

# The Individual Christian

## My Responsibility to Watch, Test, and Warn

### Introduction:

Various teachings that contradict the Law of Christ have always assaulted the church. Said teachings serve no purpose but to lead God's people and the world away from saving truth (Matt. 24:24; II Tim. 3:13). The Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 convened to thwart teachings that contradicted divine revelation (Acts 15). Many Galatian brethren had been infected with a teaching that contradicted the Lord's doctrine (Gal. 1:6; 3:1). False teachers in Corinth had corrupted the word of God causing many to turn from the truth (II Cor. 2:17). Paul tells of the leavening affects of the false doctrines taught by Hymenaeus and Philetus (II Tim. 2:16-18). Men such as Jannes and Jambres withstand truth and cause others to be infected with their false doctrines (II Tim. 3:1-8). Peter tells us that there will be "*false teachers*" in the church that will bring teachings that will divide the church (II Pet. 2:1). Diotrephes went about "*prating against us* (the apostles who preached truth) *with wicked words*" and apparently gained a following in the church (III Jn. 10). The leavening effects of the Nicolaitans' false doctrines had taken its toll on the church in Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-15). The church in Thyatira was infected with the false teachings of Jezebel (Rev. 2:18-22). Note that all such false teachers are doing the work of Satan (Rev. 12:17; II Cor. 11:13-15). Those who contradict the word of God must be identified and their doctrines exposed (Jude 11-16). Knowing that these teachers exist in the world and in the church the Christian must watch, test, and warn!

### I. The Christian's Individual Responsibility is to WATCH for False Doctrines:

- A. Distinctions between true and false doctrines will be made by Christians who study (II Tim. 2:15).
- B. Christians who know their Bibles will be careful to be on the look out for those who bring false doctrines. The Scriptures depict the Christian as a guard who watches out for any who would bring a doctrine that contradicts divine revelation.
  1. **Elders:** The elders at Ephesus were commanded to "watch" for doctrines that would lead the church away from truth (Acts 20:28-32).
  2. **Preachers:** "*guard*" the truth (I Tim. 6:20). The word "*guard*" (*phulasso*) = "to keep watch and ward, keep guard... defend... to watch for... to be on one's guard, keep watch" (LS 875) (note the use of *phulasso* in Acts 12:4; 22:20; 28:16).
  3. **Members of the body of Christ:** The apostle Paul told the Roman brethren to "*mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them*" (Rom. 16:17). The word "mark" (*skopio*) = "look out for, notice, keep one's eyes on" (AG 764). "A lookout-place, a mountain-peak,... metaph. the height or highest point of anything, a watchtower, a look-out, watch, to keep watch" (LS 735).

### II. The Christian's Individual Responsibility to TEST the Teachings of Men:

- A. The scriptures authorize individuals to test their own self (II Cor. 13:5).
- B. The scriptures authorize a test of brethren's faith (II Cor. 2:9; I Jn. 3:10).
- C. The scriptures authorize a test of doctrines taught (Jer. 23:26-29; I Jn. 4:1, 6).
  1. John admonished the brethren not to "*believe*" every teaching (I Jn. 4:1; cf. Eph. 4:14).
  2. Brethren are to "*prove*" each character and disposition or teaching (spirits). To "*prove*" (*dokimazo*) is to "test metals, to see if they be pure... of persons, to put to the test, make trial of, scrutinize then, to approve" (LS 208).
  3. How can I apply II Jn. 9-11 if I have not put a man's teaching to the test?

### **III. The Christian's Individual Responsibility to WARN others of False Doctrines:**

- A.** Once it has been determined that the teaching or practice is error then warning must take place.
- B.** Jesus warned his disciples of false teachers and their doctrines at the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:15-16).
- C.** Paul warned Timothy of Alexander the coppersmith by name (II Tim. 4:14-15). The word "beware" = "keep watch and ward, keep guard" (LS 874).
- D.** Paul warned the Corinthian brethren of their sinful practices in tears because he loved their souls (II Cor. 2:4).
- E.** Consider the divine instructions for warning sinners and false teachers of their error:
  - 1.** Ezekiel charged to warn the wicked (Ezek. 3:16-21) (note the association between blood and the soul in Ezek. 3 and 18:4, 13).
  - 2.** Paul revealed the fact that his soul would not be held accountable for the sin and false doctrines of the world because he warned individuals of these things (cf. Acts 18:6; 20:26).
  - 3.** How do we know when an Old Testament passages has NT implications?
    - a.** Paul said that if we keep one part of the law we better keep all the law (Gal. 5:3).
    - b.** Again, Paul said that, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope (Rom. 15:4; cf. I Cor. 10:11).
    - c.** I know what to apply from the OT in my life by what the NT reveals to be so (cf. I Cor. 14:34).

### **Conclusion:**

The church of Christ is the collective body of saints that has some overlapping and some different works than does the individual Christian. The collective body of saints cannot watch, test, and warn others of false teachers in the same manner as an individual can and must. The Lord has delivered one faith (Eph. 4:1ff) that has the power to save souls (Rom. 1:16) and anything contrary to this sound doctrine (I Tim. 1:10) is considered a doctrine of the devil (I Tim. 4:1). Since doctrines of the devil do exist, the individual Christian is admonished to watch, test, and warn.