Essential and Non-Essential Beliefs

Ephesians 4:3-16

There is a slogan some churches use: "In essential beliefs we have **unity**; in non-essential beliefs we have **liberty**; in all our beliefs we show **charity** (love).

On the surface, this sounds good because unity among believers is certainly desired (*Eph. 4:1-6*), and love is the greatest of the virtues (*1 Cor. 13:1-13*). We must, however, ask the question, "Who decides which beliefs or which teachings are essential?" Are we qualified to make a judgment that some things God says are extremely important and other things God says are not so important? Jesus told us that man is to live by *every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God (*Matt. 4:4*). *All Scripture* is God-breathed and profitable (*2 Tim. 3:16*).

The Great Commission tells us to teach men to obey *all things* that Christ has commanded us (*Matt. 28:20*). The Lord Jesus taught that even one of the least commandments was important and must not be broken (*Matt. 5:19*). Another problem with this slogan is that it elevates unity over doctrine, and it exalts love over truth. The tragedy of the ecumenical movement is that doctrine has been minimized for the sake of organizational unity. However, what good is unity if we are not unified around the foundational truths of God's Word?

True Biblical love never sacrifices the truth of God. Rather, we are told that love *rejoices in the truth* (*1 Cor. 13:6*). Paul knew that true unity must never be divorced from doctrine: "Till we all come in the unity of **the** **faith** [the revealed body of truth], and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (*Eph. 4:13*). The ones who are hindering the cause of Christian unity are those who refuse to stand faithfully and obediently upon the written Word of God.

True Biblical love and Bible doctrine are never at odds!

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