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What's Down that Road?

by Warren E. Berkley

The most vital consideration for every human being and certainly every Christian is: the allegiance of the heart and obedience of the life to God. While we must avoid the arrogance of self-righteousness and the bondage of human creeds and traditionalism, we must determine with all our hearts to never relax or compromise our commitment to God's Word. That means we must never indulge even the so-called "small departures." They have a way of gradually turning in to all sorts of human innovations, which so often seem to have no brakes. The "mystery of iniquity" in **2 Thess. 2:7** did not suddenly appear one morning. The seeds of iniquity were sown, watered and came up slowly.

Ideally, we should be so careful about our obedience to God, we avoid even those practices that may be doubtful as to their divine authority. Sometimes a good way to evaluate a particular theory or proposal is to look ahead to what results when the theory/project is embraced. What effects or consequences logically follow. Now this does not require the gift of a seer. The question we can ponder is: What's down That Road?

If There Are No Scriptural Limits On The Work Of The Church...What's Down That Road?

I've heard some not only express doubt, but utter ridicule for the approach to Scripture that looks for commands, examples and inferences. And while these critics may tolerate these realities of communication in other areas, they really want to push them out of any consideration of the work of the church. I like to ask them, "if it is 'out with the old, and in with the new,' what is the new?" The responses I get are patently vague and evasive. They will not admit that the local church can just do anything, but their boundaries are subjective at best, but mostly non-existent. If the work of the local church has no limits, there are no limits. Anything is in.

There is a simple approach that I like. Anytime God instructs us about anything, we are limited to His instruction. Even if you tire of the old terminology (commands, examples, inferences), surely our respect for God will prevail: When God gives us instruction about something, we are limited to His instruction. And you cannot read the New Testament without observing God has given us instruction about the local church.

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If We Just Accept Any Marriage...What's Down That Road?

Marriage is a product of the creative mind of God; an institution founded by Him for human companionship and reproduction. He is its designer and the legislator of its laws and we are subject to those laws. Marriage is more than a wedding ceremony; it goes beyond the reciting of vows, the eating of cake and wearing a rented tux. It is the commitment of a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife in an arrangement set up by the Creator. Any view of marriage we adopt that doesn't accord with these truths will tend in the wrong direction, send the wrong message and reap an awful harvest in future generations.

God is very much involved in this relationship called "marriage," because He is its designer and legislator. In **Matt. 19:6**, Jesus tells us it is God who joins the man and woman together in marriage! "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," (**Matt. 19:6, KJV**). We need to think of

husband and wife being joined together in God's sight ... before God ... with regard for His laws, given to govern the relationship!

This is so simple, and so clear: God set up the marriage relationship for the human race. God has set up the rules to govern marriage - rules for husbands and wives. God has said He hates putting away (**Mal. 2:16**), and God has said something about divorce and remarriage.

If these things are ignored, disobeyed or re-interpreted to suit the times, we set ourselves up for misery and unhappiness, and the horrible potential of eternal consequence. We must take all of this seriously!

In Jesus' answer to the Pharisees and scribes when they tempted Him - they wanted to know if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause. Have you ever noticed in Jesus' reply, the focus was God! He reminded them that God made them male and female, and that God said a man should cleave to his wife, and that God joined them together ... and let no man put asunder what God hath joined together!

Paul told women to be in subjection to their own husbands, "as unto the Lord" in **Eph. 5:22**. He said - when we are unfaithful in marriage, we despise not man, but God in **1 Thess. 4:8**. So the commitment that keeps a marriage together is commitment first to God. To Honor Him who founded this institution; to decide both husband and wife will be governed by His laws. To realize He is the family's designer and legislator and we are amenable to Him. If we let the world influence us to stop teaching and applying these things, what will happen?

If We Administer Discipline But Neglect To Maintain The Withdrawal...What's Down That Road?

Scripturally administered discipline may seem to produce more division. When some members refuse to withdraw from the guilty, and others get mad and leave, it may appear that the discipline God has called for has hurt the local church. Some will try to make the effect the issue: slighting the sin that caused the action, and arguing against the action. But our focus must be on the stubborn facts: the presence of sin and the action God wants us to take. If there was sin, and we've taken the action God requires, we must not let the results or the complaints cause us to regret obeying God! "Where the gospel, correctly presented, produces divisions, as it always will, the divisions are right. We are not responsible for the legitimate effects of the truth," (Moses Lard, Commentary on Romans, p.#463).

Often, after scripturally administered discipline, those withdrawn from will seek to charm and socialize their way back into the good favor of the members. The only restraint against this is, a well-instructed and committed membership. Teach them what the Bible says about the sins involved, and the action required in the absence of repentance. Remind members of past withdrawals when efforts are made to influence members. And remember - if a church withdraws from a disorderly member and fails to follow through and maintain the separation - down that road there is the ruin of the good effects intended by scriptural discipline.

"I wonder why the Bible tells us that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom? Could be that He wants to say something about wrong tendencies." (Dee Bowman, That's Life, Christianity Magazine, Jan. 1987).

Conclusion

Conscious of the perishing nature of everything around us and our own immortality, we should want to be certain that every involvement and aspect of our lives is in accord with the will of God. My individual behavior, my marriage and family, the use of my resources, my citizenship in the nation and my citizenship in God's kingdom needs to be in harmony with what God's word teaches. Diligence in glorifying God means guarding carefully against the slightest change in attitude toward His Word, or any movement away from what we know pleases Him. Surely we have learned from the Old Testament that all wandering from God ends in disaster.

The legendary W.W. Otey often warned against "what he often spoke of as 'Trends' - tiny and apparently insignificant steps away from the truth." He said, "I think it may be safely said that no great departure from the teaching and practice of the Word of God was taken in a single step." His biographer, Cecil Willis, added: "In these initial steps are the only periods during which impending apostasy can be stemmed." {p.#279, W.W. OTEY: CONTENDER FOR THE FAITH 1964}.

on serves as an opportunity for you to 'sharpen your sword.'