

# THE FRIDAY NIGHT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

## WHY STUDY THEOLOGY?

### INTRODUCTION

- A.** Why a school of theology? Because theological-mindedness, assuming that it is centred on sound teaching and true spirituality, is the best remedy against being 'blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming' (Eph. 4:14).
- 1.** Every Christian is called to be a theologian.
    - a.** You don't have to have a degree in theology to be a theologian.
    - b.** You don't have to be a minister to be a theologian.
    - c.** You don't have to be in full-time Christian service to be a theologian.
  - 2.** The pastor's task is to prepare others for works of service 'so that the body of Christ may be built up ... in the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:11-13).
    - a.** 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth' (II Tim 2:15).
    - b.** 'You, however, know all about my teaching' (II Tim 3:10).
    - c.** 'For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine' (II Tim 4:3).
  - 3.** The present trend toward man-centeredness and 'what's in it for me?' type of thinking has created a vacuum that has left the church in a powerless and superficial state.
    - a.** Too many Christians cannot tell you for sure what they believe or why they believe it.
    - b.** Too many Christians know nothing of the history of the Christian church.
      - (1)** Church history is the laboratory of theology.
      - (2)** Knowledge of the past will help us to understand the present and face the future.
  - 4.** All of us need motivation to be disciplined.
    - a.** A school of theology may help motivate us to get on with learning that is long overdue.

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- b.** A school of theology may help us discipline our minds that they will be filled with godly knowledge.

### **B.** Why theology and not just the Bible?

- 1.** One can learn facts about the Bible and miss the important principles that lie behind these facts.

- a.** It is one thing to know the story of Adam and Eve, quite another, for example, to know:

- (1)** The implications for marriage and the family.

- (2)** The nature of sin, temptation and results of the Fall.

- b.** It is one thing to know that Jesus died on the cross, quite another to know:

- (1)** What the blood of Jesus meant to God the Father.

- (2)** What the blood of Jesus means to us.

- 2.** Theology is partly shaped by church history.

- a.** None of us can live in isolation from the past.

- (1)** Our biases have been passed on to us.

- (2)** They came largely from those who lived before us.

- b.** The Apostle Paul built his teaching on those who preceded him, e.g., Abraham and David (Rom. 4:1-8).

- (1)** Our minds have been shaped by great thinkers as well.

- (2)** We often quote Luther and Calvin; they quoted Augustine and Athanasius.

- c.** But I will just read the Bible like Paul. I don't need Augustine or Athanasius or Calvin.'

- (1)** Chances are, you will still have your prejudices.

- (2)** We need to understand our prejudices, how we got them and where they may need some correcting.

### **I THEOLOGY MEANS THE STUDY OF THE WORD OF GOD**

- A.** It comes from two Greek words:

- 1.** *theos*, meaning 'God'.

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2. *logos*, meaning 'word'.
- B. Theology is not a bad word!
  1. Theology was once regarded as the 'queen of the sciences'.
    - a. Just two or three centuries ago the greatest minds aspired to be theologians or clerics.
    - b. Today the better minds aspire to be scientists or computer experts.
  2. On the Oxford University coat of arms are the words 'Dominus illuminatio mea' - 'the Lord is my light' (Psalm 27:1).
    - a. Theology has since passed behind a cloud.
    - b. We want to help restore the honour of God's name by a return to theological-mindedness.
  3. Uninteresting preachers, dull theologians and less able men have moved in where spiritual giants once held sway.
    - a. Correcting this trend will not be easy.
    - b. Learning theology may not come naturally.
      - (1) It will take effort.
      - (2) When Jesus said 'strive to enter in' the Greek word is 'agonize' to enter in.

## **II SOUND THEOLOGY COMBINES BOTH THE MIND AND HEART**

- A. One without the other will lead to a defect.
  1. Emphasis on the intellect alone is dangerous.
    - a. 'Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up' (I Cor. 8:1)
    - b. The intellect is only one part of our personality.
    - c. Intellectual stimulus alone breeds pride and leads to dullness and self-righteousness.
  2. Emphasis on the heart alone is dangerous.
    - a. 'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure' (Jer. 17:9).
    - b. The heart emphasis can lead to an over-emphasis on emotional feeling.

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- c. Ignoring the intellectual side of personality can lead to false pride and self-righteousness.
- B.** The best theology will be shaped on our knees.
- 1. Prayer is the antidote to dullness and intellectual pride.
  - 2. Prayer is the vehicle by which our hearts remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit.
  - 3. What the Holy Spirit does not reveal is not worth knowing.
    - a. For this reason, our School of Theology will be constantly endeavouring to correct itself by the 'practical' as well as the 'cerebral'.
    - b. We will be constantly aware of the danger of being unbalanced.

### **III GENERALLY SPEAKING, THEOLOGY HAS 7 BRANCHES**

- A.** Revelation. The inspiration of the Bible.
- 1. This does not refer to the Book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, but the doctrine of revelation.
    - a. Revelation comes from the Greek word meaning 'unveiling'.
    - b. It means to unveil what is hidden.
  - 2. Revelation is to theology what epistemology is to philosophy.
    - a. Epistemology deals with knowing, i.e., 'how do we know?' which leads to answer 'what is true?'
    - b. Revelation deals with the way God reveals Himself.
  - 3. God has revealed Himself in the Bible by the Holy Spirit.
    - a. There is a sense in which revelation and Scripture are used interchangeably.
    - b. We know the Bible is the word of God by the 'inner testimony of the Holy Spirit' (Calvin).
  - 4. The doctrine of the Trinity emerges under this heading, as well as providence.
- B.** Cosmology. Creation.
- 1. From *kosmos* (world, or order of things) and *logos* (word). The study of creation.

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2. Cosmology partly deals with the question: Did God create the world (the universe and all in it) or did it evolve or happen by chance?
  3. Cosmology also deals with environmental issues.
- C. Anthropology. Man.**
1. From *anthropos* (man) and *logos* (word). The study of man.
  2. Anthropology partly deals with the question: Was man created or did he evolve?
  3. Anthropology also deals with issues such as:
    - a. Is man fallen?
    - b. Is man a dichotomy (e.g. body and soul) or a trichotomy (e.g. body, soul and spirit)?
    - c. Human psychology.
- D. Soteriology. Salvation.**
1. From *soter* (salvation) and *logos* (word). The study of salvation. How is man redeemed?
  2. The words salvation and redemption are used interchangeably.
  3. This is perhaps the widest area that will be covered in future lessons, dealing with such subjects as: atonement, justification, predestination, the Law, faith, sanctification and assurance.
- E. Pneumatology. The Holy Spirit.**
1. From *pneuma* (spirit) and *logos* (word). The study of the Holy Spirit.
  2. This branch of theology overlaps with all of the above but is extended to subjects like the gifts, or anointings, of the Holy Spirit.
- F. Ecclesiology. The church.**
1. From *ecclesia* (the called out, or church) and *logos* (word). The study of the church.
  2. Do not confuse ecclesiological (the study of the church and church government, church offices, etc.) with ecclesiastical (which tends to refer to work in a denomination (as in 'ecclesiastical appointment')).

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3. This branch of theology also includes subjects of baptism, the Lord's Supper and issues of church and state.
  
- G. Eschatology. Last things.
  1. From *eschaton* (last things) and *logos* (word). The study of last things.
  2. This branch of theology deals with subjects such as the Second Coming, unfulfilled prophecy, the Final Judgement, Heaven and Hell.

### **IV THEOLOGY AND ETHICS**

- A. Closely parallel with the study of theology is the study of ethics.
  1. Ethics means moral principles or values.
  2. Ethics deals partly with the relevance of theology.
  
- B. Theological ethics covers such subjects as:
  1. Marriage and family issues.
  2. Economics.
  3. Politics.
  4. The environment.
  5. Sociology.
  6. Medicine and psychology.

### **V THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY**

- A. Whereas the subject of spirituality overlaps with many of the above, say, sanctification or the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, there is a need for particular emphasis on:
  1. The place of prayer in the life of the church.
  2. The place of prayer in the life of the believer.
  3. Witnessing, soul-winning.
  4. How to read the Bible.
  5. The place of preaching.
  6. Worship.

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7. Revival.
  
- B. `Learning theology on your knees' is an aspect of our burden that will hopefully preserve us from an arid, sterile, irrelevant kind of emphasis that has not been helpful.
  1. We have a long way to go.
  2. It will not be easy to decide which subject to do next.
    - a. But we can begin.
    - b. In the meantime we can learn and slowly be set free from the ignorance that has so shamed us all.
    - c. I pray that we will soon be able to look at this school of theology and say with John Newton: `I'm not what I ought to be. I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I hope to be. But thank God I'm not what I used to be.'

### **CONCLUSION**

- A. Why else should we pursue this course in our School of Theology?
  1. We have access to teaching that would normally require going to college in order to obtain.
  2. We will be able to understand Scripture at a deeper level.
  3. Our private devotional times should be more productive.
  
- B. John 14:26. The Holy Spirit promises to `remind you of everything' you were taught.
  1. If we are empty-headed before we are Spirit-filled, we will be empty-headed afterwards.
  2. I believe Revival is coming - another Great Awakening.
  3. Those equipped when it comes will be the most useful to God, the church and the world.