

Sound 1-1: GRACE TO KNOW!

God through Christ gives us the grace to know sound doctrine and sound faith. When I first mentioned THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH to people, the question was asked "What is sound faith?" At that time I could only reply "that is a good question"; for we all know the different sounds of faith, churches, denominations, and religions that clamor in the world for attention. **{This is the age of a proliferation of the heaping up of teachers with itching ears as we will look at in the fourth chapter.}** The immediate answer is that God gives us through Christ the grace to know sound doctrine, and then the grace to have confidence in what we know! "For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of confidence, of love, and of a sound mind."

The sufficient answer which demands some additional explanation is that SOUND DOCTRINE (this, of course, includes sound faith) IS **"EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD"**, to borrow some words from Jesus as quoted from the Apostles and recorded in the Bible. Hardly anyone interested in the Bible as the Word of God would deny that sound doctrine is every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. However, it is much like the global statement that "Christ is the answer for all the problems of the world" which leaves unanswered many complementary questions such as which Christ: the Christ of the Mormons, or the Christ of the Lutherans, the Christ of the Bible of most Christians, or the Christ of some television evangelist that are in Christ's work for the money? **(It should be obvious that there must be in the world today "wolves in sheep's clothing" that Paul told the Ephesus' elders that would come immediately after his departure. And when you also consider the danger of popularity in Christ faith [the difference between the majority of "many" and minority of "few" of Jesus' teachings, it seems most probable that the popular**

television evangelists are the “wolves in sheep's clothing”.

Because of the many faiths in the world today, many religions, many interpretations of the Bible, we can not back away from the simple conviction that came from the teachings of Jesus Himself who said, If any man will do His (God's) will, he will know of the doctrine if it came of God. It is important to get the exact wording as recorded in John 7:17 by the Apostle John (who, by the way heard it for himself from Jesus): **“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”** The bottom line of this very fundamental principle of Bible understanding {**hermeneutics, to use the word of preachers and Bible scholars**} is that understanding of the Bible is an individual matter that is largely determined by a persons will to do what it teaches. In other words, a good attitude promotes good understanding and a bad attitude promotes bad understanding.

Although we desire in our preaching and teaching of sound faith no to be brutal, there are some simple Bible facts that must be faced up to as we struggle with the problem of why so few people really understand the Bible: (1) God actually blinds the eyes of most people so that they can not understand as for example most of the Jewish nation up to this present except for a chosen few like Paul and the other Apostles and the first churches; (2) As Romans 1 informs us God gives up most people and civilizations to a “reprobate mind” that can not understand the things of God, do not care to understand, and in fact have a predisposed attitude to prevent an understanding of the Bible; (3) God plays with the wisdom of the world and of the university scholars as He chooses to save those through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe (**“When in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe...”**); (4) The wisdom of this world of the universities and books (except a select few) are foolishness with God, and not many mighty

or noble or wise are called to a proper spiritual understanding; and (5) It is necessary to face up to the fact that true Bible faith in Christ is a minority endeavor as “many are called but few are chosen”, and “broad is the way that leads to destruction and many go that way” while “narrow is the way that leads to eternal life” and few there are that take that way of life. It is the simple difference between the majority and the minority that we are talking about.

This applies to the United States also. You can hardly make a legitimate case that this majority and minority thing of the Bible applies to the whole world apart from the United States. Even as it applied also to Israel, the originally chosen nation of God, in the days of Christ, it also applies to the currently chosen nation of God, the United States, during this age of the fullness of the Gentiles. What we have in the United States, to use the words of some of the American Studies scholars, is an AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC FAITH. It can be summarized as spoken by former Prime Minister of Israel Begin, “You Americans are born Christians just as Jews are born Jews.” Neither is true, but it takes a close study of that part of the Word of God called the book of Romans, by the Apostle Paul and the Spirit of God, to understand it. That will be explained in the third chapter, “God’s Watershed of History: Choice of a Beloved and Foolish Nation”. Suffice it to say for now as Paul, “not every Jew is born of Israel”, nor is every child of God born of Israel, and there is a spiritual Israel. In other words, until the fullness of the Gentiles age is complete, there will be more children of God from among the Gentiles, the United States leading the way, than from among the physical nation of Israel. **{Enjoy it while you can.}**

Second to the proper attitude, it is necessary to work hard to understand the Bible. Jesus uses the words “asking”, “seeking”, and “knocking”. Another way to say it is that those who search after the truth from the Bible are the ones most likely to find the truth. One of the so-called “beati-

tudes" describes the way God will bless those who seek the truth of the Bible, **"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."** Many like to talk about this as happiness or the beatitudes. No, it is the blessings of God; and if God Himself blesses you beyond that of the sun and rain, beyond that of the majority on the earth, it is indeed a blessing. God can and will bless you by understanding of every word that proceeds out of His mouth if you will develop the right attitude and put out effort in knowing the truth. We live among many who desire the instant spiritual blessings of salvation and special insight; however there is never and has never been a quick and easy way. Many point to the salvation of Paul on the road to Damascus as an example of instantaneous salvation; but there would not have been a salvation experience of the road except for the extended time of that preceded it in which "he kicked against the pricks". And still his salvation was not complete as indicated by the physical blindness **{a sign of incomplete spiritual insight}**, until Ananias assisted him with more truth from the Ascended Christ. Even so Paul was not yet ready to preach. He must spend time in the Arabian Desert with the Ascended Christ, and then go back to Tarsus to reread the Old Testament in the light of what Christ had taught him.

Paul teaches about the yearn in Hebrews for the sound doctrine of the Word of God as the equivalent motivation of a new born baby desiring to have milk. All know of that yelling and screaming and crying of the baby for milk, and the person who yearns with that intensity after every word from the mouth of God as recorded in the Word of God will be rewarded in like manner as a mother cares for her child. Someone besides Jacob must wrestle with the angel for a spiritual blessing, and that someone is the person, having established a proper attitude, who seeks to know the truth of God and Christ, the truth of the Word of God which is divine in origin, absolute in authority, sufficient in message, and high fidelity in communication.

A Few Biblical Statements About What Sound Doctrine Is!

1. What is Sound Doctrine? Since doctrine is another word for teachings, and of course for Bible believers the teachings of Jesus and of God, which are the same, then sound doctrine is also sound teachings from God Himself and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus made it clear often during His three years ministry on earth that His teachings or doctrines were not His own but belonged to God His Father, and furthermore that whatever God taught Him to say is exactly what He taught on this earth. Parenthetically, it should be stated at this point that sound faith is a subset of sound doctrine. Even as sound doctrine includes all that comes from God and Jesus and all that can be known as truth about God and Jesus and their teachings, even so sound faith is a subset in that it is both beliefs and a process of confidence in that sound doctrine. **{This will be discussed more thoroughly from the Bible in the chapter on FAITH.}**

2. What is Sound Doctrine? Sound doctrine is synonymous with "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (verse 3) of the book of Jude. It was delivered once for all by Jesus and the Apostles who recorded what He said in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; it was recorded once for all in the books written by the Apostles and Prophets; it has been sealed once for all in the history of the Christ faith in the book of 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament, by the assembly of the Firstborn and their leaders as they have crystallized as the Holy Bible this book.

You see right here at this point at least half of the confusion is eliminated as on how to distinguish between sound doctrine and all the beliefs that clamor for recognition. At least half of all of the religions and denominations did not subscribe to the Bible as the Word of God, and therefore do not subscribe to this as the only sufficient source of sound doctrine. Then you can eliminate another one-fourth of so-called Christian denominations and religions who do not believe as stated in Jude 3, that the sound faith and doc-

trine was once for all delivered to the saints. They believe in the evolution of sound doctrine; they believe that they like the Prophets and Apostles of old are the recipients of special revelations from God. At the extreme of this spectrum are the Mormons who have replaced the single Bible of the faith once delivered with four Bibles, and also subscribe to constant new revelation from the Heads of the LDS churches. To express it in the words of the Doctrine and the Covenants any time the Head Prophet of the Mormon church speaks, it is Word of God. **{Later, I will discuss how this places two curses from the Holy Bible itself on the head of the Latter Day Saints.}**

And at the other end of the spectrum of the group who do not see sound doctrine and sound faith as "once for all delivered" are those people and groups who see knowledge of truth from God as sort of an evolution that comes as we learn more and as we acquire more scientific knowledge. As an example, and this is very subtle, is the religious person who will take God's name in vain as excusable as if the words no longer apply, **"the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain"** as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Or the person that somehow sees God and His Word as outdated because this new generation is so much smarter than the last generation that lived. J.B. Phillips expressed it years ago when he wrote the book, *YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL*. People did not believe that God understood radar or the modified Bohr Theory of the atom. Today people do not believe that God understands computers and genetics and information technology. You see we confuse some older Christ believers and what they understand with the God of this universe who understands and knows all things; and further who created the minds who can probe and invent these things and the fundamentals laws of the universe that make the understanding of these technical matters possible.

3. What is Sound Doctrine? It is doctrine that comes from God through the work and will of the Holy Spirit of God. Here, I must quote from the

Word of God itself as found in II Timothy 3:16,17:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness...”

You see it came from God is a gift from God for the profit of humanity in order that humanity may come to know the way that God wants us to live {that is the instruction, another word for teachings, and “instruction in righteousness” another way to correct our behavior and beliefs.} As far as Scripture coming more specifically from the work on earth of God the Holy Spirit, we turn to the teachings of Jesus as recorded in John 14-16 where Jesus taught saying, **“...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”** (John 16:13)

4. What is Sound Doctrine? It also helps to shift out the wheat from the chaff of sound doctrine to know not only the origin of sound doctrine as from God through the Spirit but that it must have come through an approved apostle or prophet. How do we know who has been approved? Once again it is from the Bible itself which tells of how Jesus chose both apostles and prophets. If you believe about the Apostle Peter, then you believe that the Apostle Paul wrote Scriptures as much the Word of God as those of the Old Testament Prophets because Peter states that in his books, and so on epistle after epistle in the Bible the approximately 20 writing prophets of the Old Testament are confirmed and the approximately 7 writing Apostles of the New Testament confirm each other.

5. What is Sound Doctrine? It is the doctrine or teachings or faith taught by the Holy Spirit of God Himself. Refer again to John 16:13 above, **“the Spirit of truth...will guide you into all truth.”** Isn't just a little bit of conviction and certainty like this from the Bible, from the teachings of Jesus Himself, from the book written by the Apostle John, and that has come to be

believed by the great cloud of witnesses of the Christ faith that have gone before {**Hebrews 11 and 12**} worth a lot more than the tendency to wallow in the mud puddle of uncertainty and doubt of looking at all the teachings and beliefs in the world. **(Underlying all sound doctrine and the efforts to know and do sound doctrine is the fundamental belief based on the teachings of Jesus that the majority are wrong and the minority is right, and this applies in the United States as in all countries of the world.)**

6. What is Sound Doctrine? It is life related-can not be learned apart from the way life is lived-in that it must proceed from a deep-seated yearning to know the truth, with the confidence that the truth is more likely to be learned when it is passionately sought; can not be learned apart from a desire to know the will of God; and can not be learned unless equal life priority is given to "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" to the life priority of making a living.

What are Some Obstacles to Learning Sound Doctrine?

1. Pastor James, the pastor of the first church ever, in Jerusalem immediately after the life of Christ, and the half-brother of Jesus, had a lot to say in the little book of James about truth, doctrine, and what causes obstacles to sound doctrines in churches. It is very practical because Pastor James is dealing with the problems in a very real church, the First. First of all the Apostle James says that the wars and battles over sound doctrine in local churches (and denominations) come from individual desires for pleasure and status. Once again I must quote from the Word of God:

"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust (for control, for recognition, for power, etc) and do not have. You murder (that includes anger and fighting) and covet (desire to have and be what someone else in the church has and is) and cannot obtain. You fight (in your home church) and war (in the denomination). Yet you do not have

because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." (James 4:1-3)

Wow! It never can be said any better than that and never will be said any better than that. Don't look for some deep meaning that causes the splits in churches and the warfare in the Southern Baptist Convention, it comes out of wars and battles for pleasure. Crude, but true!

2. Another obstacle to sound doctrine in individual lives, in beliefs, and in the practices of churches is the lack of wisdom. Contrary to the old wives tale "that if the majority of the church votes to do something, it is right" is the teaching of Pastor James in the Word of God that where there is no real prayer there is no real wisdom from God and from above, and further where in any church there is "self-seeking" and "confusion" that is the sure sign that the wisdom from above has never come.

3. Another obstacle to sound doctrine is the "doctrines of devils". Do the devils, alias the fallen angels and Satan, really have doctrine? Oh yes, and that doctrine is subtle and often so close to the truth of Jesus that it is difficult to shift out from the truth. Recall the way Satan tempted Jesus Himself in order to divert Jesus from the real will of God. First of all, he quoted Scripture. Do not be deceived, every quoter of Scripture is not on the side of Jesus. In fact, it is very possible that Satan-especially in this time of intolerance toward sound doctrine-has as many people who quote Scripture as Jesus: the big difference being in the way they implement and interpret and apply the Scripture. For example, Satan tempted Jesus (Luke 4:1-13) on three fronts with unsound doctrine from Scripture: first, the temptation or obstacle from Satan was to live by bread instead of by the will of God; second, the obstacle from Satan was to worship Satan and to get the whole world rather than worship God; and third, the obstacle was to tempt God by leading Himself into futile tests of God Himself, a very common practice today in very popular churches.

4. The obstacle of seducing spirits. Along with the warnings of the Bible about doctrines of devils is also the warning of seducing spirits. Once again to quote from the Bible, the Word of God: **“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 crated to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” (I Timothy 4:1-3)**

This was expressly told to Paul by the Holy Spirit of God. It is an inevitable prediction, called a prophesy, of what will take place in history: in fact is a accepted burden of proof of this book on THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH that has already happened, the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine. It is generally referred to by Bible scholars as the *Great Apostasy*. The only reason I do not like that phrase as it seems like something to happen way out in the future instead of now!

The short and simple of the meaning is: that is the doctrines of devils that come to you, and which must inevitable come as long as there is a Satan and other devils, if those doctrines of devils do not present obstacles to your sound faith and sound doctrine, then the seducing or deceiving spirits can get you. The bad thing about a bad spirit is that it can be clothed in clothing that is very deceptive, say for example black clothing or sheep's clothing.

5. The last obstacle to be mentioned to sound doctrine is the most serious obstacle to most Protestant, non-Mormon believers: it is the wall of intolerant doctrine built up in churches and denominations by itching ears teachers, preachers, and people that protects them from the sound of sound doctrine. When the Bible says in II Timothy 4:3,4, about the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine and mentions how those of itching ears will “HEAP” to themselves teachers of itching ears, the “heaping” has the implica-

tion of extensive effort to protect against sound doctrine. For example the effort that the divorced in churches go to, who have not confessed divorce as adultery when there is remarriage, the effort they go to protect themselves from hearing the true words of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus on the matter. The "heaping" is like building up a vast wall of protection against sound doctrine. It reminds of what some of the New Jersey ladies who lost husbands in 9/11 were quoted as saying about the Bush administration, "they have built up around the White House a wall of secrecy." Well, the wall of intolerance toward sound doctrine is a wall for comfort, a wall built by itching ears.