

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## NARROW-MINDEDNESS

By Luther Blackmon

Do not feel insulted when someone tells you that your religion is narrow.

Maybe he is right. If he is right, you should feel complimented. Your critic may be confusing narrowness with bigotry, in which case he is the one out of step, not you. Bigotry the Lord condemned; narrowness (in the scriptural use of the term) he commended: “...narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it.”

### The Narrowness of Truth

Truth is always narrow. Five plus five equals ten; this is true from kindergarten to college and everywhere else in the world. It isn't ten because the arithmetic book says so, but it is ten because it cannot be anything else. If in a class of 100 students, only one gave ten as the answer to five plus five and all the other 99 agreed on a different answer the one would be right and all the others wrong.

Historical truth is narrow. The Battle of San Jacinto was fought in Texas; Valley Forge was in Pennsylvania. These are facts which are understood alike by all students of history. If a student in a history class gave any other answer concerning the location of these spots, he would be incorrect. No one would think the teacher was “narrow” in telling him so.

There are twelve inches in a foot, three feet in a yard all over the world. It doesn't matter whether the one doing the measuring is a president or a preacher, an illiterate hill-billy or a college professor. To fail to recognize these facts would throw the world into hopeless confusion.

### Religious Truth

Since truth in every other field is narrow and dogmatic, why should we suppose that divine truth is so flexible as to be susceptible of any interpretation man wants to place upon it? “We just can't see it alike,” someone answers. But we see other things alike. Is man more able to make himself understood than is God? We may misunderstand the meaning of a passage of scripture, but does our misunderstanding of it change the meaning of the passage? Does its meaning change and shift to suit our various understandings of it? If the writer of the passage meant to teach something when he wrote the passage, is not that something that he intended still in the passage?

Take, for example the much discussed passage, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16). The question about this passage is whether Jesus did, or did not, make baptism necessary to salvation. He either did, or he didn't. Some of us believe that he did; others vehemently deny it. It must be apparent to all that somebody is teaching false doctrine on this point. Is it broad minded to ignore these contradictions and pretend they do not exist? Baptists and Presbyterians teach that a child of God cannot fall away from the favor of God and be lost; Methodists teach that he can fall away and be lost. Does the Bible teach both?

Some denominations teach hereditary depravity, that infants are born totally depraved as a result of Adam's sin. Others deny this and teach that everyone is born sinless and only becomes sinful by his own transgressions.

Now if we are to escape the stigma of being called “narrow,” we must cooperate with and encourage the man who is teaching the very opposite of what we believe to be the truth. Is this honesty? If one preacher preached four conflicting doctrines, people would call him a hypocrite; but if four preachers preach these conflicting doctrines, they are all teaching the truth!

### How Broad Should We Be?

The Unitarian believes that Jesus of Nazareth was a great man and a great teacher, but that he was not the Son of God. The Orthodox Jew worships God but denies the divinity of Jesus. Shall we have these men in our fellowship? If honesty and sincerity are the only criteria, why not? Who will say they are not as honest as we are? Some denominational preachers are already taking this position. They swap pulpits with Jewish rabbis right along. This shocks the religious sensibilities in the world but the legitimate and inevitable fruit of that namby-pamby, stand-for-nothing, anything-and-anybody-is-right attitude that we are talking about.

Most members of denominations are not ready yet to take in the Jews and the Unitarians on their broad-minded position. They narrow it down a bit. We must believe in Christ, they say; we must see alike on those scriptures that teach that Jesus was the Son of God; that he was born of a virgin; that he suffered vicariously; that he arose from the dead; that he ascended into heaven, where he intercedes for us. But why must we see alike on those particular passages, but have unbounded liberty to differ on nearly everything else connected with the religion of Christ? Are not the passages pertaining to the organization of the church, baptism, apostasy, worship, church membership, discipline, authority, etc., inspired of God as much as are the other passages? Are not these things a part of the Lord’s plan? Have they not a place with divine truth? How much truth is essential, and how much is non-essential? How much of the Bible is important, and how much is unimportant?

We feel no personal animosity, of course, toward those who teach things we do not believe, but we cannot, with a good conscience, bid them Godspeed. John said, *“If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, received him not into your house; neither bid him Godspeed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds”* (2 John 10). Paul said, *“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”* (Gal. 1:9). These apostles thought it was a matter of much import what a man believed and taught.

We are not infallible, and we are open to any truth that may be presented to us; we will change when convinced we are wrong. But two things we do know, and of them we are certain: (1) truth does not contradict truth, and (2) we will not learn by hiding our heads in the sand and refusing to admit that religious divisions exist, or that such are wrong – *The Gospel Guardian*, Vol. 1, No. 31, December 8, 1949, pp. 2-3. ■

*(Editor’s note: I encourage you to consider the PowerPoint lesson titled, **Divine Narrow Mindedness**, dated July 8, 2018, in the 2018 PowerPoint Archives of this website).*

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### Lack Of Confidence In God

By R. L. Whiteside

The besetting sin of the human family is a lack of confidence in God, manifested in every kind of departure from the word of God. If our confidence in God were what it should be, we would never want to turn aside from his way.

Eve lacked confidence in God, and so she followed the devil; Adam lacked confidence in God, and so he followed his wife. Why did Abel do what God said and why did not Cain do what God said? Abel had confidence enough in God to follow his commands; Cain did not. No man today would depart from the plain word of God if he had full confidence in God; and the elders of Israel would not have asked for a king, had they not lacked confidence in God’s way. ■

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

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: [www.lodicachurchofchrist.com](http://www.lodicachurchofchrist.com) — Email: [lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com](mailto:lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com) — Phone: 209-365-9250