

FROM THOUGHTS TO DOCTRINE

I. ONE'S THOUGHTS

To me the thinking process of man is an extremely complex subject. “Thoughts” are seldom without history—in other words, they are built from the collected data of one’s experiences, emotions, and general and specific learning, etc. and this hodgepodge of inputs influences a composite of “thoughts” that continue to be filtered by the same data until we arrive at an “I think that _____ ...” response.

Whether that “thought” is correct, partially correct (which inversely implies that it is partially incorrect), or totally incorrect depends on the quality or truth of the data from which it was derived. The more truthful the data the more truthful the thought. This is why we must stress the vital importance of the “mind of Christ” to ourselves and to our churches. And isn’t this what preaching and especially teaching is all about?

So, it is imperative that we improve the stored data and take every thought into captivity to the Word of God. A preacher **MUST** be a thinking animal if he is to do service to his Master, but he must also conform his thinking and perfect his thinking according to the Master’s instructions.

My thoughts are not always doctrine—but true doctrine must always be the guide of my thoughts.

II. ONE'S OPINIONS

While at first glance, this category may well be synonymous with the “One’s Thoughts” category, however, I think there are clear nuances of differences. While “thoughts” seem to appear as somewhat transit and flexible “opinions,” on the other hand, appear as much more concrete and settled—perhaps it can be said that opinions are thoughts that have solidified.

Therefore they (opinions) hold a level of concern above that of “thoughts.” Since they are more fixed, it is very important that they not be hastily formed but should receive careful examination before molding. We are cautioned that “no other foundation can be laid” and that foundation is Jesus Christ—**BUT** “let every man beware **HOW** he builds thereon.” The correct foundation is a must—and what is built on that foundation **MUST** derive its strength from the foundation. In other words, “Don’t nail anything down until it correctly fits the foundation.”

III. ONE'S TEACHINGS

Teaching, in its purest form, derives its power from an inward knowing. A teacher that does not know his subject material experientially is no teacher at all because he himself has not adequately earned the subject. For this reason, I think, God presses men through certain “schools” of life in order to make them true teachers. Biblical doctrine is truly alive and having quickening powers and is not just a “head” thing—it is a “life” thing.

A preacher will teach primarily from his “opinions” (whether we like that or not). And again, that is why it is vital that his opinions be tested and tried in the court of Biblical Truth. In spiritual matters, we should never hold opinions that do not matter. Opinions concerning cars and the price of rice in China are another realm—but in areas of eternal consequences “opinions” must be doctrinally correct.

IV. ONE’S DOCTRINE

“Study to show thyself approved—a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” has more to it than just a study desk and an open book. That phrase encompasses the totality of a preacher’s life. “Study” implies a continuation of many things and learning from them. Prayer is a vital part of “study” as is “worship” and “hearing preaching/teaching.” Also, a spiritual open mindset must prevail on the student before he opens THE Book. To just garner knowledge is one thing but to receive spiritual wisdom is another.

To teach Biblical doctrine God seems to let the man also flow into the equation because doctrine is alive and has life qualities and therefore must be presented by men that “bear the marks of Christ.”

A preacher’s doctrine—should never be the “preacher’s doctrine” rather it should be the doctrine that possesses the preacher. Doctrine, true salvational doctrine, is birthed when the Hand of God guides the heart and mind through the correct channels of thoughts, opinions and teachings until it has been properly purified by its transmission along the route. True “belief” is usually not an instantaneous event—rather it is a process. No teaching in a preacher’s life should be deemed “doctrine” until he firmly believes it!

Conclusion: the entire process of variations is, I believe, designed by God Himself. God must have preachers that “think” and preachers with “opinions” and preachers with “teachings” that derive their worth by the ONLY standard that exists—the Doctrine of God—The Word of God.

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