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Chapel 10/27/76 Shibboleth Judges 12:4-6

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(Covenantism and Dispensationalism)

(Reading Judges 12:4-6)

This was a time when a man of Gilead was a judge of Israel. You read further in the ch. and you find a little later God called a man of Ephraim to be a judge of Israel. This was not a time when the people of God were defending themselves against outsiders. This was a conflict between two sections of the people of Israel. They used the term shibboleth to determine who they would let live, and who they would kill. The word has passed into our language as a term for a catch word or a slogan, or something that represents a sect or a group.

Two weeks ago we looked at Luther and Zwingli, and saw how they agreed in 14 and 2/3 out of 15 different articles of faith. How their only difference was over the way Christ is presented to us in the communion. That became a shibboleth. It became something that divided protestants. As a result of their not cooperating together as they should have done in times of danger, thousands lost their lives and thousands failed to have any opportunity to have the gospel preached to them during the next 2 or 3 centuries that might have otherwise had it not been for these erection of this shibboleth. That is something Christians easily fall into. Not only Christians but people of every type.

We find Paul refers to this. I quoted him a month ago in 1 Cor. 1:12-13 where Paul said, "Now this I say, every one of you says, I am of Paul, I am of Appolles I am of Christ. Is Christ divided. Was Paul crucified for you?" Yet while ~~when~~ he spoke that way there, when you turn to Gal. 1 you find in v. 8-9 he says, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that which ye have received let him be accursed . . ." Thus Paul drew a clear distinction between a stand on the great fundamentals of the Scripture, on the great essentials of that which is vital to our salvation, and the dividing up into groups over shibboleths. Paul put great stress on the method of salvation. He did not care whether you thought you were a follower of Paul or of Peter, a follower of some other true Christian. But if you said circumcision was necessary for salvation; if you said works were necessary; if you failed to recognize that the grace of God was the only thing in salvation that is or ever has been, that only through the Lord Jesus Christ and what He did on calvary can we be saved, then Paul spoke out in a very strongest of language.

Now there are other matters that are equally important. Perhaps not as important for salvation but equally important for the progress of Christian activity. One of these is the question of the inerrancy of the Bible. Now that's not quite in the class. You don't have to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible to be saved. There are many saved who have comparatively little knowledge but you have to be saved through the grace of Christ or there is no other way. But the inerrancy of the Bible is an essential doctrine and a very vital doctrine for Christian learning. If we are to understand the things of God we have to know that we have a solid foundation. That the original MSS of Scripture were free from error. And though we don't have the original MSS we can get close enough to them so that by comparing Scripture with Scripture we can find those things that are clearly taught in the Scripture and take our stand upon them without the least hesitation. Inerrancy of Scripture is important for another reason. This is the point at which Satan begins to lead Christians astray. Institution after institution has been founded in order to stand for the gospel of Christ, and has begun to waver when people begin to raise doubts about the truth and dependability of Scripture.