

Marks of Authenticity: Word of God – Doctrine

Jesus was a teacher. The crowds marveled at “his teaching” (Matt. 7:28; Mark 1:22). This teaching, read within and against the framework of the Old Testament, is what the apostles expanded and applied to the churches under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They gave us the doctrine by which the people of God are defined and by which they should live. To be a believer is to believe this teaching. And that is the point made by an impressive array of passages.

Sometimes, as we have seen as John Stott has also noted, this apostolic doctrine is called the “teaching” (Rom. 16:17), “the faith” (Titus 1:13; 1Tim. 3:9; Jude 3), “the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15; 4:3), and “the deposit” (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14). It is called the “pattern of the sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13), “the traditions” (2 Thess. 2:15), “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42; cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). Elsewhere it is “what we have heard” (Heb. 2:1) or what was heard “from the beginning” (1 John 2:24).

It is about this body of teaching that the apostles wrote to the early Christians. This doctrine was given by God for the instruction, moral guidance, and nurture of God’s people. The apostles therefore say they are writing to “remind” the churches of this doctrine, that they are to “recall” it, to “stand firm” in it, to “follow” it, or, in Hebrews, not to “drift” from it. This, the apostles say, is what they “delivered” to the church. This is what has been “entrusted” to the church.

Christians, therefore, are those who “know” this doctrine. They “believe” it, “have” it, “hold it fast”, “guard” it, and “contend earnestly” for it. That is the central and defining place it should have in the life of the church. This apostolic teaching is what should describe what all Christians believe. It should explain how they think and who they are in their very souls. It should be their identifying mark. They are the ones who “have” the apostolic teaching. They guard it, treasure it, teach it, defend it, and are nourished in their lives by its truths. [Pages 228-229]

Source: *The Courage to be Protestant (Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Modern World)* by David Wells, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2008.