

Protecting Our Pulpits

Written by H. E. Robertson

I believe we have some important things to think about and talk about. The things I want to consider in your presence are things that have to do with the condition of the church, and its filling its place in the world—namely, fellowship, agreement, and those things that bring happiness and prosperity to the cause of Jesus Christ. Christ prayed that all believers might be one as he and the father are one. Paul reminded the Corinthian brethren, he instructed them that they be of the same mind and the same judgment; that they all speak the same thing and that there be no division among them (1 Cor 1:10). In this friends, we have an injunction that should be respected, and all the people of the earth ought to regard. If it were, the things that have brought division in the religious world and among the brethren in the church, would not have existed and the divisions would not have happened.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13, after Paul had written quite a lengthy letter dealing with a number of things that the Corinthian church needed to be taught, he summed it up by saying, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong, let all of your things be done in charity" (love). These are things that have to do with, and make up the character of an individual, a child of God—a laborer in the Master's vineyard. These things are given us for our instruction, thus, we have the things that will bring unity; we have the things upon which we can base fellowship that ought to exist among God's people. I'm sorry to say that they don't exist all the time as they should.

First I want to appeal to my brethren. The strength of a congregation as Paul admonished the Corinthian brethren—the strength of THIS congregation—depends upon our knowledge of the Word of God Jehovah. Sometimes the reason we are not strong, the reason strength doesn't exist as it should, is because my brethren do not have the knowledge of God's Word they should. Every division, brethren, that has happened in the church—if my brethren were honest—has happened because somebody didn't know the truth. It has happened because somebody did not heed the admonition of 1 Peter 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..."

Paul instructed Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul admonished the Corinthian brethren, "You be strong, *you* stand fast in the faith." Brethren we need to have enough knowledge of God's Word to stand.

A lot of times religionists, individuals, think they are going to help folks go to heaven, not by being strong, not by standing for that that is right in God's sight—that that is in harmony with the will of God—but by trying to reach out and justify just about anybody on earth...take it all in, go

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along with it. Thus, I want to say again brethren, one of the great-est needs of the church today is a knowledge of God's Word. Upon that, and obedience to it, depends where you and I are going eternally. And upon that depends the condition of the church, the congregation wherein we worship. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). I'm not talking about the doctrines and command-ments of men. I'm not talking about the ideas, and think-so's, and cares of man. I'm talking about the truths of God's Word. In John 17 Jesus prayed to the Father, "Father sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Thus, a knowledge of it brethren, we must have.

We don't need doubters in the church. I want to tell you that it's awfully hard for a doubter to go to heaven. In Romans 14:5 Paul said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Don't be doubtful about that religion of yours. Know it. Without doubt, know it. Don't be doubtful about that condition you are in. If you are doubtful about it folks, do something about it. Upon a knowledge of that depends the condi-tion of the church.

Again, in 1 Timothy 2:15, Paul said "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Is it possible for a man to know if he stands just in God's sight or not? If the Master was right, Yes! He said "Ye shall know the truth." Don't tell me we can't know the truth. Jesus said we

can know it, and upon a knowledge of it (and obedience to it) man can be justified-he said, "You study to show yourself approved." John 6:45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." God's religion to man is a mat-ter of hearing it, learning it, and liv-ing by it-obeying it-doing the very things that God intends and requires of him.

Sometimes folks get the idea, "Well now, you folks think you are the only ones who are right." Breth-ren if I didn't think I was right I'd be trying to know that I'm right. I would study God's Word until I had a thor-ough conviction that I had a knowl-edge of the matter. More than that, we need brethren in the church who are strong enough that when they have learned what is right, they will stand for it with all the power they possess.

You know brethren, one thing that hurts the church of Jesus Christ and hurts us all, is those brethren in the church who say when somebody teaches the truth, "Oh well now, I don't know, that might be right." If you don't know if it's right or not, you better get some knowledge. And then when you have it folks, don't give the idea to somebody that you really doubt this thing. You give folks and everyone you talk to the idea that this is what you understand, and that you are going to stand for it with all the power you possess. We cannot help build up the church, we

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cannot have the unity that ought to exist among us unless the members of that church are strong, and will stand for the right and fight for the right, and do everything in their power that they might attain the right.

Another thought I want to get before you. What caused the religious division of the earth? Because somebody didn't teach the truth of God's Word! That's the reason denominationalism exists. What caused the divisions in the church of Christ? Somebody didn't teach the truth. "Just let 'em divide." Truth is that that will bring us together, cement us together. Some of my brethren have the idea that in order to be tolerant, in order that we might have the fellowship that ought to exist, we can't stand for the truth-all the truth -and we can't keep out of our pulpits the things that are not the truth.

John said, in 2 John 9, "Whoso-ever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." He didn't stop there brethren. He said, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10-11).

Those in the churches of Christ who have brought a man in-tolerated blame as well as the preacher. The thing that has caused division in the church, brethren, is not truth. John said "if any man come unto you and bring not this doctrine (truth), receive him not into your house, neither bid him godspeed."

I think of a church right now in the south-a number of years ago I labored there, and at that time, as far as I was able to know, they stood four-square against the things that have divided the church of Jesus Christ. They had unity. But they called in a preacher there, and after four or five years ninety percent of them are against the truth. You tell me what caused that.

Another thing brethren...some-times my brethren get the idea that they ought to be tolerant. "We have to work this thing out; we have to let it alone." Brethren if you stand against sin in the beginning, you' ll be able to do a lot more than you will down yonder sometime. I know of a church right now, that because they didn't heed that-they tolerated in their pulpit a man that they KNEW was teaching error.. .was teaching so much error that they couldn't consci-entiously send him out into the broth-erhood to preach.

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It costs folks, it costs. I want you to know that anytime we tolerate, anytime we bring to our pulpits error, false doctrine, we are divided. Oh how badly today we need folks that will stand for something. Not be-cause somebody else stands, but be-cause they are thoroughly convinced, *they are convicted that it is right-that* it is God's will, that it is God's Word. And brethren, if we can bring about that condition in the church, we will get some things done.

I see another church, another gregation, that for a number of years had continued to ask preachers into their pulpits that they themselves believed were teaching error. Breth-ren, can we do it?...can we stand for the truth and do these things? Not if my Bible is right folks! Keep it out of there. Take care of that pulpit, and if you don't want a division, that will do it.

I wish that the whole cause of Jesus Christ could worship together. But I want to tell you, numbers are not the only thing. In this town we have some congregations where their practice is Sunday school and cups. If we by some means could move half of one of those congregations in here, and them remain just exactly like they are, do you think we have gained by it? We've gained numbers, but that is all. They have brought into our midst nothing but confusion. If they came in here and continued to teach that that they now believe, and we still teach what we believe, it will just be a matter of confusion. Breth-ren don't realize how impossible it is for those who don't agree with truth to gather in love and peace. It just cannot be done folks. Therefore we need a knowledge of God's Word, and those things that are right in God's sight.
-Condensed from a re-corded sermon