

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES
"Edifying Directives During Individual Doctrinal Calamities"
(2 Timothy 3:13-4:8)

Introduction: (To show the need for the message...)

(1) We can expect to see doctrinal apostasy in church groups that we already know have serious doctrinal problems:

Waterbury Republican-American reported that a task force in one of America's largest mainline Protestant denominations drafted a report asserting the following: "Responsible biblical interpretation" supports the acceptance, and even the blessing, of homosexual activity. Such reading of the Bible regarding same-sex unions 'emphasizes what it says in the preeminent biblical command--to 'love your neighbor as yourself'." But we can expect that to occur.

The New York Times went to Harvard Divinity School on a sabbatical

The Search For God At Harvard as a result of his experience there. Ari Goldman, an Orthodox

Jew found and reported in this book that spiritual Christianity was the hardest faith to find at Harvard with all of its religious pluralism. We can almost expect that to occur. (2) But what is hard to face is doctrinal failure in church groups

that we consider to be sound as follows:

(a) A gospel-preaching church in Connecticut, desiring to include

as many people as it can for membership, relaxes its beliefs just a bit, and now the church is full of all sorts of beliefs, including Christians who believe in "soul sleep," a belief common to cultists who deny the consciousness of the soul at death!

(b) A missionary medical doctor who served on the foreign field in Nigeria with my parents has since denounced Christianity, saying, "There is nothing to Christianity as a faith!" He worked trying to heal lepers in Africa with my parents' mission, and now he says it was all a mistake!!

(c) When it happens to someone we know personally, it's even more difficult to understand and accept. We need God's input in handling doctrinal failure...

Need: "It is always painful to see people depart from the truth! How does God want us to handle such events productively?!"

I. **To ease our shock in witnessing parties fall into doctrinal error, God offers the following information to reveal those we might know who are already heading TOWARDS such failure:**

- A. **Step One Down** - People in religious groups start toward doctrinal defection by living in the control of their sin natures, 4:3b.
- B. **Step Two Down** - In this position, Scripture input becomes painful to them as through their **sin natures** they **cannot** hear or obey it.
 1. Paul stated that some men would no longer "endure" truth, 4:3a.
 2. "Endure" here is used elsewhere in Scripture in similar form **only** in He. 13:22 and Acts 18:14 where a party must "endure" hearing a weighty complaint or call to repent, A & G., A Gr.-En. Lex., p. 65.
 3. Paul thus teaches that due to their living by their futile lusts, men would be pained in facing Scripture's directives as they would be unable to obey it **themselves**, 2 Tim. 4:3a!
- C. **Step Three Down** - To stifle their **pain** of being **unable** to obey God, such men will seek many teachers for comforting ideas, 3c.
- D. **Step Four Down** - In heeding **many** teachers to **ease** conviction **pain**, these people will inevitably replace Scripture with erroneous sources of truth, 2 Tim. 4:4:
 1. Paul said that men would accept "fables" (KJV) (NIV="myths").
 2. In the Greek N.T., this term is **muthos** which is used in 1 Tim. 1:4a to describe extra-biblical Haggadah writings of the Hebrew Talmud, cf. Hendriksen, I-II Timothy-Titus, p. 59.
 3. These men seek different sources for truth than the Scriptures.
- E. **Step Five Down** - In adopting such errant **sources** for truth, such men would deceive and be deceived by **error**, 2 Tim. 3:13b.
- F. **Step Six Down** - Given enough time, their thinking would go from bad to worse, 13a.
- G. **Step Seven Down** - Finally, they would advance so **far** into error that **everyone else** would discern their folly, 2 Timothy 3:9.

II. **If we can thus discern this challenge before it comes to a full head, God has some productive guidelines for us to apply as follows:**

- A. God desires Christians in general to **protect themselves** from error:
 1. Believers must not live by the power of their sin natures to avoid going towards error, cf. Gal. 5:16 in view of 2 Tim. 4:3b.
 2. Believers need to use practical guideposts to discern the truth:

- a. They need to stick with beliefs that God let them be sure were true **before** they faced questionable teachings, 3:14a.
 - b. They need to use reputable believers for input, 3:14b.
 - c. They need to rely on Scripture as the utterance of God for all certainties, and do so until Christ comes again, 3:15-4:2a.
- B. God has directives for **teachers** to help their **listeners** as follows:
1. Those who teach must also stay right with God instead of using their sin natures to minister for Christ, Jn. 15:5-8.
 2. They must teach Scripture as opposed to other sources, 4:2a.
 3. They must teach truth whether it is received or resisted, 2.
 4. They must define right from wrong in applying it, 2c.
 5. They must use it to encourage those who are upright, 4:2d.
 6. They must use painstaking efforts to clarify reality to others in even hard situations, 4:2f (Hendriksen, Ibid., p. 311).
- C. God has **motivations** for all believers to fulfill these directives:
1. Every believer will be accountable to Christ when He returns, so one is motivated to obey these directives, 2 T. 4:1.
 2. Every believer has the example of the cost paid by godly forerunners to imitate in fulfilling these directives, 2 Tim. 4:6.
 3. Every believer has rewards to receive by doing these things, 4:7-8. Rewards will come for countering error (fighting the fight), for enduring in that stand (finishing the course), and for preserving truth in the process (keeping the faith), 4:7-8.

Application: *To handle the pain of witnessing doctrinal defection, God wants us to (1) note the signs of those who are headed for tragedy (2 Tim. 4:3-4; 3:9, 13) so we can be durable enough to address the crisis fruitfully. (2) While noting these signs, we are to protect ourselves from heading towards that failure by doing the following: (a) If we have not done so, believe on Christ for salvation (Jn. 3:16) to become indwelt by the Holy Spirit and possess a new nature (Rom. 8:9; Ep. 4:22ff); (b) believers must confess any sins that block fellowship with Christ (1 Jn. 1:9) and rely on the Holy Spirit to be able to live right, Gal. 5:16-23. (3) Thus equipped, we heed 2 Tim. 3-4 for God's blessing in (a) protecting ourselves and of (b) ministering to help others in need.*

Lesson: *To overcome our trauma in witnessing apostasy, we must replace our earthly viewpoint of what we see with Biblical insight !*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message...)

flesh, a doctrine necessary for all believers to state and believe according to 1 John 4:3-4.

With great courage, another professor, Norman Geisler, decided to challenge his errant colleague publicly at the convention level of the Evangelical Free Church Association. For daring to challenge the professor at Trinity, Dr. Norman Geisler was treated as a troublemaker. One of the officials of the Evangelical Free association in a letter called Norman Geisler's stand "hogwash" and "nonsense". A cartoon appeared in Christianity Today magazine depicting Norman Geisler as a scowling opponent in a boxing ring of the defensive professor with the errant view.

I learned a week ago that Dr. Murry Harris, the errant professor, has recanted his error to the extent that he agrees with Norman Geisler. Norman Geisler has signed a statement that Murray Harris totally agrees with his belief of the resurrected body of Christ. The President of Trinity that pushed hard against Mr. Geisler has since resigned from Trinity, and the issue is settled.

It cost a lot of personal public suffering from colleagues for Norman Geisler, a man who had been a mentor of mine when he taught at DTS. But, thanks to his courage and the follow up work of Dr. Robert D. Culver of the Evangelical Free Association, we can recommend Trinity Evangelical Divinity School doctrinally. It was a price, a great price, but it was needed, and Professor Murray Harris is back on track along with an entire movement in America.

God help us to follow Scripture's edifying directives to face and deal productively with error as did Norman Geisler!!

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