FLIRTING WITH DISASTER

In October 1987, James O. Baird, long time President of Oklahoma Christian College wrote an article published in the Christian Chronicle entitles “Perspectives: brotherhood courts illusion about doctrine.” I read the article carefully. I also underlined some of the things he said and made notes in the margin of the page.

I met James O. Baird the first year of the school in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, when he was the Dean. I have always admired him for his commitment and determination to do the right thing and his clear way of thinking. Some of the language he used in that article I will use here because it is still so applicable.

In the first line of the article he stated our brotherhood was “flirting with an illusion,” that illusion being that some among us were trying to tell the rest of us there was no such thing in scripture as “doctrine.” He developed the idea further in stating that “flirting leads to romance and romance often leads to marriage.”

The illusion he spoke of was the idea that if “we are kind, patient and loving enough, doctrinal difference will disappear.” He also advance the idea that if there was a marriage, there probably would never be a divorce, as needed as that divorce might be.

Being “kind, patient and loving” is certainly desirable. Christians would not want to be accused of anything else, but what is the price of the “appearance?” While it “seems” appealing, the end result can be disastrous.

The first point brother Baird made in his article was: “It removes the Christian from the unpleasantness of disagreeing.” This idea is more prevalent today than it has been in my memory. Have you ever thought of what tactics well meaning Christians use to cause is to agree most of the time. “No one likes a
troublemaker,” they will say. “I do not believe one should call names in the pulpit,” says another. Preachers like to know they have done a good job and if they preach a particularly disagreeable sermon, many congregants will just not say anything, or in effect, give him the “freeze.” In years past we have been soundly criticized for “arguing” or “disagreeing,” and we just don’t want to be like that anymore. Brethren, many have simply have become “men pleasers” and we need to face up to it. Today the emphasis in the pulpit is placed on “communication” not Bible preaching, and that is disastrous to the church.

The second point brother Baird made about the illusions about doctrine is that “it contains partial truth.” There are a lot of well meaning people in this world that think because a man stands up with a Bible in his hand and reads from it, he is preaching the truth. Know what? That is exactly what Satan has designed his doctrine to do, fool people. Billy Graham has been preaching “from the Bible” as long as I can remember. Not many of our brethren (though a few) will admit that he is preaching the truth. “The truth” contains the totality of the Word of God. I am ashamed to say that many of our brethren are following the same path, speaking “from the Bible” but not preaching those hard things the Bible teaches.

We need to remember our forefathers and predecessors. Some of our preachers need to read Jeremiah more. Listen to Jeremiah 6:16-19 “Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, We will not walk (therein). And I set watchmen over you, (saying), Hearken to the sound of the trumpet; but they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.” ASV

Lets face it, preaching from the Bible is not preaching the Bible. Too many are contented to enjoy the tranquility of ease rather than the unpredictable life of telling the truth. We content ourselves that we are not preaching false doctrine but there are many who are not preaching doctrine at all.

Brother Baird: “Facing doctrinal issues with love alone makes one seem more spiritual and Christ like than those who enter the arena of doctrinal conflict.” Brethren there is a difference in the doctrine of the scriptures and the doctrines of denominationalism. We do not need to be “fussing all the time” but we do need
to remember our purpose here on earth is to glorify God and his word. How can we do that if we do not preach doctrine. Many are the stories of people who have attended the same congregation for years and never heard anything “controversial” or “doctrinal.”

One of the reasons given by many about the "non growth" of the church is that we have been too “narrow” and too “doctrinal” and that is not what people want. Let it be observed that those who have grown in an appreciable way these last few years are churches who have particular doctrines and stand by them.

It is a good thing to be tolerant but it is wrong to be tolerant of teaching that will damn a person’s soul in eternity. Being “Christ-like,” contrary to the ideas of some, is not being a panty waist that will never raise one’s voice or never object to anything it taught. There were times when Christ lashed out at people who were doing things contrary to God’s word. All you have to do is read the Bible carefully, instead of listening to people who tell you what Christ was like instead of showing you in his word.

Because one is vigorous in defending the truth does not mean that one is un-Christian. If we fall for the fallacy that we can get by without some of the tenants of the New Testament in order to please our religious neighbors, I fear we shall get a surprise at judgment. “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.” “ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;” (John 14:15 - 15:10) And he did not mean just SOME of them.

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