

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## The Problem of Error

By Hoyt H. Houchen

The preacher of the gospel is obligated to fulfill a most solemn charge, and that is to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). We often hear it said: *“Preachers should just preach the word; and when they do this, they will not have time to condemn the errors of others.”* This statement is made by brethren who frequently take it upon themselves to tell preachers how they ought to preach, and their desire along this line is obvious: they want to restrain the preacher from exposing false doctrines. In the first place, those who entertain the attitude just expressed fail to read on into the passage where Paul told Timothy to **“preach the word.”** There is more embraced in the phrase **“preach the word”** than many realize. In the same verse Paul goes on to say: **“reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”** Why was Timothy told to so preach? The answer is given in verse 3: **“For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts.”** Not only, then, does preaching the word mean *exhorting*, but it also means *reproving* and *rebuking* when it becomes necessary. The idea believed by some brethren that one cannot have the spirit of Christ, exercise kindness, and manifest love when he exposes error (whether it be on the part of a brother in the church or a sectarian individual or institution) is wholly without scriptural foundation. All will admit, however, that the attitude assumed by a speaker or writer in cases where exposure of sin becomes necessary is an important factor. A pulpit or literary display of arrogances and entertainment characterized by abusive language that reflects upon the intelligence of the evildoer is not contended for and will not be indulged in by one whose disposition of heart is to see the souls of others saved.

Isaiah had the problem of dealing with error in his day. Among God’s own people there was the soft, compromising attitude toward sin. Jehovah described these people in the following words: **“For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits”** (Isa. 30:9, 10). As we examine the New Testament we find the problem of error and how it was treated.

## Jesus and Error

Jesus loves the lost, and his entire life exemplified that love; but never did he compromise with error. The true spirit of Christ is displayed in the denunciatory woes pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23, wholly as much as his discourse on love to his disciples in John 15. These two examples are not paradoxical; they are a complete picture of Christ’s attitude—the one toward those who practiced error, the other toward those who were doing his will.

In dealing with error it sometimes becomes necessary to name the person committing it, the purpose being to warn brethren lest their hearts be beguiled by smooth and fair speech (Rom. 16:18). If it is right to commend good and name the person doing it, it is also right to condemn error and name the person committing it. Jesus said a tree is known by its fruit and false teachers by their works (Matt. 7:15-20). Narcotic agents are able to curb the dope racket when they know who it is that is selling the dope. Jesus warned his disciples against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:11, 12).

## Paul and Error

Paul, in his writing to Timothy, names certain ones who had made shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:17, 18). When Timothy finished reading these epistles, he knew that Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus were men guilty of the error he was discussing. Paul named these men in order that young Timothy

would beware of their teaching. This purpose is expressed in 2 Timothy 4:14, 15, where Paul mentions Alexander again and says: ***“Of whom do thou also beware.”***

## Our Attitude

One of the problems facing the church today is the soft, compromising, sentimental attitude of brethren toward error. Let a preacher condemn it, and he is classed with the Pharisees and charged with all their attitudes of bigotry, selfishness, and dogmatism. It is reported that a brother once remarked that the sin against the Holy Spirit is calling denominational names. The comprehension of this attitude is a misapprehension of love. The attitude and motive of heart on the part of the one who identifies error would more determine its being right or wrong, not the mere fact that he does it.

Some errors among us are so well regarded that it would be as improper to search the moon with a microscope, as it would be to find them. It is observed that some brethren believe that the gospel is so indispensable in foreign fields that premillennialists or their sympathizers must be sent if the work is to be done. The work of preaching the gospel is certainly the work of the church, but it should support the loyal brethren who are already in the fields and see to it that others who are just as loyal are sent. It is not anti-missionary, bigotry, or quarrelsome to expose error when it is done with the attitude of helping to save the soul of the teacher and the ones he has taught.

In doing the Lord's work we must be diligent as well as zealous. An exaggeration of the latter sometimes overshadows the former. As Christians we must stand together for what is right, dealing with errors which threaten the church from within and without as Jesus or the apostles would do if they were here. ***“Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints”*** (Jude 3). – *The Gospel Guardian*, Vol. 1, No. 12, P. 2, July 28, 1949. ■

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## ***“Be Ye Followers of Me...”***

By Bobby Witherington

The Apostle Paul often urged brethren to use care concerning those they followed. He wrote to the Corinthians saying: ***“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”*** (1 Cor. 11:1). Notice that he did not say to be a follower of Paul alone. He qualified his statement by urging the Corinthians not to follow him as a mere man, but to follow ***“as I also am of Christ.”*** Also, in 1 Corinthians 4:16 & 17, Paul wrote: ***“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ as I teach every where in every church.”***

In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 Paul admonished the Corinthians because they were divided and were following men. You might say some of these brethren had a good case of “preacheritis.” In Galatians 1:8 & 9, Paul admonished the Galatians for following perverters of the Gospel and he included himself in the admonition he gave when he said: ***“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”***

To exercise care in whom we follow is a needed quality of character that all should possess. Christians must follow Christ (1 Pet. 2:21-23) and use great care in following men. We must remember and abide by the inspired words of Paul: ***“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”*** ■

***“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you”*** (Phil. 4:9).

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

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