

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Introduction: “Doctrine is responsible for shaping world history”

Doctrine: “What we believe about God”

John 8:31-32 “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. **32** And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

- Garden of Eden, Spanish Inquisition, Transatlantic Slave Trade, Cults throughout history, False religions, Political Views, Social Issues, Climate Issues, Life in the womb, Prison System, Education System

When living in a time of Political Correctness, moral relativism and subjectivity it is very easy to dismiss this necessary topic, but if we do, it will not only be to our demise, but to future generations. Our children are depending on us to hold up a standard of truth.

I. Doctrines of Demons:

“The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” 1 Timothy 4:1

There can be good and bad doctrines. The word *doctrine* can refer to the biblical teachings of a church or a pastor. Or, in the case of 1 Timothy 4:1, the ungodly teachings of Satan. Those who follow the doctrines of demons “will fall away from the faith.” That is, heeding the doctrine of demons is a serious matter because it involves a departure from the truth of Christ’s gospel.

Observations:

1. These false teachings will grow in prominence in “the latter times”.
2. The aim of these false teachings is to disrupt or overthrow a person’s faith in Jesus
3. These evil spirits gain an audience with unsuspecting people through captivating their attention

- Opportune times: (Luke 3)
- Loneliness, challenges of any sort...
- tragedy, confusion, logic

4. “Doctrines” of Demons implies a strategic and systematic approach toward the goal of deception
- the word here is plural, indicating there are more than 1 type of false teaching

Warnings against False teachings in scripture:

*For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. ~ **2 Corinthians 11:4***

*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting ~ **2 John 1:10***

*Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ~ **Galatians 1:7***

II. What does the Bible say about False Teachers? (2 Peter 2:1-22, Jeremiah 23)

1 Peter 2:1 “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. **2** And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. **3** By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”

vs. 4-11 God’s judgement against false teachers

vs. 12-17 The depravity of false teachers

vs. 18-22 The deception of false teachers

Jeremiah 23:21-22 (21-22) The corrupt prophets were not sent by God.

*“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.
I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.
But if they had stood in My counsel,
And had caused My people to hear My words,
Then they would have turned them from their evil way
And from the evil of their doings.*

a. **I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran:** The corrupt prophets were not called or sent by God, yet they **ran** with great energy to proclaim their self-generated words.

i. “They never received a divine commission; yet they ran, with their false messages, eagerly and energetically trying to accomplish their own objectives.”
(Feinberg)

b. **If they had stood in My counsel... then they would have turned them from their evil way:** If these *were* true prophets and sent prophets, they would have called people to repent. They did not. Instead of repent, their message was relax.

III. Biblical examples of false teaching

- **Legalism** (Jews/pharisees) The word “legalism” does not occur in the Bible. It is a term Christians use to describe a doctrinal position emphasizing a system of rules and regulations for achieving both salvation and spiritual growth. Legalists believe in and demand a strict literal adherence to rules and regulations. Doctrinally, it is a position essentially opposed to grace. Those who hold a legalistic position often fail to see the real purpose for law, especially the purpose of the Old Testament law of Moses, which is to be our “schoolmaster” or “tutor” to bring us to Christ
- **Antinomianism** (Greek *anti*, “against”; *nomos*, “law”), doctrine according to which Christians are freed by grace from the necessity of obeying the Mosaic Law. The antinomians rejected the very notion of obedience as legalistic; to them the good life flowed from the inner working of the Holy Spirit. The ideas of antinomianism had been present in the early church, and some Gnostic heretics believed that freedom from law meant freedom for license. Theologically, antinomianism is the belief that there are no moral laws God expects Christians to obey. Antinomianism takes a biblical teaching to an unbiblical conclusion. The biblical teaching is that Christians are not required to observe the Old Testament Law as a means of salvation. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He fulfilled the Old Testament Law. The unbiblical conclusion is that there is no moral law God expects Christians to obey.

The apostle Paul dealt with the issue of antinomianism in Romans 6:1-2, “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” The most frequent attack on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is that it encourages sin. People may wonder, “If I am saved by grace and all my sins are forgiven, why not sin all I want?” That thinking is not the result of true conversion because true conversion yields a greater desire to obey, not a lesser one. God’s desire—and our desire when we are regenerated by His Spirit—is that we strive not to sin. Out of gratitude for His grace and forgiveness, we want to please Him.

- *Titus 2:11-15* For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **12** teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **14** who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. **15** Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

“Contending for THE FAITH” is every generation’s responsibility (Jude 1:3-4)

IV. Historical Heresies: “Orthodoxy” and “Heterodoxy”

- **Hyper-Calvinism.** (Refer to attached addendum)
- **Pelagianism**
- **Cessationsim**
- **Arianism**
- **Docetism**

1. **Legalism** (Jews/pharisees) The word “legalism” does not occur in the Bible. It is a term Christians use to describe a doctrinal position emphasizing a system of rules and regulations for achieving both salvation and spiritual growth. Legalists believe in and demand a strict literal adherence to rules and regulations. Doctrinally, it is a position essentially opposed to grace. Those who hold a legalistic position often fail to see the real purpose for law, especially the purpose of the Old Testament law of Moses, which is to be our “schoolmaster” or “tutor” to bring us to Christ

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3. **Hyper-Calvinism:** is the belief that God saves the elect through His sovereign will with little or no use of the methods of bringing about salvation (such as evangelism, preaching, and prayer for the lost). To an unbiblical fault, the hyper-Calvinist over-emphasizes God’s sovereignty and under-emphasizes man’s responsibility in the work of salvation.

An obvious ramification of hyper-Calvinism is that it suppresses any desire to evangelize the lost. Most churches or denominations that hold to hyper-Calvinistic theology are marked by fatalism, coldness, and a lack of assurance of faith. There is little emphasis upon God's love for the lost and His own people but rather an unbiblical preoccupation with God's sovereignty, His election of the saved, and His wrath for the lost. The gospel of the hyper-Calvinist is a declaration of God's salvation of the elect and His damnation of the lost.

4. Pelagianism: the teaching that Adam's sin did not affect future generations of humanity. According to Pelagianism, Adam's sin was solely his own, and Adam's descendants did not inherit a sinful nature passed down to them. God creates every human soul directly, and therefore every human soul starts out in innocence, free from sin. We are not basically bad, says the Pelagian heresy; we are basically good.

Pelagianism is named after Pelagius, a monk who lived in the late 300s and early 400s AD. Pelagius began teaching the doctrine associated with his name in an effort to promote holy living among Christians. When people sinned, Pelagius grew weary of hearing the excuse of "I can't help it. It's in my nature to do wrong." To counter that excuse, Pelagius stressed the freedom of the human will, essentially teaching that all sin is the result of a conscious choice of evil over good; everyone has the ability to freely choose to do good all the time. And, since there is no such thing as original sin or an inherited sin nature, then we cannot blame Adam. God created us good, so no one ever has an excuse for sinning. If you're not living a holy life, it's because you're not trying hard enough.

5. Cessationism is the view that the "miracle gifts" of tongues and healing have ceased—that the end of the apostolic age brought about a cessation of the miracles associated with that age. Most cessationists believe that, while God can and still does perform miracles today, the Holy Spirit no longer uses individuals to perform miraculous signs.

The Apostle Paul predicted that the gift of tongues would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8). Here are six proofs that it has already ceased:

1) The apostles, through whom tongues came, were unique in the history of the church. Once their ministry was accomplished, the need for authenticating signs ceased to exist.

2) The miracle (or sign) gifts are only mentioned in the earliest epistles, such as 1 Corinthians. Later books, such as Ephesians and Romans, contain detailed passages on the gifts of the Spirit, but the miracle gifts are not mentioned, although Romans does mention the gift of prophecy. The Greek word translated "prophecy" means "speaking forth" and does not necessarily include prediction of the future.

3) The gift of tongues was a sign to unbelieving Israel that God's salvation was now available to other nations. See 1 Corinthians 14:21-22 and Isaiah 28:11-12.

4) Tongues was an inferior gift to prophecy (preaching). Preaching the Word of God edifies believers, whereas tongues does not. Believers are told to seek prophesying over speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:1-3).

5) History indicates that tongues did cease. Tongues are not mentioned at all by the Post- Apostolic Fathers. Other writers such as Justin Martyr, Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine considered tongues something that happened only in the earliest days of the Church.

6) There are indications that the miracle of tongues has ceased. If the gift were still available today, there would be no need for missionaries to attend language school. Missionaries would be able to travel to any country and speak any language fluently, just as the apostles were able to speak in Acts 2. As for the miracle gift of healing, we see in Scripture that healing was associated with the ministry of Jesus and the apostles (Luke 9:1-2). And we see that as the era of the apostles drew to a close, healing, like tongues, became less frequent. The Apostle Paul, who raised Eutychus from the dead (Acts 20:9-12), did not heal Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-27), Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23), or even himself (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). The reasons for Paul's "failures to heal" are 1) the gift was never intended to make every Christian well, but to authenticate apostleship; and 2) the authority of the apostles had been sufficiently proved, making further miracles unnecessary.

6. Arianism is a heresy named for Arius, a priest and false teacher in the early fourth century AD in Alexandria, Egypt. One of the earliest and probably the most important item of debate among early Christians was the subject of Christ's deity. Was Jesus truly God in the flesh, or was Jesus a created being? Was Jesus God or not? Arius denied the deity of the Son of God, holding that Jesus was created by God as the first act of creation and that the nature of Christ

was *anomoios* ("unlike") that of God the Father. Arianism, then, is the view that Jesus is a finite created being with some divine attributes, but He is not eternal and not divine in and of Himself. Arianism misunderstands biblical references to Jesus' being tired (John 4:6) and not knowing the date of His return (Matthew 24:36). It may be difficult to understand how God could be tired or not know something, but these verses speak of Jesus' human nature. Jesus is fully God, but He is also fully human. The Son of God did not become a human being until a specific point of time we call the Incarnation. Therefore, Jesus' limitations as a human being have no impact on His divine nature or His eternity.

A second major misinterpretation in Arianism concerns the meaning of *firstborn* as applied to Christ. Romans 8:29 speaks of Christ as “the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (see also Colossians 1:15–20). Arians understand *firstborn* in these verses to mean that the Son of God was “created” as the first act of creation. This is not the case. Jesus Himself proclaimed His self-existence and eternality (John 8:58; 10:30). In Bible times, the firstborn son of a family was held in great honor (Genesis 49:3; Exodus 11:5; 34:19; Numbers 3:40; Psalm 89:27; Jeremiah 31:9). It is in this sense that Jesus is God’s “firstborn.” Jesus is the preeminent Person in God’s plan and the Heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2). Jesus is the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

After nearly a century of debate at various early church councils, the Christian church officially denounced Arianism as a false doctrine. Since that time, Arianism has never been accepted as a viable doctrine of the Christian faith. Arianism has not died out, however. Arianism has continued through the centuries in varying forms. The Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons of today hold a very Arian-like position on Christ’s nature. Following the example of the early church, we must denounce any and all attacks on the deity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

7. Docetism denies the humanity of Jesus. Hardcore Docetists taught that Jesus was only a phantasm or an illusion, appearing to be human but having no body at all. Other forms of Docetism taught that Jesus had a “heavenly” body of some type but not a real, natural body of flesh. Docetism was closely related to Gnosticism, which viewed physical matter as inherently evil and spiritual substance as inherently good.

The problem with Docetism is that it denies the core truths of the gospel, namely, the death and resurrection of Christ. If Jesus did not have a real body, then He did not really die (Docetism teaches that His suffering on the cross was mere illusion). And, if Jesus had no physical body, He could not have risen bodily from the dead. Without the actual death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have no salvation, we are still in our sins, and our faith is futile (1 Corinthians 15:17). Docetism also denies the ascension of Christ (since He had no real body to make the ascent).

On the matter of Jesus’ humanity, the Bible could not be clearer. Jesus went out of His way to prove His bodily resurrection to the disciples who thought at first they were seeing a ghost: “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).

The apostle John warned the early church against the false doctrine of Gnosticism, which embraced Docetism’s error: “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every

spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist” (1 John 4:1–2). Note the apostle’s emphasis on Jesus being “in the flesh.” Denial of Jesus’ humanity was heresy. John repeats the warning in another epistle: “Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming **in the flesh**, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 1:7, emphasis added).

Early church fathers fought valiantly against Docetism, especially Ignatius of Antioch (c. AD 35–107). Ignatius rightly taught that, if Jesus had not actually shed His blood on the cross, then His death was meaningless. Ignatius saw that there was no possible way to align the deception of Docetism with the truth of Christianity.

Docetism must be rejected because it is not a biblical view of Jesus’ nature. In fact, Docetism stands in flat denial of biblical truth. Jesus Christ did not simply *appear* human; He was truly human, as well as truly God. He came from heaven and took on human flesh and bone, and He lived the life of a normal man in this world—a Spirit-filled man, to be sure, and a man who always obeyed the Father, but a man nonetheless. His suffering on the cross was real, and His death was an actual death. He shed real blood to pay the real price for our real sin in order to grant us real forgiveness.

V. What’s the difference between a heresy and a difference of opinion?

- Heresies have historically been determined through councils of church leaders as things that go against the testimony of scripture, the historic witness of the church and the ultimate plan of God as revealed in scriptures.
- Throughout History, many people have been accused of “heresy” and later vindicated as “prophets”, such as JESUS, the early church etc..
- Examples of Differences of opinion: how we dress in church, how we sing, timing of the rapture, what titles we use in addressing one another, social drinking, how to baptize someone,
- “Difference of Opinion” typically revolves around our cultural preferences or inherited dogmas but are things that are not explicitly or implicit in scripture. Even if a person makes a strong case for their opinion, using the Bible, it is still an opinion, when not directly commanded or stated.
- **Matthew 15:7** Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: **8** ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. **9** And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.’ ”

VI. What Is Heresy? (“Let’s recap”)

Referring to a person as a heretic or to an idea as heretical is a powerful claim, one with the ability to destroy. And like all weapons of mass destruction, it should be used with extreme caution. Calling something a heresy when it doesn’t contribute to other serious problems for the church today.

1. It’s not a heresy just because it’s wrong.

I can be wrong about lots of things without undermining the gospel itself. If that wasn’t the case, I’d be undermining the gospel with almost every thought

2. It’s not a heresy just because it *might* undermine the gospel.

There’s a difference between things that clearly undermine the biblical gospel (e.g. denying the deity of Christ) and things that could possibly undermine the gospel depending on how exactly you understand them (e.g. the relationship of faith and works). The church has generally been rather careful about using the label heresy, restricting it to beliefs in the first category, not the second.

3. It’s not a heresy just because one person says so.

People who connect heresy to power and authority are correct to do so. It’s not a heresy just because I say it is, but because recognized authorities in the church have determined it to be so. That of course leaves open the question of who qualifies as a “recognized authority” in the church. And this is why many Christians rely on the authority of the ecumenical councils, which have a unique status in being accepted by most Christian churches, and whose decisions have stood the test of time.

4. It is indeed a heresy if it explicitly undermines the gospel.

At the end of the day, the church has been hesitant to call something heresy unless it has been determined by some authoritative body that the belief in question explicitly undermines the gospel itself. When duly designated ecclesial authorities have determined together that a belief explicitly undermines the truth of the gospel, as the church decided with heresies like Arianism and Pelagianism, we should not shy away from calling them what they are. **To do less isn’t humble, it’s irresponsible.** The problem isn’t with the concept of heresy but with the ways that we have misused and abused the concept. While trying to search out errors in the church, we haven’t been as mindful of the fact that the way we use the heresy label can create its own errors, some equally as dangerous as the ones we had in mind, to begin with.