

Criticizing The Five Step Plan

I recently was sent an article titled, "Do We Have A Catechism?", written by Ken Green. The form the article took, and the comments following, indicate that brother Green had posted it to his Facebook page.

Though brother Green gave no specifics in the article, it was critical of the preaching and attitudes of Christians in the past. Notice the following two quotes:

We do not have catechism classes that insist on the rote learning of the proper responses to various questions about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, faith, baptism, worship, and other doctrines. But, by and large, our people have done quite well in memorizing (sic) things they can recite on a moment's notice, while, too often, having little understanding of the material and never really growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

But there was a stretch of many years when at least a couple of generations grew up in our churches without hearing much about love, grace and forgiveness and how we're supposed to treat each other, and it had some devastating effects.

Brother Green took issue with the call made for "distinctive preaching" and said that what was meant is that we should be "reciting the catechism." It is becoming fairly common to hear a rather dismissive attitude towards the faith and practice of earlier generations of Christians. This is unfortunate.

First, brother Green's assessment of past preaching is not my personal experience. I grew up hearing lessons on love, grace and forgiveness, and through the efforts of faithful men have gained a good understanding of the concepts. I preach them myself. I do agree that reciting what others say, without a full understanding of a principle of truth, is unfortunate and potentially destructive.

Later, in the comments, brother Green had an exchange with another individual, both of them poking fun of the "5 steps to salvation." This is actually more revealing of brother Green's attitude, and I find the criticism to be both disappointing, and invalid. Consider:

1. Is the gospel God's power to save (cf. Romans 1:16)?
2. Does it take **hearing** the gospel to elicit faith (cf. Romans 10:17)?
3. Must one **believe** in the gospel of Jesus that he has heard to be saved (cf. John 3:16)?

4. Can a person reach heaven if he is unwilling to **repent** of their sins (cf. Luke 13:3)?
5. Will Jesus confess a man to the Father if that man refuses to **confess** Him (cf. Matthew 10:32-33)?
6. When one is **baptized** in water in the name of the Lord is it at this point that his sins are remitted (cf. Acts 2:28)?
7. *Is there anything else required of a man before his sins are taken away?*

If the answer to number 7 is "no" (and it is), then it is simple to read the bold-faced words, and notice that there are five things a man must do to be saved. **Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess,** and be **Baptized**. It is certainly simple, and it can be simply stated. Why are some Christians ridiculing it? Why is it objectionable? Is it because it is a "catechism," because brethren are memorizing without having a proper understanding? I submit to you the problem is not with the way we have been teaching or memorizing the principles, rather that some are no longer content with the truth of the gospel.

Stan Cox