

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical and Southern Studies

Pastor Ron Rumburg

SBSS

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1 Glory to God the Father's name,
Who, from our sinful race,
Chose out his favourites to proclaim
The honours of his grace.

2 Glory to God the Son be paid
Who dwelt in humble clay,
And, to redeem us from the dead,
Gave his own life away.

3 Glory to God the Spirit give,
From whose almighty power
Our souls their heavenly birth derive,
And bless the happy hour.

4 Glory to God that reigns above,
The eternal Three-in-One,
Who, by the wonders of his love,
Has made his nature known.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

The Majesty of God and Sound Doctrine

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

2 Timothy 3:16

God breathed out or exhaled, and we have His sacred Word, which is His majestic voice to us pure and without error. Yes, this is anthropomorphic (attributing to God a human characteristic, which is one of the ways our Lord reveals Himself to us). The Bible is God given and He used chosen men to record it though He preserved its integrity. The very first thing this text emphasizes as a result of God breathing (θεοπνευστος, theopneustos) is the mention of “doctrine.” This is how God chose to reveal Himself in special revelation. His Word is “profitable for doctrine.” The word “profitable” is a very encompassing word which means useful in every facet of man’s earthly existence as God’s infallible directive to man His human creation with a heavenly prospect by grace.

First things first, so out of the four elements in the verse “doctrine” precedes reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. “Doctrine” is preeminent in the verse for without truth revealed how would anyone know what is truth? Without correct doctrine what would be the basis for reproving, correcting, or instructing in righteousness?

True theology, which is doctrine systematized, points us to doxology. Truth takes us by the hand and leads us into the place of worship; God said, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.” Only a false holding of doctrine or a rejection of doctrine leads away from the self-revelatory God. God has chosen to reveal Himself through His infallible Word, which records and reveals His mind and will. “I believe certain doctrines because God says they are true; and the only authority I have for their truth is the Word of God. I receive such and such doctrines, not because I can prove them to be compatible with reason, not because my judgment accepts them, but because God says they are true” [Spurgeon].

God’s Word is “profitable for doctrine.” Paul, by God the Holy Spirit’s guidance, taught sound doctrine. He instructed Titus as a servant of God to be “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9). The apostle is reinforcing instruction which had already been given Titus. The “faithful word” is to be held fast to keep it from being twisted by false teachers. The words of the majestic God are to be guarded against perverters who are coming. God who is faithful speaks only faithfully. The way of combatting such opposition is to be faithful to the Word by holding “sound doctrine.” Titus and such men of God must literally “hold themselves face to face” with those who would twist God’s Word. Sound or healthy doctrine must be the weapon against “gainsayers” or those who “talk back.” It is sound doctrine that can “convince or convict” them. God is not seeking consensus with men!

Sound doctrine is a hedge against the error of those who take advantage of the majestic God as if they knew more about doctrine than the One who revealed it. Some profess God, but deny Him in practice. “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). Their professed assertion is they know God when they are “abominable” or “detestable.” They are detestable because their behavior declares the opposite, “in works they deny him.” That is, they demonstrate that they are actually unacquainted with the majestic God of heaven and earth. Gill noted, “But their lives and conversations showed that they had no true knowledge of Him, and that the fear (reverence) of Him was not before their eyes; there gave the lie to their profession; they practically denied that faith they professed to hold, and the power of godliness, of which they had the form.” The professors were abominable, disobedient and reprobate (that is rejected by God).

Paul declared to Titus, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Sound doctrine deals with what our majestic God has breathed out from Himself. People who do not like or oppose sound doctrine do not like God or what He says! Titus is urged to verbalize things that fit in or are suitable with sound or healthy doctrine. Sound doctrine is like pure gold for there is no admixture with anything else.

With some there is no danger of sound doctrine being preached. They do not attend to doctrine! Paul said, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13). Why is doctrine neglected? “They are trying to be popular.... I heard one of our ... preachers preach last fall, and in one sermon he sank four ships, wrecked three trains and buried a mother and two sisters, freed the Negro race and hung crepe on the doorknob of every family in the country. The sermon *seemed* to have good effect.... I found that those brought in under such preaching were very much like the sermon; like the ships they were soon sunk; like the trains they were soon wrecked; and like the dead they were soon buried.... I believe we need more gospel, Pauline, Christlike preaching, and less goody-goody, please everybody preaching” [W. D. Nowlin].

Charles H. Spurgeon declared, “Depend upon it, there are countless holy influences which flow from the habitual maintenance of great thoughts of God, as there are incalculable mischiefs which flow from our small thought of Him. The root of false theology is belittling God; and the essence of true divinity is greatening God, magnifying Him, and enlarging our conceptions of His majesty and His glory to the utmost degree.”