

Distinguishing Between Needless Controversy & Contending for the Faith (1 Tim. 6:3-5 & 2 Tim. 2:14-16)

Defining Spirit of Our Age

Tolerance for Evil + Disdain for Righteous Controversy

But There Is Need for Conflict with Sin & Error

Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).

This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:18-20).

I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will hearken to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry. For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing (2 Tim. 4:1-8).

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

Contending for the Faith Is NOT Needless Dispute of Words

Contending for the Faith -vs- Needless Dispute of Words

- **The faith**, *not our opinions*, should be issue
- Distinguishing the difference is where the difficulty comes
- **1 Tim. 6:3-5** Strife from disputes of words
- **2 Tim. 2:14-16** Striving... to no profit
- Need a closer look at these & other passages

Distinguishing Differences

- Can we know the truth?
- Can we distinguish error?
- Must we dispute over every difference?
- Must we dispute over any difference?
- Difference in disputing or not disputing is determined cause of the conflicting views

“Disputes of Words”

- Same word found in *1 Tim. 6:4* & *2 Tim. 2:14*
- Both contrast between word of truth & unprofitable dispute of words
 - ◆ Associated with envy, strife, etc.
 - ◆ Matters of “perpetual wranglings” (*6:5*)
 - ◆ “Useful for nothing, for overthrowing of the hearing” (*2 Tim. 2:14*)
- Contrast with needed disputes (*Jude 3*)

1 Timothy 6:3-5

If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth.

Summary of 1 Timothy 6:3-5

- We must hold to & abide within:
 - ◆ “Sound words”
 - ◆ “Words of the Lord Jesus Christ”
 - ◆ “Doctrine according to godliness”
- We must avoid & shun:
 - ◆ “Doting (sick) about questionings”
 - ◆ “Disputes of words”
 - ◆ Differences leading only to “strife, railing, evil surmising & wrangling”

2 Timothy 2:14-18

Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them in the sight of the Lord, that they strive not about words, to no profit, to the subverting of them that hear. Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: or whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.

- Must appeal to & properly handle truth to learn its teaching
- Truth will result in godly living
- Error distinguish from truth by its...
 - ◆ *failure to properly handle or divide truth*
 - ◆ *overthrow faith of hearers*
 - ◆ *yields ungodliness when applied to life*
 - ◆ *has degenerative effect as a gangrene*
 - ◆ *error abandons fundamental principles*

1 Timothy 1:3-11

³ As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, ⁴ neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies,

which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith; so do I now. ⁵ But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned: ⁶ from which things some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talking; ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm. ⁸ But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, ⁹ as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; ¹¹ according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

- Doctrine must be of God
- Sound doctrine (*1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13*)
- According to the “gospel” revealed
- Error distinguished from truth because...
 - ◆ It teaches a different doctrine
 - ◆ It is product of improper handling of truth
 - ◆ Lives manifest corruption when put in practice

1 Timothy 4:1-7

¹ But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, ² through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; ³ forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth. ⁴ For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: ⁵ for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer. ⁶ If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now: ⁷ but refuse profane and old wives' fables.

Summary of 1 Timothy 4:1-7

- Truth described as “words of the faith”
- “Good doctrine” must be taught to all
- Found by those giving self wholly to it
- Produces fruit of godliness as applied
- Error differs because it ...
 - ◆ Is of seducing spirits & doctrines of demons
 - ◆ Contradicts revealed truth
 - ◆ Produces fruit of evil whenever put in practice

Contrasting Message of Truth & Error in 2 Timothy 4:1-5

- Preaching of the “word” = sound doctrine
- Way taught is contrary to the world
- To preach it we reprove, rebuke & exhort with all longsuffering and teaching
- Will not be tolerated by worldly ones
- Contrasting characteristics of one in error:
 - ◆ His teaching justifies path of ungodly lust
 - ◆ He will not endure teaching of full truth

Inherent Corruption of Error

- It is a gangrene (*2 Tim. 2:17*)
- It waxes worse & worse (*2 Tim. 3:13*)
- It corrupts hearers (*Matt. 16:11-12*)
- It corrupts church (*1 Cor. 5; 15:33*)
- It gives license to sin (*Rev. 2*)

Progressive, Corrupting Effect of Error

- **Doctrine becomes increasingly perverted (misuse of Scripture)**
- **Lives manifest growing effects of sin (cases of evil grow in number)**

Error Brings Inevitable Division

- *1 John 2:19*
- *Acts 20:29-30*
- *2 Timothy 4:3-4*
- *1 Corinthians 11:19*
- *2 John 9-11*
- *John 3:19-21*
- *2 Corinthians 6:17*

History of Doctrinal Errors

- Gnosticism corrupted doctrine & life
- Apostasy into Roman Catholicism
- Evil impact of Calvinism
- Errors among recent brethren:
 - ◆ from missionary societies & instruments to present Disciples of Christ Christian Church
 - ◆ from premillennialism to ecumenism practiced in modern premillennial churches of Christ
 - ◆ from institutionalism (orphans homes, sponsoring churches, etc.) to new hermeneutics
 - ◆ from unity-in-diversity (of Garrett, Ketcherside, Fudge & others) to moral relativism
 - ◆ from alien sinners not amenable to marriage law to all divorce & remarriage accepted
 - ◆ from shorts to worse immodesty, drinking "moderately" to getting "a buzz"

Distinguishing “Disputes of Words” *from* Truth & Error

Defining the Characteristics

- “Disputes of words” refers to matters:
 - ◆ Not based on revelation of God, but on questions of man
 - ◆ Open to perpetual wrangling rather than matters settled by divine precept
 - ◆ Matters not found in doctrine revealed, but in judgments of application
 - ◆ Not profitable regardless of outcome
- Speculation, Opinion, Application of General Principles Where Details Not Specified

Examples of Such Disputes?

Examples from N.T. Times

- Eating of meats
 - ◆ problem for one from Jewish background
 - ◆ problem for one from Gentile background
 - ◆ both had problem based on application of generic principles, some still binding (e.g. not eat blood)
- Keeping of days
 - ◆ mainly of Jewish days - principle still true
- Circumcision practiced after time of Christ

Examples of Modern Issues

- Observing Christmas as secular holiday
 - ◆ Growing sinful practice? Abuse of Bible?
 - ◆ Issue deals with application, not doctrine
- Sunday evening Lord's Supper
 - ◆ Growing sinful practice? Abuse of Bible?
 - ◆ Neither deny revealed pattern of Lord's Supper
- Artificial covering in worship for women
 - ◆ Growing sinful practice? Abuse of Bible?
 - ◆ "Sign" of subjection at issue, not principle
- Yet, any could become divisive if bound as a doctrinal necessity

Divorce & Remarriage Issues: *Where Do They Fit?*

- Revealed truth must be basis of unity
 - ◆ One man & one woman for life
 - ◆ One exception: innocent puts guilty away for **CAUSE** of fornication
 - ◆ Opposition to revealed truth not tolerable
- Cannot bind application of present law
 - ◆ Specific procedure for putting away
 - ◆ Who initiates & secures civil action
- One is **principle**, other is **application**

Division Will Arise Whenever

- **One Looses Principles of Doctrine, or**
- **When One Binds Specific Applications Left Generic**

Attempts to Loose Principles of Truth Bound by God

- Homosexual marriage
- Guilty party may remarry
- All may remain in subsequent remarriage
- Alien sinner not bound by God's law
- Baptism cleanses adulterous remarriages
- **NO UNITY POSSIBLE IN ERROR**

Current Attempt to Bind Human Additions to God's Law Is Also Present

Quote from Don Martin, Bible Matters - 4/8/03 - 4:35pm

"You asked:

'My wife left me for another man and promptly filed for and received a divorce. She was committing adultery before she left and received a divorce before I responded. Can I remarry? If not why was the adultery exclusion added to MATT.19: 9?'

Reply:

Some believe that since your mate committed adultery BEFORE she put you away that you are free to put away and marry another.... However, this is not what Matthew 19: 9 teaches. Every state with which I am familiar allows some waiting time between the filing and the issuance of the civil divorce document. I believe, alas, that you should have been active before the whole divorce process became history. You are now a 'put away person' and according to Matthew 19: 9 are not allowed to 'put away' and subsequently marry another."

Binding Human Additions & Opinion Not Bound By God

- Makes CAUSE of fornication irrelevant
- Binds court & procedure of modern origin
- Binds necessity to take civil action unknown
- Binds framework of time from human judge
- Makes impossible original procedure
- Forbids marriage of innocent in case where marriage sundered for cause of fornication

Teaching of Jeff Belknap, *God-given 'Rights' Nullified by Man's Wrongs*

- "God's will is for us to **obey** 'the higher powers' even though they may nullify our God-given 'liberties.'"
- "There are many other examples of divine rights which have been taken from God's people due to man's **injustices**."
- Sound harmless?
- Here is the application by another brother being consistent with the principle
- We often get wrapped up in scenarios that lead us to false conclusions. No scenario can change divine truth. Marriage is a liberty not a command. If a country outlawed marriage then a Christian would have to obey that law (Rm. 13:1-5). A scriptural divorce is a liberty. If a country outlawed divorce for any reason then a Christian would have to abide by that law (Rm.13:1-5). --- Brian Yeager, *Do Divine Liberties Supercede Civil Laws?* ---
- **Deifies Human Law, Lowers Divine Authority & Opens the Door to More Additions**

Attempts to Bind Specific Applications Not Bound by God

- Make civil procedure = Bible putting away
- Innocent party must initiate civil action
- Timing for all action ends with judge's gavel
- No right for one previously unmarried to marry if sunder adulterous "marriage"
- Civil law supersedes divine liberty to marry
- Must consider all civil law to interpret Bible
- **NO UNITY POSSIBLE IN ADDITIONS**

MUST Contend for Faith & MUST Avoid Needless Disputes (Bind Opinions)