

Three Phases Of Digression

Over the years, I have collected many articles over various subjects. After an extensive search, I can no longer document the original writer of this article on the subject of digression. However, its sentiments are very good and appropriate in our time. So we will examine it with the understanding that the bulk of it was produced by another author.

Digression means "to turn aside from, to depart from the faith or to deviate from the truth." Paul wrote, *"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; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables"* (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Digression has taken many forms since the establishment of the church. It involves adding to the word, taking from the word and/or perverting the word to promote unscriptural practices. History will bear out the fact that digression from the truth has taken three well-defined steps.

First, there is aggression. Digression begins by boldly teaching something contrary to the truth. Such new doctrines soon take the characteristic of aggression. They are content only when they have pressed their new teaching to the fracturing of peace and unity among the brethren (Matthew 15:9). These are they *"... whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teachings which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake"* (Titus 1:11). Those who followed Paul were aggressive in teaching false doctrines to corrupt the minds of the disciples. *"And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"* (Galatians 2:4-5). At the introduction of any false doctrine we can expect it to be aggressively taught. It will be urged upon the church as an important belief in being loyal to Christ.

Second, there is ridicule. There are always those who will not be turned from the faith, and who will fight against all forms of digression. As a result, all sorts of names will be used to prejudice people, all forms of evasive quibbles will be used to divert attention from the issue and all forms of mockery will be employed to try to stop the opposition. Much of this has been seen in recent years concerning the present issues. Sanballat and Tobiah mocked Nehemiah and those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and they ridiculed their efforts by pointing out how weak they were (Nehemiah 4:1-3). Ridi-

cule attempts to answer arguments, but it never does to those who sincerely seek truth. Ridicule has an effect upon some because they cannot stand it.

Third, there is compromise. The time always comes when ridicule does not convince; in fact, in time it usually turns the people from their unworthy cause to seek the truth. It is at this point that those in digression will cry that they are the peace-loving and fellow-seeking children of God. They take the role of persecuted people who are misunderstood and misrepresented. Again and again I have taken the very words of a promoter of some digression doctrine and had him cry, "You have misunderstood and misrepresented me." No false teacher can stand up under the fire of truth, and when his digressive teaching has been answered and his ridicule exposed, he will try for a compromise somewhere between truth and his stand. If this is rejected as it must be, he will play the persecuted martyr who stands for truth and unity is rejected. There can be no compromise with truth on any issue. Ridicule simply clouds the real issue and disturbs the seekers of truth.

The power and tactics of digression must not be underestimated now; the methods of approach must be understood. Digression must be opposed with every bit of our ability. When digression is unsuccessful in its efforts in a congregation, it then turns to compromise and talks of "peace" and "unity." Only the sword of the Spirit will bring real peace and unity.

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