
Words of Truth

Knowledge Isn't A Sure Defense By Itself

By: Brian A. Yeager

In 1999 I was preaching error in Christiansburg, VA. Like Paul, Apollos, and others who have unintentionally erred (Acts 18:24-28 and I Timothy 1:12-16); I was not purposely teaching false doctrine. I thought I was following nothing more or less than the wholesome doctrine of Christ. I erred when it came to the work of the church and what is commonly known as “Institutionalism” amongst so-called “churches of Christ” today (<http://www.wordsoftruth.net/studyofinstitutionalism.htm>). The root of my error was found in the proper handling of the authority of the Scriptures. I was not ignorant of the basics regarding the authority of the Lord and the Scriptures. I knew and preached that we needed Scriptural authority for all that we say and do. I often used Scriptures such as Matthew 7:21-29, Luke 6:46, Acts 5:29, Galatians 1:6-9, Colossians 3:17, II Timothy 3:14-17, I Peter 4:11, II Peter 1:3-4, and Revelation 22:18-19 in teaching. Yet, I failed in applying the Scriptures properly.

So, how can someone KNOW that authority is required for everything from the Lord, and yet still err regarding the application of it? Let me say briefly that there are so many right answers to that question that I will not come close to covering them all. What I do want to do is help us to consider how a person can know the truth on something, be honest, and still miss the mark. AGAIN, I am not going to cover it all. This is just a brief, thought-provoking study to make us all be cautious (I Corinthians 10:12 and Colossians 2:8). So, let me start with something knowledge did to me that I had to confess and repent of long ago. Knowledge made me (in 1999) be arrogant, proud, and puffed up.

When You Know It All!

After preaching lessons, I was often complimented on the knowledge I put on display and the delivery of the lesson. I sinfully ate that up. I even briefly excused myself for letting it get out of control by using Proverbs 27:2 to justify how I liked being complimented. Knowledge is not a “sure” defense when you think you “know it all.” Coupled with arrogance, knowledge can become a source of sin in your life. Paul wrote: *“Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth”* (I Corinthians 8:1).

There is a balance here. Knowledge is useful (Proverbs 19:2). We can know the truth (John 8:32). It is not good to be without knowledge (I Corinthians 15:34). We just cannot allow

the knowledge we acquire to become a stumbling block to ourselves. We can find a balance by allowing our knowledge to show through our proper works rather than our puffed up words (James 3:13-18). So, we have to keep studying and growing (II Peter 1:1-12; 3:15-18); but we have to keep ourselves humble too (I Peter 5:5). Don't start thinking your time in study is some kind of achievement you need to boastfully put on display in one way or another.

When You Spend So Much Time Studying You Think You'll Not Miss A Thing

Rightly dividing the word of truth is a good thing (II Timothy 2:14-18). However, learning is not a guarantee. There have been those whom are ever learning, yet not able to come to a knowledge of the truth (II Timothy 3:7). Think about how we have studied the songs we sing here in El Paso, and yet missed an obvious error we had to humbly correct in October of last year. It wasn't a lack of knowledge on our part. It was an oversight. It was because there was something subtly in front of us that our knowledgeable minds just didn't see.

Paul told the congregation in Corinth this: *"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"* (II Corinthians 11:3). Sin has, many times, occurred because of something that was subtle. The Scriptures show it (Galatians 3:1-3; 5:7-9). Many of us have experienced it. Knowledge cannot protect us if we lose our sense of awareness and our need to test all things.

The Lord says: *"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober... Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"* (I Thessalonians 5:6; 21). As an evangelist, I am charged with this: *"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry"* (II Timothy 4:5). As I write this article, I am still stinging hard from missing that error in that song. Though the process of repentance over this has begun, I feel terrible. I have failed as a disciple of Christ and as an evangelist charged to watch all things. Brethren, knowledge did not help us because we had grown too confident that since we once studied those songs it was not necessary to bring them back into question. How is that proving all things? What good did our knowledge, my knowledge, do for us when we were complacent in that?

Conclusion

Brethren, let's continue to desire to grow as though we are newborn babes (I Peter 2:1-2). Let's NEVER reach a point wherein we think we have it ALL figured out. Let's be cautious to continually do only those things we can prove to be Scripturally right (Romans 14:23). Without going to extremes, remember to look at things once proven to be as sure as we can that we have missed nothing. Remember Solomon. There was not a man on the earth in his time that knew more than he did (I Kings 4:29-32). Yet, his knowledge and wisdom did not keep him from being influenced and falling away (I Kings 11:1-11). Learn from that!