

Sound Reasoning

“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment.” (1 Timothy 6:3-6, ESV)

Honest people make honest mistakes, right? There seems to be little debate about that. The question is, what do people do when they are gently presented with correction? Do they accept it? Do they reject it? What is their motivation? Paul wrote to Timothy about the motivation of the teacher.

Being judged with greater strictness isn't just something that happens at the end of time, is it? Consider what James said. (Jam. 3:1) James's statement is broad enough to include all of the misstatements of fact that brethren happen to make. When those mistakes happen while teaching, teachers find themselves quickly needing to correct themselves and move on. The motive of that teacher who accepts is to please God. Why? Because their underlying motive is to know the truth and to preserve it. To do that, it requires the sacrifice of humility at the moment to say, “I made a mistake” or “I will have to research that and get back with you” depending on the question.

But in Paul's writing, he refers to what happens when one teaching does not accept correction. It is then a matter of the individual being unwilling to consider the truth. If I do not desire to know the truth, I may find myself trying to justify my teaching or conviction without caring if it is true or not. Paul says that I would become the kind of teacher who draws battle-lines about the meaning of words, leading to chaos and the disruption of peace among brethren. At what cost have I justified myself then? At the cost of fellowship with my brethren? Not only that, but perhaps I have removed myself from fellowship with Christ and God? (1 Jno. 1:3, 6)

The grinding between plates of the Earth results in earthquakes causing destruction to those who live on the land above them. What harm has the grinding among the brotherhood caused in the past few decades? Sound reasoning based on scripture applying wisdom from above can prevent this effect in the future. (Jam. 3:17) Let us always base our doctrine and convictions on scripture, testing ourselves with pure motives. (2 Cor. 13:5) To the world, do all Christians appear as teachers? Let correction be gently offered, gently accepted. Let us at all times consider, accept, preserve, and speak the truth in the spirit of peace and humility.