ON THE HOME FRONT

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We are always happy to hear the responses of those who read our bulletin from week to week! Hopefully, all will find the words of guidance from the Bible a delightful blessing to their life on earth! We must all realize that we will not “pass this way again.” This very fact should impress us with the heavy duty and responsibility that is ours now to live in harmony with the Lord’s teaching, and to help others, especially our children, to see the importance of living the Christian life (Rom. 6:3-4). Jesus said, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24). Are we among those whom the Lord has called “wise”?

We sometimes wonder if the elders need to change the time of our services on Sunday and Wednesday. The reason this question is asked is because there seems to be a habit formed with some to come in after the appointed time to start. Of course there are reasons why at times we are unable to be present on time, but it does not seem to be the case with those who are habitually late for Bible study and worship. Some miss part if not all of the song service. And then, coming in late, they disturb those who are already worshipping! Please consider trying to be at least 5 minutes early. It would be greatly appreciated. Surely, we do not seek to discourage anyone, and we acknowledge that all are “better late than never!”
Perhaps the Scriptures referred to in this question are the words of Jeremiah: “Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words everyone from his neighbor ... that use their tongues, and say, He saith ... that prophesy false dreams ... and cause my people to err by their lies, and their lightness” (Jer. 23:30-32). This stern warning should be taken seriously by all who would teach or preach the Word of God (I Pet. 4:11). When men give their own thoughts and ways, and say that God spoke them, they must have the Scripture to back up their statement, or else they “steal” God’s Word from the people. “False dreams” here have reference to false revelations. They say Jehovah revealed certain things to them, but they lie, and cause God’s people to err! It is a serious thing to twist, change, or mutilate God’s Word, or for men to make their own creeds (Gal. 1:6-9). God’s prophet Isaiah clearly states that God’s ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9). Let us always remember that the Bible is the only book that came from the mind of God to man! (I Cor. 2:9-11; Eph. 3:3-5). The Holy Spirit without error delivered God’s Will in the Bible through the apostles chosen by the Lord (Jn. 16:13). God’s Word speaks to us from the heart of God, just as our words speak what our heart thinks, purposes, and by which we obey (Prov. 23:7; Matt. 12:34; 15:18; Rom. 6:17-18). So great is the love of Jehovah to man that His Word should be treated with dignity and care (Jn. 3:16-17). The Bible, not man’s creeds, is the only book that correctly tells us where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going when this life is over (II Cor. 4:16-18). It is the only Book that tells us the things we must think, know, believe, and do, in order to go to Heaven! (II Pet. 1:3; Jn.14:1-6). When obeyed in its purity, it will cleanse man from sin (Eph. 1:7), make him a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27), and thoroughly furnish man unto every good work (II Tim. 3:16-17). It is the only Book by which we shall be judged in the great day of Judgment (Rom. 2:16; Jn.12:48). The Bible declares to us that we shall all stand in Judgment, to give an account of the deeds done in the body here, whether they have been good or bad (II Cor. 5:10-11). For those who are fearful to stand for what is right, and the “unbelievers, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars,” God says they “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 20:8). Let all be warned against “steeling” the Word of God from the people!
Sound Doctrine

Paul instructed Titus, “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1 NKJV). According to Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary, the term “sound” refers to that which is healthy. Therefore, Titus was supposed to speak or preach healthy doctrine—doctrines designed to promote healing among those who depart from God’s plan and encourage growth in the lives of those who adhere to it. Importantly, Paul’s statement implies that speaking things “which are proper for sound doctrine” or speaking “what accords with sound doctrine” (ESV) is not a given. If it is possible to speak or preach healthy doctrine, it is also possible to speak or preach that which is unhealthy.

The significance of “sound doctrine” becomes clear when we consider the other instances where it is mentioned in Scripture. Paul described “sound doctrine” as being “contrary to” wicked behavior (1 Timothy 1:10). He elsewhere noted how elders must use “sound doctrine” to “exhort and convict those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). And he warned Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). From these passages, it is clear “sound doctrine” is to be both proclaimed and practiced.

When “sound doctrine” is preached and followed, good fruit is produced (cf. Matthew 7:15-20). When “sound doctrine” is ignored, individuals and congregations depart from the faith. This is what took place in the congregation at Thyatira. According to Revelation 2:20, the church allowed the false doctrine of a woman named Jezebel to be openly presented. Jesus was not pleased. Consequently, He declared, “And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds” (vv. 21-22).

The words Jesus addressed to the church at Thyatira could rightly be called “sound doctrine.” His admonition to refrain from following Jezebel’s teachings and repent of immoral behavior would bring restoration and healing. If the church listened to His exhortation, its soundness would be restored; if it rejected His appeal, its punishment was fixed (Revelation 2:23). The same point could be made about the other congregations mentioned both in Revelation 2-3 and throughout Scripture. When the Holy Spirit directed an inspired message to a particular congregation, that congregation was expected to correct the issues addressed in that message. If they did, their soundness was restored; if they did not, it was not.

As we seek to both preach “sound doctrine” and practice such today, we must remind ourselves that the congregations mentioned in Scripture were composed of individuals like us. Some were hungry for power (cf. 3 John 9-10); some were greedy (cf. Acts 5:1-11); some were immoral (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1). Their examples and obvious weaknesses do not justify our misbehavior, for the Lord did not condone their sins but instead corrected them. When the truth of God’s Word is properly applied to the lives of God’s people, soundness results. Let us make every effort to both speak and practice “sound doctrine” as individuals and congregations.

--Chad Ramsey
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