

False Doctrine Galatians 5:7-15

I often say that I love the academic environment of seminary or anywhere that is set aside for in depth learning about theology and the Bible. However, there is one negative aspect to seminary when I attended that is very easy to assume as the reason you are there.

Seminary students (and I include myself) can be some of the most critical people in the church. No student is ever smarter than they thought they were in the first year of seminary. We very quickly begin to think that our job is to become the “doctrine police” for the entire church. A very good character quality (desiring truth) can easily become a negative quality (criticizing people and actions that you have no right to criticize).

Galatians is one of those books of the Bible that emphasize just how important right doctrine is for every Christian. We find lots of exhortation to know and hold fast to the right beliefs. But just as importantly as knowing the right beliefs is knowing how to properly live out the right beliefs. This second area of “right doctrine” tends to follow with the wisdom of experience rather than the gorging of theological knowledge in a classroom.

Paul’s job is not to be the doctrine police. His view of making disciples requires that ordinary Christians know the Gospel of Jesus well enough that they can know right from wrong doctrine for themselves. When the people in the church depart from the truth, it is not because the Gospel, or even Paul himself have failed. Churches leave the truth because the people within the church have allowed themselves to be led astray.

Paul is writing as an older brother from a position of loving authority in the churches of Galatia. When he speaks about right doctrine, he is not simply telling people to check the box of saying all the exact right things in church. Paul’s version of right doctrine also encompasses freely and joyfully loving one another in a way of life that results from knowing the precise truths of the Gospel.

There is no shortage of people in the world who claim to believe things that make no impact on their daily lives. We can only truly say that we believe the things that we actually put into practice. Bad doctrine will sooner or later lead to bondage to the flesh in the way that people actually live. Good doctrine that is actually believed will lead to the freedom of a life lived in love.

It is with this definition of right doctrine that we want Venture Church to be known as a church that believes with precision the things that are pure and right.

Galatians 5:7-15

⁷You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰I have confidence in the

Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹ But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Discussion Questions

- What was the false doctrine preached by the Judaizers that was leading the Galatian churches astray?
- Why do you think the false doctrines had an audience that was willing to believe them?
- How will false teachers be held accountable by God (v. 10)?
- How will people who believe false teachers fail to experience some blessings that God has for them?
- Why should false teachers not be tolerated within the church?
- How can you spot a false teacher as an ordinary Christian?
- What are some common false doctrines about the Gospel that are destroying lives today?
- How can teaching that is technically true still be as destructive as false teaching?
- What can a Christian do to guard himself from the destruction of hyper criticism?
- What role does love play in keeping our beliefs pure?