

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Careful Cutting

Paul wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The subject of authority has been well-investigated over the years. The enormity of the issue demands careful scrutiny. But behind all the study of commands, examples, and inferences is the word of God itself. Before anything can be accomplished in a study of authority, everyone must be looking at the Bible the same way.

Differing perspectives and presuppositions creep in and affect the way that human beings examine the Bible. Paul admonished Timothy that he should "study" (give diligence) to "handle accurately" the word of God. "Handle" (orthotone) means to "cut straight, as in road-making." The stress is on the first part of the word (orthos) and it indicates that the word should be "handled strictly along the lines of its teaching." A. T. Robertson made the comment, "Since Paul was a tent-maker and knew how to cut straight the rough camel-hair cloth, why not let that be the metaphor? Certainly plenty of exegesis is crooked enough (crazy-quilt patterns) to call for careful cutting to set it straight."

The absolute basis for knowing what the will of God is studied [*sic*]. And it cannot be just any study, but the study that "cuts straight" the word of God. Many false teachers must use "crooked exegesis" to force their interpretations upon the Bible. This results in using verses out of context, plainly ignoring straightforward verses and explaining away sound Biblical teaching.

This kind of disregard for the Bible opens the door for hundreds of false doctrines. Everyone has probably seen their share of false teachers who have proposed numerous doctrines that have been invented from the mishandling of truth. This is so dangerous! All it takes is one stray "cut" and a snowball effect is born. This effect stacks false teaching upon false teaching and soon you have nothing but a complex "theological card house" which has no real truth to stand on. Calvinism is a perfect example of this type of mishandling of the Bible.

Brethren must realize the need for careful study. The only way to stop false teaching is to know the truth. Without the desire to handle the word of God accurately, studying authority accomplishes the same result as digging a dry well. It leaves you frustrated and spiritually "thirsty." The only way to see "eye to eye" is to make sure that both sides are doing "careful cutting."

- Kyle Campbell

God's Thoughts And Man's Thoughts

"Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:6-9)

The greatest sin man commits is exalting himself above God. At the root of every sin is the rebellious heart that rejects the commandments of God and seeks to establish its own law by the nature of man. Eve took of the fruit in the Garden of Eden after the devil convinced her to put her thoughts above the thoughts of God (Genesis 3:6). The thoughts of man in Noah's day "was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). The Jews continually rejected the blessings of God as they put their thoughts above the thoughts of their Savior (Exodus 17:3; Numbers 11:5-6; Deuteronomy 1:43; Ezekiel 20:32).

The Bible is given to man to show him the consequences of following his own law. How can man (the creation) believe that he can exalt himself above the One who created him? Paul wrote about the problem of man exalting himself above God in Romans 9:20 - "Nay but, O man, who art thou that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Jehovah God made the world and all that is in it. Man is nothing more than a small speck of dust in respect to the grand scheme of creation - yet, he finds it within himself to think of himself as greater than his Creator. The thoughts of God and the thoughts of man are so vastly apart from one another. The ways of man are no comparison to the ways of God. Everything that man creates fails; nothing that God establishes fails.

We want to put God on our level and make Him rule with our thoughts. Our idolatry is to make God like one of us. Rebellion against God happens when man puts God on the level of man's will. The Bible is no longer the word of God for man but man's will to do as

he pleases in accordance with what he finds in his own thoughts. The greater tragedy is that man uses God's word to establish his own doctrines and suggest these are the commandments of God (Matthew 15:9). The Jews of Jesus' day were more concerned about teaching the thoughts of men rather than the thoughts of God. "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13).

Why do we have so many religious bodies in the world today? Why is immorality an accepted norm of life in our society? What drives men to accept homosexuality, divorce, lying, cursing, immodest dress and a myriad of other things that God clearly condemns? "But he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God'" (Luke 16:15). The root of the problem with each one of us is when we decide that our thoughts are greater than the thoughts of God, we sin. "These things you have done and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before you" (Psalms 50:21).

Everything that man exalts in rebellion against God is an abomination to God. Just because man believes it to be true does not mean that God does. What will judge us in the last day - man's word or God's word?

"He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day" (John 12:48).

- Kent Heaton

Wisdom Speaks ...

"Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD."

- Proverbs 1:24-29, NASB

What type of life have I chosen to live?

The apostle Paul said this of the Christians to whom he wrote: "you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household," (Ephesians 2:19). Christians were identified as familiar citizens in the kingdom of God and members of His family. Prior to their obedience to the gospel commands leading to forgiveness, Paul described them as "dead in your trespasses and sins, . . . indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, . . . having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:1, 3, 12).

When Christ left this earth He commissioned His specially chosen and trained apostles to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15). The gospel message is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes," (Romans 1:16). Those who chose to believe the gospel of Christ became, through their obedience (Hebrews 5:9), free from the consequences of a sinful life (cf. Acts 2:40). These were saved by the choice they made upon hearing the gospel. As time went on and the gospel continued to be spread, "Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe." (Acts 28:24). Choice is left to every individual.

When people choose not to believe, they are described as indicated in Ephesians 2:1, 3, 12 (as noted above). It is not a life of peace (Isaiah 48:22). To refuse to believe is to be in a state of condemnation (John 3:18, KJV). Why would one choose to remain in alienation from God, without hope of God's greatest blessings?

The Christian has a "living hope" that he may "obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:3-4). What has heaven done to discourage you from making the choice to live as a believer? Nothing. God calls you through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ," (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Christ died to save sinners (Romans 5:6, 8; 1 Corinthians 15:3). He died for you! He has provided everything you need to live with Him (Romans 6:8; 2 Corinthians 13:4; 2 Timothy 2:11).

Friend, what life have you chosen to live? Have you not chosen to live the righteous life of the believer?

- Gary Smalley

- * "Giving is sowing and God promises a harvest!"
 - * "Faith makes it possible for us to see the eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18)!"
 - * "We must obey God rather than men." (The Apostles of Christ, Acts 5:29)!
 - * "Some people want religion simply as a kind of fire escape!"
 - * "Beware of hypocrites: They present themselves in appearance and claims as those who are concerned and care while taking advantage of others!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)