

Faithful & True

The Faithful and True Witness. Rev 3:14

The Lord Jesus is described in Revelation as the faithful and true witness more than once (Rev 3:14, 19:11); his words are also described as faithful and true when he speaks (Rev 21:5). Those who follow him clearly must be faithful and true in the way they conduct their lives if they are genuine disciples. This is very simple.

Now church leaders are also called to contend for the faith. The apostles provide a model for us in the way they named names when dealing with heresy. They were ruthless in combating error of doctrine or practice. Just as the Lord hated error and heretics (Rev 2:6, 15), so the apostles were zealous in overturning false teaching.

These two characteristics (being faithful and combating heretics) need to be carefully balanced by modern believers. Now it is my contention that these issues are not balanced by many church leaders today, but are massively unbalanced.

Failure to properly contend for the faith

Many leaders utterly fail to defend the sheepfold. Basing their ministry on a need to appear tolerant they never name names or ministries that are deceptive. Indeed, it is rare to even mention any modern heresies. This failure is very serious. The modern situation is so bad that it equates to a believer being in a boat on the sea surrounded by mines. Safe passage absolutely requires steering round these mines and avoiding being blown up. Leaders are pilots who are called to steer the sheep away from danger so that they can prosper. Failure to do this will certainly result in great damage to the flock.

It is absolutely vital that leaders explain modern heresies and name those false leaders who teach them. If this is not done the sheep will read their books, listen to their sermons and watch their DVDs without any discernment and become more and more confused and deceived. Many church leaders today instead of fighting off the wolves allow them to come into the sheepfold and ravage the sheep without obstruction. It is no wonder that many church members today are mixed up, deceived, confused and weary.

Failure to be faithful and true

Sadly the Protestant church has continually showed a tendency to splinter and fragment into factions. Sometimes there is a good reason for a group to separate, such as fleeing formal institutions of error, but very often there isn't. Protestants have had a bad tendency to fight for no reason and to 'bite and devour one another' (Gal 5:15). The worst example of this is when a man is falsely accused of sin or error and then isolated. This is a grave injustice and worthy of condemnation.

I have personally been involved in situations where a brother has been accused of gross sin, his ministry undermined and condemnation of him presented worldwide. I have dealt with leaders who have conducted this witch-hunt on the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence, who even continued their accusations when the truth was made manifest that they were utterly wrong. In one case a man was accused of leaving his wife, relocating abroad and living as a hippie. Even when presented with the truth that he was still happily married, living in the same home and still faithful to the Lord the rumours continued.

I, along with many others, have had personal experience of being called the foulest names by church leaders and accused of heresy, personal failures and have even been tarred as mentally deranged. These denouncements always followed my critique of an error. Instead of interacting sensibly with my arguments, these men ignored the doctrinal issues and launched into a personal attack hoping that the mud sticks enough to obscure the issue and deflect their errors.

Now I have written elsewhere that those who pursue the truth and follow the Lord will, like him, be falsely attacked and slandered, but what is shocking is that the worst attacks come from brethren who are not faithful and true. Often those who fail to judge heresy will wrongly denounce brethren to support tradition, pride or to defend a certain camp. This is a great sin.

Conclusion

What is appalling today is that many leaders utterly fail to take on heretics and allow them intrusion into the sheepfold, while at the same time wrongly attacking innocent brethren who ruffle their feathers. This is the most tragic situation and one which will result in divine chastisement.

Leaders must take the Day of Judgment far more seriously than they do. Every idle word will be accounted for and damage done to brethren will receive divine displeasure (Matt 12:36; 2 Cor 5:10). People who espouse Calvinism sometimes appear to forget that final perseverance does not mean that we will not be judged. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and this means that we must take especial care about inter-body relations:

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rm 14:10).

Every action we pursue must have God in mind and we must take great care in the way we behave in the body. Therefore, it is essential that believers are faithful and true, especially as regards dealings with the brethren. There is no place for unfounded attacks on brothers.

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