
Words of Truth

A Balanced Spiritual Diet

By: Brian A. Yeager

There are many problems facing churches of Christ today. This is not a new problem. The New Testament shows that, even in the infancy of the body of Christ, apostasy was rampant. Many times warnings were given and promises made about those who'd fall away (Matthew 7:15-20, Acts 20:28-31, I Timothy 4:1, II Timothy 3:1-5, Jude 1:4, Revelation 2:1-3:22, etc.). To say that the body of Christ today is in the midst of apostasy may be an understatement to say the least. We can take great comfort in the fact that there is always a remnant (Romans 11:1-5). Sadly, the remnant isn't always as visible as we'd like to see. Our task is to stay on the side of the remnant and not become part of the apostasy.

Among the many problems facing churches of Christ today is the lack of balance in teaching. This effects congregations because it is an unsteady balance of teaching. A congregation that is constantly fed lessons about loving your neighbor misses the balance of hatred that a Christian must also have (Psalms 31:6, Psalms 119:104, Psalms 119:163, Psalms 139:21-22, Amos 5:15, Romans 12:9, I Peter 3:10-11, and Revelation 2:6). A congregation that constantly has a diet of lessons about false doctrine and against false teachers are missing many other lessons such as forbearance (Ephesians 4:1-3), proper Christian living (Colossians 3:1-4:6, I Peter 1:13-16, I Peter 2:11-12, etc.), and many more things. A congregation with constant lessons on "first principles" is missing the meat of the word (Hebrews 5:12-6:3). A congregation constantly being fed lessons from the Old Testament is missing the law we live under now (James 1:25). On the other hand, a congregation constantly being fed lessons about the New Testament is missing the lessons we should be learning as well from the Old Testament (Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:1-12).

The above examples are a very small example that could have been given to illustrate the point. Any congregation with a steady diet of only few subject matters is erring. Any teacher who teaches in such a way is erring. Paul, through inspiration of God (II Timothy 3:16-17), said this: *"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house... Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:20; 26-27).

Clearly, every local body of Christ has a need to be sure the proper diet is being served. There is the personal accountability that comes upon teachers to teach the whole counsel of God (II Timothy 4:2, Titus 2:1, and James 3:1). There is also the personal accountability that comes upon brethren to study on our own (Acts 17:10-11). However, there is also the collective accountability to be sure that we are feasting together upon the whole spiritual diet God has given us in His word. We all live by every word of God (Luke 4:4). If you cut out some of those words you cut out some of which gives us spiritual life. Watching out for each other means we have to watch what we're all being fed.

Starting With What The Body Needs

Teaching should first be based on what the body needs to learn to be spiritually healthy (Jude 1:3). This has to be determined based upon many things. Some of which include what spiritual state the body is in (I Corinthians 3:1-3), what the body is ready to consume (Mark 4:33), and even what the body is capable of bearing (John 16:12). It is obvious that when there is something lacking it needs to be taught (I Thessalonians 3:10). However, if someone has never learned something they will not know they are lacking it. Thus, having capable teachers is necessary among the body (Colossians 4:12).

Those who teach must guard themselves against getting comfortable in serving up only a few types of diet from the word of God. Some call these men "hobbyists". Those are men who ride the same subject over and over again. Now, there are times when lessons need repeated. There are times when something needs to be said over and over again until it is learned (Isaiah 62:6). There is also the need to remind people of things (II Peter 3:1-2). Yet, this must be balanced with other lessons the body needs to grow spiritually.

Proper Nourishment

When Paul wrote to Timothy he said this: *"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained"* (I Timothy 4:6). Our nourishment obviously comes from the word of God (John 6:63 and I Peter 2:1-2). The nourishment of the body of Christ starts with the head of the body (Colossians 2:19). Proper spiritual feeding has to start with the will of our Lord. What does He want taught? What does the improper balance lead to?

When considering the church of Christ in Ephesus, you see a congregation that had many things right. They had formerly been taught about fighting the spiritual battle we are all in and about not following false doctrine (Ephesians 5:6-11 and Ephesians 6:10-17). All of that is right and good. It led to them being a congregation that worked hard, had patience, did not bear with those who were evil, exposed false apostles, etc. (Revelation 2:1-3). However, they lacked balance. Even with all the right they were doing, they had left their first love (Revelation 2:4). They had to repent of this before the Lord took action against them (Revelation 2:5).

We have to learn from Ephesus. I do not know all they were taught or that there was a lack of balance in teaching. I am not suggesting that. What I do see is there was a lack of execution of the will of God. A lack of balance in living the faith led them to a breach in relationship with our Lord. The incomplete obedience of the Ephesian congregation may or may not have been from a lack of balance in teaching. However, one thing is sure, if **we** have an imbalanced spiritual diet **we** are SURE to have a local body of believers here in El Paso that will lack in complete execution of the will of God (II Peter 1:1-13).

Conclusion

If our spiritual diet is imbalanced it is not God's fault (Psalms 19:7-10 and Acts 20:32). Hold teachers (me included) accountable for the nourishment of the body. Hold yourself accountable to study. Don't starve yourself to spiritual death.