

Is Your Preacher Telling You the Truth?

by Bryan Gibson

“Tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14)—that describes some people, but not the folks in Berea, because when Paul preached to them, they “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). They didn’t take for granted that Paul was preaching the truth. They checked it out to make sure it was the truth. Preachers and teachers, even those with good intentions, don’t always teach the truth. It’s our responsibility to listen carefully, and compare what we’ve heard to what the Scriptures teach. “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). That’s our God-given responsibility—to test everything we read and hear. And that’s exactly what the brethren in Ephesus did—“you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Revelation 2:2). Sure wish the brethren in Thyatira had done the same, because it may have saved some souls from hell (Revelation 2:20-23).

What will happen to us if we believe a lie? “But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and **whoever loves and practices a lie**” (Revelation 22:15). “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should **believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness**” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

If you do hear your preacher say something that is not the truth (a lie), talk to him about it. Show him from the Scriptures where he is wrong. If he is the kind of man he should be, he will thank you and change what he is preaching. That’s exactly what happened with a preacher named Apollos. “This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:25-26). The text doesn’t specifically say that he changed his teaching, but look at the next verse: “And when he desired to cross into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him...” (Acts 18:27). Hard to believe these brethren would have written this letter on his behalf if he had not been willing to change.

Make no mistake about it—there is a whole lot of error being taught today, and some of it may be coming from your preacher. It doesn’t matter how long he’s been there, how popular he may be, how many degrees he may have, how eloquent and persuasive he may be, etc. Ground yourself in the truth, and then put him to the test. If you do find error, do your best to persuade him of the truth, but above all, make sure that you don’t believe and practice a lie. You already know the consequences if you do.