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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

IT WON'T WORK!

Jady W. Copeland

Possibly one of the chief reasons why effective withdrawal from the ungodly among God's people has not been done is that brethren have convinced themselves that "it won't work." In this article, I refer especially to the final step in church discipline—that of the decision to withdraw from those who will not repent. This is really why we withdraw, in a sense, namely because they fail to come back. But we must not get bogged down in semantics.

I am afraid that the expression in our caption is indicative of an attitude—the attitude that says we are afraid of the consequences, or we are afraid of what the brethren will think (or do), or we will "lose them" if we withdraw. It seems ironic to me that this very fear of the brethren's disapproval of the action is the very principle on which the effectiveness of withdrawal is based. The success of disciplinary action in any fellowship stems from the basic principle that man, being by nature a social being, desires the approval of his fellows. When he realizes that he does not have that approval, he is inclined to re-think his actions. So, for this same reason, many elders and others are reluctant to withdraw because they fear disapproval from the ones that should be withdrawn from—their family. They may even fear disapproval from others in the church not in the family.

But again I am afraid that the refusal to withdraw expressed in the statement "it won't work" is merely an excuse. We simply do not like the unpleasant task and rationalize

that "it won't work anyway, so why should we withdraw?" Actually they are already "away" from God, else why would we be withdrawing? But should we not be concerned about disapproval from God? That must be our first concern.

If discipline does not work, it is either the fault of God or man. Surely it is not God's fault, so that leaves man. If it is man's fault, it must be the fault of the person who is withdrawn from or the ones doing the withdrawing. If we are speaking of whether or not it works (meaning restoring them to the faith), it is often the "fault" of the sinner, as some can never be restored (Heb. 6:6). But in this article, we speak of the attitude of brethren who should do the withdrawing. And let me make this point before we go further. If "it doesn't work" and if the sinner is not reclaimed, we should not be discouraged any more than if we fail to convert every alien we teach. Regardless of the sinner we are trying to reach (whether or not they have been baptized), they are still sinners and need converting. And we will not convert all in either group. In both cases, the Lord told us to teach and exhort them, and we must do it (2 The. 3:13). We have no choice in the matter if we ourselves want to be saved. In the words of the bumper sticker I saw (slightly rearranged), "God said it; that settles it; I believe it."

Two extremes need to be avoided in withdrawal. *First*, under the excuse of "love and tolerance," many brethren seldom if ever withdraw from the ungodly. *But on the other hand*, there are some that are withdrawal-happy. I was once told by a member of a certain congregation that the elders had decided to withdraw from members if they failed to come to three consecutive services (I assume without good cause). The purpose of church discipline is to save the lost and, while love and forbearance is truly the proper attitude in this process, the same characteristics will demand that with-

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

“THE PEOPLE ARE YET TOO MANY”

Judges 7:4

The neglect and/or improper study of the Old Testament has resulted in the ignorance of people on various subjects, one of which is the ultimate and final source of man’s spiritual strength. With these facts before us, let us study a forgotten but important and timely principle from Judges regarding the genuine and only source of spiritual strength for God’s people in any age.

We begin in the divine record at the point where Gideon and his army are encamped by “**the well of Harod**” anticipating the battle with the Midianites. The Lord is giving final instructions to Gideon concerning the army of Israel. From the human perspective, it is not only strange but foolish advice when God declares: “**The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands**” (Jud. 7:2). “Too many”! How is it possible for an army to have “too many”? Usually the converse is true. But this is God’s army, doing His bidding, walking “**by faith, not by sight**” (2 Cor. 5:7). Whatever God’s army accomplishes, it is to be because God is with and for them. Timely and well put are David’s inspired words on this point: “**The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower**” (Psa. 18:2). The strength or power of God’s army at any time is never increased or diminished solely on the basis of the number of persons found therein. No matter what the numerical size of God’s army, it is the army’s strong faith in God’s way or plan that wins the battle!

God wanted Gideon’s army to win the battle, but they were to do so with the full realization that God alone was the sole reason for their victory. God declared the aforementioned point with the words, “**lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me**” (Jud. 7:2).

The inspired record now reveals how God reduced the size of Gideon’s army. Those who were “**fearful and afraid**” were commanded to “**return and depart early from mount Gilead.**” Out of an army of 32,000 men, 22,000 depart.

Now that the cowards are out of the ranks of God’s army, He then makes the statement that serves as the title of this article: “**The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there**” (7:4). God’s instructions were, “**Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down**

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drawal finally be done. One extreme may cause bitterness and frustration, while the other can allow sin with impunity. Let us not be extreme in either direction.

WHY WITHDRAWING HAS NOT WORKED

Brethren will point to many occasions where everything has gone wrong (seemingly) and say, “See, it doesn’t work,” and so they refuse to withdraw. And, of course, it does not always bring the sinner back. But it may be the fault of those withdrawing. Let us suggest a few reasons why it may not have worked.

(1) *No faith in God’s plan.* Could not denominational people point to the unpopularity of baptism and say, “See it doesn’t work” so why demand it? It may be compared to the repeal of prohibition when politicians were saying “it won’t work” (prohibition) when we understand drunkenness and other crimes rose sharply when the law was passed in the ‘30s. Paul said, **“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us”** (2 The. 3:6). This passage and others show clearly that while it may be unpleasant, it is a command of the Spirit and must be done **“in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”** which is pretty plain and positive. Yes, it will work (meaning bringing some back) just as preaching the gospel to the alien will work in some cases: All will not be converted—in either group, but shall we quit preaching, teaching, exhorting, reproving, and rebuking simply because it does not convert all of them? As we say with reference to preaching to the lost, let us do our part, believing in God’s plan and leave results to Him.

(2) *We often begin with the wrong attitude.* The second reason it has not done more good is we go about it in the wrong way and with the wrong attitude. Disciplining begins long before withdrawal. The final step is preceded by long hours of loving, thoughtful and prayerful teaching, reproof and exhortation. A parent does a lot of the same kind of training before he resorts to spanking. He begins with teaching, prodding, correcting, and warning. In too many cases, we have let brethren drift for months, even years, with little or nothing being done, and then suddenly we decide to withdraw. We go through the motion of withdrawing without teaching and admonishing and, of course, it does not work. Let us keep in mind the goal of this procedure is the salvation of a soul; not condemnation.

(3) *Little fellowship before withdrawal.* When we withdraw from a brother, we are to keep no company with him (2 The. 3:14; 1 Cor. 5:9). God’s people are a “family” but often we do not seem to have that attitude toward each other. Many go to worship once a week, then go home until the next week, never seeing anyone between times. They never see one another socially, and very little when they come to

the building. I have known of brethren living in the same community for years not knowing even where each other lives. And occasionally, you will hear a brother ask who another brother is (at the services) when both are members of the same group. So they have “fellowship” but very little with each other and, therefore, if one is withdrawn from, there is no change, for they never had any association with them to begin with. Hence, any value the matter of withdrawing may have is not realized. If they had nothing to do with each other to start with, what good is an announcement going to do?

(4) *Only partially done.* Another reason it has not done the good it should have done is that all do not withdraw themselves. Withdrawing must be done on an individual basis. One time it is recorded that a public statement should be made (1 Cor. 5:4) but obviously each individual must withdraw himself if the desired good is to be realized. If relatives and close friends continue to associate with the person, it seems to have two effects. *First*, it encourages the sinner in his sin and, *secondly*, it often divides the congregation. One group sides with the sinner, saying others are not fair or they are being too harsh. The others side with the elders (or the ones taking the lead) and so you have a divided condition which causes harsh words, insinuations, impugning of motives and ugly attitudes that do the church no good.

IT WILL WORK

Yes, God knows best and He told us to discipline ourselves. When done properly, it will accomplish that which God desires. While it is true that the goal of withdrawal is to save the lost person, there are other reasons for doing so. There are other things which God wants accomplished that have to do with the church as well as the sinner. The church is to be kept pure (1 Cor. 5:6-7) and the good influence of brethren maintained (Rom. 16:18). The withdrawal causes others to fear (1 Tim. 5:20). How many have not been caused to examine their life when they heard elders ask brethren to withdraw from an ungodly person? Also, if we fail to discipline the ungodly among us, we are guilty of partaking of their evil (2 John 4-11). At the very heart of the process, is the idea that we show our disapproval of the sin that has been committed and make an honest attempt to save the person from destruction. We withdraw to show the sinner the sinfulness of his sinful ways (2 The. 3:14). Even if we never get him to repent, the brother will surely know that we believe him to be living in sin. We have done our part, just as we can take some comfort in the fact that we have done our best to convert an alien but he has not responded. It is my duty to discipline; it is his to respond and he will have to meet that in the judgment. I do not want to face God not having done my duty to an erring brother.

I know discipline will work because it is His plan; it is His will. God does not command us to do something that will not work. If we have faith in His knowledge, and His

wisdom, we cannot afford to question His judgment. Sure, we must proceed with love, longsuffering, and consideration for the condition of the one involved. But we must proceed. It worked with the case of the fornicator in Corinth (1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2 6-8) and it will work with some today. We know it will work because we have seen cases in our lifetime where it has worked and done the good intended. But like bad news that travels farther than good news, maybe we just hear of

the many cases where the brother or sister fails to repent.

Yes, brethren, like a loving parent disciplines a child with instruction, helping, reproving, and more stern forms of discipline, let us with love and consideration of our own faults fulfil our responsibilities to the erring. God’s plan will work if we work the plan as He directed.

—Deceased

(Editorial, Continued From Page 2)

upon his knees to drink” (7:5). Those who **“lapped”** were kept and those who **“bowed”** were sent home. Out of the original 32,000 men, only 300 remained!

Three hundred men now set themselves to attack **“the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east”** who **“lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude”** (7:12). But these three hundred troops are no ordinary soldiers, for they have implicit trust in God and His plan to win the victory.

Judges 8:10-12 records that the armies of Israel killed 135,000 of **“the hosts of the children of the east.”** Gideon and his God-fearing 300 believed and obeyed their Commander-in-Chief. By the power of **“Jehovah of hosts,”** truth’s standard waved over the field of battle when the fighting ceased.

We have lived to see what God said would happen if Gideon had won the battle with 32,000 men. **“The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying mine own hand hath saved me”** (7:2).

The church has reached an all-time low in faithfulness when a person, in promotion of a multimillion dollar effort

to “spread the gospel,” declares that Christians in American have never had a plan to evangelize the U.S. Has such a one never read the New Testament? No wonder the state of the church in this present apostasy was not even considered in this “first ever plan to evangelize America.” When no provisions were made to differentiate between faithful and unfaithful brethren regarding the placement of contacts made in the effort, something was sadly lacking.

Any “plan” to evangelize America that stipulates that you get the contacts we make only when we get your money is contrary to the very spirit of New Testament Christianity (Gal. 6:10). Where did anyone come up with such an idea (Col. 3:17)? Shades of Oral Roberts and of Rome!

Let many come to fill the house of God. But let them be drawn only by God’s distinctive Gospel. Let those who do the evangelizing trust in God’s plan to the complete exclusion of anything that would water down the truth and glorify man’s intellect. Let the faithful remember Gideon and his faithful 300 and always do things in God’s way lest we **“vaunt”** ourselves **“against”** God, **“saying mine own hand hath saved me”** (Jud. 7:2).

—David P. Brown, Editor



PREPARING FOR A SMALLER BROTHERHOOD

Bill Jackson

Before someone tries to rename me, let me state that “I am not Chicken Little, running around crying that THE SKY IS FALLING!” I do not believe that the sky is falling. I do know that many congregations are fallen, and more will fall; and I know many members of the church have done and are doing the same. Sadly, in spite of all the publicity given to the marks of apostasy in our time, some are still prone to chalk it up to “preacher excitability, and exaggeration.” They state that after documentation of more than 160 congregations having had internal problems due to the Crossroads/

Boston Movement errors [Of the late 1970s and early 80s in the church—*Editor*]. Some will still say, **“Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”**

I am stating no more, in this article’s heading, than was in the mind of Paul and others as they worked in the first century, and pointed to the coming great apostasy. Paul spoke of the departures from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1), and that due to men who have tired of sound doctrine, and wish to hear something else (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Peter spoke of false teachers who will bring in damnable heresies, and that **“many shall follow their pernicious ways”** (2 Peter 2:1-2). The Lord had waning faith in mind in looking to His return and asking, **“when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”** (Luke 18:8). Our Lord, and the apostles, were laying before us the matter of the church, as a result of apos-

tasies, being smaller than in an earlier time.

We do not see how any informed member can doubt it. There cannot be great apostasy and the church still be growing in number. There cannot be all the weakness associated with departures from the faith, and great spiritual or numerical strength at the same time. Having fallen from the “top ten,” the church will fall further unless there is, very soon, a turnaround that we cannot now see. In fact, being “in the top ten,” and pridefully desiring to remain so, or to climb even higher, no doubt encouraged some to soften all stance in order to be more pleasing unto men, and to gain the numbers that will be so impressive that we will remain high in denominational favor. After all, the denominational papers and magazines were the ones keeping the count, and some in our ranks wanted to keep these in a favorable mood toward us. But, did not Jesus warn, **“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!”** (Luke 6:26)?

We must then prepare for a smaller brotherhood. When the apostasy has run its course, that is what we will have. But, it will be a more faithful brotherhood, loving God and loving truth, and still holding onto and preaching exactly what we believed and preached since Pentecost, 33 A.D. It will still be the body of the Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), charged with making known to lost men the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10). It will be the body maintaining the New Testament’s marks for the church, in name, in organization, in work, in the plan of salvation taught, and in the form of New Testament worship. It may not be the body once positioned

on Main Street, downtown in a large city, having long since had to move once again into the frame building down some side street and across the tracks, but it will be the body of Christ, and faithful to the Lord. It will be the body known by the Lord, and to be claimed by Him when He next appears (1 Cor. 15:24). A congregation does not have to be great in size to be either faithful or blest by God!

There will remain, I fear, one confusing element. Unlike some hobbyistic movements, so anxious to leave the church that they readily adopted some other religious name, the trend in modern-day liberalism is to keep the designation “church of Christ.” Some few, in demonstration of “freedom” will be “the Family of God...Fellowship Cathedral... House of the Carpenter...” etc., but doubtless most will retain the wording “church of Christ.” Those who are traveling will have to do more careful advanced planning as to where they will stop for worship. But still, if worship is important—and it is—the planning is worth it. We will have to do that planning, for the brotherhood will be smaller!

—Deceased

*[The foregoing article was printed on page 2 of the April 1990 **Christian Worker**, of which brother Jackson was the editor and I was the Associate Editor. Thirty years have passed since he wrote his editorial. A simple perusal of the last almost third of a century has well proven what he had to say in his editorial.—Editor]*

DOES SILENCE GIVE SANCTION?

Winfred Clark

It is a matter of verbal conjecture on the part of many that God’s silence on a subject of human preference makes such allowable. Such is advocated by those who presume to use mechanical instruments in New Testament worship. It is assumed that since there is no declared prohibition against it such is then allowed. It seems the battles of the past fought in this same arena must again occur. The same questions need to be asked again. The same simple lessons must be learned again.

WASN’T GOD SILENT ABOUT ALL OTHER WOOD EXCEPT GOPHER IN BUILDING THE ARK?

Such seems to be a foolish question to those who read Genesis 6:14. In fact, as you read this verse, and others related to the ark, you would affirm the silence of God on all other kinds of wood to be used in the ark. This would be a good place to show His silence.

Would you at the same time argue that His silence would give sanction to the use of any other kind of wood? Would you even care to assume that His silence gave sanction to the use of such? In fact, wouldn’t you oppose the use of any other kind of wood? If you did, on what basis would you oppose it?

Would you argue that His silence does not sanction it and that you would have to have His Word to authorize the use of any other kinds of wood? Shouldn’t it follow then that the silence of the New Testament does not authorize the use of mechanical instruments in New Testament worship?

WASN’T GOD SILENT ABOUT THE KIND OF FIRE USED BY NADAB AND ABIHU?

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons Of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon and offered strange fire before the Lord

which he commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1).

What did they do? They did something God had not commanded. They used a kind of fire about which God was silent. Did His silence give sanction to what they did? If such were sanctioned, why were they punished for such?

Would God by His silence sanction a practice, and then punish those for doing what He sanctioned? You and I know better. We wouldn’t dare argue that His silence gave sanction to what they did but we do have to admit that God was indeed silent about the kind of fire they did use.

WASN’T GOD SILENT ABOUT THE NEED OF GENTILES TO BE CIRCUMCISED TO BE SAVED UNDER THE GOSPEL?

Do you remember those who went from Jerusalem to Antioch saying such was the case (Acts 15:1-2)? Do you recall that the apostles and elders met in Jerusalem about this question? Do you remember that they sent an epistle back to Antioch and other places saying, **“We gave no such commandment”** (Acts 15:24)?

They were silent concerning the necessity for Gentiles to be circumcised. To add such to God’s requirement for salvation was equal to the invasion of God’s silence. This would constitute an addition and perversion. For men to add the mechanical instrument to N. T. worship is no less an invasion of God’s silence.

WASN’T GOD SILENT ABOUT WASHING HANDS BEFORE EATING?

Some would add such and seek to have the Lord endorse it, but to no avail (Matt. 15:1-9). Jesus showed such to be nothing more than a human tradition. It has its origin with men and not with God. God was silent concerning such and Jesus did not accept that as authorization to bind such on His

disciples.

WASN’T GOD SILENT CONCERNING ONE SERVING AS A PRIEST UNDER THE LAW FROM THE TRIBE OF JUDAH?

One has but to read the following,

For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (Heb. 7.13-14).

The Hebrews writer used this as an argument to show that Jesus was of a higher order of priest.

Wouldn’t you think the overall priesthood would be better by having one perfect priest such as Jesus? Surely we would, but such wouldn’t authorize invading God’s silence and making Jesus a priest from the wrong tribe. The unanswerable argument is that since nothing was said concerning one from the tribe of Judah serving as priest, then one from Judah was not authorized to serve as a priest. Then what would it take for one to be authorized? Certainly not silence but rather a statement to that effect.

What would it take for the authorization of the mechanical instrument in New Testament worship? Wouldn’t it take a supporting statement like we have in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 for singing? You certainly don’t have any authorization based on silence. If so, there is absolutely no limit to the additions one can make. No, silence doesn’t give sanction and God doesn’t need to be treated as an idol that cannot speak. He has told us how to worship and in doing this we have His sanction based on His Word.

—Deceased



CAN ONE KNOW HE IS A CHRISTIAN?

Kenneth D. Cohn

Mankind has suffered many things for many reasons ever since creation. That should not be a surprise to anyone. The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:15-16, **“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”** This passage clearly says that one can suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. We have no problem in identifying these malefactors by their actions. The admonishment to us is to avoid these actions so that **“... none of you suffer”** because of them. Then the 16th verse says, **“if anyone suffers**

as a Christian.” How is it possible to suffer as a Christian if it is impossible to determine if one is a Christian? If it is impossible to know one is a Christian, it is also impossible to know one is NOT a Christian. If we cannot know we are NOT a Christian, why do we even bother to obey the will of Heaven?

Yet there are those who proclaim that one CANNOT know if he or she is a Christian, further proclaiming that only God knows. It is true that God knows all things even the hidden things of the heart (Heb. 4:12, 13), yet He says we can know false prophets (those that teach contrary to the

Word of God) by their fruits (Mat. 7:16). If we can know false prophets by their fruits, then we can know true prophets by their fruits. Accordingly, we can make the same determination as to one's status as a Christian by comparing the fruits they bear with the infallible Word of God. A Christian bears certain fruits (Gal. 5:22, 23) that a non-Christian does not (Gal. 5:19-21).

If it is the case that one cannot know if he or she has been saved from their sins, neither can one know if he or she has eternal life. The apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:13 that **“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”** Continuing the thought in verse 13, he goes on to write in verse 14, **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”** He wrote in 1 John 3:18-20, **“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”** The apostle John says that we can know we have eternal life and we can know we are of the truth. Our confidence and assurance are predicated on this knowledge.

Can we know anything? Can we know the truth? Yes, we can. Is truth absolute, i.e., the same for you and for me? Yes, it is. Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, **“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:31-32). Jesus affirmed that they could know the truth, and that they would know the truth if they abided in His Word. Jesus, in His prayer for His disciples, petitioned the Father to **“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth”** (John 17:17). Previously, He said that **“[h]e who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day”** (John 12:48). The gospel is the word of truth and it saves (Eph. 1:13). Indeed, Paul wrote in Romans 1:16-17,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’

The gospel, the Word of truth, is God's power to save, but only to those who believe. Believe what? The Words of Jesus. Since Jesus is a much God as is the Father, one can say “the word of God” and mean the same as “the words of Jesus.” How can you know if you believe? As the apostle Paul wrote, **“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves”** (2 Cor. 13:5a).

How can you obey that which you do not believe? You cannot; you will not. Paul further writes,

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not

believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:14-17).

Not only must the truth of the gospel be believed, it must be obeyed. Jesus said to, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:15-16). Can one know he believes? Jesus seemed to think that one could believe and be baptized; He also seemed to think that one could fail to believe and thereby be condemned. Paul wrote that **“... God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”** (Rom 6:17-19).

Will the mere preaching of the gospel, God's only power to save, result in the salvation of its hearers? No. Paul wrote, **“For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it”** (Heb 4:2) Must we take care what and how we hear? (Mark 4:24; Lk. 8:18). Indeed, we must. Jesus said as much. Can we be mistaken in thinking we are doing good works for the Lord and deceive ourselves? Indeed, we can. Jesus said that,

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (Mat. 7:21-23).

Well, then, can we determine from God's objective truth what is required of us? Paul says to, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (i.e., we must use logic)”** (2 Tim 2:15). We do not have the liberty to place any interpretation on scripture that suits us, but we have an obligation to draw REBUKE

Roelf Ruffner from scripture what it says explicitly or implicitly. If we can rightly divide the Word of truth (i.e., we must use logic), then we can also wrongly divide the word of truth (i.e., we may be illogical). Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that, **“the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth”** and that **“those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”** (John 4:23, 24). If we can know the truth, and know that we know the

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truth, then we can know that we are Christians or that we are not Christians. The same evidence that gives us knowledge pertaining to our eternal inheritance (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:7, 2:3-5, 29, 3:19-21, 5:11-14; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:58) is the same evidence by which we determine that we are Christians (i.e., in Christ).

As the God of heaven and earth said to the prophet Isaiah so long ago—

Come now, and let us reason together, Says the Lord, Though your sins are like scarlet, hey shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be

as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken (Isa 1:18-20).

What has changed since that time that we are no longer required to use our powers of reasoning. Certainly, God, who knows the hearts of mankind, has not changed. Unfortunately, neither has mankind, but it does not need to be so. Let us reason correctly that our sins may be as white as snow and as wool. Then we can truly know and prove with adequate evidence that we are Christians.

REBUKE

Roelf Ruffner

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). Christians have been freed from many things: **“the law of sin and death”** (Rom. 8:2), the Law of Moses (Col. 2:14), and the bondage to sin (Rom. 6:6). We are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Apparently some of the Galatian brethren did not understand this or at least were not acting like they did. They were using their liberty to treat their brethren in an unloving way. The old man of the flesh lashes out at those who disagree with him and seeks to tear them down. This is not the mark of a Christian. **“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”** (John 13:34).

But does brotherly love mean I must not rebuke my

brother/sister when they transgress the law of Christ? The answer, contrary to the opinion of some, is a resounding “No”! The prophet Nathan rebuked his friend King David. Jesus rebuked His Jewish brethren, the apostle Peter, and even whole congregations (Rev. 2-3). Paul rebuked his co-worker Barnabas and his fellow apostle Peter.

Rebuke done with an attitude of love can be refreshing and edifying. **“Open rebuke is better than secret love”** (Pro. 27:5). Likewise, those on the receiving end of such a rebuke should take it with openness and love; ready to change if needed. Not always an easy thing to do!

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