

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## WHAT IS HERESY?

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**H**ow do you know if you are a heretic? Is it when you cross the line of current opinion? Are you a heretic simply because you do not go along with what the majority believes?

The word “heresy” conveys such judgmental tones, that in our “politically correct” society, many would never call one a “heretic”. In a society corrupted with moral relevancy, many have the same trouble in labeling heresy as they do in labeling evil.

When we turn to the Bible, we see that heresy does exist, and can be so labeled. Our English word “heresy” is a transliteration of the Greek word, “*Hairesis*”. Vine’s definition of the word helps us see the concept of the word and it’s negative connotation: “*HAIRESIS denotes (a) a choosing (from haireomai, to choose); then, that which is chosen, and hence, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects...*” (p.217).

In the New Testament, the

word occurs nine times. Five of these times, the word is denoting a “sect” or group of people, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and in a negative way, even the early church, who have certain beliefs that distinguish them from other groups. (cf. Acts 5:17, 15:5, 24:5, 14,28:22).

Paul defuses the negative charge of being a sect by replying, “But this I confess, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). Paul chose to believe the way of revealed truth. Some called it merely a sect, he called it the Way.

“Submission to the power of truth” is what some are **unwilling** to do. This choice to not submit to truth is what God calls “heresy”. When teachers taught that men could be saved by the grace of God without dieing to self and serving the Master with Holy lives, they taught a false doctrine. Their error, which encouraged lasciviousness, were “destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1, Jude 4). Their heresy results in destruction upon them and their followers.

A man is factious or a heretic, when he makes himself and his opinion the focus, instead of the truth (Titus 3:10). Such a man departing from the truth, has sinned. After a second admonition, if he is determined to continue to hold to his false belief, he stands self-condemned. His conscience has been taught truth from God’s revealed truth. It is not you condemning him, but he condemns himself. Such a person is to be avoided at that point.

God teaches us look at heresies in a certain light. When they occur, we should view them as occurring in order “that are approved may be made manifest among you” (I Corinthians 11:19).

We could not determine heresy, if we could not first determine objective truth. One reason for many to refuse to label an opinion heresy is they do not believe we can determine absolute truth. God teaches us otherwise (cf. John 8:32, Eph. 5:17). Applying the truth of the gospel, we can determine what is heresy, who is the heretic and those who are approved.