

IS DOCTRINE EXPENDABLE?

In a letter to a religious journal, a preacher makes the statement: "My people don't care whether my sermons are doctrinally correct - they want something by which they can live."

The implication is that those who emphasize purity of doctrine are leaving the lives of their hearers untouched and not providing them with anything to live by. As though Bible truth gives people nothing to live by! It breathes an utter contempt of doctrine as playing no essential role in the Christian ministry. How different was the attitude of St. Paul! In giving instructions to the young preacher Timothy for his work, Paul wrote, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season." He wanted all of Timothy's ministerial work to revolve around the Word. Was Paul off-base when he insisted that? Likewise was Jesus talking nonsense when He said: "If you continue in my Word, then you are my disciples indeed," or when He instructed His apostles to teach all things whatsoever He had commanded them?

It is bad enough when lay people don't care whether the sermons are doctrinally correct or not, but it is worse when ministers take that attitude. That is polluting the stream at its source. It is the great tragedy of our time that there are more and more such preachers.

Is it unimportant whether the sermons of your pastor are doctrinally correct or not? Thank God that you have a pastor who stresses doctrine, who preaches God's Word to you and not the commandments of men. If he does that, he is not depriving you of something to live by but providing you with the only thing that you can live by. Remember that Jesus said: "Without me, you can do nothing." St. Paul calls the Gospel the power, the "dynamite," of God unto salvation. The preacher who proclaims his own ideas or the ideas of other men, however much admired in the world, is spending his time lighting firecrackers which just fizzle out. The Psalmist thought that the Word was something to live by when he said: "Your Word is lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path."

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