

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“Continuing Steadfastly In The Apostles’ Teaching”

By Micky Galloway

Acts 2:42 says, **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.”** **“They”** who? In verse 41 we learn that the antecedent of **“they”** were the **“three thousand souls”** who were baptized that same day. In teaching these new converts the apostles were executing the commission Christ had given them (Matt. 28:20). These 3000 disciples **“continued steadfastly.”** It is just as important to keep saved as it is to be saved from past sins. Primary obedience alone is not sufficient, but continued obedience, or faithfulness, is required (Matt. 10:22). Some start out well as a Christian, but do not continue steadfastly. Galatians 5:7 says, **“Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?”** Here the life of a Christian is presented as a race. Likely the metaphor was borrowed from the Olympic contests. The apostle asked **“who hindered you?”** **“Hinder”** is here used to mean to check or retard. What has checked or retarded you from the Christian course? John 6:66-68 records a sad report of many who did not continue as disciples of the Master. Jesus said, **“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”** (Jn. 8:31). Note here that not merely those who have been baptized, or those who have their names on some church roll, but those who **“continue steadfastly”** are those who are rewarded.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching (doctrine).”

What is the Apostles’ Doctrine? They continued to abide in the teaching or instruction which they received from the apostles, for this constituted the doctrine of Christ. Paul indicated that those things he wrote were indeed from the Lord. **“If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord”** (1 Cor. 14:37). **“Steadfastly”** means **“to be strong towards, to endure in, or persevere in, to be continually steadfast with a person or thing,”** (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, Volume I, page 236). The lesson is that the early disciples adhered directly to the teaching of the apostles.

Some are now telling us that the apostles’ doctrine was their interpretation or explanation of the Lord’s teaching and may or may not have been correct. These also tell us that there is a difference between **“gospel”** and **“doctrine”** and while we can and must agree on the gospel, that we cannot agree on matters of doctrine. What saith the Scriptures?

First, from whom or how did the apostles get their information? In Galatians 1:11-12 Paul told the Galatians that he had not been taught or received his gospel from men, but that he had gotten it by revelation from Christ. In Ephesians 3:1-5 he declared that what the Holy Spirit was revealing, he was putting in writing that others by reading it might understand what he had received from the Spirit. Why was the Holy Spirit sent to the apostles? Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come upon the apostles: to teach them all things and bring to their remembrance what Christ had said (Jn. 14:26), to testify of Christ (Jn. 15:26-27), and to guide them into ALL truth (Jn. 16:13-14). That the Spirit did these things is evident from our being given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

Second, as the apostles acted under the Spirit’s guidance, they served as ambassadors or official representatives of the Lord who had chosen and assigned them their roles (2 Cor. 5:20; cf. Jn. 17:8, 14, 18; Matt. 10:40; cf. Jn. 12:48). Therefore, to reject their words is to reject God’s word, who had given them the Spirit for guidance (1 Thess. 4:8) and who now relates His message for man through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). Does this sound like the apostles’ doctrine was just their explanation or interpretation of the Lord’s teaching or does it sound like it was the Lord’s teaching being given through them?

Thirdly, why is it called the apostles' doctrine if it is the teaching of Christ? The answer is because they were earthen vessels to whom the Lord entrusted the gospel for revelation and writing (2 Cor. 4:7). Paul was put in the Lord's service as a preacher, apostle, and teacher of it and called it "**my gospel**" (2 Tim. 2:8; Rom. 2:16; 16:25). Paul considered the message "**my gospel**" because it "**was committed to my trust**" (1 Tim 1:11). This is true of "**the apostles' doctrine**" (Acts 2:42). It isn't a commentary by them on Christ's doctrine, but the doctrine of Christ as revealed through them. To "**continue steadfastly**" in the apostles' doctrine is to continue in the doctrine of Christ.

John considered it to be a serious offense for one to fail to abide in the doctrine of Christ. "**Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into (your) house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works**" (2 Jn. 9-11). To transgress is to progress beyond the bounds of its teachings and if one does it, he doesn't have God's approval, or His blessings, or His fellowship in what he does.

To continue in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42) and to continue in the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1ff) and to continue in the faith (Col. 1:23) are one and the same! All are commanded. The gospel, when received or obeyed (1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Thess 1:7-8), is God's power for salvation (Rom. 1:16). But the Romans were told that they were made free from sin by obeying "**the form of doctrine**" which had been delivered unto them (Rom. 6:17). Luke wrote of the priests who became "**obedient to the faith**" (Acts 6:7). Paul warned the Galatians that some were perverting the "**gospel**" (Gal. 1:6-7). Yet, he left Timothy at Ephesus to "**charge some that they teach no other doctrine**" (1 Tim. 1:3). Jude exhorted brethren to "**contend earnestly for the faith**" delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Are these warning about changes made in reference to the same thing or three different things? Titus was to teach servants to "**adorn the doctrine of God in all things**" (Titus 2:9-10). Paul taught the Philippians to let their manner of life "**be worthy of the gospel of Christ**" (Phil. 1:27), that whether present or absent, he might hear that they stood fast "**striving together for the faith of the gospel**" (KJV). A qualification a deacon must have is adherence to the "**mystery of the faith**" (1 Tim. 3:9). Are adhering or striving for the faith, living becoming of the gospel, and adorning the doctrine of God doing three different things, or are they doing the same thing? Paul assured the Galatians that the gospel that he preached was not from men (Gal. 1:11), but brethren in Judea had heard that he was "**preaching the faith**" which once he destroyed (Gal. 1:23). On Cyprus, a Roman deputy manifested interest in hearing "**the word of God**" (Acts 13:7), but a Jewish sorcerer tried to turn him "**from the faith**" (Acts 13:8), causing Paul to reprimand him and miraculously strike him blind, which in turn caused the deputy to be "**astonished at the doctrine of the Lord**" (Acts 13:9-12). These denote, not three systems of teaching, but the one inspired revelation of our Lord.

Let us be content to "**continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.**" Indeed, it is the doctrine of Christ. Let us never go beyond it (2 Jn. 9). Let us never attempt to justify the deeds of the false teacher, but contend that if they continue in error, they shall be eternally lost (Matt. 15:14; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). – **Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin**, July 8, 2018. ■

“4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. 6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: 7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. 9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, 10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” (Acts 13:4-12).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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