

## Teachers In The Body Of Christ

‘Behold, God exalts in His power; who is a teacher like Him?’ (Job 36:22).

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brethren, because we know that we teachers will be judged by a higher standard than other people.” (James 3:1)

“Devote yourself to reading (the scriptures), to exhortation and to teaching and instilling doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was imparted by the Holy Spirit when the elders laid their hands on you. Practice these duties; throw yourself wholly into them as your ministry, so that your progress may be evident. Look well to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Timothy 4:13 to 16)

“Tell them (the people) these things. Urge, advise, encourage, warn and rebuke with full authority. Let no one despise you or think little of your teaching.” (Titus 2:15)

‘The teachers and those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who turn many to righteousness shall shine like the stars forever and ever’ (Daniel 12:3).

‘Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be tried and refined, but the wicked will continue to do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the teachers (of the Word) and those who are wise shall understand’ (Daniel 12:10).

‘After three days they found Him (Jesus) in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions’ (Luke 2:46).

‘One of those days as He (Jesus) was teaching ...’ (Luke 5:17).

We need to teach the truth of the Gospel by faith with the love of Christ, as we can read in 1 Timothy 2:7. Although all Christians are called to serve God using their own particular talents, not everybody is called to be a teacher of the Gospel as we read in 1 Corinthians 12:28 & 29 and again in Ephesians 4:11. Teachers are important, and even Jesus Himself as a teenage boy, listened to the teachers and asked them questions, then later became a teacher. If we study the two verses above, taken from the book of Daniel, we see that there is a special mention of teachers, almost as though they have been allotted a special place in the body of Christ. With that allotted place though, comes enormous responsibility to see that our teaching is 100% correct. It is, however, the Holy Spirit Who teaches us (1 Corinthians 2:13), and we can only teach others what we have learned, by sitting under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, and by spending much time in the Word of God and in deep intense prayer.

We need to teach people one of the main aspects of God, which is His love for all mankind. In 1 Timothy 1:5 we read; ‘The object and purpose of our instruction is love, which springs from a pure heart, a clear conscience and sincere faith’.

The primary requirement of a teacher of the Word, is to be steadfast in the doctrine taught initially by Jesus then by the apostles. Acts 2:42 says; ‘And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to the instruction (doctrine) and fellowship of the apostles, to the breaking of bread and prayers’. There are four main points in that verse: fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer and steadfast devotion to the apostle’s doctrine. Whenever a

church has moved away from the apostle's doctrine, the church has failed. That is what James 3:1 is talking about in the verse on the top of this page. God will judge harshly those who stray away from His instruction.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:14; "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to all the world..." Who were the ones who originally took this Gospel to all the world? The apostles that's who! In 1 Timothy 4:1 we are warned not to listen to any other Gospel or doctrine. 'But the Holy Spirit distinctly declares that in latter times some will turn away from the faith, giving attention to deluding (deceiving) and seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach, through hypocrisy and pretensions of liars, whose consciences are seared'. Not only does God have doctrines, so does the devil. Every major false doctrine could well be a doctrine of a demon. One of the devil's major tactics against the church is to introduce a false doctrine.

As we read in 1 Timothy 4:16 (the third verse written on the top of this page), we are to look to ourselves, or in other words, look after ourselves. It is important that a teacher of the Word, saves themselves through accepting the covering blood of Jesus as well as trying to save others. We cannot take our salvation for granted. It is a free gift from the magnificently enormous, eternal God of the whole universe. Thank the Lord!

In 2 John 1:9 to 11 we read something frightening which is largely ignored by many Christians; 'Anyone who runs ahead of God and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God; but he who lives in the doctrine (teaching) of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him, do not welcome him into your house or bid him Godspeed and give him any encouragement, for he who wishes him success is a partaker in his evil doings'. That is a very radical statement spoken by John. We need to be very careful with whom we fellowship. We are not to endorse things that we know are not right (Romans 14:22). For example, much of the end-time teaching cannot be endorsed because many of the events 'prophesied' didn't happen and as the world changes, they cannot happen. Simply put, those who speak these prophecies are false prophets.

There are two levels of Bible teachers; those who initiate and those who reproduce. Paul was one who initiated teaching. Read 2 Timothy 2:2; 'The teaching which you have heard from me (Paul) along with many witnesses, entrusted to faithful men who will be competent to teach others also'. These men were to teach only what Paul had taught. In essence, remaining in the apostle's doctrine.

In Titus 1:9 we read about those who reproduced the teaching; 'He must hold fast to the trustworthy Word of God as he was taught it, so that he may be able both to give instruction and encouragement in sound doctrine, and to refute those who contradict and oppose it'. They didn't initiate the teaching; they heard it, held on to it and taught it or reproduced it.

There are other forms of communication within the body of Christ, and they are not all teaching. We see them in Romans 12:6 to 8, and 1 Corinthians 14:22, 30 & 31; prophecy, exhortation (encouragement), tongues, interpretation of tongues, testimonies, counselling and an inspired revelation from God. These gifts are often given to people who are considered by others, not to be very important. That keeps our eyes on God and off individual personalities. In Titus 2:3 to 5 we read about older women teaching younger women. The word 'teach' in that verse does not necessarily mean teaching doctrine, it means discipline. All these forms of teaching must be tested against the Word of God.

We have to be servants of the Gospel before we are servants of the church. Paul says in Colossians 1:23 to 25, he became a minister (or a servant) of the Gospel, then for the sake of the church, he became a minister in accordance with the divine stewardship entrusted to him, to make the Word of God fully known to them. It is important we keep those in the correct order. If we are firstly servants of the church, we will do only what the church wants us to do. We need to be free to be servants of the Gospel first, then we can serve the church. We need to please God and obey the Gospel rather than please the people, or even our own pastors. Moses pleased God while Aaron pleased the people. Whom we will please is a decision all teachers need to make. Our business is not to correct scripture – our business is to teach scripture.

In 2 Timothy 3:16 & 17 says; 'All scripture is God-breathed, given by His inspiration and profitable for doctrine, instruction, for reproof, for conviction of sin, for correction of error, discipline in obedience and for training in righteousness; in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose and action, so that the man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work'.

A teacher of the Word must have a comprehensive grasp of the whole Bible. It is not enough just to know the books of Peter; you need to know the epistle written by Jude. It is not enough just to know Kings; you need to be able to balance it with Chronicles. Chronicles explains things that are not mentioned in Kings. We also need to be very familiar with the 'minor' prophets. In truth, they are not minor at all; their books are just smaller than the 'major' prophets. They all have a message that is uniquely appropriate for our culture today.

Bible teachers need to be uncompromising, pure, blameless and prayerful. Most of the truth of the Bible has been obscured by compromise in this modern world. To be uncompromising is a challenge to our character and can make us quite unpopular with some people who consider us 'radical' or too extreme. We can even be persecuted by weaker or younger-in-the-Lord Christians, who sometimes become offended by the depth of the Word of God we teachers expound on. Young Christians do not usually like to be told that God has a lot of rules for us to follow, but they need to learn that we can't be holy if there is sin in our lives. The Bible has a few but not many 'grey' areas. Sin is sin in the eyes of the Lord. We can't be 'saved by the skin of our teeth'. We are either saved or we are not saved. The same principle applies to pregnancy. Either a woman is pregnant or she is not pregnant. There is no 'grey' area here. If we compromise the Word of God to please people, we have failed to fulfil our God-given function.

Teachers of the Word have to be completely free from personal prejudices; racial, social, denominational and especially national. We must not put any prejudice before the Word of God. Our loyalty must lie with the Lord first and our nation and any other bias last. A teacher of scripture must be orderly and systematic – self-disciplined and self-controlled. Hebrews 6:1 & 2 gives us six steps from repentance to judgement; 'Therefore let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teaching and doctrine of Christ, advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belongs to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance and abandonment of dead works and of faith by which you turned to God; with teachings about purifying, the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead and the eternal punishment (for unbelievers). If indeed God permits, we shall proceed to advanced teaching'.

A teacher in the body of Christ must set an example of Christian life for others to follow. We must be above reproach and live entirely without compromise, seeking God and relying on Him for everything. It is His Word we are teaching so our sermons have to be by inspiration from Him, even when we feel the sermons may not be well received by more compromising Christians. Jeremiah the Prophet was not popular because he told the truth, but as much as he hated his unpopularity, he said he couldn't stop speaking the truth from God. He was mocked, derided and was weary, but the Word of God was like a burning fire within him and he could not contain it. Read Jeremiah 20:7 to 10. We also need to be like Jeremiah and please God no matter what people say. As we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we are to literally pray without ceasing. Indeed, some of us have found ourselves praying in our sleep!

Being a teacher is not a ministry we ask for – it is a God given talent and He chooses whom He wants. We have to obey and take His God-breathed Word, that He entrusts to us, and give it to whom He wants to teach. Teachers are merely His vessels; His mouthpieces; His heralds and His servants. The fourth scripture on the top of page one is found in Titus 2:15. The Lord Himself has given us authority to teach His Word. The Holy Spirit teaches us and the Lord has put His trust in us to teach what we have learned from Him. Teachers are set apart for this purpose and we are not to do anything else. 'He whose gift is serving, let him give himself to serving; he who teaches, let him give himself to his teaching' (Romans 12:70).

Amen and may God richly bless you as you teach His Word.

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