

“Your Teaching Is Too Hard”

Introduction. Faithful Christians on occasion teach an honest soul the gospel and have the person tell them, “Thank you for having enough love and interest in me to teach me” (cp. Acts 16:14-15). There are also occasions when an adverse heart responds to teaching efforts by saying, “I do not agree with you, your teaching is too hard!”

This is not unique because Jesus had people to respond in this way. The disciples in John 6:60-69 were so upset at Christ’s tough teaching that they decided to not follow Him any longer. We will examine a few of the areas in which it is claimed that the teaching is too hard.

I. Salvation

A. Faith.

1. The religious world has commonly accepted the false teaching of salvation by faith only. However, the only time that “faith only” appears in our standard translations when discussing salvation is in James 2:24, and it says just the opposite!
2. Faith always does whatever is appropriate in view of the circumstances. In the case of men and women becoming Christians, we know how they heard the gospel and obeyed it (Acts 2:14-41). While the various accounts differ in terms of length and details, they are consistent in mentioning the fact of obedience. The faith that avails is the faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6).

B. Repentance.

1. We sometimes hear the word “repentance” in the vocabularies of the world and denominationalism, but it does not have a biblical meaning associated with it. Repentance is not simply sorrow (cp. Matthew 27:3-4).
2. Repentance, fully and biblically viewed, is a change of attitude and will that is precipitated by godly sorrow and results in restoration of life (Matthew 21:28-29; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11). The drunkard who says, while consuming more alcohol, “I repent of drinking” does not understand biblical repentance.

C. Confession.

1. It is evident that men and women were required not only to believe in Jesus’ deity, but they also acknowledged it publicly (Romans 10:9-10; cp. Acts 8:36-37).
2. This was required for two reasons. First, accepting Jesus’ deity was crucial, as it is today (1 John 4:2). Second, such acknowledgement declared intended allegiance to Jesus, the Son of God. This is why, in the setting of acknowledging His deity, Jesus also said that if we are ashamed to declare him as the Son of God, He will also not acknowledge us before his Father (Matthew 10:32-33).

D. Baptism.

1. According to the teaching of the New Testament, water baptism is for the remission of sins when preceded by faith, repentance, and confession (Acts 2:38, 22:16). Water baptism is immersion or a burial in water, typifying the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4).

2. Baptism is not for babies (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37-38; Romans 7:9). Every instance of people being baptized in the book of Acts shows us that they believed and had the capacity to repent and confess before they were baptized.

II. Membership In Christ's Church

- A. When the scriptures mention religious division, it is always condemned (cp. 1 Corinthians 1:11-13). This is because there is only one church and faith (Ephesians 4:4-5). Moreover, all are to believe and practice the same doctrine (1 Corinthians 1:10).
- B. The origin, nature, and importance of the church is clearly observed in the New Testament (Matthew 16:18-19; Romans 14:17; 1 Timothy 3:15). While there are certainly "social" benefits associated with church membership, the mission and work of the local church is clearly detailed (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 4:16; Acts 11:28-30).
- C. When someone obeys the gospel, God adds them to the universal church (Acts 2:47). When the Lord adds one to the universal church, it is impossible to serve the Lord in a universal way. Therefore, in order to continue in faithfulness (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25), one must identify themselves with a local congregation (Acts 9:26).

III. Exposure Of Sin And Fellowship

- A. Sin is a serious matter because its wages is eternal death (Romans 6:23). Preaching is to be specific and practical, mentioning and exposing sin (2 Timothy 4:2-3).
 1. Christians are to not only abstain from sin, but also to reprove and rebuke sin (Ephesians 5:10-11). This requires constant vigilance by the elders and discipline when needed (1 Corinthians 5:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).
 2. The drunkard or social drinker who does not intend to alter his actions does not want to hear what the scriptures teach about such conduct (Proverbs 23:29-30). Hence, they want to silence exposure to what they view as "negativity."
- B. Elders also have to watch for threats from without (Acts 20:30). This means scrutinizing those who teach and preach the gospel.
 1. For many years, brethren have known to publicly mark and avoid such denominational men as John Hagee and Joel Osteen.
 2. However, as time has passed, men associated with churches of Christ such as Max Lucado and Rubel Shelly have demonstrated digression from the faith. Even brethren from conservative churches such as Homer Haily and Ed Harrell have not proven immune to advancing erroneous positions.
 3. If one is found to be in error, a faithful congregation can have no fellowship with falsehood and false teachers (Ephesians 5:10-11; 2 John 9-11).

IV. Human Sexuality

- A. Lasciviousness.
 1. This word, occurring six times in the New Testament (Mark 7:22; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19; 1 Peter 4:3; Jude 4), indicates behavior completely lacking in moral restraint, usually with the implication of sexual behavior.

2. Thayer adds wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc. This is any kind of lewdness that falls short of fornication.
- B. Fornication.
1. Fornication, used over 30 times in the New Testament, generally refers to any kind of illegitimate sexual intercourse.
 2. God commands us to flee fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18) because it will be judged (Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 21:8; 22:15).
- C. Divorce and remarriage.
1. Due to the relaxed civil laws, false teaching, and societal indifference, many have unscripturally divorced and married another. Yet, Jesus' teaching is just as relevant and binding today as it was in the first century (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).
 2. Too many churches now have accepted divorced and remarried people whose current marriage is adulterous. When the truth is preached on this subject some reject it. Many pronounce woe on any who expect adulterous relationships to be dissolved pursuant to the requirements of repentance (Colossians 3:5-7; cp. 2 Corinthians 12:20-21).
- D. Homosexuality.
1. The first mention of homosexuality in the Bible depicts God's judgment on it as sin. It was the outstanding transgression of Sodom and Gomorrah. The severity of the judgment indicates the seriousness of this sin (Genesis 19:1-11).
 2. Paul makes the argument in Romans 1:18-32 that homosexuality is one consequence of rejecting God as Creator and His created order. anyone who continues in these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Conclusion. People want smooth sayings and sweet sounding platitudes that do not up-set and call for change (Jeremiah 5:31). It is not difficult to find a church and preacher that will not "declare the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). If we want to go to Heaven, there are really no options regarding "hard teaching" other than to accept it (John 6:67-68; cp. 1 John 5:3).