

Conclusion – Discovering Doctrine

- A few years ago, I put together a series of ten lessons I called "Learn to Study"
- Our goal was learning to fear God greatly, by learning to faithfully study His word
- That series was presented as part of an Adult Bible Fellowship class here at Harvest
- All of those lessons are still on my website
- Notes and audio files are provided there for anyone who might want to check it out
- At the beginning of that series, in a lesson called "Study and Theology," I asked a question
- Why is study important?
- As I came to the conclusion of this series, I couldn't help but ask myself the same question
- Why are we spending ten weeks on strange words like ecclesiology and eschatology?
- Do they matter?
- It is obvious this church believes the answer is "yes!"
- Why is that the case?
- How did we determine that studying the Bible deeply enough to systematically organize its teachings was of value?
- Shouldn't our priority be preaching Jesus?
- Isn't that enough?
- Not according to Jesus himself
- He spent the bulk of a chapter in the gospel of John commenting on this
- And if you know anything about His prayer in John 17, you will know what He says
- We're going to take some time looking at it in this session
- Again, answering the question "Why is this kind of study important?"
- In the chapter we are about to address, Jesus prays for His disciples
- He provides a few pieces of information in His prayer
- First, He confirms their future persecution
- Second, He tells them why it will happen
- And third, He tells them how to be strengthened and fortified through it
- Yes, He was speaking to the disciples of His day
- But this chapter is for us as well
- Our generation of Christians is included in Christ's prayer
- We'll see this as we begin in verse 9 and continue through verse 21...

John 17:9-11

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

- Those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ alone, belong to God
- And we have been given the ability to glorify God by reflecting His attributes
- At this time when Jesus would die, be buried, raise from the dead, then return to His father
- He asks God to keep His disciples (those of His day, and us), giving us unity

- But clearly, based on what we know about the original 12, and ourselves
- Growth and change and development and strengthening would be needed
- That is emphasized as Jesus goes on...

John 17:12-14

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- While Jesus was with His disciples, He taught them
- He gave them God's word
- And while they were hated, being foreigners on the earth
- They were being equipped
- Because this hatred would lead to violent action against them

- Here's what Jesus goes on to say about it...

John 17:15-17

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

- His prayer is not that they be removed
- As citizens of God's kingdom, they would leave soon enough
- But His prayer is that they would be sanctified
- And that sanctification would come through God's word

- To be sanctified is to be set apart from profane things and dedicated to God
- It is to be cleansed and consecrated for His exclusive service
- And God has provided truth to do this work - the scriptures

- Because those who know Christ have a job to do
- A mission to carry out
- A service to render
- And we are in need of equipping
- His word is provided to equip us

- Jesus goes on...

John 17:18-21

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

- Jesus will command all who believe in Him to "go" and "preach"
- And He has lived (and will soon die) having done exactly what God commanded Him
- Having lived according to the truth
- And His disciples must obey and follow His example
- Because the message of redemption, which He is about to complete for the world
- Must be spread far and wide
- And it can only be spread by "set apart" servants
- This is why the scripture - and the study of it - becomes so important to us
- Because to grow into His likeness, we have only one tool that works in conjunction with God's Holy Spirit (the One who dwells in us)
- And that is the Bible
- He uses its truth within us to transform our every thought and action
- We find ourselves going back to Old Testament passages like Psalm 19 as a reminder
- It tells us...

Psalm 19:7-11

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

- I know this passage begins with the law of the Lord
- Sometimes when we hear that, we think of the Mosaic law
- But we are not keepers of Old Testament law in this new covenant
- Instead, we are lovers of everything God says
- Diligent people who "rightly divide" the word of truth
- Who meditate upon it, who study it, who learn from its people (God's people), and who find within it examples
- These things become a lamp to light up life's dark paths
- And a guidebook for what can be a treacherous journey

- Where else will we find that which is perfect?
- Or that which can restore, revive, or refresh the soul?
- How many things in this world can be regarded as sure?
- Or can make wise the simple?

- We find what is right in God's statutes
- They can make our hearts rejoice!
- God's words are pure words
- And they can enlighten the eyes or show us the way of truth

- These are a few of the reasons Jesus said God's words will sanctify us for His purposes
- And will prepare us for the difficult days of persecution

- This is why the Bible should be more desirable than gold
- And why it should be sweeter to us than honey
- We are warned within it, yes (see our study on eschatology)
- But when we live according to it, we are greatly rewarded

- We must, at all times, remember what this book is...

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

- These words, these ideas, these principles, these instructions come directly from God
- Therefore they deserve deep consideration
- For when we deeply consider them, they provide for us a foundation for life
- A perspective on life in the past, present, and also into the future
- They may reprove us
- They may direct us back to the right path
- Or provide for us an ever-increasing arsenal of internal tools (aided by the Holy Spirit) to think, act, and live rightly
- When we have them, we can be - in totality - the person who God intends for us to be
- People being altered in this way can carry out their mission
- There is no doubt about this
- I'll leave you with the words Paul gave Timothy in the verses immediately preceding these...

2 Timothy 3:14-15

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- Continue in God's word - that means to "abide" in it
- Read and keep reading
- Study and keep studying
- Learn and keep learning
- Surround yourself with those who read and study and learn too
- Because the holy scriptures can not only make us wise unto salvation
- They can enlighten us to the implications of that salvation
- Which will mean vigorous and effective ministry
- That ministry will be used by God to provide eternal transformation to others
- This is the beginning of an answer to the question "Why is study important?"