
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Why does doctrine matter? Or: If a preacher teaches false doctrine and you believe it, who will suffer?**

Doctrine means "teaching" – it's what the Bible teaches that men ought to believe. "False doctrine" is a teaching that is not true -- it's something that men ought not to believe.

Many people feel that false doctrine is not a real threat. They feel it doesn't really matter what you believe, just so long as you live your life right. The problem is that what you believe will affect how you live your life. Let me give you an example to illustrate.

It is a true fact -- a true doctrine -- when a doctor says that smoking causes lung cancer and heart disease. It is a false doctrine when someone teaches that no harm comes from smoking. Now ... if a young man truly believes the doctrine of the medical doctor, he will likely not take up the habit of smoking. On the other hand, if a young woman believes the false doctrine that smoking causes no harm she is very likely to take up the habit and eventually ruin her health. Think carefully about these four facts:

- 1) A young woman can be taught the false doctrine that smoking will not harm her.
- 2) She can sincerely believe what she is taught.
- 3) Her sincere belief in this false doctrine is likely to affect her behavior.
- 4) Her sincere belief will not prevent her from suffering later in life from lung cancer and heart disease.

Likewise, anyone can be taught false doctrine in religion. They can sincerely believe what they are taught and it will affect their behavior, but their sincere belief will not prevent them from suffering certain consequences.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

In religion, there is a popular idea that if a preacher preaches a false doctrine, then he is the only one that will answer for the crime. I have talked with many people that say such things as:

"Well, I'll have to ask my preacher what we believe about that."

In other words, whatever their preacher says they will believe and do. But we have a personal responsibility to verify and test what a preacher says. If a preacher preaches false doctrine he will answer to God for teaching something false, but we will also suffer for believing it! Listen to what Jesus Himself said:

Matthew 15:14

¹⁴ "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

Listen to this! A blind leader will fall into the ditch; he will suffer harm for teaching false doctrine. However, the blind follower -- the person who blindly follows along without verifying what he is being taught -- he will also fall into the ditch; he will suffer the same harm as a false teacher.

WHAT PUNISHMENT AWAITS A FALSE TEACHER?

Keep this concept in mind. The person following and believing the false teacher will suffer the same fate and the same punishment as the false teacher himself!

Q: What sort of punishment awaits a false teacher?

2 Peter 2:1-2

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.

According to this, "swift destruction" awaits the false teacher and anyone that believes and follows their teachings.

A preacher is necessary for people to hear the gospel (Romans 10:14), but remember that a preacher is still just human. He can be mistaken and it is your personal responsibility to verify that what your preacher is teaching is the truth. If your preacher is teaching false doctrine, he will suffer "swift destruction" on Judgment Day, but if you believe his false doctrine, you too will suffer the same fate.

OTHER WARNINGS

The Bible gives other warnings about false doctrine.

Matthew 15:9

⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Hear we learn that false doctrine can make worship "vain" or worthless. Many people go to worship services every week and do not realize they are wasting their time and losing their souls because what is being taught and practiced are the "doctrines and commandments of men."

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 we learn that some false teachers would be able to perform miracles that would convince gullible people that they were true messengers from God. The Scriptures, then, are warning us that a miracle is not proof of its source. We are exhorted to test and verify what the preacher is saying and hold to the truth no matter how many miracles a preacher may perform.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

²¹ Test all things; hold fast what is good.

2 Timothy 1:13

¹³ Hold fast the pattern of sound words ...

1 John 4:1

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The only safe course of action, then, is to listen carefully to what is being taught by the preacher and verify what he says with the written word. If the preacher is teaching something different than the written word, he is a false teacher and anyone following him will receive the same fate he receives.

- 1) Ask your preacher why he doesn't teach baptism for the "remission of sins" like Acts 2:38 teaches.
- 2) Ask your preacher why he allows women to speak in the services of the church when the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 that they must remain silent.
- 3) Ask your preacher why he wears a religious title like "reverend," "father," or "pastor" when Jesus strictly forbids the wearing of such titles in Matthew 23:5-10.
- 4) Ask your preacher why he teaches the church is unnecessary for salvation when the Bible says in Acts 20:28 that Jesus shed His blood for His church.
- 5) Ask your preacher why he teaches that men cannot fall from grace and be lost again when 2 Peter 2:20-21 clearly teaches that they can.
- 6) Ask your preacher why he teaches that the communion should not be eaten every first day of each week when Acts 20:7 clearly teaches that it should.

These are just some areas of concern that you should think about -- there are others. Be very careful and check twice to make sure you are not being taught a false doctrine, because if your preacher teaches a false doctrine and you believe it, both of you will suffer the consequences.

Matthew 24:24

²⁴ "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Take this passage heart! Jesus said false prophets can deceive the very elect. Don't think it can't happen to you. Don't think that your preacher is incapable to teaching false doctrine and don't elevate what your preacher says above what the written word says (1 Corinthians 4:6).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.