

PROVE ALL THINGS

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul penned these words: “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). The structure is simple. The statement is succinct. But this command is largely ignored in the religious world. At Stephen’s preaching, the angry crowd “stopped their ears” as they rushed to kill him (Acts 7:57). A number in the brotherhood have contributed to the current digression by “stopping their ears” to the Truth—they refuse even to consider that they or their favorite spokesman (or university [or school of preaching, DM]) might be in error.

“Prove all things.” The word *prove* is full of meaning. It is translated from the Greek word, *dokimazo*, which means, “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing be genuine or not), as metals” (from *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). Further, the present tense of the word tells us that this is to be continuous action: It is an imperative. This means that we must—we are commanded to—“prove all things.”

“Hold fast that which is good.” To “hold fast” means to keep secure, hold firmly, or retain possession of something. That which is approved is to be firmly held.

Practical Applications

Consider now several practical lessons that can be drawn from Paul’s command:

First, this short verse teaches us that a religious position can indeed be proved to be right or wrong. This is diametrically opposed to the notion that “you can prove anything by the Bible.” Opinions on favorite colors and concerning politics are different from matters of Truth. Truth is non-negotiable. It is unbiased. Truth does not change with the passing of time or popular movements. A religious doctrine can be proved to be right or wrong. Moreover, we are obligated before God to prove it. This command—“prove all things”—stands between the religiously indifferent and salvation.

Second, this command from Christ’s ambassador tells us that it is important to be right in matters of religion. If not, why this command? Prove all things! Make sure you are right in God’s sight! Yet some castigate sincere hearts that diligently seek to prove all things. One young man, with either little Bible knowledge or little respect for the Word (or a combination of both), tried to shame a sound congregation with this charge, “You’re trying too hard to be right on every little thing.” So what are the faithful supposed to do? Shall we intentionally introduce

at least some error—perhaps a “sin of the month”—in order to make the liberal element more comfortable? Of course not. With our text in mind, we know God believes it is important to be religiously right.

Third, all are obligated to “prove all things.” This is not a command just for the “clergy.” Denominationalism thrives when religious leaders preach to unsuspecting, indifferent masses. Error makes strides in the brotherhood because of gullible souls that will not “prove all things.” These are the opposites of the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11). Hearts that believe any and every thing in religion are blind followers (Mat. 15:14). The intellectually lazy will miss the splendors of Heaven because they are content to let others do their religious thinking for them.

Fourth, all are obligated to “hold fast” once something has been proved to be the Truth. It is not enough to admit the truthfulness of a doctrine. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). Compromise here, and all is for naught.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

There are no paid mercenaries in the church of our Lord. You cannot hire a gun to fight your battle for you. Standing for Truth may cost us in this life, but we will be more than amply repaid in eternity (Mat. 10:34–39).

Fifth, this verse implies that we can determine the Truth on any given religious matter. We have at our disposals the “tools” by which God commands that we discern between good and evil, right and wrong. The standard, of course, is the Bible (Psa. 119:104; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; John 12:48). The other tool required is the properly conditioned heart—the intellect of man. Make no mistake here. You do not have to be a rocket scientist or hold a college degree to understand the Bible properly (1 Cor. 3:18). “For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, (are called)” (1 Cor. 1:26). Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The parable of the soils clearly illustrates the necessity of an open heart in the salvation of any individual (Luke 8:11–15). To prove something to be true, you must be able to gather and weigh the evidence. Once the evidence is examined, one must draw the proper conclusion. Men are expected to reason properly from the Bible and as a result, be united in doctrine (1 Cor. 1:10; John 17:20–21).

Conclusion

If observed and practiced far and wide, Paul’s command in our text will dramatically alter the religious landscape around us. Denominations will no longer flourish when individuals scrutinize their tenets in light of the Bible. Apostates will find no following among Berean-like Truth seekers who are determined to “prove all things.” Religious unity will be promoted when all obey the command to, “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

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