

## The Restoration of Doctrine

Beloved, in centuries past pious men left the historical church over many disagreements, and sought to live more faithfully than the historical church by themselves. You can still hear some of them preach about the dark days, when the Church kept the Bible literally chained to the pulpit, and no one had one for themselves. Later, out of the churches which the protestors formed, countless individuals claimed nearly the same as the previous men, that there were falsehoods in these denominations, that denominationalism itself was corrupt, and left to form their own, and often tiny ministries. You can still hear these men rail against the denominations which they left for their wrongs. Yet of course, these new and often cliquish ministries are themselves corrupt, much like their forefathers, and do not teach the truth from the Bible, often refusing to teach much biblical doctrine at all. In fact when I think of that image of the historical church, with its Bible literally chained to the wooden pulpit in front of the somber seated community\*, I think more of the modern church, than I do of the ancient. That's because in all of its claims of freedom and populism, the modern church has nearly banned the Bible from its halls. You will not hear the Bible preached. Not from the pulpit. Not in small groups. It has been banned. In fact, any minister who dared preach biblical truth would very likely not be a minister for long. This is the state of the Bride of Messiah, the *Kallah haMahiach*, with everyone claiming to be a church, yet unwilling to do the job of one.

One of the greatest manifestations of this total breakdown in teaching is the inability of churches to communicate more than a fraction of a faith statement. The very fundamental truths that the Body of Messiah should be leading in are often skipped over or even denied. Some ministries will simply play the relativist, and claim we cannot know divine truth. Others will be open about the fact they communicate salvation doctrines, and not much else. But the holy word of God, the divine food that the Lord gives us, is full of abundant truth, truths to lead our faith and lead our lives and lead the entire Body of *Mashiach*. When churches affirm only a tiny fraction of these godly instructions, how is that not bad teaching? How is it not shamefully bad and truly negligent teaching? It is in a sense a denial of God's authority.

After all, if you help run a church, you are at least claiming the mantle that Yeshua gave to His called out ones; the *Kahol*. You are claiming to be a shepherd, to have teaching authority, and presumably with it, ability. So I ask all listeners, all sincere believers, how it is possible to claim such extraordinary responsibility, and then neglect to teach the large majority of what the

divine word of God teaches? Again, few words come to my mind for this other than deceptive and, perhaps, negligent. And isn't that fair to say, beloved? Claiming one thing and doing another is deceptive. Having a great responsibility and shirking it is, well, negligent. So to all of you out there, especially servants and ministers, don't you think it's time to turn the ship around?

The current situation really doesn't need much explaining, because it's about as common as water today. But just to briefly mention, let me point out the incredible number of alleged churches which claim a small handful of truth points as their faith statement: the authority of scripture; the divinity of the Son; the need for faith for salvation. Did these churches not read the holy Bible? If they did, aren't they doing nearly what the devil would love to do with it? Erase it? Change it? Silence it? It may indeed be correct that there are only a handful of truths central to salvation, yet it is certainly not true that there are only a handful of important truths. If they are from God, I propose to you that they are important. If they involve major elements in how we live our lives, they are important. Churches and ministries have no businesses chain sawing them off of our faith, and are doing the devil's business when they do so. They are Satan's helper.

Therefore, what I am proposing is a restoration of good doctrinal statements, including entire catechisms. This is because any responsible teacher ought to as best they can represent good biblical doctrine, not a quarter of it, not half of it, but all of it. Not only that but a responsible teacher also gives good common sense ways of applying them to our lives. That is what a responsible teacher would do. I realize many churches feel justified in their rather brief, bikini-like faith statements, but I tell you – there is no excuse. I understand that some people think it is necessary in order to get along with other ministries, but I challenge the claim that it is necessary. Number one, why should lying be necessary to begin with? Does God say that lying is necessary? Number two, if various organizations functioned with biblical doctrine and catechisms for centuries, and some still do, how is it possible to say it is necessary to abandon them? It is not necessary to abandon them. Nor is it necessary to grievously misrepresent the word of God, ever.

While I'm not going to go into great detail here, let me just briefly go over what a thorough statement of doctrine and practice could include. I'm going to cover a number of categories, but forgive me if I leave anything out. I am not a scholar:

- 1:theological truths about God, the Savior, the Trinity
- 2:theological statements about the means of justification and sanctification, naturally including the workings of God's grace
- 3:statements on the nature of divine revelation, the Bible, the authority of special revelation
- 4:moral truths, ethical truths (this includes everything from common morality, to respect for human life in all its stages, the traditional church prohibition on contraception, the traditional and biblical prohibition on usury, various business ethics and more)
- 5:explanation and some application of biblical gender roles
- 6:biblical teachings on marriage, divorce and remarriage
- 7:ordinances in the New Covenant (including both ordinary ways of running the congregation, offices in the congregation, headship in the congregation as well as what are historically called "sacraments")
- 8:the nature of man, the nature of the fall
- 9:basic community or local standards (how we run the show locally, and standards we would like our community to keep)
- 10:church discipline (how we deal with sin or disorderliness, repentance, excommunication)
- 11:Communion (how we have it, when we have it, meaning of the Body and Blood)
- 12:Baptism (how it's done, when it's done, is it in itself regenerative)
- 13:eschatology (that is End Times and millennial beliefs)
- 14:explanation of the doctrines of heaven and hell
- 15:what is the Body of Messiah
- 16:what are the virtues to nurture
- 17:advice on the faith and growth of the believer

Please go through what I have written above, and give it some thought. Even put it away for a while and give it some thought for a few days or weeks. Is what I have written milk? Or is it, as

Sha'ul (Paul) would say, meat? Is it descriptive of the richness and depth of truth in the Bible? Does it rightfully include our own common sense application of some of those truths? Does it at least point out major areas of spiritual and moral doctrine? I believe that it does, and it's not my own idea either. It is in scripture, and the historical church, including much of the Protestant world, sought diligently to teach it. And I ask you once again – If you really are a teacher, why don't you teach it? If you do not teach it, how does that not qualify as negligence? If you were getting your driver's license and the teacher taught you a small fraction of the driver's manual, you'd definitely call that negligence. In the same way, if you are a servant or minister in church and you're not permitted to teach even the majority of the above, isn't that negligence too? Isn't that unethical? Don't you think you will be judged by God for your refusal to teach?

I want to put one more thing out there; I want to propose that if your church or similar ministry is at a point you believe it's incapable of teaching much of what I've written above, then maybe, just maybe, it's about time to close up shop. I know many will be offended by a statement like that, but I've said it before and I say it again – maybe going out of business is the best thing to do. That doesn't mean you can't still do good things for the Lord. Anyone can do good things for the Lord. It means you stop claiming the mantle of the church while simultaneously being either unwilling or unable to fulfill its role. It's that simple. And who knows, maybe closing up shop includes going to work for someone who CAN do those things. Maybe it means bringing your organization under the headship of one who can. Please take the above options very seriously as a possibility for the future. The little children of God do not need to be misled. Nor do they need to be fed only half the truth. It is damaging. It is destructive and false. We must restore the incredible faith we have been given by the one we call the Savior. We must restore the faith.

I realize there are naturally a few questions that come to mind in thinking about such a radical change from the extremely non-doctrinal environment we have today. I realize that in speaking of how thorough and rich that doctrine is, we will see that certain applications and kinds of doctrine really are a matter of prudential judgment, not of fundamental right and wrong. That goes without saying. But take a look at the smorgasbord of ideas packaged under the frightful name Christian today, and see how many of those ideas really are Christian, or biblical at all. Take a look at how many teachings are left out, ignored or scorned today, and I think you will find a Church which simply wants to flee from the word of *Elohim*. So despite any real questions about how to implement what I have detailed above, let us act urgently and with a mission to restore godly teaching. Our God is not a God of confusion.

I began this call for reform with a historical reminder of the breakdown of the Church, the very Body of our Savior. I will end with another historical reminder, brothers: This secular world we live in today, this world many believers would say they are second-class citizens in, this humanist world which has forced religious truth out of nearly all meaningful societal institutions, was in part founded by Christians who didn't want to teach the truths of their faith. Or to live by them on any large scale. In fact the modern concept of rights, some of which are far beyond scriptural truth, was in part defended by professed believers both Protestant and Catholic. Why? Because they figured that having rights as a foundation would avoid one religious group being persecuted by the other. So the liberal concept of rights, which has grown greatly since, became the foundation of thought for many of the faithful. Not the word of God. Not only that, but the modern exit of religion from the state schools began not in the 1960s, but in the 1940s with a decision which had strong support from various Christian sects. You see, they were happy to shut down Christian education in the nation's schools because they felt the system disadvantaged them. In short Christians supported silencing Christians because they felt those Christians were silencing them. Well, that left schools with a vague biblical theism, and only decades later, with the annihilation of that remaining theism. We can see where the same schools are today. My point is, that by being silent about our very own faith historically, we have not solved the problem of persecution, but have rather created the great secular beast which now silences Christians of all stripes. Communicating our faith, and living by it is essential. This cannot be done with bare minimum faith statements. It cannot be done with the presumption that one sect is equally as true as another. It cannot be done with the blatant falsehood that all that matters is a few doctrines about salvation. It is done by standing with divine truth from God, which we know, teach and live as a community. We must teach good doctrine. For they have not only chained the Bible to the pulpit this time. They have chained it shut.

*\*It is true according to historical apologists that the main reason for chaining the Bible to the pulpit was to avoid theft, as the Bible was very expensive to produce at that time. However, I use the image because I think it powerfully illustrates the attitudes toward scripture in the Church then. In fact, even after many centuries, it is still observable that Protestants and Evangelicals spend more time personally with the scriptures than Catholics and Orthodox do. Therefore, it is an evocative image, even to this day.*