

Words of Truth

“Teachest Thou Not Thyself?”

By: Brian A. Yeager

You’ve heard that old saying, “practice what you preach.” The problem is, some so-called “preachers” do not practice what they preach. This problem does not only exist among preachers though. There are Christians who know the truth, share it with others, and yet do not practice that which they know is right. We don’t want to be those people. Thus, as we examine this subject matter, let’s look in the mirror first. Let’s begin our study with the text from which the title of this article is taken.

Looking At Romans 2:17-23

*“Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, **teachest thou not thyself?** thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God” (Romans 2:17-23)?*

If we were to use this text for an application to us, it would be that we are called Christians (Acts 11:26). Since Christians are disciples of the Lord, we are expected to be the people who continue in obedience to the word of God (John 8:31). We claim God as our Father, which means we are proclaiming to be obedient disciples of the Lord (John 14:23). By our proclamation of being in Christ we are saying we are the biblically learned (Colossians 3:10, I Peter 4:11, and I John 2:3-6). When we say we are disciples of the Lord, we are accepting the role of being teachers (Titus 2:1-6) and lights in this dark world (Matthew 5:14-16 and Philippians 2:15-16).

The application to those things above comes in when we accept whom we are, teach others the right way, and then forsake living it ourselves. Notice a few Scriptures we all have to remember as they relate to our subject at hand: *“And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers... But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee... In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Luke 11:46, I Corinthians 9:27, I Timothy 4:15-16, and Titus 2:7-8).* In light of the Scriptures above, we need to consider some more things.

Consider These Things...

The Jews in Romans 2:17-23 were teaching against thefts, idolatry, adultery, etc. while they were committing those same sins. Certainly, those things would apply to us all. However, there are other applications that can be more broadly made as well. For example, we proclaim often that we say and do all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17). What if we then find ourselves doing something we don't know the Scriptures authorize? Well, the same would be true of us as was those hypocritical Jews in the second chapter of the Book of Romans. The same would be true if we teach others that they must love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, and soul (Matthew 22:37), but then we fail to live it ourselves. We teach others that they must be cautious in teaching only the truth (James 3:1). What happens to us then if we speak without studying and thinking through what we're saying (Psalms 34:13, Proverbs 4:24, James 1:26, and I Peter 3:8-11)? You can see that the applications to these points are nearly endless. Think about your life and think these things through (II Corinthians 13:5). It is important to realize that we'll not have a way out of judgment on these or any other matters of truth.

If we know and teach one thing while we practice another, we will be without excuse. Notice this: *"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds"* (Romans 2:1-6). Folks, there is a principle in seeing that when we judge someone we will be judged with that same judgment.

With What Judgment Ye Judge, Ye Shall Be Judged

"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). This should make us all understand why it is so important for us to teach ourselves the same lessons we're teaching others. In fact, the context of Matthew 7:1-5 teaches that point very clearly. This point was made abundantly clear to David (II Samuel 12:1-7), as he was guilty of unlawfully taking Bathsheba into his bed and then seeing to her husband being killed to cover his transgressions (II Samuel 11). We do not want to be told, "thou art the man". When we stand before our Lord to be judged (II Corinthians 5:10), there will be no opportunity of repentance (Matthew 7:21-23 and Matthew 25:41). Thus, we need to teach ourselves the same things we teach others.

Conclusion

I have seen many so-called "Christians" and "preachers" who know the truth, teach it to others, and still do not get it themselves. When you try to tell that person they are acting as a hypocrite, they often get excited and will not listen. Brethren, it takes us being the best of students before we can ever be good teachers. We have to be willing to open our Bibles up, learn, and apply the things we've come to find out. We have to spend our time studying first for ourselves before we will ever be truly effective in helping others to know and obey the truth. We all know that we are expected to not just know the truth, but to practice it (Luke 6:46, Luke 11:28, Romans 2:13, and James 1:18-25).