

Handling the Word of God

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (1 John 1:1)

For anyone with a knowledge of God's holy standards, today's march of "progress" is approaching free-fall speed. How shall we then live? (Ezekiel 33:10) Thank the Lord He's made a way for us because He delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). Some refuse the goodness of the Lord and remain in their sins (John 8:24). No matter that the wicked are ruling the airways, schools, and industry to a large degree, we have a large place in which to serve the Lord. He has given it to us (Psalm 31:8).

Given the times, I want to fellowship with those who name the name of Jesus. Even with the various denominations, a bond can be formed when the Bible is upheld as authoritative. When doctrinal differences are known, fellowship in the Lord is possible when grace is extended to the other person in their growth in the truth. If the word of God is handled deceitfully, however, not much can be done. Let the Word speak. If someone presumes that if you hear all that the passage says you will believe something different than they want, so they skip that part in the reading - there's not much that can be done in interacting as parts of the body of Christ. A member is offering a life-flowing witness that is refused because they are deemed as outside the truth. What a shame.

If I may be more specific, I have been going to a neighborhood church, knowing their doctrine is different from what I see the Bible say. Yet I haven't come in strife, or even made mention of our differences. I expect God to come in demonstration of His power, not through my persuasive words. I realize the extent that their mindset has almost totally put sound doctrine in a stranglehold. I even cut them some slack in my understanding of the workings of their mindset. Even though I go to their church in the name of the Lord, only one lady has treated me as if I may be a Christian. I get so I'm afraid to say anything that might not comply with their brand of interpretation. That's not good. How can you search the Scriptures together, if there are certain lines you cannot cross in your search? You end up putting a bushel over your light to limit yourself within those lines.

As that dynamic plays out, another one comes into play in that a false understanding, no matter how solidly supported, will unravel before the truth. The truth is a pesky thing. You exegete a passage to form a dogma to proclaim over every person which only begins to cover the subject, and you've gone into handling the word of God deceitfully. You can't get the dogma to stretch that far, so you cut out some of the Word. That has a form of godliness, but denies the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5), which is their whole point - they think the power passed away with the apostles. They have an answer to supposedly nail down any objection to their doctrine, especially saying we have the Bible so we don't need anything else, but they gut the Bible to get there!

Through the months I've spent attending this church, I would have liked to put my head together with someone over the Bible, but they don't even talk about Jesus to me. Other people of this peculiar view of the Bible have run away when I begin to make sense to them. I came not with the intent of pointing out error, but with the intent of fellowshiping in the Lord. The preacher was preaching the Word and seemed to defer to me in not pointing out what he may have thought was my error, me being an outsider. But then he said the Word said something that I

don't see how is defensible. His fortress is cracking up. When the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) didn't recognize Jesus, it wasn't because the sun was in their eyes for four miles (and in the house too?). When their hearts burned within them, it was not because they learned something they didn't know from their fellow wayfarer. And when they recognized the stranger as Jesus when he blessed the bread, it wasn't because His mannerisms were familiar! To stretch Scripture this far to make a point that God does NOT speak to anyone today supernaturally and that EVERYONE hears from God only in a natural way by reading some words in a book called the Bible, is one thing. But then to leave out the part that Jesus supernaturally vanished out of their sight, makes the whole teaching suspect. The preacher said there was nothing supernatural about this incident.

I mention the particulars for no other reason than to show how far a false doctrine can taint even the most obvious of passages. Each time I have attended a church like this I come away amazed at the depths they go to to miss what is really being said. How can you work with someone like that? I continue to follow the Lord's leading in dealing with them. But that dealing will now have to be outside their church doors or under different circumstances.

The times are such that we may need to depend on each other in the future. A neighborhood church would meet quite a need in that eventuality. But why wait till we are driven to each other? A neighborhood church doing good among people that live close to each other can better disciple believers. Discipling requires time spent together, too little of which goes on. Hopefully, the body of Christ can rise up in me in my surroundings. Deal with the Jesus in me and we can get somewhere. Shut Him out, and you have shut Jesus out.