

## The “Grace-Unity” Doctrine (No. 3)

### Gospel vs Doctrine

by Casey Head

In this third and final article, we want to conclude our discussion of “grace-unity” by comparing and contrasting the gospel of Christ and the doctrine of Christ. You see, those who seek to establish unity where there is diversity will say that it is perfectly acceptable to disagree on doctrinal matters so long as we agree on gospel matters. In other words, if we agree on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and if we agree on the plan of salvation, then we can maintain fellowship with one another and overlook doctrinal differences such as instrumental music or church-sponsored social meals. Let us show the error of this line of thinking.

First of all, the words “gospel” and “doctrine” have different definitions. One refers to the “good news” of Christ while the other refers to the “teachings” of Christ. This tells us that the two words indeed have different definitions. We also know that the word “gospel” can be used in a limited way to refer to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4), and that the word “doctrine” can be used in a limited way to refer to a specific teaching such as baptism (Rom. 6:17).

However, we also know that the two words can be used interchangeably in reference to the New Testament as a whole. In Acts 5:28, for example, the high priest told the apostles, “Did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, *and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.*” The high priest referred to the religion of Christ as the “doctrine” of the apostles. In response, Peter told Him in verse 30, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.” As you can see, “doctrine” in this instance, includes the story of Christ- His death, burial and resurrection. We also find that the two words are used interchangeably in 1 Timothy 1:9-10: “And if there be any other thing that is contrary to *sound doctrine*; according to the *glorious gospel* of the blessed God.” What does this all tell us? That while the two words have different definitions and can be used in different ways, they can also be used interchangeably in reference to the same things.

In order to destroy the “grace-unity” doctrine, though, we must show the necessity of both the gospel AND the doctrine. This is a very simple point to make from the scriptures. In 1 Timothy 4:16, for example, it says, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the *doctrine*; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both *save thyself*, and them that hear thee.” Clearly, the doctrine of Christ plays a role in our salvation. The point is made again in 2 John 9 where the apostle says, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the *doctrine of Christ, hath not God.* He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” Those who reject the doctrine of Christ cannot have fellowship with God. Who can say after reading these two verses that we do not have to agree on doctrinal matters? While we have mentioned it on multiple occasions in these articles, Romans 6:17 cannot be ignored. Paul says here, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned: and avoid them.” Should we overlook doctrinal differences? No. Again, Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:3 that we are to “charge some that they teach *no other doctrine.*” Many verses speak of “sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9, 2:1). With all of these points in mind, it is ridiculous to say that “doctrine” doesn’t matter- that we can disagree when it comes to doctrinal matters and maintain fellowship, so long as we agree on the “basics.”

In this third and final article, we have proven adequately that both the gospel and doctrine are necessary for salvation and Christian fellowship. The “grace-unity” doctrine, which has become so prevalent among churches of Christ, has been debunked yet again. Let us fervently preach against this dangerous doctrine so that the purity of the Lord’s church might be preserved.