

Lesson Four

DOCTRINE

A. THE MEANING OF DOCTRINE:

The word “doctrine” means “teaching” or “truth.” It is impossible to teach the Bible without teaching doctrine. Doctrine is the backbone and framework of all teaching and preaching. It gives strength, form and beauty to the message we proclaim.

B. SOUND DOCTRINE:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (II Timothy 4:3).

Sound doctrine is the teaching of God’s Word in purity and truth without error or darkness. It is teaching which is wholesome and healthful. If you are sound in body, you are healthy; if you are sound in doctrine, you have spiritual health. Sound doctrine exalts Jesus and denounces sin. It faithfully points out the suffering that follows a life of sin; it inspires faith in the hearer and leads him to a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Sound doctrine leaves the believer with a heart full of deep peace and rest in Jesus.

In these days of apostasy, many are not willing to endure sound doctrine. A spirit of restlessness, discontent and dissatisfaction enters in and the professing Christian begins to look for a thrill, excitement or something sensational. They become unstable and unsettled and are like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. They become wells without water, clouds that are carried with the tempest. Because of this, they depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

When we endure sound doctrine, we are perfectly happy and content with God’s Word alone. When heaven and earth have passed away, the Word of God will still be standing. The Bible is that which will lead us to Jesus and save our souls. It alone is truth, for it alone is infallible.

C. IMMUTABILITY OF DOCTRINE:

The Word of God does not change and is absolutely eternal and unchangeable in its nature. This means that there is no true doctrine apart from that taught by the apostles and there is the great necessity of continuing steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine.

"The truth of the Lord endureth for ever" (Psalm 117:2).

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 4:42).

D. THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE:

The importance of Bible Doctrine may be seen in the following Scriptures:

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (I Timothy 4:13).

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:16).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16).

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (I Timothy 5:17).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2).

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).

E. THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS DOCTRINE:

The proper approach to the study of God's Word is to have a healthy hunger to know TRUTH for the sake of TRUTH alone. There are many motives for the study of the Bible; but above all others, this should be the most important.

We should never search into God's Word simply to win an argument or to defend a certain position. We should always search for and seek after TRUTH for the sake of TRUTH alone.

F. PRINCIPLES TO BE REMEMBERED IN UNDERSTANDING DOCTRINE:

1. Truth comes by Divine Revelation. There is no better teacher of Divine truth than the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Bible. Many truths are mysteries that are hidden from the unregenerate mind and can only be understood as the Spirit makes them clear.

“When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Corinthians 2:14).

2. Next to the Holy Spirit, Scripture is the best interpreter of the Bible.
3. Truth is in agreement with the whole tenor of Scripture. Doctrine should never be established on one isolated passage of Scripture unless that doctrine is at the same time in harmony with the entire Bible.
4. Truth is always well balanced and sound. Extreme viewpoints are more likely to be in error than the middle of the road belief.
5. Truth always exalts Jesus Christ. Any teaching that degrades Jesus is erroneous.
6. Truth always has a sanctifying effect in the life of a believer. A man’s daily walk will tell whether or not he is a believer of true doctrine.

G. HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE DOCTRINE:

1. By the use of an analytical concordance or topical Bible, trace the doctrine through the Bible and collect all references. By taking time to write all these references out in long hand, the student is more likely to receive a true understanding of what the entire Bible has to say about the subject.
2. By comparing all these Bible references, write a definition of the doctrine. Ask yourself these questions: What do these references have in common? Where do they differ? Remember that the Bible never contradicts itself.
3. Relate the references to their immediate context and the total pattern of Biblical truth. Study each reference in the light of its context and evaluate the presence of this doctrine within the total pattern of the biblical revelation.
4. Apply the doctrine to personal experience. Is this a doctrine for believers or unbelievers? In what way must it be applied to the lives of those to whom it is addressed?
5. Summarize the doctrine. Write a paragraph or more stating your conclusions.

