

Importance of Doctrine (Revisited)

[Read preface to the 1984 edition of “1984” by Walter Cronkite.]

My last Wednesday lesson was on the Importance of Doctrine. Shortly before class, it came to me how it should be organized. Unfortunately, there was not time to redo the lesson. Hence, today we will revisit the importance of doctrine with a better organization and perhaps more examples to better communicate. The purpose is to have individuals in the audience understand the message, take it to heart and grow in grace.

[Read the bio of Helen Keller from Wikipedia. Note the point at which the world of language opens up to her. It is my desire that this teaching help open up to you the language of doctrine and that you become excited about learning to love God through His Word.]

Here are some often quoted passages from the New Testament concerning the Scriptures.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

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2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

2 Timothy 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

R. B. Thieme often quoted these verses at the beginning of class in order to focus on the importance of what he was about to present.

Here is an overview of today's lesson:

Doctrine Defined

Doctrine is Required

Doctrine is Provided

Doctrine Categories

Doctrine Uses

Doctrine Applications (Examples)

I. Doctrine Defined

What do I mean by Bible Doctrine? Let's start by looking at the word "doctrine" in the dictionary. From my old Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition from 1993, doctrine is "1. Archaic: TEACHING, INSTRUCTON. 2. a: something that is taught b: a

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principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief: DOGMA c. a principle of law established through past decisions d: a statement of fundamental government policy esp. in international relations.” In the context of the Bible, doctrine is teaching, instruction, something from the Bible that is taught. It should be what the pastor-teacher teaches. The result of Bible teaching is knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Wisdom is something the Bible says is very valuable.

From the biblical context, the “Word of God” in Hebrews 4:12, “the Word of Truth” in 2 Timothy 2:15 and “Scriptures” in 2 Timothy 3:15 we usually understand this to refer to the Old Testament. Yet, in 1 Peter 3:16 equates Paul’s letters as Scripture.

1 Peter 3:15 just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

1 Peter 3:16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Per Kenneth Wuest in his “The Exegesis of II Peter,” “The words, “other scriptures” show that Paul’s epistles were ranked as scripture at that time.”

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So, we are talking about both the Old Testament and the New Testament. This does not include the Apocrypha nor the Pseudepigrapha. Bible doctrine is teaching from the Old Testament and the New Testament. We consider both to be the inerrant Word of God. Narratives about Satan and sin are not removed but are included to train us to avoid them.

II. Doctrine is Required

Knowing and understanding Bible information, doctrine, is a requirement to live the Christian life.

I started looking for “study” in the Old Testament. I didn’t find what I expected. Upon further consideration, I realized that most people in the Old Testament did not have a pocket Torah available to read. They depended upon the Levitical priesthood to teach them verbally. Hence, the many commands to “listen.”

Doctrine is required to prevent bad things from happening. For instance, Hosea 4:

Hosea 4:1 Listen [Qal imperative, used at least 90 times in the Old Testament] to the word of the Lord, O sons of Israel, For the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land.

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Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [Hebrew: daath]. Because you have rejected knowledge [Hebrew: daath], I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

This Hebrew word for knowledge is prominent in Proverbs chapter 8 which we will study later. It is for lack of knowledge that Israel is destroyed. In 722 B.C. the northern kingdom is destroyed. The southern kingdom is destroyed in 586 B. C. It is not just lack of knowledge, but knowledge that is understood through Bible teaching, believed and acted upon by faith (i.e. for the Christian, faith dependence or faith reliance on the Holy Spirit).

Do you understand your relationship with God? What pleases God? What displeases God? What you don't know can lead to your destruction. As Herman likes to say, a little legalism (in this case lack of correct knowledge of Bible doctrine) won't hurt you, it will kill you! And in 722 B.C. and 586 B.C. it did exactly that to the children of Israel.

Paul takes the Corinthians to task in 1 Corinthians. Repeatedly he asks, "know ye not" in the King James translation. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. As I read, count the number of times Paul asks "...do you not know?" (New American Standard Bible)

Check out Hebrews 12:5-6 from the New Testament:

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Hebrews 12:5 “...My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprovved by Him;

Hebrews 12:6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.”

When God disciplines a person, it is for the purpose of getting someone’s attention and convincing the person to get with God’s plan of blessing. And blessing isn’t necessarily a T-bone steak every night or a new cell phone. It is a strengthening of your relationship with God.

Other examples of discipline include Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 and Paul handing a man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh in 1 Corinthians chapter 5. There are many examples in the Bible, both Old Testament and New.

So, are there some positive examples of the requirement of Bible doctrine? Yes, of course. How does the book of Psalms begin?

Psalm 1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

Psalm 1:2 But his delight is in the law [Hebrew: Torah] of the Lord, And in His law [Hebrew: Torah] he meditates day and night.

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Psalm 1:3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

Proverbs 3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching [Hebrew: Torah which can mean the Pentateuch but as here can refer to the teaching or instruction of those books], But let your heart keep my commandments;

Proverbs 3:2 For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you.

Or a New Testament passage:

Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge [Greek: epignosis] and all discernment,

Philippians 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;

Philippians 1:11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

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Knowledge, understanding and wisdom of Bible doctrine are not optional. They are a requirement.

III. Doctrine is Provided

God ensured we have the inerrant Scriptures

Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

1 Peter 1:25 (quoted from Isaiah 40:8) But the word of the Lord endures forever.

God endowed certain men with the gift of pastor-teacher

God provided for local churches in which pastors-teachers can teach along with other spiritual gifts for the building up and support of the local church.

In the Old Testament God provided for his presence in a tabernacle (tent) and then in a temple. I am not going to delve into them today. Were I to do so, I might go off on a tangent and not finish until next week.

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IV. Doctrine Categories

Over the course of almost two millennia, scholars have developed an immense body of works on theological doctrine.

One way to itemize the categories of doctrine is to use the titles of the volumes of a systematic theology like the one L. S. Chafer wrote. What follows are the titles of specific parts of his Systematic Theology with a paragraph of introduction to each. I felt it instructive to add the introductory paragraphs to get a feel of the broad scope and variety of doctrine we now have access to. Doctrine is that which the average Christian could not be bothered to learn, let alone put into practice in a godly life. Although reading through a systematic theology is not something a Christian may indulge in, God has provided pastors-teachers to teach applicable doctrines from systematic theology in the local church.

Prolegomena. (from the Preface) Systematic Theology, the greatest of the sciences, has fallen upon evil days. Between the rejection and ridicule of it by the so-called progressives and the neglect and abridgment of it by the orthodox, it, as a potent influence, is approaching the point of extinction. It is a significant fact that of the upwards of two score accredited and notable works on Systematic Theology which have been produced in this and other countries, an exceedingly small portion is now in print and the demand for these works is negligible. The unchanging emphasis in the Scriptures upon doctrine, which subject is referred to in the New Testament more than forty times and is that to which a Christian is to “take heed” (1 Tim. 1:3; 4:6, 16; 2 Tim. 3:10, 16; 4:2, 3), stands as a silent rebuke, whether heeded or not, to all modern notions which belittle

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the importance of Dogmatic Theology, and also stands as a corrective to those who neglect any portion of it.

Bibliology. “SINCE SYSTEMATIC, or Thetic, Theology is the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works, and since the Bible in its original writings is by its own worthy claims and by every test devout minds may apply to it the inerrant Word of God, it follows that, if any progress is to be made in this science, the theologian must be a *Biblicist*—one who is not only a Biblical scholar but also a *believer* in the divine character of each and every portion of the text of the Bible.”

Theology Proper. “THE TERM *Theology Proper* is a somewhat modern designation which represents the logical starting point in the study of Systematic Theology, being, as it is, its primary theme, namely, a scientific investigation into what may be known of the existence, Persons, and characteristics of the triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—and quite apart from their works. Since the whole field of Systematic Theology is so extensive, it is part of wisdom to reserve the consideration of the works of the triune God, as unfolded in Angelology, Anthropology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, for later contemplation. Unabridged investigation of the truth concerning the Second and Third Persons, including their works, is to be undertaken under the two cardinal divisions, Christology and Pneumatology.”

Angelology. “THE TRUTH that there is an order of celestial beings quite distinct from humanity and from the Godhead who occupy an exalted estate above the present position of fallen man, is the teaching of much

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Scripture. These celestial beings are mentioned at least 108 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New Testament, and out of this extended body of Scripture the student may construct his doctrine of the angels (cf. Gaebelien, *Angels of God*, p.12).”

Anthropology. “ANTHROPOLOGY—the science of man—is approached from two widely different angles, namely, that of human philosophy and that of the Bible. The former is extra-Biblical and avoids every feature of Scripture revelation. The latter is intra-Biblical and confines itself to the Word of God and such corroborating human experience as may give confirming witness to the truth disclosed. The one is conceived by man and, reflecting his philosophy of human life, is offered as educational discipline in secular schools of learning. The other is a revelation from God in that sense in which all Scripture originates with Him and presents a record which proud man is loathe to accept.”

Hamartiology. “THERE IS a justification for the fact that the two great doctrines—*sin* and *redemption*—go hand in hand. It is sin that has drawn out redemption from the heart of God, and redemption is the only cure for sin. These two realities, in turn, become measurements of each other. Where sin is minimized, redemption is automatically impoverished since its necessity is by so much decreased. The worthy approach to the doctrine of *sin* is to discover all that is revealed about the sinfulness of sin and then to recognize that God’s provided Savior is equal to every demand which sin imposes. It is one of Satan’s most effective methods of attack upon the saving work of Christ to soften the voice which is set to proclaim the evil character and effect of sin. Apparently not all who are known as teachers of God’s truth are awake to this satanic strategy. It is

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too often assumed that it is wiser to leave this loathsome monster called *sin* to lurk in the dark, and to dwell on the more attractive virtues of human life. Sin is what God says it is, and here human opinion and philosophy must bend to the testimony of the Word of God in which He declares the true nature of sin.”

Soteriology. “SOTERIOLOGY is that portion of Systematic Theology which treats of salvation.”

Ecclesiology. “THIS, THE SIXTH major division of Systematic Theology, contemplates the New Testament doctrine of the Church.”

Eschatology. “THIS THE LAST major division of Systematic Theology is concerned with things to come and should not be limited to things which are future at some particular time in human history, but should contemplate all that was future in character at the time its revelation was given. The time word now is ever moving and things yet future at the present time will soon have passed into history. A worthy Eschatology must embrace all prediction whether fulfilled or unfulfilled at a given time. In other words, a true Eschatology attempts to account for all the prophecy set forth in the Bible.”

Christology. “CHRISTOLOGY (Χριστος, λογος), to which this entire volume is devoted, is the doctrine respecting the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Pneumatology. (excerpts from the Preface) “Pneumatology is the scientific treatment of any or all facts related to spirit.”

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“Doubtless some natural causes lie behind the fact that Christians generally are so little informed regarding this great theme. (1) There is no lack of plain revelation regarding the Holy Spirit; yet neglect, ignorance, and error are transmitted from teacher to pupil as freely and effectively as is the truth.”

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“(2) Again, a reason for the general failure to recognize the Person and work of the Holy Spirit is due to the fact that, within the range of the usual comprehension of revealed truth, the Spirit is not set forth as an object of faith as are the Father and the Son. Salvation is not said to depend upon faith in the Holy Spirit as it is in the case of the Father (cf. Rom. 4:24), or the Son (cf. John 3:16). It is only as the deeper truths related to the power of the Holy Spirit within the believer are approached that the thought of dependence upon the Third Person of the Godhead is brought into view. Thus it has come about as a general effect that the Father and the Son are really esteemed the objects of saving faith and the Holy Spirit is lost somewhat from consideration. (3) Similarly, the Father and the Son are constantly associated with one another in the text of the New Testament. This is due to the fact that in a large portion of the Gospels, which four books occupy two-fifths of the whole New Testament, the Son is speaking and that as One sent out by the Father and doing the will of the Father (cf. John 14:10). Likewise, personal declarations are not recorded as directly proceeding from the Holy Spirit (John 16:13); nevertheless, a considered perusal of the Sacred Text yields an impression that the Holy Spirit is the mighty executive of the Godhead and by so much His relation to both Father and Son a theme of great

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proportions. (4) Lastly there is a reason for the general neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be found in the fact that His work as executor of the Godhead is often attributed in a more or less impersonal way to God. Thus the precise truth that certain things are wrought specifically by the Holy Spirit are lost in a generalization.”

V. Doctrine Uses

Combating Temptation [Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11]

Knowing the will of God [Acts 11:5-16]

Correcting Fallacies [Paul corrects Peter in Galatians 2:11-21]

Solving Problems using doctrinal orientation

Living a Productive God-pleasing life, growing in grace, etc.

VI. Doctrine Applications (Examples)

A. Overview of Wisdom (Proverbs 8)

B. Jehoshaphat's prayer (2 Chronicles 20) [solving problems]

C. Paul Corrects Peter (Gal 2:11-21)[correction]