13 The Church - Doctrine & Preaching

Introduction

"Youth," it is sometimes said, "is wasted on the young." I remember when I was in high school in Colorado, I was in the habit of hiking in the mountains with my friends. At one point we had been climbing up around Boulder Falls when we discovered a cave. The more we explored the more caves we found. Some of them went only a short distance, and some were quite extensive. We even found some caves that had waterfalls inside of them. We had a great time exploring these caves, but we were sometimes not very smart about it. One of the cave we explored we never found the end. We went into this cave for perhaps 45 minutes just walking.

We only had one flashlight, so at some points one person would explore a bit further ahead than the other or in different directions. You do not get too far into a cave before things turn absolutely black. We came upon a junction where there was a vertical shaft that went straight down as far we could see with the flashlight. It was by pure providence that we happened to be close together at that point in our journey. We were only watching out for the twists and turns and places we'd hit our heads. It had not occurred to us that the floor itself would suddenly stop. That light, and providence, saved our lives!

Scripture describes us in our natural state as walking in darkness. It describes us in our natural state as blind. We are no good on our own, we need the light of God's word to guide as we walk this life.

The Importance of Doctrine

The term "doctrine" comes from the Greek word *didache* which means "teaching." Doctrine is a set of teachings, or a set of beliefs. Now we all have a set of beliefs, that cannot be helped. We all have doctrine; the question is what kind of doctrine do we have? Is is good biblically informed doctrine? Or is it doctrine baked from our tradition, flavored by our experiences, and served on our desires? We all have doctrine; is it good doctrine or bad doctrine, that is the question.

Ideas have consequences. What you believe about reality effects how you act. There was the idea that babies in the womb go through the evolutionary process. This paved the way for abortion to be legalized in the United States, after all if you kill the baby at this stage you are only killing a fish. The Ideas of Karl Marx gave rise to Communism. The ideas of Frederich Nietzsche gave rise to Hitler's quest for the super race. Ideas have consequences. What you believe has consequences.

> **Mark 7:21-23** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

> **Romans 8:7** For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Who we are precedes what we do. All these things derive from within. As Paul points out in Romans 8:7, the mind that is set on the flesh cannot please God. What we think, what we believe, where our mind is set makes a big difference.

The Importance of the Word of God

Some people suppose that they can think good thoughts on their own and so please God. But listen to these passages.

> **Proverbs 14:12** There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
> **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
> **Proverbs 28:26** Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered
> **Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

All of these verses are saying that we cannot trust ourselves. We are not good guides. Our understanding will lead us astray. The way that seems right to us is the way to death. Our heart is deceitful above all things, so do not follow your heart. If you trust in your own mind, according to scripture, you are a fool!

These passages also hint at where our trust should be. If you trust in your own mind you're a fool, but if you walk in wisdom you will be delivered. So how do you walk in wisdom? **Proverbs 2:6** says "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" If we want good doctrine, good ideas that will give rise to good actions, then we must be people of the word.

Consider **1Tim. 3:15** if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." The church (that is all of us) is called the pillar and foundation of the truth! That is big. Do you feel that you have a decent enough grasp on theology to be called the pillar and foundation of the truth? Following are 8 ways that I think doctrine and therefore the word of God is important.

It Helps During Times of Distress

> **Job 38:1** Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: 2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?

Here is Job, after everything has been taken away from him, after his friends have been ever so unhelpful, Job speaks to God demanding an answer. God's first rebuke is to ask who darkens his counsel "with words without wisdom?" Job did not know God as he should have. If Job knew God better he would have no need of questions. He would know God and that would be enough.

It is Vital for Leadership

This is especially true for the elders of the church, but it is applicable to almost everything. Almost everyone leads in some form or another. Whether it is as an elder, or a Sunday school teacher, or a small group leader, or a parent, most everybody will find themselves in some form of leadership at some point in time.

> **Isa. 56:10** Israel's watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep.
> **Mal. 2:7** "For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction --because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty.
> **Hosea 4:6** my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. v14 -- a people without understanding will come to ruin!

It Aids in Evangelism

If we want to do evangelism well, we should know scripture. God has said that his word will not return void. It will be God's words, not your words, that will save people.

> **Acts 6:9** Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) --Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, 10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. (John 4:23-24)
> **2Cor. 10:5** We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
> **1Pet. 3:15** But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

We do not need to have everything perfect to do evangelism. In fact you had better not wait for perfect because it will never come. We all have the obligation to go and witness to the world. So this is not an excuse for inactivity, however, having a good grasp on scripture will sure help you.

It Rightly Focuses Our Passions

> **Rom. 10:2** For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.
> **1Tim. 4:6** If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.
> **1Tim. 6:20** Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge.

It Aids in Our Sanctification

Rom. 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your *mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will.
Col. 1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and *teaching* everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.
1Cor. 14:20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your *thinking* be adults.
1Tim. 4:16 Watch your life and *doctrine* closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

It Keeps Us From Being Led Astray

Rom. 16:18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of *naive* people.
Eph. 4:11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and *in the knowledge* of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.
2Pet. 3:15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which *ignorant and unstable people* distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. 17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But *grow in the grace and knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have no idea how common this is. People are led astray all the time. You have no idea how frequent it is and how subtle it is. It is really frightening. One of my big passions is for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.

It Promotes Genuine Unity

1Cor. 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.
Col. 2:2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the

> mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Many churches that attempt a coming together do so in a way that all the differences are swept under the rug. But this is merely trading truth for false unity. The differences still exist, and they will raise their ugly head at some point. The more united a people are, the more effective they will be. If we want to make a difference in this community and in this world, then it is imperative that we be united.

It Informs Our Worship

> **Col. 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

We just finished 2 weeks of looking at worship from a biblical perspective. Congregational singing is heavily emphasized. Style is a minor concern, but both traditional and contemporary express certain truths about the church. Being God-centered is of utmost importance, and worship should only be designed for those who can worship. There is much more that could be said, but this is a series on the church, not a series on worship.

The Importance of Preaching

2Tim. 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.
2Tim. 2:23-25 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth...
2Tim. 4:2-5 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage --with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

> I would ask a strange question: who is the most [diligent] bishop and prelate in all England, that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell, for I . . . know him well. But now I think I see you listening and hearkening that I should name him. . . . I will tell you: it is the devil.
> "He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his [diocese]; he is never from his [curate]; ye shall never find him unoccupied. . . . The diligentest preacher in all the realm; he is ever at his plough: no lording nor loitering can hinder him; he is ever applying his business, ye shall never find him idle, I warrant you. . . ."Where the devil is resident, and hath his plough going, there away with books, and up with candles; away with Bibles, and up with beads; away with the light of the gospel, and up with the light of

candles, yea, at noon days. . . . Up with man's traditions and his laws, down with God's traditions and his most holy word. . .
"Oh that our prelates would be as diligent to sow the corn of good doctrine, as Satan is to sow cockle and darnel!
- Hugh Latimer