

The Clarity Trumpet

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Post Office Box 2472 • Douglas, GA 31534

For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

I Corinthians 14:8-9

Is Doctrine Important?

More and more the emphasis in churches seems to be on love and acceptance and less on doctrine. "Doctrine," we are told, "divides the Body of Christ and, therefore, cannot be what God intended for us to preach." Another has said, "No dogmatic doctrine ever healed a broken heart nor comforted a bereaved loved one."

Well, let's think it through together to see if doctrine is really all that important. I begin where all such reasoning should begin, with a definition. "Doctrine" means *teaching*. Bible doctrine is Bible teaching. Many things taught in Scripture are taught dogmatically.

That there is a personal God is dogmatically taught in the Bible. Remove that doctrine and the world becomes a very real and fearsome "jungle" with every man being his own judge of right and wrong and no one being safe from the onslaughts of the wicked.

It is true, of course, that some elevate their own view of doctrine to the level of "*Thus says the Lord*" and in doing so cause strife and divisions that normally would not be present if we all believed and preached *only* what is clearly taught in Scripture. But it is next to impossible to convince a die-hard Church of Christ pastor, or Reformed Calvinist, or Arminian, or Covenant Theologian, or Dispensationalist that there just may be some doctrines taught in their various systems that are not truly Biblical. To many of them their doctrinal beliefs *are* Bible truths even if you can show them their doctrines go contrary to clear Bible teaching.

But you might be thinking, "Are there no Bible doctrines upon which we can all agree?"

That depends. Certain truths are unmistakably taught in the Scriptures, but it is sometimes extremely difficult to get all "Bible believers" to agree even upon these crystal-clear doctrines.

Take, for instance, the literal, physical resurrection of Christ from the dead. Most of us would probably think, "All of Christendom believes in the resurrection of Christ." However, it may shock you to know that many people who call themselves "Christians" do not believe Christ literally came back from the dead in a physical form (only spiritually), or do not consider such a teaching very important or relevant to their personal lives. Is the *doctrine* of Christ's resurrection important? Can its reality bring comfort and hope? Well, consider --

If Christ Did *Not* Rise From the Dead--

- The apostles and others knew He had not risen and lied about it (Matthew 28:1-8; John 20:19-29).

- The angel lied to the women at the tomb (Matthew 28:1-6).

- Our preaching of salvation is useless (I Corinthians 15:14).

- We are false witnesses (I Cor. 15:15).

- Our faith is useless - of absolutely no value, and we are still in our sins (I Cor. 15:17).

- We will not be raised (I Corinthians 6:14; 15:13-19; II Corinthians 4:14).

- Christians who have died perished.

We will never see them again (I Cor. 15:18).

- Therefore, all the apostles and

Christian martyrs throughout the Church age died for nothing.

- There is no Gospel -- no good news of eternal salvation (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

- Christ's prophecy failed about His resurrection. He is unreliable (Mt. 20:17-19).

- If that's true, then He also lied.

- There is no heavenly Father who sent His Son, and to whom the Son returned (John 3:16; 14:1-3).

- There will be no Rapture of the believers of this Age (I Thessalonians 4:16).

- There will be no Second Coming of Christ to the earth (Acts 1:9-11).

- Every wicked, vile person who has ever lived will get away with his abominable deeds because there will be no judgment (II Thessalonians 1:6-8).

- Death and hell have not been defeated

(I Corinthians 15:54-57; Romans 6:9-10).

- Christ is neither "Lord of the dead [or] the living" (Romans 14:9).
- He is not the Messiah or Savior.
- There is no Savior. No one else paid for sin and rose again from the dead to prove it.
- Jesus is not seated at the Father's right hand (Ephesians 1:20).
- Nor will we be in "heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6).
- Christ is not God in the flesh (Romans 1:4).
- There is no security in Christ (Romans 8:31-39, especially v. 34).
- There is no "newness of life" in Christ to enjoy (Romans 6:4).
- We are not justified (declared righteous) before God (Romans 4:23-25).
- All the work and labor we do for Christ *is* in vain - of absolutely no use whatsoever (I Corinthians 15:58).
- We are no longer "dead to the Law" -- instead, we stand condemned by it (Romans 7:4).
- The Holy Spirit has not come and does not indwell believers (John 14:16-18; Romans 8:11).
- All things do *not* "work together for good to those who love God, and to those who are called according to His purpose." Therefore, we should live totally for ourselves -- eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. (Romans 8:28-34; I Corinthians 15:30-32; II Corinthians 5:14-15).
- The Bible is not true. Any comfort we derive from it is false comfort (Mt. 24:35).
- Christians are of all people most to be pitied (I Corinthians 15:19).

Doctrine not important? It seems that only the naive, or those who have been misled, or those who choose to ignore the obvious, or those who have not taken the time to delve into the pages of Holy Scripture for themselves -- earnestly and *objectively* -- could hold to such an unrealistic view of the *teachings* of God's Word.

What's Holding Me Back?

Let me shift gears and introduce another thought. With the new year now here it is a good time to reevaluate our priorities and to adjust our thinking and our lives. I urge you

who trust in Christ as your Savior to think through the following very carefully. Take your time. Be prayerful.

- What's keeping me from growing, from being consistent, from being productive for the Lord?
- What is it that's filling me with doubts -- about myself, my purpose, about God, His Word, the future?
- What's influencing me in a wrong direction, filling my time and/or my mind with worthless or sinful things?
- What's causing my attitude to go sour -- being critical, indifferent, in opposition to things and people around me, unfeeling about things I should feel deeply about?
- What is it in my life that's leading to wrong relationships -- perhaps a relationship that's too involved, too physical, too consuming, too demanding; or causing me to be uninvolved in building healthy relationships, backing away from others, failing to reach out to those around me; a relationship where I use another person, or I am allowing that one to use me; being too dependent on someone else, or too independent of everyone else?
- What's causing me to be too busy -- too rushed to spend unhurried time with the Lord in prayer and careful meditation in His Word; too preoccupied to take advantage of witnessing opportunities, or too much "on the go" to even recognize such opportunities; too full of the noises of life (talking, radio, music, TV) to sense God's presence -- His attempts to get my attention; too busy to think, to dream, to plan?
- What is it that's leading me to become uninvolved, withdrawn -- just wanting to be left alone, to not be confronted with work, schedules, classes, jobs, commitments, responsibilities, or anything to do with the demands of *responsible productive* living?
- What *Is* Holding Me Back? Will I name it right now, put my finger on it?
- Will I give it 100% to the Lord?
- Will I yield *myself* 100% to the Lord?
- Will I do that Now?

Signed: _____

Date _____ ∞