

## **A Calling for Teaching Sound Doctrine and Not Being Ashamed of it**

J.C. Ryle in his book on "Holiness", published by Hendrickson, speaks about *knowing the times in which we are living*, using as his text, 1 Chronicles 12:32, under the heading: "**The times require at our hand distinct and decided views of Christian Doctrine**". He writes:

**"I cannot withhold my conviction that the professing church of the nineteenth century is as much damaged by laxity and indistinctness about matters of doctrine within, as it is by sceptics and unbelievers without.** Myriads of professing Christians now-a-days seem utterly unable to distinguish things that differ. Like people afflicted with colour blindness, they are incapable of discerning what is true and what is false, what is sound and what is unsound.

**If a preacher of religion is only clever and eloquent and earnest, they appear to think he is all right,** however strange and *diverse* his sermons may be. They are destitute of spiritual sense, apparently, and cannot detect error... nothing comes amiss to them... **they seem to think everybody is right and nobody is wrong,** every clergyman is sound and none are unsound, everybody is going to be saved and nobody going to be lost...

These people live in a kind of mist or fog. They see nothing clearly, and do not know what they believe... They are eaten up with a morbid dread of controversy and an ignorant dislike of party spirit; and yet they really cannot define what they mean by these phrases. **The only point you can make out is that they admire earnestness and cleverness and charity, and cannot believe that any clever, earnest, charitable man can ever be in the wrong...**

The explanation of this boneless, nerveless, jellyfish condition of soul is not difficult to find."

Speaking about the natural heart, Ryle says:

- *It is naturally in the dark about religion (Romans 3)*
- *It has no intuitive sense of truth...*
- *It hates exertion in religion, and cordially dislikes patient, painstaking inquiry*
- *It generally likes the praise of others, shrinks from collision, and loves to be thought charitable and liberal. (2 Tim3:1-9)*

**The whole result is that a kind of broad religious "agnosticism" just suits an immense number of people, and specially suits young persons...**

Now I do beseech all who read this paper to beware of this undecided state of mind in religion.

- *It is a pestilence which walketh in darkness, and a destruction that killeth in noonday*
- *It is a lazy, idle frame of soul which, doubtless, saves men the trouble of thought and investigation*
- *It is a frame of soul for which there is no warrant in the Bible...*

For your own soul's sake:

- *Dare to make up your mind what you believe*
- *Dare to have positive, distinct views of truth and error*
- *Never, never be afraid to hold decided doctrinal opinions*
- *Let no fear of man and no morbid dread of being thought party spirited, narrow, or controversial, make you rest contented with a bloodless, boneless, tasteless, colourless, lukewarm, un-dogmatic Christianity.*

**Mark what I say. If you want to do good in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply cut, doctrinal religion.** If you believe little, those to whom you try to do good will believe nothing.

The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won:

- *By distinct doctrinal theology*
- *By telling men roundly of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice*
- *By showing them Christ's substitution on the cross, and his precious blood*
- *By teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe on a crucified Saviour*
- *By preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit*
- *By lifting up the brazen serpent*
- *By telling men to look and live-to believe, repent, and be converted.*

***This is the only teaching which for eighteen centuries God has honoured with success, and is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad.***

Let the clever advocates of a broad and un-dogmatic theology... let them, I say, show us at this day any English village or parish, or city, or town, or district, which has been evangelized without "dogma," by their principles. They cannot do it, and they never will.

***Christianity without distinct doctrine is a powerless thing... depend on it, if we want to "do good" and shake the world, we must fight with the old apostolic weapons, and stick to "dogma."*** No dogma, no fruits! No positive evangelical doctrine, no evangelization!

... The men who have done most for the Church... and made the deepest mark on their day and generation, have always been men of most decided and distinct doctrinal views...

- ***It was "dogma"*** in the apostolic ages which emptied the heathen temples and shook Greece and Rome.
- ***It was "dogma"*** which awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation and spoiled the pope of one-third of his subjects.
- ***It was "dogma"*** which one hundred years ago revived the Church of England in the days of Whitefield, Wesley, Venn, and Romaine, and blew up our dying Christianity into a burning flame.
- ***It is "dogma"*** at this moment which gives power to every successful mission, whether at home or abroad.

It is doctrine-doctrine, clear, ringing doctrine-which, like the ram's horns at Jericho, casts down the opposition of the devil and sin. ***Let us cling to our doctrinal views, whatever some may please to say in these times, and we shall do well for ourselves, well for others... and well for Christ's cause in the world."***