

Truth and Error: How to Tell the Difference

We learn about a thing by experiencing it. Babies learn sweet from sour, hot from cold, and wet from dry by experiencing these things. Even so, we learn spiritual truth by experiencing it in God's word, which is truth (John 17:17). Our use of God's word enables us to readily distinguish between truth and error. Haddon Robinson relates the following story that illustrates this point:

A Chinese boy who wanted to learn about jade went to study with a talented old teacher. This gentleman put a piece of the stone into the youth's hand and told him to hold it tight. Then he began to talk of philosophy, men, women, the sun, and almost everything under it. After an hour he took back the stone and sent the boy home. The procedure was repeated for weeks. The boy became frustrated-when would he be told about jade?-but he was too polite to interrupt his venerable teacher. Then one day when the old man put a stone into his hands, the boy cried out instantly, "That's not jade!"(Biblical Preaching, p. 102).

In Hebrews 5:12-14, the inspired writer is addressing Christians who were not mature enough to tell the difference between right and wrong. He admonishes them with these words:

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

There are two words in the text that shed much light on our current topic. The first is the word "unskilled" and it means "inexperienced." The Hebrew Christians had not progressed and developed because they did not have enough experience in the word. As a result, they were like children who cannot discern right from left; they were spiritual babes who could not tell right from wrong. The second word to consider is the word "exercised." It comes from the Greek word "gymnazo" from which we get our word "gymnasium" - the place where athletes practice and train. Those who regularly use God's word have their senses trained to "discern both good and evil."

Why is it that some brethren don't seem to be able to identify obvious error when they hear it? Why are so many Christians bogged down in their spiritual lives by moral relativism and compromises with the world? Can we not tell the difference between good and evil? Could the root of the problem be that we have had no meaningful experience with the "word of righteousness"?

My friends, may we this day resolve to hold God's word in our hearts - to study it, meditate on it, and practice it -- so that when we're given something else we will be able to simply exclaim, "That's not truth!"

- by Steve Klein

Cleanliness, Godliness

For a parent to require a child to wash his face and keep his body clean and not require him to learn and obey the Bible, is to teach him the body is worth more than a pure heart and clean spirit. For a parent to require a child to learn spelling and reading and not require him to study the Bible is to teach him that it is much more important to be qualified to live in this world than to be fitted to live in heaven.

- by David Lipscomb

Are You Taking Your Medicine?

An elderly gentleman who hated going to the doctor became ill. Finally agreeing to go, he was given a prescription to be taken daily for a month. Taking his first dose he nearly choked! So, he added a little water to it. His next dose was just as bad, so he added a little honey to it. He continued adding a little this, a little that, until it began to taste pretty good.

When he returned to the doctor for his checkup however, the doctor was puzzled as to why there was no progress made. "Did you take your medicine as I prescribed", the doctor asked.

"Sure did", the old man replied. The doctor said, "Well, I don't understand why you haven't improved".

I think we all see what happened. The old man kept adding things to his medicine until it was so deluded it couldn't do the work for which it was intended. Too many people say they are taking the medicine God has prescribed, but by adding their old traditions and man made creeds along with other erroneous practices they have not only deluded God's word but have polluted it beyond any usefulness. Some of these traditions go back hundreds of years and are given equal authority with God's word. By doing this they feel they have made his word more palatable, but in reality have only weakened it and robbed it of any real value.

God's word can be strong medicine sometimes, but the great Physician knows what He is doing. No one can take this watered-down 'medicine' taught by men and correctly expect to be cured of their sins.

- by J.D. Williams

6th in a series

Jesus' Law on Marriage

Here is yet another erroneous view on the subject of divorce and remarriage:

5) BOTH PARTIES IN THE DIVORCE ARE FREE TO REMARRY IF THE CAUSE FOR THE DIVORCE IS FORNICATION. THAT IS TO SAY, THE GUILTY PARTY MAY ALSO REMARRY.

Those who teach this view maintain that if the marriage is broken then neither party is bound, and so both may remarry. They fail to realize that a God approved marriage is more than a civil contract. Two people, in marriage, are bound to each other, and at the same time bound to the law of God. A marriage may be broken by divorce, but the two people involved, although no longer married, are still bound by the law of God. Whether either can marry again depends on whether or not God gives that right. (Review our earlier article on the difference between "married" and "bound", especially in Rom. 7:2,3 and 1 Cor. 7:10,11.)

A more technical attempt to defend this position involves an argument on Matt. 5:32 and 19:9. These folks want us to believe that the only remarriage that Jesus was forbidding was that of a person who was put away for some reason other than fornication. In other words, they would have the verses to read: "Whosoever shall put away his wife for fornication and shall marry another does not commit adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away for fornication does not commit adultery". The obvious flaw here is that such a twisted interpretation has the direct result of rewarding the fornicator for his/her sin. Actually, the verses teach that God does not allow any "put away" person to remarry.

Our series concludes next week . . .

- by Greg Gwin