

July 2005

Whole Counsel Teaching

“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Acts 20:27

Intro:

As Paul was returning back to Jerusalem, he called to himself the elders of the church at Ephesus to impart to them certain doctrinal concepts. In this matter he told them that he had communicated to them the whole counsel of God.

This is similar to the same concept that he wrote Timothy about in 2 Timothy 4:3, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;”*, where he got into the subject of Christians getting to the place where they won't want sound doctrine.

The term *sound doctrine, hugiainouse didaskalias*, referred to whole counsel teaching. The word for sound, *hugaino*, has as its root idea the idea of wholeness and referred to being healthy. In the area of physical health there must be wholeness, where all of the parts are healthy. When all of the parts are healthy, there is wholeness, therefore there is health.

It's the same idea when it comes to the teaching of the Word of God. To have sound, healthy doctrine, then all the doctrines must be taught on a matter. When they are, there is whole counsel teaching, there is wholeness and then you have sound doctrine.

For example, many churches teach on the love and mercy of God, but not about his justice and wrath. This is not sound doctrine because parts of the whole have been left out, with the result we do not have an accurate portrayal of God and how he deals with man and his running of the universe.

The result of this is that the believers are being led into error because they do not have the whole counsel teaching of God's Word. And this goes back to the minister in the pulpit that is not teaching sound doctrine, and because he isn't he is the one leading them into an error, thereby making him a false prophet.

It cannot be emphasized enough as to the importance of the Pastor teaching all the counsel of God's Word, because if we don't, the end result will be that the people will be led away from the path of grace, faith and truth into error. And that they won't be able to go on to spiritual maturity.

There is a phenomenon in the Christian Church in America today to only speak of the positive things of the Bible and to avoid the negative. But to do so, even though it is pleasing to the people, means that we are not accurately and completely teaching all the Word of God.

From the very beginning of Adam in the garden, under the Adamic covenant, to Israel at Mt. Sinai, under the Sinaitic covenant, to the Church Age, under the new covenant, there has been the positive side of blessings for obedience, but there has also been the negative side of cursings for disobedience. And the man that does not teach both is a false prophet!

When God put Adam in the garden he entered into a covenant with him with only one condition- do not eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he did, he would die. Sounds negative to me!

When God formed Israel as a people and nation for himself, he had them chant in two different groups what their blessings would be for obedience and their cursings for disobedience. The negative was taught right alongside the positive. This is teaching the whole counsel of God's Word.

And there are both blessings and cursings under the new covenant in the Church Age. But most Christians don't know this because they are not taught these things; their ministers are only teaching them "positive" things. Yes, God has called us to bless us; this shows his intentions toward us. But his blessings to us come from following the protocol plan of God. If we ignore it, or reject it, then we have to deal with the cursing aspect.

There is a Heaven, but there is also a Hell. How often do these men teach on Hell? Most don't because it's a negative subject. There is the love of God, but there is also the wrath of God. How often do they teach on his wrath? There is the grace of God, but there is also the justice of God. How often do they teach on his justice?

The Pastor of a church must teach on all these subjects. If he does not, he is not teaching the whole counsel of God. If he's done it in ignorance, then he is incompetent. If he has done it willingly to please people, then he is a false teacher and is misleading the people who sit under him!

How trivial a matter do you think it is to insult the spirit of grace? *"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* Hebrews 10:29

Is this being taught from the pulpits today? Are these words even being read from the pulpits? Do they know that it refers to believers in Christ who had rejected their local churches that were teaching Bible Doctrine to go back into the sacrificial system of the Temple?

Do they know that there is a carry over of application of Christians walking away from the spiritual dynamic of sitting under the doctrinal teaching, the whole counsel teaching of God's Word, faith and the filling of the Holy Spirit in a doctrinal church to go into legalism, whether the legalism of Catholicism, or Protestantism, or Pentecostalism? That they are guilty now of what those believers were guilty of then? And how would they know unless they were being taught the whole counsel of God's Word?

They are not being taught these doctrines because they are negative things to them, and negative things are counter productive to their agenda of building large churches and keeping the money flowing in.

There is the positive side that we can live our lives in the privacy of our own priesthoods before God and no other man has the right to tell us how we are to live them. But there is, what they would imply to be a negative thing, the other side of the equation that we will all have to stand before God in the judgment and give an account of everything that we have said, done, or thought.

It is the true man of God that declares **all** of God's counsel to God's people. He teaches the whole counsel of God, thereby teaching sound doctrine. By doing so, the people of God have the complete information they need to make the right choices, stay on the right track in life and live a life pleasing to God.

Paul warned us in 2 Timothy 4:3, another negative thing they would say, that there would come a time when Christians would not put up with sound doctrine, or whole counsel teaching. *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;”*

How this works out practically in the various churches, is that instead of calling to their pulpits men who have the spiritual gift of Pastor-Teacher, men specialized in teaching Bible Doctrine, whole counsel teaching, they will call men to the pulpit who will say what they want to hear! Men who will fit the “program” of their church; men who are pleasant, dynamic, personable, able to attract more people to the church. Men who are dogmatic, authoritative and who teach Bible Doctrine are not what they're looking for.

Christianity is inundated with these kinds of men today; men who are charismatic; men who are great motivational speakers; men who do not step on people's toes; men who are organizers; men with great personal charm; men who make the people feel good; men who speak of only positive things. They want their “Dr. Feel Goods”, their “Rev. Slick and His Dog and Pony Show”. The one thing, though, that all these men have in common is that they don't teach the whole counsel of God's Word!

The result is that you end up with Christians knowing absolutely nothing about the doctrines of God's Word. It's tragic when I meet Christians who have been going to these kinds of churches regularly for ten to twenty years and **don't even know the basic doctrine of justification**, or how to deal with their sins according to **1 John 1:9!**

They know nothing about justification, imputation, eternal security, the atonement, propitiation, the new nature, our priesthood and hundreds of other vitally important doctrines! And why is that? Because their churches are not teaching them these things! The purpose of the local church is not for social change, or to make people feel better. The purpose of the local church is to teach God's people Bible Doctrine- all of it! And that's the job of the Pastor-Teacher gift.

1. "I have not hesitated"- ου γαρ υπεστειλαμην

The emphatic negative, *ou*, is used to make a point. Paul is emphasizing the point that he was a faithful minister of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a faithful minister because he not only accurately communicated the Word of God to them, but he did so in its entirety and completeness.

Whether the people liked it or not; whether the people wanted it, or not; whether the people loved him, or hated him; whether it built the churches up, or drove people away; the important thing is that he communicated the truth of God's Word to them- **all of it!**

Paul wasn't an idiot; he knew what people were like. He knew about their pride, their stupidity, about their self righteousness, about their legalistic bent and works. He was very familiar with the condition of the flesh nature.

He also knew that man in his flesh nature wanted to run away from God, and that includes running away from his Word as well. He also knew that man would rather listen to speakers that entertained them, rather than speakers who taught the truth! It is only the new man, that God created in the believer, who wants the truth, the flesh doesn't. Kind of gives us insight into the carnality of churches that do not have whole counsel teaching!

Hesitated is hupostello, which meant to draw back from, to shrink from, to avoid, to retreat from. It had the idea of backing off from something to avoid something painful, unpleasant, or threatening. Used in the context of the army it would refer to withdrawing from the battle to avoid injury or death. Used nautically it would speak of the captain who would slacken his sails, or steer his ship away from "harm's way" because of the prospect of injury or death.

As I said, Paul knew full well what people were like, even saved people, due to the flesh nature. And he knew what their reaction would be, the reaction of their flesh natures would be to the teaching of the whole truth of God's counsel, but he absolutely did not shrink back from doing it!

Paul was also very familiar with the life of the prophet Jeremiah as he brought forth the Word of God to the Israelites. Did he hold anything back? Did he only pick out only the positive things to communicate to the Israelites? The false prophets were the ones that did that! No! He communicated to them **everything** that God wanted! That's the mark of the true man of God; the true communicator of God's Word; the man who has been given the spiritual gift to do so. The rest are hirelings and false prophets.

This passage in Acts 20 sums up, it reveals to God's people the men God has called to speak to his people. It reveals them by the fact that they communicate all of God's counsel to his people, and that they will hold nothing back! They are interested in only pleasing the God who has called them to do this, not the people. While, on the other hand, the others are interested only in pleasing the people, not God! Which one are you sitting under? Which one do you want to sit under?

2. "To proclaim to you"- μη αναγγειλαι υμιν

To announce, to declare, to proclaim, an offer of information. The *angelos* was the messenger who brought the information. In the area of religion it was always the deity who had information for his subjects. To do this he sent men, *angeli*, with the knowledge that he wanted the people to know. *Anangelo* was the communication of this knowledge.

The authority of the *angelos* to do this resided in the deity who sent him. The mission, the authority and the responsibility of all this made total demands on the life of the messenger. He lived for the message. The messenger did not have the right to pick and choose those parts of the message that he wanted the people to hear. He had to communicate the message in its entirety and completeness.

He did not have the right to omit parts of the message that he knew the people might not want to hear. He did not have the right to impart only the pleasant parts of the message and omit the negative. He was to communicate the message completely and accurately to the people as it was given to him by the deity.

Now we come down to the men of today. The man of God, the true communicator of God's Word, is not only to communicate the truth accurately, but in its every part. **We do not have the right to communicate only the positive things of the Word and avoid the negative.** We do not have the right to leave things out. We do not have the right to add things to it. We do not have the right to adjust the message to the crowd. We have the right and authority to impart only the whole counsel of God to his people.

To pick and choose what a communicator thinks he wants the people to hear is total arrogance! Yet this is prevalent throughout Christianity today. Men, and sometimes women, in the pulpit picking and choosing what they want the people to hear! They know their people don't want the whole truth; they know that they want messages that will make them feel good and help them make more money- **that's what they were hired to do!** But not so Paul; he communicated the whole counsel of God to the believers.

We see the same sort of ministry in the person of the Holy Spirit when he came to earth at Pentecost. It is said, "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*" John 16:13

We notice that the Holy Spirit did not pick and choose the parts of the message received from the Father that he wanted the church to hear, as most do today. But announced, *anangelo*, exactly what he had received from the Father.

The Holy Spirit proclaimed to the people of God what he had heard from the Father. The Lord proclaimed to the people of God what he had received from the Father. The Apostles proclaimed to the people of God what they had received from the Lord. And they communicated God's Word to us accurately and in its entirety.

So by what right do these “ministers” operate when they say they are going to only communicate positive things? To be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ you had to speak **everything** that God wanted you to say! Now, if God the Holy Spirit communicated the whole counsel of the Father, and if he indwells and fills a communicator, then that man will proclaim the whole counsel of God.

It also says that, “*He will guide you into all the truth.*” Not just parts of it, the pleasant, the palatable, the things we agree with and want to hear, but **all** the truth! The significance of this cannot be overlooked. The Holy Spirit's function is centered around the whole truth from the Father, the entire counsel of God, around sound doctrine.

Why is this so important? Because without the whole counsel of God being taught we do not have the sufficiency of doctrine being taught to arrive at an accurate conclusion and build our basis of doctrines! It's like in a court of law, before one can arrive at a correct judgment, all the facts of the case must be presented.

Many examples of this have been given over the years, where people have taken bits and pieces out of the Bible to back their own ideas, but their ideas are wrong because they are not doctrinal. We have to have all the facts pertaining to a subject so that we can have the correct teaching on a subject. Without whole counsel teaching we can't do that.

3. “*The whole will of God*” - *πασαν την βουλην του θεου*

In the preceding verse we have *humin*, the accusative plural of you, which tells us that whole counsel teaching is for the Church, not the world. It is God's will for us to know all of his will in this matter.

What the world needs to know is, that it has sinned against God, that there is a time that God is going to judge the world, that, as it presently stands before God, the people of the world stand condemned and are going to Hell, that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for their sins, died and rose again, and that if they believe on him as their Savior God will forgive them and give them eternal life.

But whole counsel teaching is for the Church, the entire Church of Christ, not just theologians and not just for the mature believer. In fact, one cannot mature without it! It takes the complexity of whole counsel teaching to bring a believer to spiritual maturity.

This is why Christ spoke to the disciples in parables. He told them that the truths of the kingdom of heaven were granted only to them to know, not the world. He spoke in parables so that the unbelievers, who were listening also, could not understand what he was saying. Sometimes he even had to explain them to his disciples.

So we have the question, “If whole counsel teaching is for the body of Christ, the Church, then why aren't these religious organizations called churches teaching it?” We have to also ask, “If these people sitting in these churches are Christians, then why aren't they asking for, crying for, demanding whole counsel teaching?”

The word for *whole* is *pasan* from *pas* and it meant all of a whole of something, or all of a whole of a group of people. The subject it is referring to will be denoted in the context. Here it refers to the purpose or will of God.

So that what it's saying is all of God's will, all of the counsel of God, to teach it in its entirety and not leave anything out. What right does any alleged communicator have to leave any part of the purpose of God out? What right do we have to determine what we will teach? Who gave us the authority to pick out the pleasant things we and our listeners want to hear out of the counsel of God and shun the unpleasant?

The word for *will* or *counsel* is *boule* and it means: decision, resolution, plan, unchangeable will, the decision of the will after previous deliberation, to prefer and to choose. *Boule* denoted deliberation and taking counsel in all its stages and effects up to the resolve and a decree.

The **first stage** of *boule* was inward deliberation. Its **second stage** was the final result of inner deliberation resulting in a decision and a resolve to carry that decision out. Its **third stage** was to design a plan whereby the decision would come to pass.

Boule is not a wish or desire; *thelo* would come closer to that where it speaks of volition by inclination or natural instinct. While *boule* is rational and conscious. *Boule* denoted a decision of the will based upon conscious thought and deliberate resolve. It spoke of volition based upon choice, preference, or decision. Conscious thought, preference, deliberation, choice, decision, resolve and a plan dominate the idea of *boule*.

It was generally the word reserved for the divine will of God and referred to his eternal purpose. A decree of what God has willed can be made, or it can be kept private known only to him to be revealed at a point in time in the future.

Boule is an extremely strong word used to denote an original intention, conscious deliberation, a decision, a willful resolve concerning that decision, the unchanging nature of that decision, a decree, a plan to carry it out and a commitment to that will and plan!

Christ was handed over and crucified according to the purpose of God, "*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*" Acts 2:23; "*For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*" Acts 4:28 The word used for counsel here is *boule*, the determinative purpose of God from eternity past. We were chosen and predestine from eternity past according to his eternal purpose, "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*" Acts 1:11 To demonstrate to us that his eternal purpose concerning our election and salvation would never change, God swore an oath to us, "*Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.*" Hebrews 6:17 Our salvation, our regeneration is due solely to the electing purpose of God, "*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*" James 1:18

As we study into the *boule* of God, we find that God had determined certain and many things in eternity past according to the counsel of his own will. What this brings out is the sovereignty of God. God has made certain decisions in eternity past and these will come to pass, because **He** will make them come to pass! He has the resolve to do so and he has the power to do so. As Paul wrote, *“Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?”* Romans 9:19

Paul wrote that our salvation was attributable, not to our own will, but the will of God in eternity past, *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”* 2 Timothy 1:9

There are things in life that God wants us to do; we call that the **direct will of God**. There are things in life that God allows us to do; we call that the **permissive will of God**. Then there are things in life that God has determined in his own counsel and purpose and this he will do regardless of what anybody else wants; we call that the ***boule of God***, or sometimes known as the **eternal purpose of God**.

It is the responsibility of the communicator of God's Word to teach all the counsel of God, regardless of whether we agree with it or not, or whether we find it pleasant or not. Men who say that they are going to only speak on positive things are not true communicators sent from God. The true communicator that God sends will speak the whole truth to people regardless of how they relate to it.

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