



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 10

Many treat the Word of God as a wax nose, twisting and bending it to say whatsoever they want, to support their teachings. This is due to a lack of understanding of the rules of Biblical interpretation.

Hermeneutics – The art and science of Biblical interpretation. It is a science, because it has rules which must be followed. It is an art, because the more you do it the better you get at it. Such is writing, which is an art and a science. It has rules, and the more you practice the better you get.

Reformed doctrine of Hermeneutics views the Bible as the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, who does not lie or contradict Himself. Consistency, unity and harmony are attributes of the Bible.

Analogy of faith – The governing principle of Reformed hermeneutics is the analogy of faith, stating that Scripture is its own interpreter. One passage of Scripture assists us in understanding another passage of Scripture, as both are inspired by the same author, the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Grammatical-Historical method – The Grammatical-Historical method (*sensus literalis*), teaching that the Bible is to be interpreted in the sense in which it is written, looking at the simple, direct, ordinary sense of grammatical constructions, taking into account history, cultural setting, and literary context. This does not mean the Bible is interpreted in a “wooden” literal manner, which would result in absurd and ridiculous interpretations. Rather the Bible is to be interpreted by the same ordinary rules of language that govern the interpretation of all types of literature we read.

Parables are interpreted as parables, symbols as symbols, poetry as poetry, didactic literature as didactic literature, historical narrative as historical narrative, letters as letters. We do not mix these.

Perspicuity of Scripture – The Doctrine of Perspicuity (Clarity) of Scripture affirms that the Bible is not a book of esoteric messages, hidden codes and secret meanings, which only a select few can comprehend. Rather it is clear in its main message, especially what the Bible teaches about salvation from sin. All Israelites were expected to be able to teach their children the law of God (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). The gospel does not require a master’s degree in theology to be understood; rather any person can understand its central message. The idea that common people can’t understand the Bible is faulty.

On the other hand the doctrine of perspicuity does not mean that every part of the Bible is equally clear. There certainly are verses and passages that are complex and difficult to grasp, but these do not obscure the message of salvation (2 Peter 3:15-16). In another word, the gospel is clear enough that a child can understand it in its basic concept, and yet deep enough in its wisdom and grandeur that a theologian can drown in it.

Interpret the difficult in light of the clear – Interpret obscure and difficult passages by those that are clear. If the Bible clearly teaches something in one passage, while another passage uses difficult or complex symbolism, then we are to interpret the difficult and unclear passage in light of the clear and plain teachings found elsewhere. Compare Hebrews 6:4-6 with John 10:27-29; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30, regarding the assurance of salvation and perseverance of believers.

Many heresies have resulted due to the violation of such principles, by developing doctrines using the obscure and disputed passages instead of the clear passages, thus perverting the Word of God.