

Bible Study

Topic: The Bible in the Wesleyan Heritage

Lesson #2: Erroneous Teachings To Be Avoided

Key Verse: 2 Timothy 2:15

Proposition: Erroneous Interpretations can be very harmful to a Christian's understanding of God and the Church.

1. **An Austere Predestinarianism:** the erroneous view which fosters that "God chooses some people to be eternally saved and others to be eternally damned."
 - a. The Methodist position is called "universality of Salvation" and fosters that "all people are chosen by God for salvation, but in order to be saved they must respond to God's Gracious offer in Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 2:3,4) (Romans 10:10-13)
 - b. The Bible Teaches that God saves all who repent and believe. (2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30)
 - c. Grace is free for all and in all who believe. (2Cor. 5:14,15; Titus 2:11)
 - d. Man has freedom of choice and by God's own creative action, he is not a mere puppet. (John 3:16; Revelation 3:20; 22:17)
 - e. Salvation is something that God wants us to experience and not speculate about or hope for. (Mark 1:14,15; Acts 16:30, 31)
2. **A Barren Sacerdotalism:** the erroneous belief that the rituals and sacramental functions of the priesthood (Communion, Baptism, etc.) alone can affect the grace of God in the lives of people.
 - a. The Methodist position is that "religion must be experienced in the heart" as a result of one's faith before the sacraments and other rituals can have any real spiritual and lasting impact. (Romans 10:8-10; John 1:12,13)
 - b. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of those who believe which give power and reality to rituals and sacraments. (John 1:26,27; 1 John 5:10-13)
3. **A Mystical Nonchurchism:** the erroneous view which stresses the mystical presence of the Holy Spirit without emphasizing the "means of grace" and the fruit of the Spirit. It fosters separation from the community of faith.
 - a. The Methodist position stresses that the "means of grace" are made available primarily through the Church; its orderly services of worship, duly administered sacraments, regular habits of Bible study, directed prayer groups, carefully planned preaching, organized program of service to others and disciplined living. (Acts 2:41-47, Heb. 10:23-25)

4. **An Irresponsible Antinomianism:** the erroneous belief that “when we are under the grace of God in Christ, we are free from the requirements of the law. We are free to do as we please.
 - a. The Methodist Position fosters that even though we are not saved by obeying the law and commandments, the Bible teaches that one evidence of being saved is that we obey God’s law. (1John 2:3-6; 3:6-19)
 - b. Good Works and godly life are not means of salvation, but are evidences of genuine faith and vital relationship with Christ. (James 2:17-2-)
5. **A Cold Intellectualism:** an erroneous emphasis on intellectual understanding of truth without the heart experiences of that truth.
 - a. The Methodist Position emphasizes that knowledge and piety must go together. The understanding of Biblical truth must be accompanied by the experience of its realities. (1 Cor. 8:1-3)
 - b. Sound Thought is an aid to grace but not the substance of it. Our religious knowledge and Biblical understanding must not be allowed to make us cold, conceited and self-reliant. (Proverbs 3:5-7; Romans 12:3)
6. **An Uncaring Institutionalism:** the erroneous position which holds that the church lives in a community only to promote, preserve, and provide for itself.
 - a. The Methodist position fosters that the Church is a community of faith in the world as a servant of God and the community and not as an end in itself. It is to care for and minister to those within its fellowship as well as those outside itself. The Church is God’s instrument to reach out to the community and the world. (Galatians 6:9, 10, Romans 12:13) God judge people and nations on the basis of how they responded to the needs of the people around them. (Matthew 25:34-40)
7. **A Narrow-minded Dogmatism:** the erroneous view which forces one’s view of the Bible on others, insisting that all persons must adopt those views in order to be in favor with God.
 - a. The Methodist position fosters that in all matters that do not strike at the heart of Christianity, “we think and let think.”
 - b. John Wesley knew that each person must worship according to conscience and that the Bible with its emphasis on love of God and man, requires the “catholic spirit” towards all people, including those whose beliefs and practices are contrary to our own. (Romans 14:1-13)
 - c. He also knew that the Scriptures taught against arguing over Christian beliefs and although he could defend his own view of the Bible, he did not believe in trying to force his views of the Bible on others. (2 Timothy 2:23-25)