

Sermons on Matthew

Beware of Bad Doctrine

Matthew 16:5-12

With Study Questions

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Now __ when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. ⁻⁶⁻ Then Jesus said to them, __ “ Take heed and beware of the __ leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. ” ⁻⁷⁻ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “ *It is because we have taken no bread.* ” ⁻⁸⁻ But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, “ O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you __ have brought no bread? ⁻⁹⁻ __ Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? ⁻¹⁰⁻ __ Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? ⁻¹¹⁻ How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—*but* to beware of the __ leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. ” ⁻¹²⁻ Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the __ doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:5-12).

Preface—Peace at All Costs

It can easily be argued that the most dark and insidious employment of the devil is his effort to deposit in the church a ‘peace at all cost’ anti-doctrine sentiment. The Christian’s lack of willingness to argue for sound doctrine has been the demise of many a church. After all...

Satan’s first appearance on the stage of human history had him questioning, not what God had done, but what God had truly said (Genesis 3:1).

Jesus faces off with the clergy of His day, unearthing their true heritage as children of the devil, the father of lies (John 8:44).

It should not surprise us that the devil’s cross-hairs are on the truth of God’s message, for the message is the means by which souls are delivered from his grip of false comfort and death.

So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

Fearless Truth

The power that God wields through His own word is such that it has no fear of the false prophets and those who promote lies.

The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?_" says the Lord. ²⁹ " _Is not My word like a _fire?_" says the Lord, " _And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:28, 29)?

Yet for the word of God to be effective it must both be spoken and accurate; hence Jesus' warning to beware the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

It is often the Christians who are accused book-burning; but one is hard-pressed to find a book that men have charred (in one way or another) than the Scriptures.

Christians need not fear the lies as much as they should promote the truth. It is not (so much) the teaching of evolutionary humanism in the schools that has wreaked havoc in the souls of our youth; it is the system's ability to prevent the teaching of a theistic creationism.

The Devil's Methods

The devil has woven his tapestry of biblical ignorance throughout history in many patterns:

To no avail he sought to **destroy the word** itself, yet God preserved it against annihilation to the point of being numerically unmatched when compared to all ancient and contemporary literature.

He sought to keep it in the chambers of faithless, **power-hungry clergy** and academia through the dark-ages but the Wycliffes, Tyndales, Huss' and Luthers would allow no such sequestering of the ancient text—and with Gutenberg (the invention of the printing press) all heaven broke loose.

Then the **higher critics** sought to impose their fallible knowledge of human history as the bar under which the Scriptures had to pass muster. Their folly would be laughable if it weren't so disastrous. Every rock the unwitting humanistic archeologist or historian kicks over unveils his own folly—God's hammer breaks their rocks in pieces.

It would appear that the latest devilish trend is a **cancerous lethargy** which surfaces in a language of biblical superfluity (overstated or unnecessary). I walked with my friend and we discussed a doctrinal issue

of some controversy. He sounded very Christian when he told me that he tried to avoid matters of biblical controversy and hold merely to the essentials. It would appear that God has entered words in His Scriptures which are unnecessarily divisive.

Now __when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.⁻⁶⁻ Then Jesus said to them, __“ _Take heed and beware of the __leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees_” (Matthew 16:5, 6).

Beware of Bad Doctrine

Matthew records this directly after a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees. There were theologically shady characters lurking about and Jesus would work toward protecting His followers by protecting His word.

A good shepherd, over and above, the good deeds he must not neglect as a Christian, seeks to protect his congregation from error. To err when it comes to the word of God has dire consequences.

The vast majority of the New Testament (if not all of it) is corrective; and it is corrective in relation to religious errors and those who promote those errors. Jesus is continually correcting the priests and those under their influence. Paul continually warns those receiving his epistles of the theologically heresies nosing their way into Christ's church. In the general epistles (1, 2, 3 John; 1, 2 Peter, James, Jude) the false teachers and their anti-Christian doctrines are addressed time after time.

It would appear that the Holy Spirit is more concerned with the doctrinal errors in the church than the moral errors in the world and there is good reason for it. In order for the church to be salt and light in this world, it must first judge itself and fight for doctrinal purity—dirty instruments make for bad surgery.

Bad doctrine, like leaven, spread and permeates. It is alarming how far off track we can go.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “_It is because we have taken no bread_” (Matthew 16:7).

Righteous Distractions

Another impediment to the purity of God's word is what I call 'righteous distractions'. The apostles were concerned that they had

brought no bread; a noble concern. Yet they would receive a mild chastisement from Jesus for allowing their thoughts to drift toward the mundane. This is not the last time this will happen.

And when Jesus was in __Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, ⁻⁷⁻ a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*. ⁻⁸⁻ __But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, “ __Why this waste? ⁻⁹⁻ For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*. ” ⁻¹⁰⁻ But when Jesus was aware of *it*, He said to them, “ __Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. ⁻¹¹⁻ __For you have the poor with you always, but __Me you do not have always. ⁻¹²⁻ For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did *it* for My *burial*. ⁻¹³⁻ Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” (Matthew 26;6-13)_.

Jesus most certainly desires His followers be concerned with the poor. But the good will and love we exhibit to our fellow man must never supplant a proper understanding and heralding of the Jesus Himself. To some this may sound immensely egoistic. But when Christ diminishes, all the good works which flow from knowing Him diminish as well.

We must be careful that our missionaries don't merely become a Peace Corp. We might hear missionary report of supplying food, water, clothing, health care and even education. The value of this should not be downplayed one iota. But these good works must form a structure on which the gospel banner flies and the person, death and resurrection of Jesus proclaimed. This is what Jesus calls a good work for Him.

__Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? ⁻¹⁰⁻ __Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? ⁻¹¹⁻ How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—*but* to beware of the __leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:9-11).

Understanding and Remembering

Over and over we are called to employ our intellectual faculties. We are to understand and remember. Jesus remembered exactly how many leftovers there were. God knows what He provides for us and we are to know it as well.

We are so anxious about what might happen and we forget that God has ever provided for us in every conceivable way. Yet in this passage the physical provisions play second fiddle to what Jesus desires His followers deem precious and uncontaminated. They finally figured it out.

-Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the __ doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:12).

It's the doctrine (_____ *didache*). It has become such a bad word but it merely means teaching and instruction. Those who speak against it do so with their own teaching and instruction—they insidiously impose their own doctrine and we are to beware of all who pervert or downplay the importance of what our Savior held to be so precious. It is, after all, the means by which we know Him and what should be more protected than that.

Questions for Study

1. Why is a 'peace at all costs' attitude toward sound doctrine dangerous (page 2)?
2. Why is sound doctrine critical (pages 2, 3)?
3. How fragile is the truth (page 3)?
4. What are some methods employed by the devil to promote biblical ignorance (pages 3, 4)?
5. What is one major role of a good shepherd (page 4)?
6. How can good things become an enemy of the gospel (pages 5, 6)?

7. What did Jesus chastise the apostles for failing to do (page 6)?
8. What is doctrine (page 6)?