Dealing With Differences

By Aubrey C. Belue

1) There are many kinds of “churches of Christ”. If one looked hard enough, he could probably find “churches of Christ” that did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, that followed no divine pattern, and that were restructured from the most esteemed “scriptural teachings” by name only. In the very nature of the case, there is no central voice of “churches of Christ” so one labors in vain to substantiate this charge.

2) All churches today, right or wrong, are made up of “people” – flawed, biased, sometimes bigoted and judgmental, often worldly and carnal, temperamental – people. And individual “people” have no standing in speaking for “churches.” What a given person might opine, or even what a local group might hold collectively, cannot provide grounds for a universal accusation.

3) The charge is false! At least, among members of the “church of Christ” I am familiar with. No one that I know claims to be perfect – which is another way of wording the charge! In the past for sure, and in days to come, likely, we have all been mistaken. But the truth of a scriptural spiritual truth, and it is not to be broken” (John 10:34).

4) I don’t know ALL truth, but I know SOME truth – The truth that I know applies to both you and I, and it is the same – what those who are familiar to me do that makes them different – they search for truth at all costs, are willing to surrender their point of view if it contradicts truth, and work to bring all others to that truth. But we can’t have that, can we?

The Auburn Beacon

August 16, 2015

Vol. 6, Issue 41

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Thoughts to Ponder

Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments. (Psalm 119:73)

A weekly publication of the University church of Christ in Auburn, Alabama

Volume 6, Issue 41

August 16, 2015

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday

Bible Class .......................... 9:30 AM
Worship ................................ 10:20 AM
Evening Worship ..................... 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes ........................ 7:00 PM

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A People of Principle

By Tim Nichols

It is impossible to enslave, morally or socially, a bible-reading people. The principles of the bible are the groundwork of human freedom.

Christians, above all others, are to be a people governed by principles. The world may not yield to an obvious code of conduct, but God’s children recognize that the distinct teachings of God’s Word give us higher and better rules than our own to guide us through life. Just as Luke wrote “of those things which are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1), we can speak of our common commitment to settled principles that have been revealed from Heaven. Those precepts are the standards high by the pillar and ground of the Truth (1 Tim. 3:15). They are honorable, virtuous, and noble (Phil. 4:8-9). Only to the degree that our scriptures are shaped by unainted Truth can we live uprightly.

Divine precepts are to be kept diligently (Psalm 119:194). We are to long for, love, and meditate upon them (vv. 15, 40), 159) We can understand them and talk of them (v. 27). They give us comfort and hope when men hold us in derision (vv. 49-56).

Divine principles come as a package (Psalm 119:128, 168). We either trust God and obey Him concerning all of our ways, or we do not trust Him at all. He who inspired the living, powerful Scriptures that are able to discern the thoughts and intents of our hearts knows everything about us and everything about every situation that we will encounter (Heb. 4:12-13).

Divine principles are the hand of God helping us (Psalm 119:173). They require us to acknowledge our own lack of personal wisdom and our need to rely upon

Him. Those who count themselves wise enough to value their own wisdom above God’s slaps His hand away.

Principles connect with one another (Isa. 2:4-5) and are woven together and enlargeth. It some make perfect sense only when understood in light of some others. All are consistent with all others. True precepts from the mind of God never contra-dict each other.

When human principles enter the stream, it disrupts. Sometimes men become guilty of attempting to teach others of their duty toward God by using human standards.

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men (Isa. 29:13).

This practice seems to especially prevail when difficult matters arise and consequ-ent principles must be made concerning people. Even well respected and well-meaning brethren have been known to invent principles with which they attempt to control others under special circumstances. These often contradict and nullify principles God gave for our guidance.

For example, God teaches us to meekly seek to restore those overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:25) and shows us that doing so has the effect of saving a soul from death (Jam. 5:19-20; Jude 23). We are to mark those who “cause divisions (Continued on page 2)
Acts. We have to
Instead of
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Principles impose obligations. Principles become premises, premises lead to conclusions, and conclusions have consequences. We bind ourselves with a duty to act in ways that agree with our principles once we have expressed what they are (Rom. 2:1, 3). The man who asserts that "the truth regarding another's conduct cannot be known," for example, must remain passive and silent at all times. Otherwise he is clearly out of duty, and his own conscienc should testify to his hypocrisy if he speaks even once of something wrong and then think or admit that any admonition should be showed to it. He will be judged by even the arbitrary principles that he seeks to impose upon others (Mt. 7:2). Not to adopt unbiblical principles as standards of judgment for others. May we rather fill our hearts and mouths with Divine principles and apply the winnowing fork to those that are human. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him. And be ye imitators of me, after the imitation of Christ. However, for him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power (Col. 2:6-10).

Divine Principles do not yield. Unqualified Divine principles apply to all personal circumstances. Their nature is such that we cannot use them today for one purpose and then discard them tomorrow for different purposes. We cannot apply them to foes and then ignore them when friends are involved. They guard us from being partial in our judgment (1 Tim. 5:21). While they sometimes force us to act when we would much rather remain still, they also restrain us when we might otherwise act rashly.

Divine principles unite. When we keep them pure, they bring us together. When we contaminate them they divide: I am a bond slave (a fellow slave) of Christ, and of you, of all them that keep they precepts" (Psa. 119:63).

Divine principles liberate. They free us from the obligation to act when many around us apply pressure to do so. "And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy statutes among the nations; I will not be ashamed" (Psa. 119:45-46; see also vvs. 69, 78, 87, 94, 110, 134). They free you from the responsibility of deciding what ought to be done or said (1 Cor. 4:1-4).

The Truth Is Always Midway Between the Extremes. This is not merely a harmless, human, ubiblical observation. It has grievous consequences when applied. It judges all testimony to be unworthy of belief. If we accept it, consequently, we would have to find the midpoint between the testimony of Diotrephes and that of John (3 John 9) and between every other set of extremes between the Bible and the world. The Truth often has an extreme contrasting lie. Our duty is either to find the Truth or to recognize that we have not found it.

It is Wrong To Deal With Personal Attacks; We Can Only Challenge the Doctrinal Sins of Others We are not able to find such precepts in the Divine principles. These human precepts would condemn Paul for dealing with the Corinthian brother who had his father's wife and John for responding to the personal attacks of Diotrephes. In our day these principles would provide safe haven for every slanderer and fomenter, whether in pulpul or pew.

That God hasn't plainly told us exactly how He does everything or exactly how He will do some things, we just know that He did, He does and He will. We have to bridge the gap between our absolute Knowledge and His Absolute revelation and will with our absolute faith.

Instead of going mad doctrinally speaking or getting mad emotionally speaking at those who differ with your hypotheses, theories, speculations, assumptions and asumptions on exactly how God does something, perhaps we can do a bit more uniting on what we can know for

What God has not revealed to us today, something

Jesus will return again, something

need to realize that faith is oftentimes enough to

Let it be plainly known, I am not advocating this as a means of unity in doctrinal pertinency, nor am I advocating doctrinal shallowness or ignorance. There are things that will remain revealed and that we MUST know. Nor am I naive enough to believe that we will agree on everything. Division is a reality (cf. Matt. 10:34).

I am advocating the idea that while we are diligently striving in the divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 3:16), that we are careful not to unnecessarily chop it up into such tiny little pieces that it fails to resemble the word of truth anymore. Likewise, let us be careful that we do not chop His body (the group of those whom He has Saved - Acts 2:47b) up into such little pieces trying to prove ad infinitum what Paul was "out of his mind." Instead of dig into "they" are on such matters. In other words, this is meant to impress the need for dogmatic prudence, particularly when it comes to the details of God's will. Let us not go beyond what is actually written in our desperate quest for academic knowledge that might very well be above our pay grade (i.e., belongs to God) beyond the scope of practical application or consequence.

Instead, let us do what God has plainly revealed to us for do. These things that we do not to have to cross ocean to find or reach into the farthest parts of heaven to unveil. They are plainly set forth and often simple enough to accomplish. “For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it” (Deut. 30:11-14).