvation and the necessity to repent and believe. If you look at what Paul had to say, you will find, in **Acts chapter 13**, Paul spoke of the same things. Now each time Peter spoke about Jesus' resurrection he declared, **"We were witnesses of it."** When Paul spoke of these things he said, **"...and they were witnesses of it."** It was according to the Scriptures. In the epistles of Paul you will find the same teachings. This was the apostles' doctrine. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. They knew that and knew also that wonderful transformation of life, this wonderful power of living. When John wrote his epistle he began,

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.....that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" I John 1 v 1-3

Who is he speaking about? Well he is, of course, declaring the Lord Jesus. Jesus is central.

Teaching Gifts

Then, in **Ephesians 4 v 11 - 15**, we learn that the ascended Lord Jesus has given gifts to the church, including teachers, ***"...for the perfecting of the saints, unto (for) the work of the ministry, unto (for) the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men...."***

Thus we cease to be like little children, no longer being tossed first one way and then the other because we cannot make out what we should believe. We are firmly grounded on sound doctrine, the apostles' doctrine. Everything else flows from it. There is no need to get over-worried about tithing, the Lord's Day, women's ministry, fellowship, breaking of bread, fasting, ministry, evangelism, overcoming, worship, guidance, gifts of the Holy Spirit - all those issues we shall be studying. It is all catered for in the sound doctrine concerning Jesus. And it says concerning Jesus and those that listened to Him, that they were astonished at His doctrine. If we listen to the Lord Jesus, we too will be astonished at His doctrine, for He teaches as one with authority and power. He gives life.

Now you may say, "You're doing a lot of teaching this evening and yet you have been emphasising the fact that it is the Holy Spirit that teaches." Yes, the Holy Spirit is our teacher. John's epistle makes it

clear that the anointing which you have received of Him abides, and you need not that anyone teach you. The Holy Spirit teaches us the Word of God. But remember that the Lord has given teaching gifts to the church. Those gifts are Spirit-filled men and the Holy Spirit can take these words, words which expound scripture, and apply them to our hearts. He will teach you what is right and warn you of error. You will have the witness within. Jesus Himself said, in **John 7 v 16**, when the Jews marvelled at Him, ***"My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself."*** That applies today too.

Finally

If you will do His will, you will know the doctrine whether it be of God. The Holy Spirit will teach you. The words that I am speaking; the words that you read in the Bible; the Holy Spirit will bear witness. The Holy Spirit gives life. So, brothers and sisters, sound doctrine is very important if you want to get on in the Christian life. Paul did not leave Christians until they had sound doctrine, until He had declared the full counsel of God. Desire the sincere, the undeceitful, unmixed milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

© 2003 G. Jones. The Church at Gun Hill, Bowers Gifford