

Moving The Church Forward #3 430
Dangers To Avoid
by Bill Denton

TEXT: Phil. 3:12-14 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

- A. We've been talking about moving the church forward.
- B The church needs to be thinking about the future.
 - 1. Looking forward.
 - 2. Thinking forward.
 - 3. Planning forward.
 - 4. Moving forward.
- C. Like Paul in the text.
- D. Past two Lessons.
 - 1. Challenges to Accept.
 - 2. Enemies to Defeat
- E. Today, I want to discuss Dangers to Avoid.
 - 1. What if, after you entered the building today, I discovered that we had a rattlesnake loose in the auditorium.
 - 2. Now, I could keep quiet about it, since I wouldn't want anyone to become upset, nor would I want people to get hurt trying to get out.
 - 3. However, it might be handled, I think all would agree that if a rattler was loose under your pew, you'd want to know about it.
 - 4. This is the reason we must discuss dangers that lie before the church -- they will stop, or kill our ability to move into the future

I. THE DANGER OF FALSE DOCTRINE

- A. Definitions.
 - 1. False = that which is not true; something that is a lie.

2. Doctrine = teaching; or that which is taught with the intent of producing a body of information to be believed and used for one's basis of faith, worship, life and service to God.
 3. False doctrine is, then, a body of information, which people believe and then use as a basis for their relationship with God that is untrue.
 4. If the doctrine is untrue, then it cannot actually produce what it claims, and leaves the one believing it in a dangerous position
- B. The Bible has many warnings about the dangers of false teachers who dispense false doctrine or teaching.
1. Matt 7:15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.
 2. Matt 7:22-23- Many will say to Me in that day, `Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, `I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'
 3. Acts 20:28-30- Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.
 4. 2 Tim 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.
 5. 1 Tim 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
 6. 1 Tim 6:3-5 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of

the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

C. There are at least a couple of ways we might try to deal with this problem.

1. We could try to identify false doctrines, flag them, and then avoid them
 - a. a very cumbersome and virtually impossible task.
 - b. besides, if you spend all your time with that which is false, when will you learn what is true.
 - c. obviously, we must examine some things that are false, but I'm talking about an approach that focuses on that which is false.
2. Or you could identify that which is true, focus on that truth, learn and practice that truth, and thus eliminate all that is false.
 - a. illustration -- suppose (for argument) that I wanted to travel from Florida to California, and that there were 100 highways I could travel on. Suppose further that only one of them actually made a connection between Florida and California. Do I need to know all the ones that do not complete my journey, or do I need to know the one that does complete my journey?
 - b. If God gives us the truth so that we can know how to please Him in our faith, our worship, our service, the way we live our lives, etc., doesn't it make sense to focus on that truth?
 - c. False doctrine is a perversion of God's truth -- to overcome it, we must put the focus on what God has said

D. The Bible is our source book of truth.

1. 2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2. 2 Pet 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

E. Let us determine that we will focus on the teaching of Scripture and nothing more, that we may believe and practice only the truth of God.

II. THE DANGER OF DIVISION.

A. Division among believers has plagued the church since shortly after it began

1. Rom 14:1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

2. Rom 16:17-18 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. (By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people).
 3. 1 Cor 1:10-12
 4. 1 Cor 11:17-19- In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.
- B. Jesus knew that even Satan could accomplish his work if his forces were divided.
1. Matt 12:25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ""Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.
 2. Division will destroy every effort regardless of its merit, but it will certainly destroy the work of God.

C. Jesus prayed specifically that his people would be unified- John 17:20-21 My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

D. Let us determine that we will move forward into the future as a unified body of people, and that we will do all within our power to avoid the dangers of division.

III. THE DANGER OF EXTREMEISM

- A. Now the next two dangers are, in many ways, extensions of the two that I have already discussed.
- B. Extremism -is the tendency of some to go to extremes with what they believe or practice or teach others.
 1. It is very much the problem of the Pharisees in Jesus' time.
 2. One of their stated goals was to live the letter of the law to very best of their ability.
 3. But extremism caused them to become unbalanced and thus displeasing to God

C. Let us not think that this danger is insignificant or that it was one that only people like Pharisees can practice.

1. Matt 23:23-24 Woe to you, scribes and Phar'isees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!
2. Matt 23:27-28 Woe to you, scribes and Phar'isees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

D. We use words like liberal and conservative to describe the extremes.

1. Not always good terms, for there is no solid definition to go to.
2. Usually we define liberals and conservatives based on our own perspective.
3. Someone who is looser than we are on a topic is liberal and someone who is tighter than we are on a topic is conservative.
4. You can run off the road into the ditch on either side.

E. We need to be less concerned with what group we are going to tie ourselves to, and more concerned with God's will on matters.

F. If God's position on something is conservative, that needs to be my position, regardless of where the rest of the brotherhood stands. If God's position on something is liberal, that needs to be my position, regardless of where the rest of the brotherhood stands. I need to balance out the whole will of God, rather than over-emphasizing one aspect of it.

G Extremism is frequently the root cause of both false doctrine and division, therefore, let us beware of the dangers involved.

IV. THE DANGER OF OVER-REACTION

A. Over-reaction is similar to extremism, except here we are talking about how people react to things and not just how they act of their own accord.

1. Over-reactions come in response to something that someone else does.
2. Over-reactions often come in the guise of things that will repair a false teaching or division.

- a. example of repairing a false doctrine -- Luther saw that the Catholic church promoted a works oriented salvation, so he over-reacted and helped create the belief-only salvation, both which are wrong.
 - b. example of repairing division -- in an effort to promote unity, some have decided that it doesn't matter about doctrine
- B. Balance is the key, with our eye always fixed on the word and will of God, determined to know and practice those things that are both true and unify us.

CONCLUSION

- A. There are other dangers besides these four I've discussed today.
- 1. False doctrine.
 - 2. Division.
 - 3. Extremism.
 - 4. Over-reaction.
 - 5.
- B. If we are going to move the church into the future, we must avoid these dangers.
- 1. They will destroy the work of God in us.
 - 2. They will make us ineffective as God's people in the world
- C. Invitation