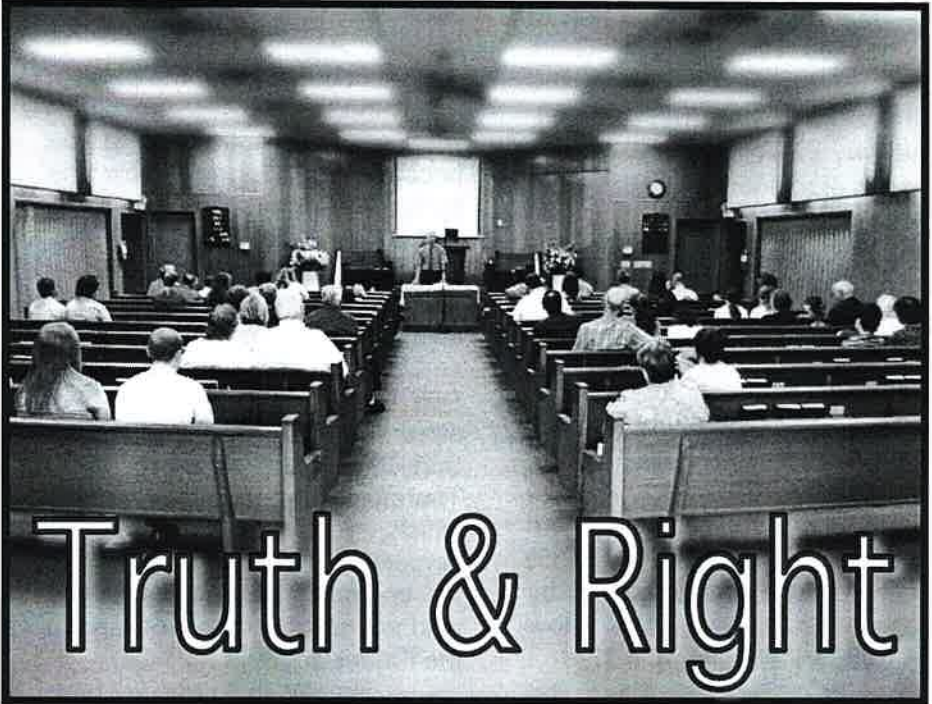


In search of...



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Contentment

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:16-17)

Here in the Colossian epistle, Paul gives several exhortations which are rather closely tied together. Simply, they

are:

1. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom
2. Teach each other by singing spiritual songs with grace in your hearts to the Lord
3. Do all things by the authority of Jesus Christ

Underlying each of these is an emphasis on the importance of doctrine in the life of those who name the name of Christ. Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Interestingly, a search in the New King James version of the New Testament reveals three other times where the phrase "know the truth" is used. The way in which the phrase is used is significant.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, the Apostle contrasts those who have apostatized with those who are faithful Christians. Faithful Christians are identified as those who know the truth.

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

In 2 Timothy 2:24-26 the faithful Christian is encouraged to teach with humility those who are

in opposition to Christ, in the hope that they will too become faithful. Again, faithfulness to Christ is equated with the phrase, "know the truth."

"I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2:21-24).

Finally, in 1 John 2:21-24, John contrasts those who had denied the deity of Christ with those who named His name. Again they are described as being individuals who know the truth, and who abide in it.

The three passages show clearly that the apostles equated faithfulness to the word with faithfulness to God and Christ. Conversely, those who were unfaithful were characterized as such because they had departed from the truth of God.

Denominational groups have obviously missed this fundamental truth. It is not so much that it is a difficult concept to grasp, rather their preconceptions have led to a religious system that is antithetical to this principle. The

basis of denominational "Christianity" is that God accepts those who are not abiding in truth. Error is glossed over, and the claim is made that religious sincerity is sufficient basis for our acceptance by the Father and the Son. The verses preceding show this claim to be in error.

The division over the church support of human institutions also illustrates our point. As departures from truth have multiplied, there has been a departure from the hermeneutic which demanded divine authority for practices, to a plea for "unity in diversity." Now the cry for tolerance has reached the point where some are calling for the use of instruments of music in worship, the abandonment of baptism as a requirement of redemption, and the acceptance of the denominations.

Finally, even among non-institutional churches, there is an increasing call for toleration of those who have departed truth. Imagine, the desire to treat those who do NOT know the truth the way you treat those who DO know the truth. The absurdity of this is evident from the scriptures already cited. Romans 14 is appealed to (as it is by the denominationalist, and by the institutionalist), as a basis for unity in diversity. This appeal has centered around the desire to accept some who teach false doctrine regarding divorce and remarriage. However, the ramifications of the error is being felt in many other areas as well.

An interesting aspect of this peculiar attitude toward truth is that those who are so tolerant of error style themselves as loving, and righteous. This ought not surprise us, as Satan himself makes the same claim. Paul stated, "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Those who stand for truth, and demand conformity are often castigated for their efforts. They are admonished as being "mean-spirited", and "sectarian" in their mindset. Attacks are made on their character, as they are charged with impure motivations. They are "out to make a name for themselves", or "self-appointed brotherhood watchdogs."

Brethren, more and more we will find ourselves on an "island" in our appeal to truth. However, we should heed the apostle Paul, and diligently strive to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."

Stan Cox

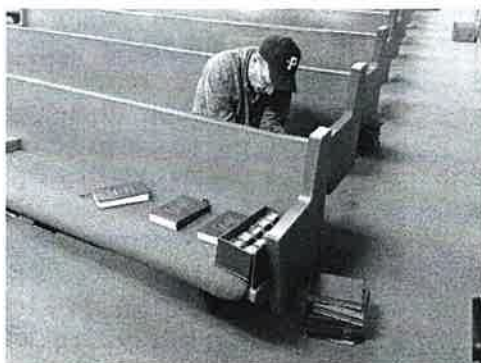
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As with all things here on Earth, our building and the things in it age and require fixing from time to time. You've probably noticed some of these recent repairs, but what you might not have noticed is the time & effort put into making the pews stable and safe for us to use, so here are just a few images of how some of the work gets done around here. Please do not take for granted the fact that we are blessed with two good men who are serving as elders, as well as having others who give of their own time to see that things are taken care of for the church building.