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Speculate, Adulterate, Filtrate? — P4

“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Many temptations beset us when we take up the Word of God, even though we may have good intentions. Let’s look at three dangers: speculation, adulteration, and filtration.

SPECULATION. With good intentions, many Christians distort the Word of God by speculating on its meaning. To speculate is to “conjecture or make guesses about something.” As guesswork can be dangerous if people take it for truth, Paul told Timothy to “*refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels*” (2 Tim. 2:23). These quarrels likely broke out because people held their conjectures as “truth.” This can result in broken relationships and churches. We should learn to recognize speculation and call it out for what it is, but also understanding that speculation is part of life.

We all speculate when we read God’s Word, because questions arise from what we read, and since we desire to know the answer, we speculate as to its meaning. Commentaries on the Bible vary greatly in their interpretation of certain Scriptures and there is a good deal of speculation. These “speculations” are educated guesswork, not truth—conjecture that needs to be tested against the whole Word of God. Here, we should emulate the Bereans, “*examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so*” (Acts 17:11b). The safest course of action is to acknowledge an opinion, speculation, or conjecture for what it is—don’t share it with others unless you are clear. And if someone shares a conjecture with you, test it by the whole Word of God. God’s Word

destroys speculations raised against it. If it passes Scriptural examination, don’t accept it or attack it—be mature enough to admit you don’t understand everything, but also call it what it is: conjecture, not truth.

When Paul speculated, he let his readers know by saying, “*in my opinion...and I think that I also have the Spirit of God*” (1 Cor. 7:40). Paul was diligent to differentiate between his opinions and the truth of God’s Word. **Unfortunately, many denominations owe their very existence to speculations that have been “settled” as God’s truth.**

ADULTERATION. Paul warns us against “*adulterating the word of God*” (2 Cor. 4:2), which is uniting it with anything not belonging to it. This can happen when we are tempted to unite men’s thinking with the Word of God for the sake of unity or acceptance. For example, the Roman Church united Scripture with accepted Greek thought that said the Earth was the center of the universe and the Sun revolved around the Earth. This “adulteration” of Scripture resulted in the persecution of Galileo as a heretic, even though he was right. We must be very careful to never unite Scripture with human thinking for expedience, acceptance, or unity, because we end up distorting it.

FILTRATION. We are often tempted to filter God’s Word through our personal experiences in our pursuit of the truth, bending God’s Word to support our personal feelings about what is right and wrong, our experience with how things works, and our thoughts about how things should work. But your filter differs from my filter because our personal experiences differ greatly, so our filtered “truths” should never pass as God’s truth. Paul rhetorically asks, “*was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?*” (1 Cor. 14:36). Of course not.

May we take great care in our handling and defense of God’s Word. Even so, Amen.

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