**Truth Currents** **8-7-20**

 Today I want to talk to you about a five-dollar word; the word “**Hermeneutics**.” It’s probably a word that you’ve never heard of but it’s deeply important if you’re a follower of Jesus Christ. The word “hermeneutics” is the science of interpretation, particularly as it’s related to Biblical interpretation.

When we study the Bible, we don’t just read it. I’ve always said, “*The Bible doesn’t mean what it says. It means what it means*.” What that means is that we don’t just read a surface level reading of the Bible and assume that we understand what’s going on. That’s how we get so many of the goofy ideas that are prevalent in our generation. The reality is that the Bible must be understood by following the rules of interpretation. That means that we consider the historical context of the book that we’re trying to read. It means that we look at the grammar and the syntax that the original author used to get across his point. We examine the vocabulary that he chose to try and make the point that he’s making. We look at the author himself and the audience that he’s writing to. We also have to study the genre of the passage.

In other words, the Bible is not one consistent book from start to finish. It’s not a novel that you read the last chapter exactly like you read the first chapter. It’s not a manual that has bullet points that outline the highlights that you’re supposed to take away. It’s written with a variety of genres. In order to properly interpret scripture, we can’t interpret, for example, we can’t interpret poetry literally.

Let me read you some verses from one of the great love poems of all human history. It’s called the Song of Songs or sometimes the **Song of Solomon**. In this book chapter **1** verse **9**, the poet says this to the woman he loves. “*I compare you, my darling, to a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots*.” You catch that? He calls her a horse. In **4:1,2** he says this:

“How beautiful you are my darling, how very beautiful! Behind your veil, your eyes are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn sheep coming up from washing,”

 If we study the poetry of scripture and try to interpret it literally, we get some pretty bizarre pictures in our minds. So, you have to read poetry according to the rules of interpretation that apply to poetry.

 For example, you can’t take the ceremonial law and the moral law of the Old Testament and weigh them the same in their application. For example, I’ve had people use the laws like, “*you can’t boil a goat in his mother’s milk.*” Or you can’t wear clothes “*made of mixed fabrics*.” And I’ve seen them take those and put them beside the Ten Commandments and imply that the Ten Commandments are not any more valid today than these ceremonial laws are. That’s a misunderstanding of the proper rules of interpretation.

 For example, in the New Testament you can’t interpret a parable as an allegory. In a parable, it’s a pithy little story that Jesus would tell that has one point. He’s making one point. An allegory on the other hand, is a story where each of the elements represents something and is a catchy way to come to a moral that He’s trying to tell. If you get those two genres confused what you have is some real theological dilemmas.

 For example, in the parable of the Persistent Widow. Jesus tells the story of a reluctant judge who won’t give satisfaction. He won’t provide justice to a persistent widow. But she stays after it. She knocks on his door. She finds him in the market place. She’s waiting for him when he comes out of a meal. And he finally gives in because her persistence pushed him to give her justice. The point of that is, persistence in prayer is the key to receiving. But if we make that parable into an allegory, we end up with a God who is reluctant to give justice. Jesus goes on to say, “If you know how to give things to your children as a good father, imagine what the best father is?” But if you misinterpret the genre you get bad theology.

 Why am I talking to you about this? It’s because today as we look at current events, what we’re finding is that much of what would be considered actual heresy that’s being circulated in evangelical and the broader Christian circles of this country are things that come from just flat out interpreting the Bible incorrectly.

Now there are common heresies that have been around a long time. We have people tell us all the time that Jesus was just a “good guy.” He wasn’t God. We have people who say that the Bible is full of errors and contradictions. Another heresy is that God will someday let everybody in heaven. There’s no minimum standard required to get into heaven. We have people who say Christians should always at all times be healthy and wealthy in every situation. Those are heresies that been around forever.

But we’ve got some trendy new heresies that seem to be emerging in our generation. We’re being told now that the Bible doesn’t condemn, in fact it actually supports, sexual immorality. We’re being told that the Bible can only be understood through the experience of the reader. Now think about that. That heresy implies that it doesn’t matter what the historical situation was. It doesn’t matter the audience that the message was originally intended for. It doesn’t even matter what the intention of the author himself was. The only meaning that can come from the Bible is what you bring to the text from your personal experience. Folks, that’s not just a bad idea, that’s a heresy.

We’re told today that Jesus was a revolutionary socialist. We’re also told that the New Testament church was an experiment in Communism.

Where do those heresies come from? They come from people who don’t follow the rules of interpretation. And they come to the text and they pull out of it things that were never meant to be there.

The Bible has always been abused by its critics. But what we’re seeing today, is the Bible is being abused by the very people who claim that they love it. The so-called “friends” of God’s Word are the ones that are twisting it to make it say things that it doesn’t say.

I’m most disappointed frankly in some of the men that have all-of-a-sudden woke up one day recently and decided that they wanted to be “***woke***.” They wanted to be “***politically correct***.” They wanted to be in the trendy movements of our day. And so, they’ve begun to hold positions and lead their churches and move their denominations in directions that, when properly interpreted according to the “rules” of interpretation – what we call hermeneutics, the Bible doesn’t sustain the heresies that these men are promoting.

It’s stunning to me when I see who is now abandoning Biblical Christianity for what we see going on around us. This includes mega-church pastors. It includes seminary professors. It includes conference speakers and denominational leaders. Some of these are men that I followed for years. I’ve read their books. I’ve respected their ministries. And all of a sudden, I wake up and find them pushing an agenda that can’t be found in God’s Word.

Well, I’ve been praying about this and asking God to help me process how all this is working. Let me show you what He gave me real quickly.

The Spirit really drew me to the story of a man named Demos. Demos is not well known in scripture but he shows up in three places in the New Testament. He was a co-worker of the Apostle Paul. He was on the ministry team that traveled together and planted churches and discipled believers. In **Colossians 4:14** Paul is writing the closing verses of Colossians, and as he normally did, he’s sending greetings. In verse **14** he says, “*Luke, the dearly loved physician, and Demas send you greetings*.” Demos was on the team and he was with Paul sending this letter to the Colossian church.

 In the little postcard that we call **Philemon**, the closing verses (**24**), Paul again sending greetings say this, “*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings, and so do* *Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my coworkers*.”

 But then we get to **2 Timothy**, Paul’s swan song, his final letter. And this is what he says as he’s writing Timothy, his son in the faith. In **2 Timothy 4:9,10** he says to Timothy:

*“Make every effort to come to me soon, because Demas has deserted me, since he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica.”*

 We don’t know the details of this story but we do know this. Here’s the lesson. Demos gives us the example of someone who was in the fight, who had joined the cause, who was a part of the team. He was advancing the cause of Christ. He was a friend and co-worker in the Gospel until he was not. And Paul simply dismisses his departure by saying “*he loved the world*.”

 I have to wonder if some of the men that I have followed for years, that I believe in their day advanced the cause of Christ. And yet today, it sure looks like they’ve “*loved the world*.” They’re looking for the approval of the culture. And in the process, they have not… they have not abandoned the Bible… they have just abandoned proper interpretation. And now they use the Bible as a weapon against the faith.

 Think about it this way. You may be thinking right now, “*Well, who are these men?* *Give me a list of those that I need to stay away from, that I need to be wary of.*” No, I’m not going to give you a list and here’s why. Not because I don’t have a list but because of two reasons. Number one, if I gave you a list today, I’d have to revise it tomorrow and I’d have to update it the next day and I’d have to revise the after that.

 The second reason I’m not going to give you a list is this. You don’t need to make Truth Currents the source of your opinion on things. That’s part of the problem that we have in this generation is that people have picked their sources. They say, “*Well, I get all my opinions from this. I get all my opinions from Fox News. I get all my opinions from MSNBC. I get all my opinions from CNN*.”

 You see, part of the problem is we don’t know what the Bible says because we’re just picking and choosing who to listen to. I don’t want to be that guy for you. Here’s what I do want for you. I don’t want to give you a list but I want to teach you how to know scripture for yourself so that you can recognize heresy.

 Let me read one more verse to you. It comes from **Acts 17**. Paul was trying to plant a church in the city of Thessalonica and he got run out of town by his opponents. And when he left Thessalonica, he went to the next town over which was a town called Berea. In **Acts 17:10-11** it says this.

“As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. Upon arrival, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

 They received Paul. They listened to his teaching but they just didn’t swallow it whole. They went to the Scriptures every day to measure Paul’s words to see if they matched up with a proper understanding of what God has revealed in His Word.

 You see, Truth Currents doesn’t desire to be your trustworthy source to give you an opinion. Truth Currents is designed to help you learn to think Biblically. How can you learn to think Biblically? Well, I’ll tell you. You learn to think Biblically by spending time in the Word of God every day and in training yourself in hermeneutics. That is, learning how to interpret the Word of God correctly.

 There’s heresy all around us right now. What do you need to do? You need to dig deep into the understanding into the Bible you hold in your hands. So, let’s get to it.

 This is Truth Currents.