

"Prove All Things"

Have you ever wondered why there is such serious diversity and difference regarding religious beliefs and dogma? One chief reason, I submit, is the failure of people to check out matters. In fact, the Bible contains expressed teaching regarding proving all things. Consider Paul's teaching (I shall insert it in its context):

"20: Despise not prophesyings. 21: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.22: Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thes. 5).

The Greek word for "prove" is *domimazo* and it means, "To test, prove, with the expectation of approving" (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by W. E. Vines). The word *dokimazo* is rendered "discern," "approve," "examine," and "trieth" (Lk. 12: 56, Rom. 2: 18, I Cor. 11: 28, I Thes. 2: 4). *Dokimazo* in the expression "prove all things" (*panta de dokimazete*) is second person, plural, present tense, imperative mood, and active voice. Hence, "prove all things" is not an option but an actual command, required of the Christian (imperative mood shows this). The fact that the tense is present indicates it is an ongoing command. The Jews could "discern" (*dokimazo*) the face of the sky (Lk. 12: 56). They approached weather forecasting as a science and with intelligence. Based on observation and recording, certain cloud formations resulted in likely occurrences, such as rain, wind, and other weather matters. Hence, when these clouds were observed, given weather predictions could be made. I suggest to you, concerned reader, that this is precisely what Paul is commanding relative to the scriptures.

The command to "prove all things" is couched in the setting of not despising prophesyings and the avoidance of evil. Prophecy was one of the gifts of the Spirit used to stabilize the early church in the absence of the total revelation from God, the New Testament, the "perfect law of liberty" (cp. I Cor. 12: 10-12; Jas. 1: 25; I Cor. 13: 8-10). Prophecy was miraculous in its nature and involved foretelling future happenings, teaching, and exhortation. As the word was put in place, what had been supplied by the Holy Spirit to the early apostles and preachers was then placed in written form as various epistles were penned and preserved (cp. I Cor. 2: 13, 14: 37, cp. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). We "prove all things" today by the written word (compare with Acts 17: 11). We are to avoid all evil (false teaching) and "hold fast that which is good" (the truth, Jn. 8: 32).

I want to now raise the following question: of what practical value is "prove all things" and how does this system of apologetics work. First, consider the fact that "prove all things" presupposes a standard or means of proving. As already seen, this standard is the "doctrine of Christ" (2 Jn. 9-11). Paul knew that Peter had sinned and

thus publicly rebuked him because he (Peter) "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2: 14). The gospel, then, or New Testament is the standard to "prove all things." It is to also be appreciated that "prove all things" is positive in its essential nature. In other words, the Christian seeks to prove in order to approve and not to disapprove. However, the process of approval will also show what is wrong (cp. Gal. 2: 14).

We must prove all things in doctrinal matters. Truth, beloved, is essential in our worship of God and living a life that he desires (Jn. 8: 32, 4: 24, Gal. 2: 14). It behooves us, therefore, to "prove" what is truth. Let us briefly examine or prove a few matters. We shall consider three subjects concerning which there are many varied views. I think we shall see if we simply set out to objectively and intelligently "prove all things," that the confusion surrounding these three subjects will be removed. Let us look at the plan of salvation; the church that Jesus built; and how the Christian is to live to please God.

The plan of salvation for the lost. There is a plan of salvation in the sense that God has a certain way that the lost are to come to him and this plan is uniform. Throughout the book of Acts, we see the gospel being preached and people being saved in precisely the same way (cp. Acts 2; 3; 8; 16; 18, etc.). When these accounts are carefully considered and the responses of the lost are compiled, belief, repentance, confession of Christ's deity, and baptism for the remission of sins are apparent. There is no observed act prior to belief and no act following scriptural water baptism. Salvation is seen within the setting of these specified acts, baptism being observed as the consummating act (Rom. 6: 1ff.).

The church Jesus built. Jesus promised to build his church and he did (Matt. 16: 18, Acts 2). We read that there is "one body" or church (Eph. 4: 4, 1: 22, 23). The designations applied to the church are such that glorify her founder, Jesus, and not man (I Cor. 1: 2, Rom. 16: 16). "Church" is universally used and also used to refer to the local gathering or church of God's people (Matt. 16: 18, I Cor. 1: 2). Salvation is in the church or "in Christ" and every Christian is to be a member of a faithful local church (2 Tim. 2: 10, cp. Heb. 10: 25). Qualified elders oversee each local church and each local church is autonomous (Acts 14: 23, I Pet. 5: 2, 3). Each church is to have the same creed and teaching (cp. I Cor. 4: 17, 2 Jn. 9-11). Hence, human creeds and denominational concepts and practices are foreign to the New Testament and are wrong.

Duties of the Christian. By applying "prove all things" and using God's word as the standard, we can also glean certain facts pertaining to the life of the Christian. For instance, the Christian is to be a functioning member of a faithful local church (Acts 2: 42, Heb. 10: 25-31, I Cor. 16: 1, 2, Eph. 5: 19, 4: 11-16). The speech and general

decorum of the Christian is to be holy (Eph. 4: 29; Eph. 4: 28, 2 Cor. 7: 1). The Christian does not practice the lust of the flesh, pride of life, or lust of the eyes (I Jn. 2: 15-17). The Christian teaches others the gospel and, "earnestly contends for the once delivered faith" (Phili. 2: 16, Jude 3). There is steady growth and spiritual productivity on the part of the Christian (Col. 1: 10, 2 Pet. 1: 5-11).

Proof in general is required and has always been a key part in God's systems.

Under the theocratic Law of Moses, before the death penalty could be exercised, there had to be the presence of proof of the charge(s).

"6: At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death (Deut. 17). 15: One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19).

Proof is also required in the New Testament in matters of the charge of sin (cp. I Tim. 5: 19, 22). In circumstances of personal offence, there had to be proof offered as opposed to a groundless charge (Matt. 18: 15-17).

I think we have seen, first, the fact of "prove all things." I believe we have also seen the means or standard and the practical nature of the command. "Prove all things" is an intelligent and thinking process that is both objective and positive in nature. If we, "...believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God," the damage rendered by false teachers would be virtually eliminated (I Jn. 4: 1). Once again, the faithful preacher could, "...teach every where in every church" (I Cor. 4: 17). Keep in mind, that the life of the Christian is characterized by "prove all things." In other words, as seen, this is not a command that only pertains to the lost coming to God. The Lord's church today is in serious danger of forfeiting her identity because of the failure to "prove all things."