

## Extremism In the Ranks

When God commissioned Joshua as Israel's leader, He instructed him to "do according to all the law" and "turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." (Joshua 1:7). Wiser counsel has never been given. Stay with the Word. Avoid the leftward path of loosing where God has not loosed and the path on the right of binding where God has not bound.

Some in the church have lost this marvelous balance. To the left are those who believe the thinking of the church is too narrow. They want to widen heaven's road to accommodate practically every wind of doctrine. To the right are those who believe the thinking of the church is not narrow enough. They want to tighten the borders of heaven's road so that it is only wide enough to hold those who are carbon copies of themselves, right down to the most minute opinion.

Actually, the thinking of the church is not the standard that should be followed. The Bible is the only perfect standard (John 17:17) and wherever you see a person to the left or a person to the right, you see someone who has taken to abusing Scripture by twisting passages to support his particular doctrine.

How does one identify the proper path? One bit of advice I'd like to offer is to look at what you believe in light of its immediate and overall contexts.

Many false doctrines come from taking a verse out of context or reading only a portion of that verse. The premillennialists have done this with verses such as Matthew 24:34, saying that the events of Matthew 24:5-33 are to come upon us when in fact, in the context, Jesus was speaking of events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in the first century.

Other errors arise from not considering what other passages have to say on the subject. For instance, some read John 3:16 and conclude that salvation is by faith alone (though even John 3:16 by itself does not come close to suggesting this false teaching). They completely disregard Luke 13:3, Romans 10:10, I Peter 3:21 and many other passages that show that there is more to receiving salvation than just believing.

Those to the left are hurting the church with their "progressiveness" for their progression has become transgression as they work to melt the church into the mold of denominationalism. Soon, many congregations will no more resemble the church of the New Testament than a house resembles a fish. Sadly, some are already in this condition.

Those to the right are hurting the church with their, "I'm the only faithful one left" attitude. They have separated themselves from doctrinally sound brethren and sequestered themselves in their houses and buildings, not evangelizing, not giving and not exhorting, all the while enjoying their pipe dream that, come Judgment Day, God will put them on a pedestal to show all of mankind what a "real" Christian looks like.

Let's stay in the Book that God inspired. In times like these, let us not abuse Scripture by leaving off commands that God has given or inventing commands that God has not made.

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