

Are We Guilty Of Limiting The Word Of God?

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The Bible speaks of four comprehensive areas of usefulness for its contents in II Timothy 3:16-17. The apostle wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, *for correction*, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." The area of the usefulness of the Bible for discussion in this article has been highlighted within the text where it says, "For correction." Unless correction using the content of the Bible is taking place, "are we guilty of limiting the word of God"?

Religious Titles

Have we ever made any attempt to correct someone who wears a religious title? Perhaps the most often abused titles are "Reverend" and "Pastor." Have we ever attempted to correct a friend who referred to his or her preacher as the "Reverend" or the "Pastor"? "Our youth pastor relates well to our children—he dresses like them, talks like them, and even participates with them in all the things they like to do." "God sent our pastor to us; we genuinely believe he is called of God to be our pastor." "The Reverend Doctor delivered a moving homily Sunday morning."

Religious Practices

Have we ever attempted to correct our acquaintances who speak of erroneous religious practices? "We are having 40 Days of Prayer." "Sunday is baby dedication day." "We have the finest minister of music and choir in town." "Our sanctuary is conducive of the most spiritual worship." "The District Bishop came and preached for us Sunday." "Sunday was a great day at our church; those who got saved this last quarter were baptized."

Religious Error

Have we ever attempted to correct those with whom we come in contact about their teaching of religious error? "Our pastor told us that our tithing allows God to bless us." "Sunday our pastor told us God laid a special message on his heart." "Our pastor is a woman, and I believe she is the best preacher we have ever had." "In our denomination we teach that all denominations collectively make up the church of Christ; we are just a part of the body of Christ." "We do not judge other denominations." "A literal interpretation of the Bible is legalism."

"For Correction"

One purpose for which God gave the Bible is "for correction" (II Tim. 3:16-17). Imagine the scene at the judgment when that aspect of the Bible has not been kept by us. The apostle Paul wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Cor. 5:10-11a). Jesus promised, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Mt. 25:31-33). All will be judged by the word of Christ, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that

judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (Jn. 12:48-49).

Those on the left hand with the goats who were wearing *religious titles* will face the word of Christ which says, "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Mt. 23:5-11). The Bible says, "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9). Will the Christian who offered no correction to those in error on these points stand with the sheep or with the goats?

We are obligated to do some correcting, or we are guilty of limiting the word of God.

Those on the left hand with the goats who were advancing *religious practices* that did not harmonize with the word of Christ will face that standard before Christ. Tithing is an Old Covenant practice superseded by the New Law of Christ which teaches, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:6-7). The message to be preached today comes from the Bible, not directly from God. The word of God insists, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of

season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Those observing special days singled out for special emphasis will face, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:10-11). Those who have baptized babies will answer for Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him;" and Matthew 18:3, "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Those who have practiced the sanctuary being the physical building instead of the people themselves will hear, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:1-2). Those who seem to have worshipped the making of all sorts of music and calling it worship must face, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19) where the music of the church is regulated. The goats will then know the spiritual nature of the church of Christ from verses like Ephesians 2:21-22, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Even the "District Bishop" will learn he held no authority beyond the local church and then only if biblically qualified and serving with a plurality of bishops or elders (Acts 14:23; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Pet. 5:2). Multiplied millions of people who practiced some form of baptism will answer for failing to or refusing to obey God by baptism into Christ to be added to the church of Christ (Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:47). Will the Christian who offered no correction to those in error on these points stand with the sheep or with the goats?

Those on the left hand with the goats who were advancing *religious error* will face the truth when standing before Christ. The standard of judgment informs that women are not to be preachers, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:8-12). Those in denominational division will face, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10), and "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Everybody who did not want to judge anybody will hear, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (Jn. 7:24). Those who viewed respect and adherence to the Bible as legalism will hear, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (I Jn. 2:3-5). Will the Christian who offered no correction to those in error on these points stand with the sheep or with the goats? We are obligated to do some correcting, or we are guilty of limiting the word of God.