

My Testimony

Many years ago, I nearly lost my focus on what is important. Several of us were concerned about the messages that were being presented by our pastors. We had a strong desire to do the will of God and decided to meet every Sabbath afternoon to study scripture and the spirit of prophecy (SOP). The facilitator was an individual who had been a pastor and a fine student of the Bible and the SOP. He could quote from these sources as well as anyone I had ever heard. He wanted to be relevant, up to date in his presentations, and “on the cutting edge.” Our experience was very similar to that which is described by the pen of inspiration.

“That which Brother D calls light is apparently harmless; it does not look as though anyone could be injured by it. But, brethren, it is Satan’s device, his entering wedge. This has been tried again and again. One accepts some new and original idea which does not seem to conflict with the truth. He talks of it and dwells upon it until it seems to him to be clothed with beauty and importance, for Satan has power to give this false appearance. At last it becomes the all-absorbing theme, the one great point around which everything centers; and the truth is uprooted from the heart.”{5T 292.1}

He also wanted to shine light not only on the errors in the church, but also on individual members. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, he became more critical and the presentations and study became more and more bizarre until we were grossly off track. We finally had to call a halt to the meetings. We were becoming more active in discussing error in doctrine and in individual members, than in the study of the Word and Prophecy.

Indeed, there are errors in church leadership, doctrine, as well as in the actions of the parishioners and in our own lives. Could it be that we focus on the errors in others to hide from the mistakes and defects in ourselves?

“...Why beholdest thou the mote in thy brother’s eye;” and, “behold a beam is in thine own eye.” It is frequently the case that while one is quick to discern the errors of his brethren, he may be in greater faults himself, and is blind to his own errors.”
{ PH159 109.1 }

We are involved in a controversy between “Good and Evil” and can expect the enemy to be active in spreading discord and confusion in the church.

Satan’s chief work is at the headquarters of our faith. He spares no pains to corrupt men in responsible positions and to persuade them to be unfaithful to their several trusts. He insinuates his suspicions and jealousies into the minds of those whose business it is to do God’s work faithfully. While God is testing and proving these helpers, and fitting them for their posts, Satan is doing his utmost to deceive and allure them, that they may not only be destroyed themselves, but may influence others to do wrong and to injure the great work. (4T 210.5)

In Dealing with false teachings, we also read from inspired writings:

In the future, deception of every kind is to arise, and we want solid ground for our feet. We want solid pillars for the building. Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established. The enemy will bring in false theories, such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith. Where shall we find safety unless it be in the truths that the

Lord has been giving for the last fifty years?— The Review and Herald, May 25, 1905. { CW 53.2}

The early church also had to contend with false doctrine. In addressing this problem Paul wrote:

Gal 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Ellen White commenting on this passage notes:

False teachers had brought to the Galatians doctrines that were opposed to the gospel of Christ. Paul sought to expose and correct these errors. He greatly desired that the false teachers might be separated from the church, but their influence had affected so many of the believers that it seemed hazardous to take action against them. **There was danger of causing strife and division which would be ruinous to the spiritual interests of the church. He therefore sought to impress upon his brethren the importance of trying to help one another in love.** He declared that all the requirements of the law setting forth our duty to our fellow men are fulfilled in love to one another. He warned them that if they indulged hatred and strife, dividing into parties, and like the brutes biting and devouring one another, they would bring upon themselves present unhappiness and future ruin. There was but one way to prevent these terrible evils and that was, as the apostle enjoined upon them, to “walk in the Spirit.” They must by constant prayer seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which would lead them to love and unity. { 5T 243.2}

And again:

Just before us is the closing struggle of the great controversy when, with “all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,” Satan is to work to misrepresent the character of God, that he may “seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” If there was ever a people in need of constantly increasing light from heaven, it is the people that, in this time of peril, God has called to be the depositaries of His holy law and to vindicate His character before the world. Those to whom has been committed a trust so sacred must be spiritualized, elevated, vitalized, by the truths they profess to believe.616 { CCh 345.6}

Each member of has a Divine role to perform for the purpose of bringing unity and the Knowledge of Christ into The Church. The Apostle Paul instructs us:

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

While error must be addressed, focusing on error distracts from the study of “The Word” and from gaining a closer personal relationship with our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Those who would labor in word and doctrine, should be firmly established in the truth before they are authorized to go out into the field to teach others. The truth, pure and unadulterated, must be presented to the people. **It is the third angel’s message that bears the true test to the people.** Satan will lead men to manufacture false tests, and thus seek to obscure the value of, and make of none effect, the message of truth. { Ev 211.4 }

Our mandate is to preach the Third Angel’s message.

“God needs men and women who will work in the simplicity of Christ to bring the knowledge of truth before those who need its converting power. **The message of Christ’s righteousness must be proclaimed from one end of the earth to the other.** Our people are to be aroused to prepare the way of the Lord. The third angel’s message—the last message of mercy to a perishing world—is so sacred, so glorious. Let the truth go forth as a lamp that burneth. Mysteries into which angels desired to look, which prophets and kings and righteous men desired to know, the church of God is to make known.” { RH April 22, 1909, par. 16 }

Conclusion

While the issues of: Women’s ordination, 2520 prophecy, anti-trinitarianism, etc. **are important**, are they distracting us from preaching the “The Third Angel’s Message”? A Bible based doctrine is vital, and error must be revealed, but we must also be careful that in “addressing the errors” is not done at the expense of neglecting the preaching of “Christ’s righteousness and the Third Angel’s Message”. “Remember that the best way to combat error is to present truth.” { PUR November 17, 1904, par. 11 }