

EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH –Nov. 2023

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THREE GREAT BATTLES

I have been in the ministry for almost 40 years which has seemed like a few short weeks. I love what God has called me to do but synonymous with a truly biblical ministry is spiritual warfare. There are many battles on many fronts – inward and outward (cf. 2 Cor. 7:5). There is “friendly fire” and “unfriendly fire”, but fire is fire! As someone said, “When I first got into the ministry it seemed like a honeymoon, but then it came to feel like work, and then eventually I came to see it as WAR!” As Paul said to Timothy, “Fight the good fight” (1 Tim. 6:12). It is a FIGHT! And again, he said to Timothy, “Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (2 Tim. 2:3) In my ministry through the years I have been engaged in THREE OUTSTANDING BATTLES!

THE BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE

In the early years of my ministry, there was a great battle over the matter of “integration”. Many wanted to integrate psychology with the Bible. I argued that the Bible itself is ALL-SUFFICIENT for everything we need pertaining to our spiritual lives related to salvation and sanctification. Many who claim to believe in the Bible don’t really have a HIGH VIEW of Scripture. My KEY text in this battle was 2 Timothy 3:15-17 where Paul says the Holy Scriptures “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). That is salvation! And then he says they are able to thoroughly equip “for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). That is sanctification and service. This package presents the ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE!

THE BATTLE FOR THE SAVIOR

As a brand-new Christian, I kept running into these people who emphasized that in order to be saved one must be baptized in water. Holding to “baptismal regeneration” they believed the ritual of water baptism was necessary for salvation. Sometimes this emphasis was overt (The Church of Christ) and sometimes more covert (The Christian Church) and of course essentially all the mainline churches and the Roman Catholic church all heretically condition salvation on the ritual of baptism. I wrote many articles in the newspapers and publicly emphasized that we are saved by FAITH ALONE in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus ALONE is the Savior and not the baptismal waters. It is the blood of Christ ALONE that cleanses from all sin – not the baptismal waters! The thief on the cross forever shows that nothing physically we do (including baptism) contributes to our salvation (cf. Lk. 23:39-42). Paul said, “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel” making a clear distinction between baptism and the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17). And Paul said it is the GOSPEL that “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). Yes, baptism is IMPORTANT as a testimony. But it FOLLOWS salvation!

THE LORDSHIP BATTLE

A great scourge called “The Lordless Gospel” developed throughout Christendom. This is often called “Easy Believism”. It says a person can accept Christ as Savior while at the same time rejecting Him as Lord. This is heresy! Christ must be believed on as personal LORD as well as personal SAVIOR in order to be saved. Many emphasize receiving the GIFT and not the GIVER for WHO He is. But the Bible emphasizes believing on the “Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31). It says, “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). Paul said there is “one Lord, one faith” (Eph. 4:5). Paul said that all saints in every place “call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:2). The climactic illustration of New Testament saving faith in the gospel of John (the gospel of belief) is found in “Doubting Thomas”. Upon seeing the risen Lord he said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” and Jesus responded by saying, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed.” (Jn. 20:29) The confession from the heart of “My Lord and my God” is what it means to truly BELIEVE (cf. Rom. 10:9-10).

Thot: There are MANY battles for the Christian but Christ has already won THE war!

Earnestly Contending, Pastor Dwight J. Oswald