**Zeal Without Knowledge**

*by Jeremiah Cox*

While few will make it to heaven, the world is full of those who are zealous for God. This was so even in Jesus’ time. He said in His sermon on the mount, *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Matthew 7:22-23). How is it that those who possess such zeal will fail God?

The apostle Paul answers this question for us. Concerning the Jew’s he said, *“they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge”* (10:2). This is the common way of the world. It is not our place to question whether or not they have zeal, but is it according to knowledge?

The world wants to belittle knowledge with a false view of God’s grace. Instead of digging deep in scripture, extracting all truth on every subject, they merely skim the surface (perhaps not even the surface). They cry, “Relationship over religion!” In other words, they are able to be pleasing to God without a full knowledge of His word. They seek to liberate themselves from His standard, and establish their own. Paul marked this as folly by saying, *“they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, [seek] to establish their own righteousness”* (10:3). These Jews were not ignorant of the fact that God is righteous. This is a fundamental understanding. God is perfect, and so He is not able to do anything wrong. Rather, they were ignorant of what was included in His righteousness. God most certainly is righteous, and for that reason He establishes the requirements of righteousness! Anything contradictory proves to be unrighteous! Ergo, if we fail to attain knowledge of God’s righteousness we cannot become righteous!

Our zeal must be according to knowledge in order for it to be pleasing to God. Otherwise, it is destructive! I believe Paul was in part speaking from experience when he wrote to the Romans about the Jew’s zeal without knowledge. Paul said to Agrippa, *“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”* (Acts 26:9). Paul once had zeal without knowledge. His perception was that God was pleased with the persecution of Christians. Of course he was terribly mistaken.

It is incumbent upon the individual to attain the knowledge of God’s righteousness. How is this possible? Paul wrote, *“No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God…For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:11, 16). It is not expected of God for man to know within himself God’s righteousness. God had to reveal it to us!

The Psalmist writes, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Psalm 119:105). As a servant of God we must give ourselves entirely to His instruction (cf. 1 Timothy 4:15). We cannot expect to know the pathway of righteousness without being led by it, and we cannot expect to be led by it if we have a willful ignorance.

Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him”* (John 14:6-7). We can only know of the Father’s righteousness through knowing Jesus. We can only know Jesus through study of His word (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 John 1:1-4). Is your zeal with knowledge, or without knowledge?

**The Pillar and Ground of the Truth**

*by Jeremiah Cox*

In Paul’s first letter to young Timothy he labels the church as *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15). This language paints an image of the church that must be understood. Truth is that which always has been, and always will be. It is objective in nature, and therefore is independent of anything subjective. Whether we believe the truth does not affect the substance of the truth. However, God’s means of preserving and protecting the truth are those who have been begotten by it (cf. 1 Peter 1:3, 23). The church is made up of those who have obeyed the truth (cf. Acts 2:47). The church is *“the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

Ultimately, the emphasis is on the serious role the church plays in standing up for, and spreading the truth throughout the land. If we jeopardize the truth no salvation will be, or can be, produced. Jesus is *“the way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6), and *“there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). However, in addition to this there are other obvious implications with regard to this imagery.

* **Christ only intended for there to be one church.** The world of denominationalism is a cesspool of people rebellious to the truth. Their plea for unity in diversity contradicts Paul’s inspired description – *“the pillar and ground of the truth.”* Truth is unchangeable and everlasting (cf. Hebrews 6:18; 1 Peter 1:23-25). The only legitimate claim to truth is that which is in accord with *“the oracles of God”* (1 Peter 4:11). Churches that teach ANYTHING contrary to that of the gospel of Christ are in fact not the church which Jesus built. Consequently, any other church cannot possibly be the structure on which the truth rests, and therefore cannot ensure salvation to its members.
* **If your “obedience” is in reaction to anything contrary to the truth you are not saved.** The only thing Jesus said would release one from the bondage of sin is the truth (cf. John 8:31-32). Any message differing from the original, and only gospel of Christ is not a gospel at all (cf. Galatians 1:6-9). There cannot be divergent messages that save. Jesus said, *“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness”* (Matthew 6:22-23)! This divine logic suggests that obedience to a message that is “mostly right” is obedience to a message that is completely erroneous and unable to save. Brethren, we must not fall prey to the concept of unity with regard to the “black and white” areas and not the “grey” areas. There are no grey areas in God’s truth!

The church has been given a grave responsibility to uphold. It is *“the pillar and ground of the truth!”* The members of the one body of Christ must all recognize the gravity of who we are, and what we are supposed to be doing. We cannot compromise! We cannot take vacations from standing for the truth! We must always contend for the faith (cf. Jude 3)! We must unequivocally be *“the pillar and ground of the truth.”*