

A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR THEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

Many today pray for and believe for the fulfillment of the prayer of Yeshua for the unity of the people of God (John 17:21). We hear of calls for humility, love, repentance from competition, prayer, cooperation, and more. One thing we do not hear is **a call for theological integrity**. What do I mean by theological integrity? I am not speaking about judging theological integrity by any particular stream of theological commitments. There is a tendency in some streams to dismiss others on the basis of their theological stream and claim that only their stream has integrity. This we must not do if we are to gain John 17 unity. The theological streams include Calvinism, Arminianism, Pentecostalism, new charismatic streams, Methodist, Lutheran, Holiness, Anglican and so many more. These streams all have attained credibility and longevity, and it is time to allow for differences of interpretation **within broad orthodoxy**. This broad orthodoxy is defined by the historic and more recent confessions of faith that have gained near universal acceptance as rightly representing a summary of the most important Biblical truths. Theological integrity is first based on the embrace of this broad orthodoxy. This includes the broad orthopraxy of Biblical morals and ethics.

However, some who claim to embrace broad orthodoxy still say very bizarre things. When they say such things, others react and dismiss these people as false teachers and vilify them. Some go on a public crusade against these ministers. I am very accepting of those who do not think like I do. I also came to what was for me a very hard conclusion, that God's anointing and power are not correlated to accurate precision in theology. As a theologically trained person, I would that it be that anointing and power was correlated to accurate theology. I am sure after years of examination that it is not so. Anointing and power come from the heart of faith and love more than theological precision. God's work is often through weak theological vessels. If we vilify these people and their work, we could be rejecting the work of the Spirit and in danger. However, accurate theology is still important and can prevent some sad results. Can we hope for a way through on this problem? But let me first note just a few of the kinds of bizarre things that have been taught and are taught today but some who have large platforms and influence.

In recent times we have heard those with influence teach the following:

1. That there is no judgement during this age, but that this is an age of grace and love without judgement or wrath. Judgement and wrath are Old Testament realities not New Testament.

2. That the New Testament teaches that we are only to love God and that we are not to think that the fear of God is relevant or a proper motivation.
3. That the Old Testament is irrelevant to believers in the New Covenant. Yes, it is the Word of God but is now mostly irrelevant. It is as a past word of God now that we are in the New Covenant.
4. That God expects us to exercise faith in such a way that we can all become very rich.

I could go on and note other aberrations. You may have your own list. I sometimes wonder if these people carefully read the Bible, and even just the New Testament! Do they really fully accept even the authority of the New Testament, though of course I argue always for the authority of the whole Bible. Accepting the New requires accepting the authority of the Old since the New Testament directly teaches the continuing authority of the Old which it calls Scripture and does not use the phrase Old Testament.

It would be very helpful if those who have a large platform of exposure due to their anointing, media or a large Church would have a theological partner to vet writings and media presentations before launching off into the never never land of bizarre theology and bizarre proclamations. The theological partner would be one sympathetic to their general orientation. My friend Dr. Craig Keener of Asbury Seminary, who wrote the brilliant book ***Spirit Hermeneutics***, is a top Biblical theologian. His book is a corrective for Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars and applies to all Bible teachers. Professor Keener is a very strong supporter of movements that show the power of the Spirit. A person such as Dr. Keener could be a great aid to the large platform ministers whose presence in media: in television, videos and writing gains a great following. With such platform of influence comes greater responsibility.

God desires humility. If the critics would be slower to condemn, this would help unity as well. Let their writings of correction come with humility and pleading on a biblical basis. May those with large platforms and who have power ministries have the humility to have advisors who are well trained and solid in theology. This would be helpful to the quest for greater unity.